

John Logie Baird - A Life

Notes by Stewart Noble, 2007 (updated 2020).

References:

1. John Logie Baird: Sermons, Soap And Television (1941 - published 1988 by the Royal Television Society)
 2. John Logie Baird: Television And Me (2004 - update of Sermons, Soap And Television - published by Mercat Press)
 3. Margaret Baird: Television Baird (1973 - published by Haum, Cape Town)
 4. Anthony Kamm and Malcolm Baird: John Logie Baird - A Life (2002 - published by National Museum of Scotland)
 5. Tom McArthur and Peter Waddell: Vision Warrior (1990 - published by The Orkney Press)
 6. Douglas Brown: The Three Dimensions of John Logie Baird (2012 - published by the Radio Society of Great Britain)
 7. www.bairdtelevision.com – this website is hosted by Malcolm and Iain Baird
- The items in italics below come from these books.*

13th August, 1888 born at The Lodge, 121 West Argyle Street, Helensburgh - a normal healthy child.

Age 2 - suffered a serious illness diagnosed as a *stoppage of the bowels* [Ref 2, page 1]. Later suffered from severe colds and flu every winter, and general poor health. His symptoms came to include intolerance of cold, lethargy, weight gain (in the 1930s), constipation, depression and occasionally eccentric behaviour - the suspected cause is undiagnosed hypothyroidism [Ref.4, page 91] .

Life in Helensburgh. *In those days life moved far more slowly and with much more dignity than it does today. There were no motor cars, no wireless sets, no aeroplanes; the telephone was a novelty possessed by a few of the more wealthy; the gramophone, a strange instrument, appeared occasionally in booths at fairs held in the village. Mysterious cylinders revolved beneath a great glass dome; those who paid tuppence had the privilege of inserting rubber tubes into their ears and hearing a squeaking voice proclaiming some dissertation. [Ref 2, page 1]*

In our social life the old caste system, already in a precarious condition, still survived. In the lowest caste were the beggars, tramps and gypsies, analogous to "The Untouchables"; then came the dustmen, labourers and navvies, and next but quite a distance removed, the smaller tradesmen such as butchers, bakers and grocers. These again merged into the small businessman, and the businessman in turn expanded to the city magnate. Mixing into the stratum and oscillating between its extremes were the professional men, doctors, lawyers and clergy. At the top of the tree, a race apart, were the country gentleman, the idle land owners of the County, engaged in "shootin', huntin' and fishin' " and right at the very top of the tree was the laird or chief, Sir Iain Colquhoun of Luss. [Ref 2, page 3]

Baird himself described his schooling as "a disaster" [Ref 4, page 4]; it had nothing whatsoever to offer a child with a leaning towards science and in particular a child prone to ill-health.

Age 11 - attended **Larchfield** (now part of Lomond School) . *It was a really dreadful school run by three public school men fresh from Oxford and Cambridge. They made it an imitation of their public schools and a very poor imitation it was, with all the worst features and none of the best. Sport came first and, from two till four every afternoon, we*

played rugby in winter and cricket in summer. After the game we stripped and went into a cold spray. This was, to us, the culminating point of a tortured afternoon. In winter it became an unbearable ordeal. I went to every subterfuge to escape but only to be found out in the end. Sooner or later a dread voice would be heard shouting "Baird, you have not had your tub", and I would be caught by the hair of my head and held under the icy douche until I became numb and blue with cold. Then I caught chill after chill and spent most of the winter months in bed. [Ref 2, page 13]

His interest in science and technology was already showing itself at an early date. While at school he purchased a camera, for which he designed a remote control. He and some friends also built a glider on the roof of The Lodge. One day while Baird was tinkering in it one of his friends decided to push the glider off the roof; needless to say it crashed to the ground - Baird never ventured into an aeroplane again! He also installed electricity in The Lodge - the first house with this facility in Helensburgh but it needed supervision, and supervision did not really interest a boy with an inquisitive mind. Consequently the electricity failed one night when his father was halfway down the stairs; he fell the rest of the way, and so the electrical system had to be removed.

