

# I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue – 30th Anniversary Special



**BBC Radio 4 celebrates 30 years of the  
classic antidote to panel games  
Saturday 13 April at 6.15pm**

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30th Anniversary Special  
Saturday 13 April  
6.15pm on BBC Radio 4**



To celebrate three decades of its perennial antidote to panel games, BBC Radio 4 broadcasts a special recording of *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue* on Saturday 13 April at 6.15pm. The anniversary show is being recorded on Sunday 7 April at London's Playhouse Theatre, venue of the very first recording back in April 1972.

Regular panellists Tim Brooke-Taylor, Barry Cryer and Graeme Garden will be joined by Stephen Fry for 45 minutes of verbal gymnastics, double entendre, song and puns, with the inimitable Humphrey Lyttelton in the chair.

A new series of *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue* (the 39th) will begin on BBC Radio 4 on Monday 20 May at 6.30pm.

## A Brief History of I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue

### Conception

The brainchild of Graeme Garden, the programme was devised as an alternative to *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again*. This chaotic sketch show, starring the 1963 Cambridge Footlights team of John Cleese, Graeme Garden, Bill Oddie, Tim Brooke-Taylor, Jo Kendall and David Hatch, enlivened the BBC airwaves between 1964 and 1973. However, Graeme found that writing a weekly sketch show was too time-consuming and, in 1972, took the idea for an unscripted comedy show to David Hatch, at that time a producer in Light Entertainment Radio (he was later appointed Controller of Radio 4 and became Managing Director of BBC Network Radio in 1987).

### The Chairman

Jazz legend Humphrey Lyttelton was the surprise choice for chairman. David Hatch remembers the conversation with Graeme that led to Humphrey's career in light entertainment radio: "What we already had was a scripted show which was like a composed piece of music and the notion was that we should go off-piste and not have words written down ... and the equivalent to the composed piece of music was jazz. I think that it was from that kind of conversation that his name emerged in the air over the third pint. I think we both said it together and then both realized how clever we were."

Humphrey's superb comic timing and masterful pauses have earned him a great many accolades over the last 30 years. Jon Naismith, current producer of *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*, explains the reason for his success: "He gets laughs when they're not expected and he's a brilliant ad libber – not just an absurd authority figure flung into this arena. He revels in the gentle anarchy of the show. You can hear the

delight in his voice when the buzzers aren't working. He'll conjure magic out of it. He'll even milk laughs from a spelling mistake. And his sense of timing is second to none. He's a national treasure."

In the first series, Humphrey alternated the chairmanship with Barry Cryer, before making the role his own. One of Jon Naismith's innovations as producer was to bring in a scriptwriter for Humphrey's links. Ian Pattinson has been writing Humphrey's gags for over 10 years and believes that the chairman's impeccable delivery and phrasing transform his jokes, bringing something to his writing which he hadn't even realized was there. His admiration is reciprocated – Humphrey claims that he needs to read his scripts at least three times before going on stage ... to stop himself from giggling.

### The First Show

The stars of the pilot turned up at the Playhouse Theatre to find it packed to the rafters with fans of *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again*. By all accounts, recording the inaugural show was a nerve-wracking experience. The improvisational format of *Clue* may make it the perfect radio vehicle for time-pressed comedians but the anxious panellists had very little idea how the show would be received. When asked in the pub afterwards if he thought that the pilot would ever be broadcast, David Hatch replied that it might go out on Boxing Day, after lunch, when everyone was very drunk.

Fortunately, Tony Whitby, then Controller of Radio 4, liked what he heard and commissioned a series of six programmes. The first programme was broadcast on 11 April 1972 with panellists Graeme Garden, Tim Brooke-Taylor, Bill Oddie and Jo Kendall.

## Willie Rushton

Comedian and satirist Willie Rushton joined the panel in 1974. He became an entrenched regular and much-loved *Clue* panellist until his untimely death in December 1996, just two days after recording his final show.

His career at the BBC as an actor, writer, lyricist and satirist spanned more than 30 years. It started when Ned Sherrin discovered him doing an impression of Prime Minister Macmillan in a fringe review show, and made him a regular on the cutting-edge television satire *That Was The Week That Was*.

Over the ensuing decades, Willie became a favourite on panel games, in satire shows and as *Jackanory's* voice for the tales of Winnie The Pooh. In later years, he is best remembered by radio fans as a cricket lover on *Trivia Test Match* and for his razor-sharp puns in *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*. Barry Cryer's fondest memories of the past three decades all involve Willie, whose "off the wall" sense of humour was an essential element in the success of the long-running panel game.

