

Television

Television is a big part of people's lives today. With hundreds of channels in the UK alone, it's hard to remember the technology is less than a hundred years old. The first television wasn't even called a television. When John Logie Baird created it in 1926, he called it the "televisor".

The technology that allowed Baird to create the televisor wasn't new. The first still image had been transferred over wires in 1862. Alexander Bell's discoveries with the telephone had developed a system for sending digital signals quickly over distances.

Baird's early life was spent in Scotland. When the First World War started, he wanted to sign up to fight. His poor health meant that he had to stay home and work in his workshop instead. He began inventing and experimenting from an early age. When he was a boy, he rigged up a telephone wire to his friend's bedroom across the street. He began an engineering degree, but it was interrupted by the war.

Baird's poor health meant that he needed to move to somewhere warmer. In 1923, he moved to the south of England. It was here that he began working on his idea for a television set. The first set he created used an old hatbox, a pair of scissors, bicycle lights and glue. It was all held together inside an old tea chest! Eventually, his landlord became fed up with his experiments and asked him to move out. Baird moved to London and continued to work on the idea of television.

The first moving image was transmitted using Baird's system on 2nd October 1925. The video was of the head of a ventriloquist's dummy called "Stooky Bill". At one point, a man named William accidentally stepped in front of the camera and became the first person ever televised.

One of the big problems with Baird's system was that it used lots of mechanical parts to display the image. At the same time, other inventors were creating designs that used electronic components. These were more efficient and easier to build. In 1935, there was a trial of both Baird's and



an electronic system. Baird's system lost on all counts. Eventually, the mechanical system was dropped. Electric systems soon became the norm.

Nowadays, all televisions use electronic systems, and the technology is still adapting. New innovations such as ultra-high definition and 3D images mean that the television we see now is nothing like those first images sent over the airwaves in 1925.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What was the first television called?
2. When was the first still image transferred over a distanced?
3. Where was Baird born?
4. Why didn't Baird complete his engineering degree?
5. Who was the first person to be seen on TV?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S

What made Baird's system less effective than other, later systems?

V

Find and copy a phrase that means something became common over time.

V

Which word in the final paragraph means the same as "changing"?

I

How do you know that Baird was having to use whatever bits he had to make the first television?

S

What makes television now different to the first systems?

Answers:

1. Televisor
2. 1862
3. Scotland
4. It was interrupted by the war
5. William

S: It used mechanical parts

V: Soon became the norm

V: Adapting

I: He made it from lots of things like hatboxes, scissors etc.

S: There are lots of channels and the new innovations such as high definition mean it is much clearer