

NO.1 | APRIL 2021

CENTRE FOR TELEVISION HISTORIES

Department of Film and Television Studies, Millburn House, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7HS
TVHistories@warwick.ac.uk | [Website](#) | [@TeleHistories](#)

WELCOME TO THE CENTRE'S FIRST NEWSLETTER!

A very warm welcome to friends of the Centre for Television Histories, old and new. The Centre was opened at the University of Warwick in 2015 with the aim of developing new, innovative, impactful research in the field of television history. Since our inception, the researchers situated in the Centre have produced a wide array of books, articles, and theses (as well as all the work that is currently under construction...). As you'll read below, we've been working hard to foster connections with archives, programme makers and commissioners, museums, and a whole host of other organisations to bring attention to television history, heritage, audience memory and preservation, with a particular focus on public engagement and social and cultural research impact. In the run up to our home city's year as City of Culture in 2021-22, we've also been doing a lot of work in Coventry to engage our local communities in and with television's histories, and to learn about the historical programmes that matter to them. Linking a lot of the above together, we have also been thinking and talking about what new forms of art and culture can be made from historical television; we're very excited, for example, to have played a small role in the construction of John Wyver's forthcoming BBC4 documentary, Phoenix at Coventry. During the last year, members of the Centre have kept in touch through a monthly TV Club (see below), the chance to watch and discuss significant pieces of archived programming, realising that what we love best is watching, and talking about, TV. I'm the Centre's second director (after Rachel Moseley) and I'm about to hand over the reins to Joanne Garde-Hansen, so I thought now was as good a time as ever to update everyone on what we've been up to.

Helen Wheatley (April 2021)

FOCUS ON: COVENTRY

Helen Wheatley has been very busy in her role as the Director of the University's Public Programme for Coventry's City of Culture year (soon to be launched as the Resonate Festival). For updates and more information, please see the [University of Warwick's City of Culture webpage](#).



In the lead up to the City of Culture year, Centre members have been involved in a number of projects related to the city's heritage on screen.

GHOST TOWN: CIVIC TELEVISION AND THE HAUNTING OF COVENTRY (2018-)

Cities are haunted places: they are haunted by the ghosts of people, buildings, businesses, ideas, of things which once stood and now no longer remain. These traces of the haunted city might be slowly lost to the passing of time, but the city is also vividly recalled in another haunted place: the television archive. Ghost Town traces how Coventry's history persists as ghostly traces in the television archive: glimpses of people, places, stories, and snapshots that have been captured and preserved.



Haunting #1: Remembering Coventry at Coventry's Shop Front Theatre, 16-22 April 2018

Researchers from the Centre, led by Helen Wheatley, have embarked on this four-year research collaborative project which brings programmes made in and about Coventry out of the television archives and back into the city. Collaborating with archives such as the BBC, the [Media Archive for Central England](#), and [Kaleidoscope](#), and with a range of groups and venues around the city (including Coventry Cathedral, the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry TUC, Coventry U3A, the pupils of Caludon Castle School, FWT – a Coventry based women's charity serving the city's refugee community, Broad Street Community Centre, The Coventry Society and others), Ghost Town has brought past, present, and future Coventry into dialogue in the lead up to our City of Culture year.

Feedback from events so far at Coventry Cathedral and the Shop Front Theatre, City Arcade, Coventry, show the range of impact and benefits for people engaging with the city's histories in this way. Ghost Town has engaged communities with television archives, boosting civic pride and enabling cross-generational conversation at these events. It has also raised public awareness of the critical importance and cultural value of the television archive. Through engaging with this project, organisations such as the BBC, the Media Archive for Central England, Culture Coventry and the Coventry Cathedral have re-evaluated the assets in their collections, making accessible, digitising and restoring key television history holdings relating to Coventry's history. This summer, Ghost Town is all about the city's music history, with contributions to the forthcoming exhibition 2Tone: Lives and Legacies at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum in Coventry city centre. Keep your eye on our social media feeds for information about screenings associated with this exciting new exhibition.



