

WG ON THE BBC, 1947-2020

A doubtless incomplete listing of BBC television and radio broadcasts featuring either WG himself or his work.

(A) TELEVISION

(T1) BBC Two's *Midnight Movie* from 23.20 on Saturday 25 December 1971 – a Christmas Day treat for film fans – was the UK network premiere of **MARNIE** (1964) starring Sean Connery and Tippi Hedren (below).



Margaret Edgar is beautiful, clever – and an expert thief. Her crimes and her hatred of men are the result of a deep-rooted neurosis which wealthy publisher Mark Rutland is determined to unravel. Discovering her criminal activities, he forces her into a loveless marriage and sets about investigating her mysterious past. The results are even more terrifying than they both imagine.

Screenplay by Jay Presson Allen, based on the 1961 novel by WINSTON GRAHAM.
Director: Alfred Hitchcock.

The film was screened on BBC One or Two thrice in the seventies, thrice in the eighties and four times in the nineties – that's ten showings in all.

(T2) On Saturday 13 January 1973 from 23.20, BBC Two's *Midnight Movie* was **NIGHT WITHOUT STARS** (1951) starring David Farrar (below) and Nadia Gray with Maurice Teynac, June Clyde, Gilles Quéant and Gérard Landry. The film was reprised on BBC One from 14.20 on Friday 15 June 1990.



BBC: *Nearly blinded, Giles Gordon derives fresh hope from the girl he meets in the South of France and determines to solve the sinister mystery that soon divides them.*

Leonard Maltin: *Adequate mystery with partially blind lawyer Farrar becoming involved with Gray, and a murder. **½*

Halliwell's Film Guide: *A blind lawyer solves the death of a traitor. Enervated romantic melodrama.*

WG (in *Memoirs*): ... after I had gone [abroad] Tony Pelissier had decided he didn't like my screenplay and had rewritten it as he thought best ... The whole film ... turned out a disaster.

Screenplay by WINSTON GRAHAM from his own novel. Director: Anthony Pelissier.

(T3) On BBC One from Sunday 5 October 1975 to Sunday 18 January 1976, in sixteen weekly episodes aired from 19.25 to 20.15:

POLDARK (*BBC in association with London Film Productions Ltd, Series One*)

A romantic serial set in Cornwall of the 1780s, based on THE FIRST FOUR POLDARK NOVELS of WG, with Robin Ellis as Ross and Angharad Rees as Demelza.

From fighting in the American War of Independence, Ross Poldark returns home to Cornwall to inherit a house, land, and two idle copper mines. He returns also to Elizabeth – the girl he is to marry. But Ross had been reported dead and others have laid claim to the house, the mines, even to Elizabeth ...



Ross and Demelza

Writers: Jack Pulman (parts 1-4), Paul Wheeler (5-8), Peter Draper (9-12) and Jack Russell (13-16). Script editor Simon Masters. Directors: Christopher Barry (1-4), Paul Annett (5-8 and 13-16) and Kenneth Ives (9-12).

The series was repeated on BBC One at 19.15 from Monday 3 January to Monday 25 April 1977 and again on BBC Two at 16.35 in two eight-part halves from Monday 26 October to Monday 14 December 1987, then from Monday 11 January to Monday 29 February 1988. The first episode only was aired on BBC Four at 19.10 on Sunday 17 February 2008.

(T4) Starring David Hemmings and Samantha Eggar (below), with Emlyn Williams, Phyllis Calvert, Ferdy Mayne and Francesca Annis, **THE WALKING STICK** (1970) made its UK network debut on BBC One from 21.25 on Monday 8 March 1976, with a second screening from 22.50 on Friday 25 September 1981.



Deborah Dainton, a valuer of antiques for a firm of auctioneers, has walked with a stick since contracting polio as a child. Self-conscious about her handicap, she at first rejects the advances of Leigh Hartley, a young painter. But Leigh is persistent and soon a fragile, uncertain relationship develops between them.

Screenplay by George Bluestone, based on WINSTON GRAHAM's 1967 novel.
Director: Eric Till.

