

Stan Parkinson R.I.P.

The following obituary was published in the The Guardian on December 19th 2007.

Stan Parkinson was the elder brother Brother Austin Parkinson who eventually left the Brothers to become a priest. Stan himself was in the Juniorate in Guernsey and the Noviciate in Dover at the same time as Br Alfred Calcutt. His departure the Noviciate was due to ill health. Stan together with Agnellus, Gerry Meath and Arthur Maxfield were the key motivators in the success of the Catholic Radio and Television Centre at Hatch End. I learnt so much from them.

John Kirby, who suggested the inclusion of this article, writes "Stan together with Agnellus, Gerry Meath and Arthur Maxfield were the key motivators in the success of the Catholic Radio and Television Centre at Hatch End. I learnt so much from them."

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Stan (Stanislaus) Parkinson, who has died aged 87, was one of the first two television cameramen recruited by the BBC in June 1946 when television broadcasting was resumed after the second world war. The service had been suspended at its outset, so removing the dust sheets at the Alexandra Palace studios in north London afterwards must have been quite an experience. Later, when televising the 1953 coronation, Stan was sealed into a false gatepost outside Buckingham Palace – together with his camera, an engineer, a chemical toilet and a bottle of whisky. It was his pictures of the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth that the world saw, both first and last: first, when she left in the state coach for Westminster Abbey, and last when she appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace at the end of the day. As Stan always put it: "She left as a princess, but came back as a queen." After the coronation, Stan was to be involved in many other high-profile broadcasts, first as a senior cameraman then, after moving to BBC Manchester in 1959, as a production assistant.

Stan sometimes stood in for other producers, and often laughed about the time he had to produce the Goon Show. On this occasion, he was amazed to find that the script consisted simply of notes hastily scribbled on beer mats. In the end, he gave up hope of getting any sense out of "that shower" – Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan, Michael Bentine and Harry Secombe. A lifelong interest in making television

programmes saw Stan work on the 1964 launch of Top of the Pops at Dickinson Road, Manchester. It was his voice proclaiming "Yes, it's number one, it's Top of the Pops", and I understand it was he who booked the Beatles for their first appearance on the show.

The following year Stan was appointed producer-director for BBC light entertainment and went on to produce many iconic 1960s and 70s programmes. For these he discovered, produced and often wrote scripts for such names as the ventriloquist Ray Allen, singer Val Doonican, comedians Ken Dodd and Harry Worth and, of course, Pinky and Perky.

Stan was born into a Catholic family in Manchester, the son of a grocer; he was educated at the French-speaking Les Vauxbelets college, in Guernsey, then worked for the engineering company Mather & Platt before volunteering for the RAF as a radio technician on the day war broke out. After retiring from the BBC in 1951, he produced television programmes for the Catholic Church from a studio in Hatch End, north London, for many years.

He married Dorothy in 1976 and settled in Northampton, where he once again passed on his broadcasting expertise, this time to the Northampton health authority, where he established a successful television production unit in 1982. He is survived by Dorothy and his sons, John and David, from a previous marriage.