

John Logie-Baird: *Television and Me*

By Adrian R. Hills

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John Logie Baird, the first man to demonstrate television, also had literary skills. As a student he wrote many amusing articles for his college magazine under the pseudonym H₂O. Many years later while convalescing from a heart attack in 1941, he drafted a charming and informative autobiography.

In 1988 his notes for this book were collated by his son, Professor Malcolm Baird and published. However, this most recent edition of the autobiography is at last complete. It contains a final chapter, written posthumously by J. L. Baird's wife Margaret, as well as alterations by JLB and others, shown on a second copy of the original notes which recently came to light. *Television and Me* also includes footnotes by Malcolm Baird which provide explanations of the historical background as well as corrections to the few factual inaccuracies in his ailing father's notes.

This book is an excellent window on the life of a Scotsman who had a titanic struggle to promote television at a time when the technology had to be promoted as it was being developed.

The story of J. L. Baird's life starts when he was born in 1888 and relates his schoolboy experiments with technology, from telephones to flight. The latter experiment put him off flying for life! In his youth Baird took a course in engineering at the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College, now the University of Strathclyde.

After his academic endeavours, and being 'unfit for any service' during World War I, he had various experiences in employment which did nothing to improve his health, but gave him a lifetime sympathy with the plight of the common man.

Warmer climes were sought and after making a tidy sum selling his "Baird patent Undersock," he took passage to Trinidad. On return to Britain, and after further struggles with his physical health, Baird attended to the business of inventing and developing television. The book provides good quality illustrations throughout which help to show the technology as well as the personal aspect of the inventor's life. The reader is taken on a journey which shows the struggles and difficulties of Baird's life, but is also blended with humour and some very sensitive observations.

For anyone with even the faintest curiosity about television and the life and times of a lone inventor, *Television and Me* is a worthwhile acquisition. In fact, J. L. Baird's autobiography inspired this reviewer so much that he undertook research of some little-known aspects of Baird's work which resulted in a doctoral thesis entitled *An Early History of British Military Television with special reference to John Logie Baird*. Since then Malcolm Baird and co-author Anthony Kamm have written an extensive biography of J. L. Baird under the title *John Logie Baird: A Life*. (This book will be reviewed in one of *Kinema's* future issues.)

Author Information

Adrian R. HILLS was born in London, England. He graduated in film studies from the University of Waterloo, Ont., Canada and received his PhD degree in Glasgow, Scotland. His research involves early television and the pioneering work of John Logie Baird.

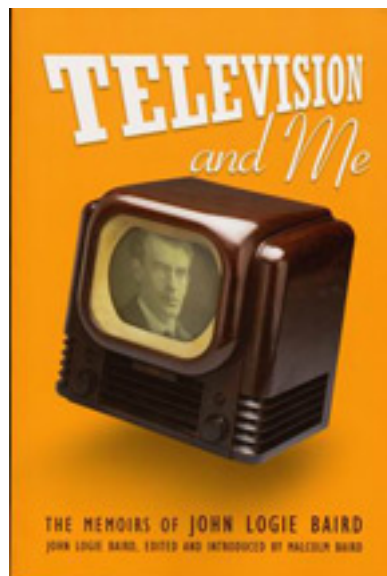


Figure 1: *TELEVISION AND ME* ¶ By John Logie-Baird ¶ Malcolm Baird ed. ¶ Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 2004. ¶ ISBN: 1841830631