(NOTE: 1947 film TAKE MY LIFE, co-scripted by WG, was broadcast on a number of independent regional TV stations in the period 1977-1982, and probably more recently also. Similarly, 1957's FORTUNE IS A WOMAN, based on his 1952 novel, appeared on commercial TV in the period 1967-1972, but neither has featured on the BBC. 1962's CARNIVAL OF CRIME seems to have been ignored by all.)

(T5) On BBC One from Sunday 11 September to Sunday 4 December 1977 in thirteen weekly episodes aired from 19.15 to 20.10:

POLDARK (*BBC in association with London Film Productions Ltd, Series Two*)

Based on THE FIFTH TO SEVENTH POLDARK NOVELS of Winston Graham, with Robin Ellis, Angharad Rees, Jill Townsend, Ralph Bates and Judy Geeson.

Trenwith has been burned to the ground. Seven months later Ross returns from the war to find George and Elizabeth Warleggan have taken over Penrice and with it Great Aunt Agatha Poldark. The feud between George and Ross is rekindled ...



Jill Townsend and Ralph Bates as Elizabeth and George

Writers: Alexander Baron (parts 1-5), John Wiles (6-9) and Martin Worth (10-13).
Directors: Philip Dudley (1-5 and 10-13) and Roger Jenkins (6-9).

It is worth noting that the first series of *Poldark*, designedly written as a "romp" but from which WG distanced himself, was eventually broadcast three times by the BBC, whereas the second rather less exuberant series, in the production of which WG was quite closely involved, was never repeated even once.

(T6) On BBC One at 19.00 on Monday 1 February 1988:

WOGAN

Chat show host Terry Wogan's guests included WINSTON GRAHAM and Robin Ellis (below, right), appearing together apparently to give a boost to audience numbers for the first series of *Poldark* then nearing the end of its second and last repeat run, airing on Mondays at 16.35 (a strange slot choice) on BBC Two.



WG: In the second series there was a great sort of pressure by various people on the set, actors and others, that I should take part, do a Hitchcock on it, you see, so they put me in as a yeoman farmer greeting a clergyman as he came into church, you see, and what I had to say was "Mornin', Zur!" and I did it very well, I thought ... I don't think even Robin or ... Olivier could have done better with the shortness of the script. But when it came out, I wasn't in it.

(T7) On BBC Four from 20.00 to 20.30 on Sunday 17 February 2008, with repeats the next day at 19.30 and on Tuesday 9 June 2009 at 22.00:

THE CULT OF SUNDAY NIGHT, episode 3 (of 8): POLDARK

How the drama became a success, despite behind-the-scenes rows and Winston Graham's refusal to allow the BBC to create their own storylines.



Though there is no archival audio or video footage of WG here, the programme, which comprises clips from episodes intercut with insightful contributions from participating actors, writers, directors and viewers, is both entertaining and very informative regarding the production of the two BBC mid-70s series. "He would have liked to cancel the thing, but he couldn't," Christopher Barry said of WG's response to reading Jack Pulman's scripts. We learn that Robin Ellis was considered for the part of Ross only after Leigh Lawson, Timothy Dalton and Ian McShane had all declined, while, in contrast, Norma Streader wrote to producer Morris Barry asking to be auditioned for Verity and landed the part just like that. Ralph Bates – "George" – is declared a "former Hammer horror star". We discover, too, why the distinct Cornish accent essayed by Dr Enys in early episodes vanishes abruptly and completely mid-series; also why actor Richard Morant chose not to reprise the part in S2 (with his replacement's first line: "I'm not the same man who went away!"). Morant nonetheless considered the production "a highpoint of TV drama" – a view, (T8) to (T12) below notwithstanding, surely shared by many.

(T8) On BBC One at 21.00 from Sunday 8 March to Sunday 26 April 2015:

POLDARK (*Mammoth Screen, Series One*)

Eight 60-minute episodes adapted by Debbie Horsfield (below) from THE FIRST TWO POLDARK NOVELS, starring Aidan Turner as Ross, Eleanor Tomlinson as Demelza, Jack Farthing as George, Heida Reed as Elizabeth and Kyle Soller as Francis. Directors: Ed Bazalgette (1-4) and William McGregor (5-8).