He also installed a telephone network to his nearby friends (including Jack Buchanan - two years his junior and later to become a famous entertainer and a lifelong friend). The wires for the system were stretched between trees. Unfortunately one dark and stormy night the wires became dislodged and fell down. The driver of a passing horse-drawn cab was pulled off his seat by them - the injury could have been much worse! Needless to say the system had to be removed.

1903 - He was aware that selenium was sensitive to light and so he tried to make his own selenium cell - a first step towards television. The result was a very strong smell in the house for days. However he realised that amplification was necessary and it was inventions patented by two other people later that provided this.

1906 - started at the Royal Technical College in Glasgow (now the University of Strathclyde) straight from Larchfield - graduated 1914 - included various apprenticeships (eg Argyll Motors in Alexandria, Dunbartonshire).

Love Life failures - *In Helensburgh, in my circumstances, it was difficult to speak with a young lady, and as to a love-affair, well that was completely out of the question. This did not greatly worry me. Self-denial, for a time, I could put up with. All would be well when I went into digs and got away from supervision and threw off the yoke..... I was to find, however that I was not of the stuff of which Don Juans are built; I tried hard, but circumstances and temperament were hopelessly against me. I had been told by other students that it was easy.... I tried [their technique] and in a state of complete nervousness bungled it hopelessly and got the snub I deserved, returning home in a state of nervous collapse..... Finally, in desperation, I took out the landlady's niece, a gaunt raw-boned creature. I was determined to have an affair at all costs. In a quiet spot I endeavoured to embrace this gaunt trollop. A drop of mucous hung from the end of her long nose. She laughed harshly, showing a row of decayed teeth, and grunted, "hands off the beef", digging her bony elbow into me. [Ref 2, page 23]*

From 1912 - experimenting with television. For this he made his own Nipkow discs to scan the image that he wished to broadcast. These discs are round and flat, with a spiral of glass lenses - the faster they revolve, the better will be the quality of image scanned.

1914 - assistant mains engineer with Clyde Valley Electric Power Company in the Rutherglen area.

1916 - declared unfit for military service.

1917 - started Baird Undersock Company. The appalling conditions in the trenches in the First World War meant that soldiers were prone to all sorts of foot infection. The Baird Undersock was a sock dipped in borax. He advertised them in innovative ways: for example sandwich board women (until then businesses had used only men) and a plywood mock- up of an army tank. If he discovered that a shop was not stocking his Undersocks, he would send his friends in to attempt to purchase them, with the result that the shop would conclude that they must be a popular item and so ordered them! He also had other businesses at this time.

1918 - resigned from electricity company, just before he was due to be sacked for moonlighting - and then there was also the **diamonds story**.

Diamonds are created in nature by subjecting carbon to a very high pressure and a very high temperature. I thought I might get these conditions artificially by electrically exploding a rod of carbon embedded in concrete. I got a thick carbon bar and filed it down into a thin rod in the centre, then I attached a wire to each end and embedded the whole thing in a large iron pot. I connected the wires to a switch which, when closed, put them straight across the power station bus bars. My idea was to pass a stupendous sudden current through the carbon so as to generate enormous heat and pressure. I chose a good time and then, when no-one was about, closed the switch. There was a dull thud from the pot, a cloud of smoke, and then the main current breaker tripped and the whole of the power supply went off. I had anticipated this and soon got it going again, but I did not get my wires away quickly enough and unpleasant explanations followed. Thereafter I was regarded as a dangerous character and, in the general unpleasantness, I forgot about the pot and it disappeared. Perhaps it is today lying in some forgotten rubbish heap, a pot of cement with priceless diamonds embedded in it. [Ref 2, page 28]

1919 - Winter brought Baird his usual bout of ill health and he decided that a change of climate was essential. On the advice of a friend he went to Trinidad, having amassed quite a large sum of money from the sale of the Undersock company. However Trinidad brought illnesses of a different sort: dysentery and fevers. But then he thought of **jammaking**.