To this day, nobody has been brought in to replace Willie. Over the past few years, Tim Brooke-Taylor has been partnered by a host of talented comedians, including Stephen Fry, Paul Merton, Tony Hawks, Andy Hamilton, Linda Smith, Phill Jupitus, Sandi Toksvig and Jeremy Hardy.

He is greatly missed.

## Clue On The Road

Another of Jon Naismith's innovations was to take the show on the road, a tradition which has continued, much to the delight of fans around the UK.

Initially performing in small hotels and theatres, the show now plays to audiences of up to 1,500 people. The production team receives a phenomenal number of requests for tickets and

demand regularly outstrips seats. Indeed, tickets for the anniversary recording sold out in just two days. The next series will be recorded in Bradford, Leicester and Hastings.

The itinerant nature of the show ensures that the programme reaches as wide an audience as possible, whilst providing Humphrey with a host of new subjects for his opening speech. Barry Cryer describes the atmosphere at the recordings as "amazing ... they are pleased to see us and we are pleased to see them". Two shows are recorded at each venue, with a 20-minute interval between each show, and audiences loudly demonstrate their enthusiasm for the frequently riotous proceedings. Indeed, Jon Naismith remembers a recording in Harrogate that had "an element of *The Rocky Horror Show* about it".

## The Games

Many games have featured in the programme over the last 30 years, the most famous of which is *Mornington Crescent*. The game's rules are notoriously complex and listeners who write in, seeking an explanation of the game, are referred to *Stovold's Mornington Crescent Almanac 2002*. Two other useful reference sources are *The Little Book Of Mornington Crescent* and *The Encyclopaedia Morningtonia* (an ever-expanding internet site which aims to categorise the rules of the game as they develop). Fans can also try to master the rules on the game's own message board at [www.bbc.co.uk/radio4](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4)

Another popular game is *Limericks*, in which Humphrey reads the first line of a limerick and the panellists each provide a new line. A book of completed limericks, the *Official Limerick Collection*, has been published.

*One Song To The Tune Of Another* is also a favourite, in which the panellists have to sing the words of one tune to the music of another, often accompanied by the show's pianist, Colin Sell. Deprived of a microphone, Colin remains an enigmatic but essential member of the team.

He joined *Clue* in 1974 and “soon discovered that accompanying people who can’t sing well was part of the joke; I learnt to stop worrying about the microphones, the audience in the theatre and at home, and any sort of personal standards. I get letters and comments from listeners saying how awful Humph is to me but I’m all for this abuse, since having one’s name mentioned is always a good thing, regardless of the context!”

### **The Listener From North Wales**

Mrs Trellis of North Wales has been writing in to the show and venting her spleen since the early Nineties. She even provided the foreword to the 1999 compendium *The Almost Totally Complete I’m Sorry I Haven’t A Clue* (having won the “Write A Foreword” competition by dint of being the first of 3,000 entries pulled out of a hat which contained the 3,000 submissions of Mrs Trellis).

### **The Lovely Samantha**

Pneumatic scorer Samantha is the constant focus of Humphrey’s innuendo and continues the game show parody. There have been two other scorers in the past, “The Lovely Monica” and “The Lovely Sven” but no points are ever awarded.

### **Awards**

The programme has garnered many prestigious awards in its long history, including: a Sony Bronze Award in 1999; The Voice Of The Viewer and Listener’s Radio Programme of the Year and The Broadcasting Press Guild’s Radio Programme of the Year in 1997; and, in 1995, the Sony Gold Award for Best Radio Comedy and the British Comedy Award for Best Comedy Programme. In its 30th year, *Clue* has proved its continuing relevance in radio comedy with yet another Sony nomination.