(T9) On BBC One at 21.00 from Sunday 4 September to Sunday 6 November 2016:

POLDARK (*Mammoth Screen, Series Two*)

This time, ten 60-minute episodes, presenting THE THIRD AND FOURTH POLDARK NOVELS, again adapted for the screen by Debbie Horsfield. Directors: Will Sinclair (1-4), Charles Palmer (5-8) and Richard Senior (9-10).

(T10) On BBC One at 21.00 from Sunday 11 June to Sunday 6 August 2017:

POLDARK (*Mammoth Screen, Series Three*)

Another nine 60-minute instalments from the pen of Debbie Horsfield, this time adapting ALL OF THE FIFTH AND PART OF THE SIXTH POLDARK NOVELS (i.e. *The Black Moon* and *The Four Swans*). Directors: Joss Agnew (1-2 and 6-9) and Stephen Woolfenden (3-5).

(T11) On BBC One at 21.00 from Sunday 10 June to Sunday 29 July 2018:

POLDARK (*Mammoth Screen, Series Four*)

A further eight 60-minute Horsfield-penned episodes, presenting THE REMAINDER OF THE SIXTH AND ALL OF THE SEVENTH POLDARK NOVELS (i.e. *The Four Swans* and *The Angry Tide*). Directors: Joss Agnew (1-3 and 7-8) and Brian Kelly (4-6).



L to R: Jack Farthing as George, Heida Reed as Elizabeth, Aidan Turner as Ross, Eleanor Tomlinson as Demelza, Luke Norris as Dwight and Gabriella Wilde as Caroline

(T12) On BBC One at 21.00 (episodes one to six), 20.00 (episode seven) and 20.30 (episode eight) from Sunday 14 July to Monday 26 August 2019:

POLDARK (*Mammoth Screen, Series Five*)

Eight more 60-minute instalments (bringing the Mammoth Screen total to 43), again written by Debbie Horsfield, who this time eschews the source novels in favour of presenting storylines, imagined by herself, set in the interlude between the conclusion in 1799 of THE ANGRY TIDE and the opening in 1810 of THE STRANGER FROM THE SEA. Directors: Sallie Aprahamian (episodes 1-3; 7-8) and Justin Molotnikov (4-6). Probably the last Mammoth Screen *Poldark* series (even though it signs off with Ross swearing earnestly to "return").

(B) RADIO

What was the BBC Home Service became BBC Radio 4 (hereafter R4) in 1967. At the same time, the Light Programme became BBC Radio 2 (R2). Launched in 2002, digital station BBC 7 was renamed BBC Radio 7 in 2008 and then BBC Radio 4 Extra in 2011.

(R1) On Tuesday 15 July 1947 at 16.40, *Stories Old and New* on the Home Service presented **THE CORNISH FARM** read by Ronald Simpson.

(R2) A dramatisation by Denzil Roberts in six 30-minute episodes of **THE LITTLE WALLS** aired on the Light Programme weekly at 20.00 from Thursday 4 October to Thursday 8 November 1956. With Godfrey Kenton, Grizelda Hervey, Anne Cullen and Jack May. Other parts by Gladys Spencer, Trevor Martin and Morris Sweden. Produced by Norman Wright.

Episodes titles: (1) Death in Amsterdam, (2) The Clue in Capri, (3) The Recognition, (4) Leonie Explains, (5) Buckingham is Explained, (6) The Reckoning

(R3) At 11.00 on Thursday 25 May 1961 the Home Service presented *The Art Of Suspense*, an "enquiry into modern-day thrillers and their authors". Compiled and narrated by Douglas Muggerridge, the programme featured contributions from Gerard Fairlie, **WINSTON GRAHAM**, Maurice Edelman MP, Geoffrey Household, Dennis Wheatley and William Haggard. A "General Overseas Service recording" of the programme was made, a copy of which is held by the British Library.

(R4) At 15.00 on Monday 18 May 1964 the Home Service's *Afternoon Theatre* presentation was **TAKE MY LIFE** "by Winston Graham and Valerie Taylor" (indicating, presumably, an adaptation – by Truman Reeves – of film script rather than novel). With John Bentley and Olive Gregg.

I never told you I was a saint. I never deceived you in the least. You married me with your eyes open.

Other cast: Sydney Fleming and Kenneth Hyde. Pianist: Frederick Stone. Producer: Graham Gauld.