The first thing to do was to find a suitably large pot in which to boil the jam. A scrap merchant in Port-of-Spain sold me a large copper pan, originally I believe a washtub, big enough to hold one hundredweight of jam. Underneath this we built a brick fireplace, complete with chimney and started off with the cauldron filled with sugar and orange cuttings in the proportions specified in the cookery books. We then lit a fire and Ram Roop armed himself with one of two large spade-like wooden stirrers and I took the other. We stirred vigorously. The heat became terrific. I took off everything but my trousers. The sugar melted and the jam began to simmer. We continued to stir vigorously, as instructed by the text books. Sweet smelling clouds of vapour rose from the pot and floated into the jungle. They acted like a trumpet call to the insect life and a mass of insects of all shapes and sizes appeared out of the bush in terrifying numbers. They flew into the steam above the cauldron in their thousands and, scorched, fell lifeless into the boiling jam. I dropped my stirrer and ran, but Ram Roop did not seem the least perturbed. After the first wild charge the insect stream abated a little and, finally, we finished our boiling of jam and poured it into a selection of glass jam jars. [Ref 2, page 35]

1920 - returned to London, but no-one was interested in his jams. Various business

ventures, including **soap**.

We sold soap to hotels, to boarding houses, to ships chandlers and to street barrows. It was very cheap at 18 shillings per hundredweight, but it was also very bad, mostly soda; the fatty acid content (the test of good soap) was ridiculously small. "Water held together by caustic soda" was how one angry customer described it! But what could they expect at the price? One day a very vulgar and ferociously angry woman banged her way into the office. She carried a small infant, pulled its clothes over its head and thrust a raw and inflamed posterior into my face. The poor child looked like a boiled lobster. The wretched woman had washed the infant in a strong solution of "Baird's Speedy Cleaner". I calmed her down and pointed out that the Speedy Cleaner was a powerful scouring soap for floors and ship decks, and not a toilet soap for infants. [Ref 2, page 42]

1923 - ill-health; sold businesses and moved to Hastings *coughing, choking and spluttering, and so thin as to be almost transparent [Ref 2, page 44]*. He concluded that he needed to invent something. Glass razor blades were a possibility, but his experiments resulted in a badly cut face. He also considered **pneumatic-soled shoes**. *I got a pair of very large boots, and put inside them two partially inflated balloons, and then very carefully inserted my feet, laced up the boots and set off on a short trial run. I walked a hundred yards in a succession of drunken and uncontrollable lurches followed by a few delighted urchins, till the demonstration was brought to an end by one of my tyres bursting. [Ref 2, page 44]*

Decided on television as the invention to pursue - got some publicity which led to some funding.

1924 - To succeed with television he realised that more light was essential. He tried to produce this by wiring up a network of batteries. This led to a **2000 volt electrocution** and explosion.

The next day I bought several hundred flash lamp batteries and began to realise my dream of a 2000 volt power supply, by joining sufficient dry batteries end to end - a formidable task. Some days later I had finished this and was connecting the supply to some part of the cobweb of wiring when my attention wandered and I received the full force of the 2000 volts through my hands. It was amply sufficient to cause death, but I was lucky, for a few seconds I was twisted into a knot in helpless agony and then fortunately fell over backwards, breaking the circuit and saving my life. But I shall never forget the agony of those few seconds. Electrocution must be a terrible death. [Ref 2, page 48]

Not surprisingly, this led to eviction by his landlord and a return to London (22 Frith Street, Soho) in November 1924.

Attempt at **publicity in Daily Express**.

After a short delay I was ushered into a small room and the editor (at least I thought it was the editor) came hurrying to see me. "Are you interested in a machine for television - seeing by wireless?" I said.

"Seeing by wireless?" said the "editor", a little taken aback.

"Oh yes," said I, "an apparatus that will let you see the people who are being broadcast by the BBC or speaking on the telephone."