Haunting #2: Ghost Town Preview: *Coventry Kids: People of a Restless City* (BBC, 1960) and *Coventry Cathedral/An Act of Faith* (BBC, 1962) at Coventry Cathedral, 23 March 2018



Haunting #3: Ska Town, Ghost Town: Arena: 'Rudies Come Back' (BBC2, 1980) and *Play for Today*: 'Three Minute Heroes' (BBC2, 1982)

FOLESHILL SCREENINGS

A piece by Kat Pearson* (originally published on the Centre's website)



The social supermarket at Foleshill Community Centre

Coventry's upcoming City of Culture year is already providing opportunities for public engagement with culture and history in the city. Towards the end of 2019 I started working with the Media Archive for Central England (MACE), Foleshill Community Centre, and a colleague from Coventry University to plan a film screening in the Community Centre in connection with the opening of the new social supermarket.

We chose two themes for the screenings, the first 'Foleshill on Screen' allowed us to find films in MACE's collection that focused on this specific area of Coventry. The second theme focussed on food and drink in the city, to link to the social supermarket, the work that Coventry University are doing at Ryton Gardens, and the growing project that has been established at the Community Centre. Obviously the screening that we held this October wasn't what we originally planned but (with the help of a technician from Film Hub Midlands) we were eventually able to hold a socially distanced screening, complete with lunch boxes for all the attendees in Foleshill.

We were worried that it would be difficult to have a discussion with people sat so far apart from one another in the large hall. Actually, everyone seemed happy to share their thoughts about watching the films and how they related to their own experiences of the area and the history of Coventry. While much of the session focused on the personal memories that the films evoked, some of the discussion touched on what was missing from these archive films. This was either in terms of communities who weren't represented, or parts of Coventry's history that people would have liked to see more of. Noting these absences allowed us to talk about what is in the archives at MACE and why, and subsequently about the work that MACE are currently doing, and what they would like to do throughout the City of Culture year.



Socially distanced screening

A benefit of having to rethink our plan for the event was being able to create an online version of the screening. This meant that the MACE films (some of which were newly digitised so haven't been seen outside of the archive since their original broadcast) are now available to be viewed and shared online. We have also included introductions from myself and Philip Leach (the senior curator at MACE) to try and give context to the curation of the films and some background about MACE. Attendees commented that some family members would have liked to come but couldn't because of illness or because they were self-isolating, so providing the films online has increased the reach and the longevity of the event. The screening has currently been viewed nearly 100 times on Vimeo, which far exceeded our expectations.



Still from a 1988 film about the award-winning food at a Foleshill Pub

One of the main things I will take away from this event is the huge appetite for people to see all aspects of the history of the city depicted on screen. Everyone who filled in the feedback forms said they would like to attend an event like this again, and over half said this could be as much as once a month. I hope that Coventry's City of Culture year will allow plenty more opportunities to showcase MACE's collection at different venues and to different communities. This screening demonstrated the importance of taking the archives to spaces that mean a lot to people. Most of the attendees were volunteers are the Community Centre and so feel very connected to the building, and felt that this made the experience of watching the films in this particular space more significant. One commented, "It was interesting to watch archives in a hall that has itself a lot of history but has not been used in years. Felt like a revival." Although all of the television clips we showed were over 30 years old, there was a sense that watching them together, in Foleshill, gave people the opportunity to discuss and better understand their own, present day version of Coventry.

You can view the online screening [here](#).

* Kat's research is funded by a Collaborative Doctoral Award: The City in the Box, The Box in the City (co-supervised by Clare Watson, (Media Archive for Central England) and John Wyver (Illuminations, the production company working on the forthcoming BBC4 documentary about the history of Coventry Cathedral, Phoenix at Coventry (May, 2021)).