(R5) R4's *Saturday Night Theatre* at 20.30 on 13 March 1971, with a 15.00 repeat two days later, was a 90-minute dramatisation of **THE TUMBLING HOUSE** freely adapted from WG's 1959 novel by Val Gielgud. With Gary Watson.

To libel the dead is not in itself an offence known to our law.

Producer: Betty Davies

(R6) On weekdays from Tuesday 1 to Monday 14 June 1971, R2's *Woman's Hour*, starting at 14.00, included Barry Foster reading successive instalments of WG's 1952 novel **FORTUNE IS A WOMAN** abridged in ten parts by Pat McLoughlin.

[\(NOTE: Woman's Hour transferred from R2 to R4 in 1973\)](#)

(R7) Broadcast at 23.00 - 23.15 on weekday evenings from Monday 10 to Friday 28 January 1972, R4's *Book at Bedtime* was **THE WALKING STICK** abridged in fifteen instalments by Paul Humphreys and read by Ysanne Churchman.

Deborah Dainton is 26 and has been crippled since her childhood. Very gently, she falls in love. At first all is beautiful but slowly her love leads her into playing a part in a very dangerous game.

Producer: James Gallagher

(R8) R2's *Morning Story* on Monday 24 April 1972 at 11.02 was **THE OLD BOYS** read by Henry Stamper

(R9) Introduced by Judith Chalmers, R4's *Weekend Woman's Hour* at 15.00 on Saturday 7 April 1973 included a reading by John Bryning of WG's **THE BASKET CHAIR** abridged for radio by Hilda Schroder.

(R10) At 20.15 on Wednesday 29 May 1974 (repeated the following day at 15.05) R4's *Midweek Theatre* presentation, produced by John Theocharis, was **THE JAPANESE GIRL** by Geoffrey Matthews, based on a short story by Winston Graham.

I do not want £35,000, Jack. I only want you. If you leave me ... go to prison ... I shall have all the money. I will be so frightened.

(R11) R4's *Saturday Night Theatre* presentation at 20.30 on 20 September 1975 was a 90-minute dramatisation of WG's 1961 novel **MARNIE** adapted for radio by John Kirkmorris with Julie Hallam in the title role, Michael Spice as Mark and Christopher Bidmead as Terry.

Hitchcock turned Winston Graham's anti-heroine into an American for his well-known film, but in Graham's original novel the girl is English – young, pretty, calculating and confused, a liar and a thief. She is also a challenge and confusion to the man she marries.

Producer: Richard Wortley

(R12) Abridged for radio by Evangeline Banks and read by Simon Lack, **WOMAN IN THE MIRROR** (WG's then most recent novel) was presented on R4's *Story Time* at 16.35 each weekday from Monday 6 to Friday 17 October 1975.

Episode titles: (1) Arrival at Morb House, (2) Sense of Fear, (3) Reflections From The Past, (4) Night Encounter, (5) A Face in the Mirror, (6) Portrait of Marion, (7) Divided Loyalties, (8) Not known, (9) Funeral Pyre, (10) The Horrible Truth

Producer: David Spenser

(NOTE: the above reading began just one day after the transmission of the opening episode of the first series of BBC One's *Poldark*.)

(R13) On weekdays from Monday 31 January to Monday 14 February 1977, R4's *Woman's Hour*, starting at 14.00, included Simon Prebble reading successive instalments of Sally Skrimshire's eleven-part abridgement of WG's 1950 novel **NIGHT WITHOUT STARS**

Blinded from a war wound, Giles Gordon is not in the mood to celebrate peace. He retreats to the South of France There, depressed and resentful he meets Alix Delaisse. Unknown to him, she too is a casualty of the war.

Editor: Wyn Knowles

(R14) On weekday evenings from Monday 18 July to Friday 5 August 1977 at 23.00, R4's *Book at Bedtime* was **MARNIE** abridged for radio in fifteen parts by Janet Hitchman and read by Ysanne Churchman.

Twenty-three-year-old Marnie Elmer starts a new life with the family firm of Rutlands as Mary Taylor, widow. She attracts the attention of the firm's two young directors but her own interest seems to be in the wage packets.