"Astounding," said the gentleman, "I am very busy at a meeting, but I'll get one of my

colleagues to take the story, very interesting," and he vanished out of the door. In a few minutes a large brawny individual came in, listened sympathetically and with great interest to my tale, assured me that it was a first class story and advised me to be sure to get a copy of next day's Express, where I would get a first class show on the front page. And so with a cordial handshake he saw me off the premises.

Nothing whatever appeared in the Express and it was only some years after that I got the inside story from the brawny individual himself. The day I called he was sitting in the press room when one of the assistant editors came running in. "For God's sake, Jackson, go down to the reception room and get rid of a lunatic who is there. He says he's got a machine for seeing by wireless. Watch him carefully, he may have a razor hidden." [Ref 2, page 50]

Baird was not alone in trying for television - he and others were having success with silhouettes, but there was still the need for **more light**. He even got an eye from a hospital to see how that would work, but he learnt nothing from it.

Light, how to provide more light was the most serious problem with which I was faced. The photoelectric cells then available were quite unresponsive to the light given by my apparatus. In my efforts to increase this I built enormous discs. One was as big as 8 ft in diameter and had fitted round it spirals of bigger and bigger lenses until I got to using lenses eight inches in diameter. Light, light, more light: I soon reached a limit in this direction, my enormous wheels almost filled the little laboratory and as they had to revolve at an absolute minimum of 150 revolutions per minute, they were distinctly dangerous. The discs were made in sizes up to five feet in thick cardboard, and beyond that size I used plywood. On more than one occasion lenses broke loose, striking the walls or roof like bombshells. The apparatus would then get out of balance and jump from one side of the laboratory to the other until it was stopped or the disc tore itself to pieces. I had some exciting moments. [Ref 2, page 54]

Baird was nothing if not resourceful. One day, for example, while visiting his parents in Helensburgh the son of neighbours came round looking for Baird's help. The boy had built his own radio set but was having problems in getting it to work properly. Baird showed him how to do this, using a piece of chewed string as a high electrical resistance!

2nd October, 1925 - success!

Funds were going down, the situation was becoming desperate and we were down to our last £30 when at last, one Friday in the first week of October 1925, everything functioned properly. The image of the dummy's head [Stooky Bill] formed itself on the screen with what appeared to me almost unbelievable clarity. I had got it! I could scarcely believe my eyes and felt myself shaking with excitement.

I ran down the little flight of stairs to Mr Cross's office and seized by the arm his office boy William Taynton, hauled him upstairs and put him in front of the transmitter. I then went to the receiver only to find the screen a blank. William did not like the lights and the whirring discs and had withdrawn out of range. I gave him half a crown and pushed his head into position. This time he came through and on the screen I saw the flickering but clearly recognisable image of William's face - the first face seen by television - and he had to be bribed with half a crown for the privilege of achieving this distinction. [Ref 2, page 57]

This event - the first ever transmission of a proper television picture - is commemorated

by a blue plaque mounted on the wall of 22 Frith Street, Soho, London.

26th January, 1926 - demonstration to Royal Institution.

In September of that year the Radio News (an American publication) said "Mr Baird has definitely and indisputably given a demonstration of real television. It is the first time in history that this has been done in any part of the world."

5th August 1926 - Experimental transmissions of television by radio started by Post Office. Baird decided to call his sets televisors - an original example is in Helensburgh Library. Helensburgh Heritage Trust also own a share certificate in a company which he formed around this time. Important financial backers for him were his Inglis cousins - they were members of the famous Clydeside shipbuilding company which later produced both the "Waverley" and the "Maid of the Loch".