PUBLICATIONS OVER THE LAST YEAR

Dhillon, Richard, 'Domesticity and Masculinity in Some Mothers Do 'ave 'em', *Journal of Popular Television*, 8.3 (2020), 327–47

Garde-Hansen, Joanne, *Media and Water: Communication, Culture and Perception* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2021)

Kääpä, Pietari, *Environmental Management of the Media: Policy, Industry, Practice* (London: Routledge, 2020)

Kääpä, Pietari and Mette Hjort, 'Nordic Production Studies [Special Issue]', *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 10.2 (2020)

Wheatley, Helen, 'Haunted Television: Trauma and the Specter in the Archive', *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, 59.3 (2020), 69–89

———, 'Signs of Care: Assisted Suicide on Television', in *Discourses of Care: Media Practices and Cultures*, ed. by Amy Holdsworth, Karen Lury, and Hannah Tweed (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020)

A full list of the Centre's output can be found on the [publications page on our website](#).

PHOENIX AT COVENTRY (BBC4, MAY 2021)

Over the last couple of years, members from the Centre have been working with the documentarist John Wyver on a new, archive-based documentary for BBC4 about the building of Coventry's iconic cathedral. Helen Wheatley (as consultant) has helped to source some of the archival material for the film and has been working with John to discuss the shape and form of the film. Kat Pearson (as researcher) compiled a spreadsheet for the production, outlining the key points of the major archival films on the Cathedral. We can't wait to see the finished film next month!

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF FILM AND TELEVISION STUDIES AWARDS

Congratulations to Helen Wheatley who was awarded the Best Journal Article Award at this year's BAFTSS conference for her publication 'Haunted Television: Trauma and the Specter in the Archive' in *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 59.2 (2020).

CONGRATULATIONS!

Huge congratulations to Centre members Tom Hemingway and Leanne Weston who have recently submitted their PhD theses.

Tom's thesis, supervised by Helen Wheatley, is titled 'The Aesthetics of Post-Broadcast Comedy Television'. You can read more about Tom's work [here](#).

Leanne's thesis, supervised by Rachel Moseley, is titled 'Fascinating Rhythms: Music Programming, Memory and Materiality in Visual Culture'. You can read more about Leanne's work [here](#).

WE HAVE BEEN WATCHING ...

The Centre's TV Club is a monthly discussion group which sources and views difficult to see historical television programmes, with the help of colleagues from the archives. Viewings have included *The Wednesday Play*: 'Fable' (BBC, 1965); three *Play for Today*s: 'The Land of Green Ginger' (BBC, 1973), 'London is Drowning' (BBC, 1981), and 'A Hole in Babylon' (BBC, 1979); and episodes from the BBC soap operas *Compact* (BBC, 1962-1965) and *The Newcomers* (BBC, 1965-1969).



Co-founded by Centre members Richard Dhillon, Joe Harrison and Misha Yakovlev in February 2020, the Queer Television Reading Group provides a forum for anybody interested in any aspect of queer television studies, including, but by no means limited to, issues around content, culture, production, history, methodology, and historiography. The group meets regularly to discuss a range of material. Recent sessions have included discussions of Ann Gray's *Video Playtime*, queerness in/of children's television, and most recently, the Norwegian teen drama *Skam* (NRK, 2015-2017)

"TV Club has been a great opportunity to engage with television history and with work happening in the department in an informal setting. I've really enjoyed watching programmes which were entertaining and at times challenging and have filled some major gaps in my TV knowledge."

Kat Pearson (PhD Researcher)



#TVClub

"TV Club has turned out to be an absolute pleasure - watching new (old) things and talking about them with colleagues. At the same time, it has also been an invaluable space for thinking about our curricula and about the shape of Television Studies past, present and future, but without a necessary 'outcome' - a real joy in these times!"

Rachel Moseley (Co-founder of the Centre)



GET IN TOUCH!

We'd love to hear from you, especially if you are interested in:

- being kept up to date about the Centre's activities;
- working collaboratively with researchers in the Centre for Television Histories to develop new research;
- doing doctoral or post-doctoral work with us;
- consultation work in any field connected to television history (broadcasting, archiving, exhibitions, curation, etc.);
- engaging with television history on behalf of a community or special interest group;
- talking about television history pedagogies and developing new and innovative approaches to TV history teaching;
- publications and/or media enquiries relating to television histories.

CENTRE FOR TELEVISION HISTORIES

Department of Film and Television Studies
Millburn House, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7HS

 [Website](#)

 TVHistories@warwick.ac.uk

 [@TeleHistories](#)