Producer: Jenyth Worsley

(R15) At 18.15 on Saturday 26 November 1977 (with the programme repeated in shortened form on Tuesday 29 November at 12.27), **WINSTON GRAHAM** became the 1,412th castaway to appear on Roy Plomley's *Desert Island Discs*.

Q: Mr. Graham, how do you view the idea of a spell on a desert island?

A: With a certain amount of trepidation, because I have never been able to look after myself very well. I've got hands which I use all the time for writing, because I write in longhand, but they're not much use, I would have thought, for building a boat or constructing a house or a shed and I've never cooked much for myself all my life.

Producer: Derek Drescher

(R16) On 22 December 1977, BBC correspondent Ted Harrison interviewed **WINSTON GRAHAM** at his Buxted home. A fourteen-minute edit of their chat was broadcast on R4's *Profile* at 22.30 on either 9 or 16 January 1978 (with each programme repeated in revised form the following morning at 11.35).

To meet Mr. Graham is to meet a shy but immaculately courteous English gentleman. I visited him at his country home and asked him whether at the age of eighteen when he had first begun writing he had intended writing to be his career?

I don't think I thought of it as a career. I don't think I thought it was unusual. I think it was instinctive for me to want to write and I just

started writing ... I didn't have any encouragement from my family, and my mother, who had a small private income, absolutely tiny by today's standards, had the enormous and marvellous faith in her son which many mothers misguidedly do have in their sons, that I might make a writer, and she had that sort of faith. I don't think it was encouragement from any other member of my family.

(R17) On weekdays from Thursday 8 to Friday 23 May 1980, *Woman's Hour*, on R4 from 14.02, included successive instalments of WG's 1957 novel **GREEK FIRE** abridged in twelve parts by Pat McLoughlin and read by John Bennett.

Greece in the mid-50s is a political powder keg. An election is due and left and right juggle for power. Gene Vanbrugh, American by birth, but Greek by descent and inclination, is determined to expose a political adventurer.

(R18) On weekdays from Thursday 1 to Friday 16 September 1983, *Woman's Hour*, starting at 14.00, included successive instalments of WG's prize-winning 1955 novel **THE LITTLE WALLS** abridged here in twelve parts by Jack Singleton and read by David McAlister.

When the archaeologist Grevil Turner apparently commits suicide, his brother Philip refuses to believe it and sets out to prove otherwise.

(R19) On R4's *Bookshelf*, broadcast on Thursday 26 February 1987 from 16.05, repeated on Sunday 1 March at 20.00 and produced by Helen Fry, presenter Susan Hill talks to novelist **WINSTON GRAHAM** about the origins of the Poldarks, the girl behind *Marnie* and the background to his new novel *The Green Flash*.

SH: *There is... something ... twisted inside that interests you.*

One of the things that I found particularly interesting in recent years has been the telling of a story in the first person. It gave me great joy once or twice to depict the first person in such a way that she or he gradually gives away his or her character to the reader inadvertently, as it were, and that's the way I like to do it.

(R20) On *The John Dunn Show* of Thursday 27 June 1991, which aired from 17.00 to 19.00 on R2, one of Dunn's guests was **WINSTON GRAHAM**.

JD: *What did you think of the television versions [of Poldark]?*

Well, I wasn't pleased with the earlier stages, but I made a lot of noise, which didn't make me very popular, but the second series I was granted a sort of special status, as it were, and obviously no author has the right to dictate but at least he has a right to be consulted, and I was consulted and I worked with them all through and my own feeling is that the second series was considerably better than the first.

(R21) On R4, from 14.30 on Saturday 2 November 1991, with repeats two days later at 14.00 and nine times since (see page 18), **THE LITTLE WALLS**. Winston Graham's novel is the first in an occasional series of dramatisations of Gold and Silver Dagger Award-winning crime novels.

Philip Turner has returned to Europe from America after his brother appeared to commit suicide in Amsterdam. His search for the truth takes him from England to Holland and Italy.

With Alex Jennings as Philip, Roger Lloyd Pack as Martin Coxon and Kate Buffery as Leonie Winter.

Dramatised by Juliet Ace and directed by Ned Chaillet

(R22) On R4's *Open Book* on Sunday 9 June 2002 at 16.00 with a repeat four days later at the same time, host Charlie Lee-Potter talks to **WINSTON GRAHAM** as *Bella Poldark*, the final novel of the perennially popular Poldark saga, appears on the bookshelves.