Although his endeavours in starting off his own company initially appeared successful, this was not always to be the case. Writing with hindsight, Baird was later to give the following advice:

I was now a celebrity, but instead of using this to get into the right circles, I turned down all sorts of invitations and continued to shuffle around in the lab in a state of dirt and dishevelment, absorbed in my bits and pieces. I paid for my carelessness later on, when big business got hold of television and of myself. Oh! Why did I not cash in while the going was good? [Ref 2, page 78]

If an inventor reads these pages, let him by this be admonished to do what [Alexander] Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, did, and sell at once for cash. Inventors are no match for financiers where stocks and shares are concerned, and will, if they hold on, find that the financiers have the cash and they have the paper. [Ref 2, page 118]

1926 - Baird took out a patent very similar to radar - there is still a big debate about Baird's role in the invention of radar. Other patents in the same year included Noctovision (an infra-red night-sight), a significant development in fibre optics and Phonovision (the world's first video recordings). In total he was granted 177 patents over a period of 24 years - approximately seven a year.

Negotiations started with the BBC. **Sir John Reith**, first director General of the BBC, had been a fellow student at college.

I met him for the first time in rather unfavourable circumstances. I was, and still am, very short-sighted and, at the beginning of one of the classes, the professor asked if those who were short-sighted and wanted front seats would hand in their names. When I went up to the platform to give him my name, three large impressive young students were talking to him. They talked in terms of equality; in fact there was a distinct aroma of patronage. The young gentlemen were of the type we would today call "heavies", and they boomed with heavy joviality at the poor little professor who was distinctly embarrassed and ill-at-ease. I interrupted timidly and handed him a piece of paper with my name on it. As I did so, the heaviest and most overpowering of the three "heavies" turn round and boomed at me "Ha! What is the matter with you? Are you deaf or blind?" I simpered something in inaudible embarrassment and he turned his back on me, and the three "heavies" walked out of the classroom booming pretentiously to each other. This was the first time I saw Reith. [Ref 2, page 22]

Reith later admitted that he was frightened of [television] from the start [Ref 4, page 110]... Potential social menace of the first magnitude [Ref 4, page 111]. He regarded the

introduction of commercial television as being equivalent to the introduction of *smallpox, bubonic plague and the Black Death* [Ref 4, page 111]. Baird said *our relations with the BBC formed... a tangle of intrigue and conspiracy and cross purposes* [Ref 2, page 84].

7th January, 1927 - In the United States Philo Farnsworth patented an electronic system using a cathode ray tube, and demonstrated this eight months later; in the mid 1930s he and Baird co-operated. In the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC in the United States, Farnsworth is commemorated as the inventor of television - wrongly!

8th April, 1927 - Baird Television Development Company floated on the Stock Exchange.

Same day - News broke of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company's demonstration of TV by sending pictures from Washington to New York over the telephone lines - using Baird's "flying spot" technique for scanning. To get this far had taken AT&T several years and had involved around 1000 engineers and other experts. Publicised by them as "television at last" [Ref 2, page 61] - despite the fact that they were 18 months behind Baird! There was also a marked contrast between the resources available to them and those available to Baird.

24th May, 1927 - to outdo AT&T Baird sent pictures by telephone from London to the Central Hotel, Glasgow (now the Quality Hotel) - twice the distance from Washington to New York.

9th February, 1928 - Baird transmitted pictures from London to New York over short wave radio. Nowadays we wrongly tend to think that transatlantic television only became possible some 30 years later thanks to the introduction of satellites.

3rd July, 1928 - Baird demonstrated colour television. As before, we nowadays wrongly think that colour television was invented some 30 years later.

30th September 1929 - broadcasts by BBC started, using Baird's 30-line system, initially only after Radio shut down in the evening.

April 1930 - Baird put television in 10 Downing Street - and received a letter of thanks from Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald.

8th May, 1931 - world's first outside broadcast - people in the street outside Baird's studio.

3rd June, 1931 - Derby broadcast by BBC.