## Clued Up

### Did you know..?

- The first-ever edition of *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue* was returned to the BBC's archives as a result of the national *Treasure Hunt* appeal, launched by the BBC in May 2001. Recorded off air by a listener, this historic broadcast is a welcome addition to the archives. The same appeal turned up another complete show from 1974 and an episode of *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again*, dating from 1965.
- The programme's signature tune, *The Shickel Shamble*, was originally composed by Ron Goodwin for the film *Monte Carlo Or Bust*.
- When Colin Sell isn't playing to packed-out theatres around the UK, he can be found at the University of Essex, where he holds the post of Head Of Music.
- Radiohead called upon the musical talents of Humphrey Lyttelton during the recording of their album *Amnesia*, and the resulting collaboration is entitled *Living In A Glasshouse*. In July 2001, Humphrey performed with the band at Oxford's South Park in front of a crowd of 45,000. In the same year, Radiohead's Colin and Jonny Greenwood turned up at the BBC Radio Theatre, to watch the Christmas recording of *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*.
- In April 1998, the *Clue* regulars helped mark the reopening of Mornington Crescent station after a massive refit which took nearly six years. London Underground invited Graeme Garden, Humphrey Lyttelton and Barry Cryer to take part in the ceremony.
- The panellists returned to Mornington Crescent station in March 2002 to unveil a plaque celebrating the life of Willie Rushton. Tim Brooke-Taylor, Barry Cryer and Graeme Garden attended the unveiling, along with over 200 fans of the show. Another plaque dedicated to Willie Rushton is situated at BBC Television Centre.
- *Clue* numbers several celebrities amongst its ardent fans. It is Victoria Wood's all-time radio favourite; dedicated fans Dame Judi Dench and Alan Titchmarsh have made guest appearances in a round of *Celebrity What's My Line*; Iris Murdoch was a fan (but had to ask AN Wilson to explain the rules of *Mornington Crescent* to her); and, during an horrific kidnap ordeal, Stephanie Slater found herself laughing along with the studio audience despite her predicament.
- The six volumes of *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue* are all best-sellers in the BBC Radio Collection.
- The programme attracts over two million listeners a week and has inspired a legion of dedicated fans and internet sites. Producer Jon Naismith describes the programme as containing that "mystical ingredient x", shared by some sci-fi programmes, which attracts a "cult listenership".



## Biographies

## Humphrey Lyttelton



Humphrey was born on 23 May 1921 in Eton College, where his father was a famous housemaster and where he was subsequently educated. During the War, he served as an officer in the Grenadier Guards and, on discharge, studied for two years at Camberwell Art School. His incredibly varied career has seen him work as a cartoonist for the *Daily Mail* and as a journalist for *Punch*, *The Field* and the British Airways magazine, *Highlife*. He has also written seven books, formed a record company and is President of The Society For Italic Handwriting.

But it is as a jazz musician that Humphrey is best known. His love affair with the trumpet began in 1936, he formed his first band 12 years later and has since written over 120 original compositions.

In 1949, he signed a recording contract with EMI, resulting in a string of now much sought-after recordings in the Parlophone *Super Rhythm Style* series. In 1965, Humphrey's *Bad Penny Blues* was the first British jazz record to enter the Top 20.

Today, Humphrey is busier than ever. His band, one of the most versatile in the world, still tours regularly. He presents *The Best Of Jazz* on BBC Radio 2 and has chaired the hugely popular panel game *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue* on Radio 4 for 30 years. His authoritative and exquisitely bored tones lend the half-hour of innuendo and improvised tomfoolery an air of gravitas.

When asked to explain *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue's* enduring popularity, Humphrey points to its improvisational format: "It's chronically unpredictable. It doesn't get stale because nobody knows what's going to happen next, least of all us."

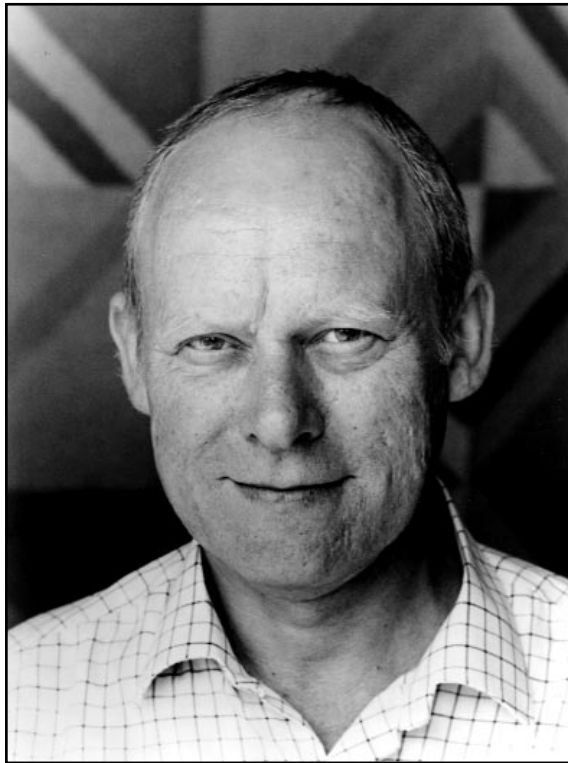
One of Humphrey's favourite recollections from 30 years of laughter, is a particular round of *Straight-Face*. "It's the round in which the teams have to say one word at a time in rotation without getting a laugh from the audience. As only he could, Stephen Fry brought the house down with 'moistly'".