This is the third time [after Warleggan in 1953 and The Twisted Sword in 1990] it has been positively the last Poldark. Well, this is positively the last because I shan't live to write another.

[WG passed away, aged 95, a little over a year later]



Winston Graham - Marnie

It's 1961 and blonde and stunning Marnie Elmer poses as a secretary in order to steal from her employers and fund her mother's existence in Torquay. But she's yet to meet handsome company director, Mark Rutland, whose pursuit of her will ultimately lead to her downfall.

🕒 1 hour

Winston Graham is probably best known for his "Poldark" series, but also wrote a number of taut thrillers, of which "Marnie" (written in 1961) may be the best remembered - having been filmed by Alfred Hitchcock in the early 1960s. This new adaptation for radio returns to the heart of the book itself.

Dramatised for radio by Shaun McKenna

Credits

Marnie	Jade Williams
Mark	Patrick Kennedy
Terry	Carl Prekopp
Edie	Elaine Claxton
Lucy	Joanna Monro
Roman	Brian Bowles
Dawn	Susie Riddell
Writer	Winston Graham
Director	Marion Nancarrow

(R23) (see previous page) On R4 at 14.30 on Saturday 27 August 2011, a 60-minute radio dramatisation by Shaun McKenna of WG's 1961 novel **MARNIE** with the title role taken by Jade Williams and other credits as shown. Repeated on R4 at 21.00 on Friday 17 August 2012 and on R4 Extra at 10.00 on Monday 9 March 2015.

NOTE: On radio, [The Little Walls \(1955\)](#) and [Marnie \(1961\)](#) have both been dramatised twice and presented in multi-part readings once, though, in other media (film, theatre, even opera), [Marnie](#) has proved much the more versatile property.

(R24) On R4 Extra from Monday 24 to Friday 28 March 2014, with repeats of the series in September 2016 and March 2018, a WG short story per day: five in all, namely (A) **THE OLD BOYS**, (B) **AT THE CHALET LARTREC**, (C) **THE CORNISH FARM**, (D) **ROSS AND DEMELZA** and (E) **MEETING DEMELZA**

Produced by The Waters Partnership, each fifteen-minute recording was broadcast three times, at 11.00, 21.00 and 04.00 the next morning. Nicholas Farrell read "The Old Boys" and "The Cornish Farm" and Ewan Bailey read "At the Chalet Lartrec", "Ross and Demelza" and "Meeting Demelza". The text of "Meeting Demelza" is missing ten words (with half a dozen added); the other four texts are all significantly abridged.

(A), (B) and (C) are all in *The Japanese Girl and other stories* (Collins, 1971), (D) comprises Book Three, Chapter Two of *Ross Poldark* (Ward, Lock, 1945) and (E) was first published in *Scryfa, Volume One* (Giss 'On Books, 2003).

(R25) On R4 from Monday 17 to Friday 28 August 2020 in ten fourteen-minute parts broadcast at 1204 and 2245 each day, **THE MILLER'S DANCE**:

The story told here rejoins the characters in 1812 – about ten years after the point where [TV's Poldark] concluded. This is a chance to return to Cornwall and the passions of the Poldarks and at the same time to reflect on what marriage and courtship are really about and whether love can ever hope to conquer all.

Read by Richard Goulding; abridged by Jill Waters and Isobel Creed; produced by Jill Waters; a Waters Company production for BBC Radio 4.



The Little Walls on BBC Radio 4 on 2 and 4 November 1991 and on Radio 4 Extra on 9 (twice) and 10 April 2016, 16 (twice) and 17 May 2020 and 16 (twice) and 17 July 2022, making – to date – eleven broadcasts in all.

A final NOTE on WG's voice: WG may be seen talking on T6 (after Wogan's introduction, WG and Ellis are on screen for a little over eight minutes) and may be heard talking on R3, R15, R16, R19, R20 and R22 i.e. in the '60s, '70s (twice), '80s (twice), 90s and '00s. Additionally, he talks for a little over two minutes on a clip of videotape originally aired on independent TV channel TSW in 1983 and viewable (at the time of writing) via the BFI website (for a transcript, see TSW 1983).

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