6th October 1931 - Baird sailed to New York as part of efforts to set up overseas businesses - **arrival in New York.**

As the boat approached New York harbour I was surprised to see on the Pier a body of Highland pipers marching up and down with great elan to the skirl of the pipes. These wretched men proved to be a gang of comic opera pipers from the Ziegfeld Follies. A misguided but enthusiastic American publicity agent had arranged to give me a real Scottish reception. I was to ride in front of this procession with a police escort to my royal suite at the Waldorf Astoria. I could not face it. I slipped away and reached the Waldorf unobtrusively in a taxi; a few minutes later the Highlanders (from Czechoslovakia, Louisiana and Hollywood) arrived. It was an expensive matter pacifying them. The Royal Suite was overpowering, particularly the bathroom which was an

enormous hall with a vast black marble bath set in the floor and a great assortment of sprays and showers and gilded WCs. The flat was filled with pressmen, flashing bulbs and taking notes, egged on by the dynamo publicity man. They stayed on but gave me the impression that they had no interest whatsoever in myself or my work, but concentrated on the whisky and refreshments. At two in the morning the last of them had reeled out or been carried out and I returned to my gilded bedroom. [Ref 2, page 112]

11th November, 1931 - Margaret Albu arrived in New York, having been asked by Baird to join him there, and they were married two days later. She was 19 years younger than him and a professional pianist. However she was not the first woman in Baird's life, and in particular there was **Alice**.

Alice had met Baird in a library during his Undersock years (1917-19), but she married another man while he was away in Trinidad in 1920. In her defence, it should be remembered that Baird's health was not good, nor were his financial prospects. In addition, so many young men had died or been injured during the First World War that there was a considerable surplus of young women. After his return to Britain Baird met her husband in 1921 and a *sharing arrangement* [Ref 4, page 23] was agreed, and so for the next 10 years she spent weeks and even months at a time with Baird. Baird and Margaret Albu spent several hours on their wedding day drafting a letter to Alice in order to break the news gently to her. However she read about it next day in the papers - it was a violent shock to her. After Baird's funeral in 1946 a distraught Alice turned up at The Lodge and had to be consoled by Margaret with tea and sympathy. [I was initially under the impression that "Alice" was a pseudonym but Malcolm Baird has discovered her true identity and Alice was indeed her name.]

23rd January, 1932 - granted licence to broadcast in the United States .

18th March, 1932 - RCA successfully appealed against the licence to broadcast in the United States on the grounds that no foreign or foreign-owned company should be allowed US air time.

January-May 1932 - The Gaumont British Picture Co. unobtrusively acquired control of Baird Television Ltd. by buying up most of the shares.

1st June 1932 - the Derby shown on large screen (8 by 10 ft) to an audience of several thousand in the Metropole Cinema, London.

5th September, 1932 - Diana Baird born; Reverend John Baird (his father) died a few days later.

July 1933 - moved premises to Crystal Palace. Growing competition and need to cooperate with other companies. Company expanded, thanks to more capital being made available through Gaumont British.

September 1933 - demonstrated high-definition television, using Farnsworth's tube from the US

March 1934 - BBC contract with Baird for experimental 30-line transmissions expired, but the transmissions continued at a reduced level until September 1935.

May 1934 - Parliamentary committee set up to consider future of television.

January 1935 - Parliamentary committee recommended a two-year trial by the BBC of

both the Baird and the Marconi-EMI systems - Baird admitted there was very little to choose between them. Both systems used a mix of techniques, depending on what type of programmes they were broadcasting - the Baird system was not all mechanical. Malcolm Baird writes *while nobody has ever questioned the superiority of the Marconi-EMI system, there are suggestions that the difference in quality between the two at the receiving end was not so great as has sometimes been made out.* [Ref 4, page 289]

2nd July, 1935 - Malcolm Baird born - Margaret had a very difficult pregnancy and birth, and so was unwell - followed by a long period of post natal depression, during which she stayed with her mother a few miles away in Sutton. This separation lasted about 2 ½ years.

2nd November, 1936 - Two-year trial of competing television systems started, with Baird and EMI taking weekly turns - David versus Goliath in terms of resources. By this time Baird had been somewhat sidelined by the Baird company which was controlled by Gaumont British . Although he held the figurehead position of Managing Director, Baird was now mainly involved with cinema-television developments at a technical level, in the expectation that television sets would always be too expensive for most people to have in their own homes.

