

Recording of the week: 'The BBC are coming on Friday, can we show them a prototype?'

This week's selection comes from Tom Lean, Project Interviewer for An Oral History of British Science.

To anyone who grew up in the 1980s the Acorn BBC Microcomputer was the computer they used at school, a machine that gave countless Britons their first experience of computing and sold over 1.5 million units. Yet this iconic piece of computer hardware came about almost accidentally. With the world on the verge of a computer revolution in the early 1980s, the BBC were desperately searching the British electronic industry for a computer to accompany a new educational television series about computing. To a small company in Cambridge called Acorn Computers, having the BBC adopt their new computer as the BBC Computer was a deal that could transform the company into a major player. However, as Acorn designer Steve Furber recalls, there was one problem: they didn't actually have a new computer yet, and they had just a week to develop one...

[Designing the Acorn BBC Microcomputer \(C1379/078\)](#)



This clip is part of [Voices of Science](#), an online resource which uses oral history interviews with prominent British scientists and engineers to tell the stories of some of the most remarkable scientific and engineering discoveries of the past century.

Follow [@BL_OralHistory](#) and [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

Recording of the Week: a princess cannot eat stew

This week's selection comes from Niamh Dillon, National Life Stories Project Interviewer.

Prue Leith is well known to television viewers of the *Great British Menu*. She started her career as a chef and restaurateur in London. In this extract from a longer recording with Niamh Dillon for [Food: From Source to Salespoint](#), recorded in 2008, she recalls a surprise visit from Princess Margaret. Her request for pheasant stew caused considerable consternation in the kitchen

resulting in a fire, a singed jacket and a spilt pot of coffee. If only VIP's knew what happens behind the scenes!

[Prue Leith and Princess Margaret C821/202](#)

 **Prue Leith (courtesy Paul Tozier)**

The full interview with Prue Leith can be found in [Food](#), an online collection of oral history recordings that chart the extraordinary changes which transformed the production, manufacture and consumption of food in 20th-century Britain.

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[Recording of the week: choosing dreadlocks](#)

This week's selection comes from Holly Gilbert, Cataloguer of Digital Multimedia Collections.

Mother and daughter, Jan and Ama, talk about why they both have dreadlocks. This is the first time they have told each other their reasons for choosing to wear their hair in this way and their motivations are quite different, though Jan's hair definitely inspired Ama's choice and they both really like the way that dreadlocks look and feel. They discuss how other people react to their hair and how this makes them feel as well as how their hair connects with their self-identity, their appearance and their blackness. Later in the conversation they talk about how fighting for racial and gender equality has evolved over time and is different for their respective generations, how their hair is part of being active in those fights and how choosing dreadlocks is a way of defining their own idea of beauty.

[The Listening Project_Choosing dreadlocks](#)



This recording is part of [The Listening Project](#), an audio archive of conversations recorded by the BBC and archived at the British Library. The full conversation between Jan and Ama can be found [here](#).

Follow [@CollectingSound](#) and [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

[Recording of the week: Wioletta Greg reads her poetry](#)

This week's selection comes from Stephen Cleary, Lead Curator of Literary & Creative Recordings.

Polish poet and writer Wioletta Greg has attracted critical praise for her coming-of-age tale *Swallowing Mercury*, which was published in January this year by Portobello Books. For this week's 'Recording of the Week' we offer a unique recording of Wioletta reading her poetry, made by the British Library in 2012 at the poet's home on the Isle of Wight. The reading is in Polish, with English translations made and read by Marek Kazmierski.

[Wioletta Greg reading_C1340/79](#)



This recording is part of [Between Two Worlds: Poetry and Translation](#), an ongoing Arts Council-funded audio recording project conducted by the British Library in collaboration with the poet Amarjit Chandan.

Follow [@BL_DramaSound](#) and [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

[Recording of the week: Himba women's songs from Namibia](#)

This week's selection comes from Dr Janet Topp Fargion, Lead Curator of World and Traditional Music.

This is an 'ondjongo' song sung by a group of Himba women, recorded in 1998 by French ethnomusicologist Emmanuelle Olivier (BL reference [C1709](#)). The recording was made within the French-Namibian project "Living Music and Dance of Namibia" (1998-2000) directed by Minette Mans (University of Namibia), Emmanuelle Olivier (CNRS, France) and Hervé Rivière (CNRS, France).

[Ondjongo song sung by Himba women](#)



The Himba, from the northern part of Namibia, very close to the border with Angola, are well known for their elaborate hairstyles, using copious amounts of lush, orange ochre – which helps to protect them from the scorching sun. Hair cutting ceremonies are significant markers of life cycle events, being performed, for example, for naming ceremonies or in celebrations connected

with girls' first menstruation and marriage.

(Photo: Emmanuelle Olivier, 1990)

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