Humphrey was honoured with Lifetime Achievement Awards at both the Post Office British Jazz Awards in April 2000 and at the first BBC Jazz Awards in 2001. In 1993, he was also the recipient of the radio industry's highest honour: the Sony Gold Award.

## Graeme Garden

Graeme Garden was born in Aberdeen in 1943, educated at Repton and Cambridge University and later qualified in medicine at King's College, London.





He co-wrote and played in the long-running BBC Radio series, *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again*, before devising the classic antidote to panel games, *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*. Thirty years later, the series remains hugely popular and he has contributed to or edited three spin-off books: *The I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue Limerick Book*; *The Almost Totally Complete Guide To I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*; and *Stovold's Mornington Crescent Almanac 2002*.

In 1973 Graeme joined forces again with Tim Brooke-Taylor and Bill Oddie in a new television project, the groundbreaking comedy *The Goodies*. Together, they recorded seven series which sold extensively overseas and won the Silver Rose at the Golden Rose Of Montreux Television Festival in 1972 and 1975. *The Goodies* also enjoyed a successful recording career, with their records consistently making the Top 20 and *The Funky Gibbon* reaching No. 4 in the UK charts.

Graeme has since embraced the roles of novelist, playwright, West End actor, presenter and director. He continues to write for and perform

on several BBC Radio shows, including *The Right Time*, *Jeremy Hardy Speaks To The Nation* and *The Motion Show* for Radio 4, and the Sony award-winning sitcom *Do Go On* for Radio 2.

### Tim Brooke-Taylor

Tim was born in Buxton, Derbyshire, and studied at various schools in Buxton and Winchester before beginning an Economics and Law degree course at Cambridge University. In 1963, he became President of Footlights, the revue club in which he wrote and performed with Bill Oddie, Graeme Garden, John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Eric Idle, Jonathan Lynn and others. He toured extensively with the revue, *Cambridge Circus*, before moving into television.

Tim's television credits include *On The Braden Beat*, *The Frost Programme* (as editor), *At Last The 1948 Show*, *Me And My Girl* and, of course, *The Goodies*.



Tim has also enjoyed considerable success on the stage and has written three books, *Rule Britannia*, *Tim Brooke-Taylor's Cricket Box* and *Tim Brooke-Taylor's Golf Bag*, as well as contributing to *The Little Book Of Mornington Crescent* and *The Almost Totally Complete I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*.

Since its inaugural broadcast in 1972, Tim has been a regular panellist on *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*. He also made the four-part series *Tim's Comedy Links*, which is being repeated on Radio 4 this April.

### Barry Cryer



Barry Cryer was born in Leeds and educated at Leeds Grammar School and Leeds University. While appearing in University revue, he was offered a week's work at the famous City Variety Theatre, home of *The Good Old Days*, the longest-running television entertainment show in the world. In later years, he was to appear on the show many times. It was during this time that he was spotted by a London agent.

His variety work led him to the Windmill Theatre in London, a legendary school for comedians, whose graduates include Sir Harry Secombe and Peter Sellers, and it has since taken him to theatres around the UK. Highlights of his career include night club shows with Danny La Rue, charity shows at the Players' Theatre Old Tyme Music Hall and *Two Old Farts In the Night*, a collaboration with Willie Rushton which performed to full houses until Willie's untimely death in 1996. More recently, he has delighted audiences with his one-man show, *The First Farewell Tour*, accompanied by pianist Colin Sell.

Barry's television and radio work has included many panel games, including Radio 4's *Just A Minute* and *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*. He chaired three shows in the first series of *Clue*, before settling into the role of panellist – the only time in his life when he was delighted not to get the job (which of course, went to Humphrey Lyttelton). For Barry, recording an episode of *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue* is a "sheer joy" and he attributes its longevity to the fact that "people haven't noticed we haven't yet gone away!"

Barry is also famous for having written gags for some of the true legends of comedy, including Morecambe and Wise, Tommy Cooper, Stanley Baxter, Dick Emery, Dave Allen, Les Dawson, Bob Hope, Kenny Everett, Sir Harry Secombe, Billy Connolly, Jasper Carrot and Richard Pryor. In 1998, Barry wrote his autobiography, *You Won't Believe This But ...*, which has been broadcast on Radio 4 and is available to buy from the BBC Radio Collection.