

Fascinating facts

- Broadcasting House was built in 1932, and is a rare example of Art Deco architecture in central London.
- It is now a Grade II* listed building.
- Its architect, Colonel Val Myer, called his original design 'The Top Hat Design', basing it on American skyscrapers.
- The Architectural Review of 1932 described Broadcasting House as 'the new Tower of London.'
- Two tube lines run under the site of the building: the Victoria and Bakerloo lines.
- During excavation of the new building, the basement foundations went within four metres of the current Victoria line!
- The famous sculptures on the front of the building are of Ariel and Prospero from Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*.
- The sculptures were hugely controversial in their day, mainly because of Ariel's exposed nakedness. Rumour has it that Lord Reith ordered Eric Gill, the sculptor, to reduce the size of Ariel's penis because of the public outcry.
- Broadcasting House is the home of BBC national radio. Radios 3 and 4 are there; Radios 1 and 2 are in adjacent buildings.
- 500 people work in Broadcasting House. This will expand to 4,500 in the new centre.
- When complete, the new Broadcasting House will be one of the most sophisticated broadcast technology centres in the world, containing 6 TV studios, 36 radio studios, 23 radio continuity studios, 190 workshops and 44 TV edit suites.

The transformation of Broadcasting House

Broadcasting House is now undergoing extensive redevelopment. This covers both the refurbishment of the original Broadcasting House as well as the addition of a new East wing and a major new extension to the North of Regent Street. This project is the BBC's single largest property project ever taking ten years from inception to completion.

When complete, this 80,000 square metre structure will provide state-of-the-art, digital production and broadcast facilities for staff in Radio & Music, News and the World Service. At the heart of the building will be the largest live newsroom in the world.

The Broadcasting House Project will also call upon top architects, designers and artists, in order to create a truly inspirational and creative centre for the BBC of the 21st century, as well as a brand new landmark for central London.

We look forward to welcoming you there in the future.

Find out more

For more information about the Broadcasting House Project, including:

- its history
 - its reconstruction and future use
 - community partnerships
 - public art programme
- go to www.bbc.co.uk/broadcastinghouse



Completed development



A short guide to
Broadcasting House

BBC

The first ever broadcast centre in the UK

Designed by Colonel Val Myer and built in 1932.

Broadcasting House was the BBC's first purpose-built home for radio, right at the very dawn of broadcasting.

It is here that many broadcast 'firsts' happened, from the first royal messages to Churchill's wartime speeches and De Gaulle's rallying call to the French Resistance, from the comedy greats of *The Goons*, *Hancock's Half Hour* and *Round the Horne*, to the nation's first weather forecasts and children's programming.

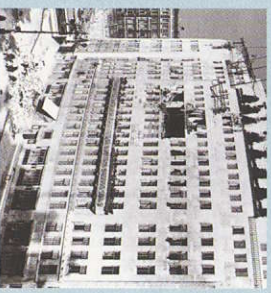
With its accentuated front section bearing a clock tower and aerial mast, the building has often been compared to a ship. It is strangely asymmetrical, because the original architect had to adapt his first plan when local residents complained about the shadow the building would cast on houses in Langham Street.

Broadcasting House was badly bombed during the Second World War: The most serious attack was in October 1944 when the 5th floor was hit and seven BBC staff died. Famously, news announcer Bruce Befrage continued reading the 9 o'clock news with complete sang froid, even as the building shattered around him.

The building reinvented itself again and again during the 1950s and 60s, when the nation's first DJs hit the airwaves from here. It is now being transformed into a brand new centre for Radio & Music, World Service and News (see back page for more information).



Winston Churchill



Bombed Broadcasting House

Fascinating features

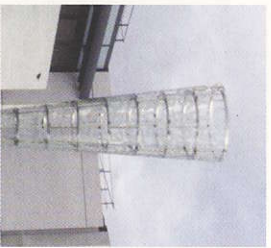
Outside

Radio mast: Look up to the top of the building where you'll see the Radio mast. This is a decorative emblem only, a copy of the original short wave aerial mast.

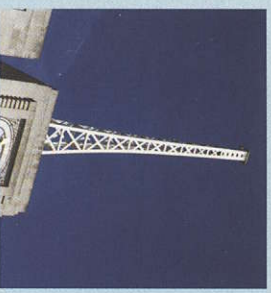
Ariel and Prospero: On the front facade of the building are the statues of Ariel and Prospero, from Shakespeare's last play, *The Tempest*. Ariel as a spirit of the air was felt to be an appropriate personification of broadcasting. The statues are by Eric Gill, completed 1933.

The Ariel friezes: On the West and East sides of the building you'll spot further works by Eric Gill - 'Ariel hearing celestial music', 'Ariel between Wisdom and Gaiety', 'Ariel piping to the children', also completed 1933.

The Breathing sculpture: Look to the right to the new East wing, where you'll see a new artwork by the Catalan artist Jaume Plensa. Called 'Breathing', it stands as a 'third spire', linking to the Radio mast and the spire of All Souls church. The sculpture is also a memorial to news reporters and crews who have lost their lives, and the text inscribed around the glass cone reflects this:
*Silence is a voice, our voice.
Silence is a body, our body.*



Breathing sculpture



Radio mast



Ariel & Prospero

Inside

The Art Deco reception: The original 1930s reception space has recently been carefully restored, in collaboration with English Heritage.

The Sower: Look straight ahead at 'The Sower' statue. This elegant marble statue is once again by Eric Gill, and stands as a metaphor for broadcasting (see dedication text below).



The Sower

The dedication: Above the statue is the gilded inscription placed there on the opening of the building in 1932. It reads:
This temple of the arts and muses is dedicated to Almighty God by the first Governors in the year of our Lord 1931, John Reith being Director-General. And they pray that good seed sown may bring forth good harvest, that all things foul or hostile to peace may be banished thence, and that the people inclining their ear to whatsoever things are lovely and honest, whatsoever things are of good report, may tread the path of virtue and wisdom.

The floor: Walk on the original mosaic floor, and spot in the centre the original BBC logo.

The commemorative plaques: As you leave the building between the sets of double doors, don't miss the two royal plaques on the left: 1932 and 2006. On the right, there's the original building works plaque, recording the first architect, engineer and construction team.



The original BBC logo



Commemorative plaque