30th November 1936 - Crystal Palace (including Baird's premises) destroyed in fire - caused major problems for Baird with regard to BBC transmissions.

13th February, 1937 - After only 3 months of the 2 year trial, the Postmaster-General announced that the **BBC would use the EMI system.**

And so, after all these years, we were out of the BBC. The fact that it was the RCA system, imported from America, the scanning used being covered by the RCA-Ballard patent and the transmitter being the iconoscope of Zworykin and the research department, did not hinder the Marconi Company proclaiming the system all British. The iconoscope was now called the emitron. Ballard was ignored, and in an amazingly short time the Marconi publicity department had established it in the public mind that Marconi had invented television. [Ref 2, page 127]

The Board of the Baird Company wanted to concentrate on the manufacture of receivers, but Baird himself preferred technical developments, eg cinema television and stereoscopic (ie 3-D) colour television (without the need for special glasses). The business seemed to be on the brink of success, despite losing over £100,000 in both 1938 and 1939. Baird was on a salary of £4,000 a year - very large for those days.

3rd September, 1939 - Second World War started; two days earlier BBC had stopped all television transmissions for the duration of the war because of fears that the short wave signal from Alexandra Palace could be used by German bombers as a navigational aid. A few days later the Baird Television Company was put into receivership by its parent company Gaumont- British (a firm of cinema owners) and so Baird's salary stopped. Baird sent family to Bude in Cornwall because of his fear of German gas attacks. He stayed in London throughout the war doing experimental work including secret signalling, facsimile television, colour television and three-dimensional television. He payed the salaries of one full-time and a few part-time employees out of his savings. He visited his family about one week in four.

May 1941 - health deteriorating rapidly, so he went to a country nursing home; had a

heart attack after arriving there and so stayed for about three months on a weight reducing regime, until fit to resume work. He was initially bored at the nursing home, but a fellow patient persuaded him to write his autobiography, which he had already thought of doing. This was *Sermons, Soap And Television*.

July 1941 - Cable and Wireless employed Baird as a consultant technical adviser on a salary of £1,000 a year, but he was still eating up his savings.

18th January, 1944 - Government set up a committee of inquiry on post-war future of television - Baird invited to give evidence, much of which was accepted by the committee.

January 1945 - family returned from Cornwall to live at Bexhill on the Sussex coast. A new television company called John Logie Baird Ltd. was set up, with some financial support from Jack Buchanan.

May 1945 - Second World War ended in Europe - three months later in the Far East.

February 1946 - Baird had a stroke.

7 June 1946 - BBC resumed television broadcasts.

14th June 1946 - Baird died (aged 57) - buried in Helensburgh beside his parents (K5 11 in Cemetery).

After his death the family faced major financial difficulties. Although Margaret was a coexecutor of his estate, probate was granted to the other executor, a prominent London barrister. It took many years for Margaret to get her fellow executor to pay over the £7,000 from her husband's estate, and finally after 15 years the interest owing was not repaid. All of this put a strain on Margaret. The situation was saved by two people: Jack Buchanan (who persuaded John Logie Baird Ltd. to pay a pension to Margaret) and Baird's sister Annie who brought the family to live with her at The Lodge in Helensburgh. Margaret then suffered a complete nervous breakdown which lasted from 1947 to 1951 and she spent much time in the Crichton Royal Hospital in Dumfries. After recovery she returned to South Africa and taught music for over 25 years, but then returned to Scotland in 1986 and died on 14th July, 1996.

Did John Logie Baird really invent television?

Malcolm Baird makes an interesting comparison with the invention of radio. "In the case of radio, the invention of the spark gap transmitter by Hertz (1887) and its commercial development by Marconi led to its widespread use in telegraphic communications in the early 20th century..... A few years later, spark gap transmitters became obsolete and their use became illegal due to the interference that they caused." Thus "there is an interesting parallel between the history of radio and the history of television; in each case the earliest achievements were obtained with devices that later became obsolete." (Journal of the California Historical Radio Society, May 2019)