

Tim Davie CBE



Tim Davie, CBE, incoming Director General of the BBC, believes that he has been very lucky to live in Peppard during the lockdown. He lives in a beautiful old house with a large garden and a view. Although he has had to go up to London two or three times a week, he has mainly worked from home but he has found using a screen for several hours a day quite tough going. While it has been possible to have meetings on-line, he does think that nothing beats face to face interaction.

One positive though - he, his wife Anne, and their three teenage boys would normally only sit down together for Sunday dinner but during the lockdown, this has happened several times a week.

Almost 15 years ago, they were house hunting in a very wide area: when they saw their current house, their immediate reaction was 'This is it'. Originally a 'townie', Tim was born and brought up in Croydon, he enjoys the buzz of working in a city like London but absolutely loves the countryside around us. He enjoys running and has probably run hundreds of miles on our local footpaths. For him, nothing beats the British countryside and he loves seeing all the wildlife whilst out running.

As a boy, he won a scholarship to the prestigious Whitgift School in Croydon which really pushed him. Having always loved stories, when he achieved entry to Cambridge it was English Literature that he chose to study.

His first job was at Procter and Gamble where his first marketing campaign was for Crest toothpaste – it is still going strong so Tim must have done something right!

After this he worked for Pepsi and lived in Connecticut for two years and melded into American corporate life. It was living there that got him hooked on living in the countryside and having lots of space around him. He says that the American business style is very results driven and it was in this environment that he honed his commercial skills. He developed his own management style, which is a melange of American business, pride in being British and never forgetting his South London roots.

During this time, he travelled all over the world – he estimates around 70 different countries. He took up running in order to see the cities that he was visiting and as an antidote to seeing just the insides of airports, hotels and conference rooms. After this, he just kept on running. He competed in the 2001 London Marathon and has now run marathons on every continent excluding Antarctica. Watch this space! But as much as he thoroughly enjoys these organised events, he actually prefers running in the Chiltern Hills.

Tim greatly admires organisations like our Green Gym, the Commons Conservators and the Chiltern Society – which work to maintain our footpaths. He believes our network of footpaths are important and identify who we are – he describes them as a wonder of Britain!

After his spell in the United States he wanted to anchor the family back in the UK and work for a British organisation. He was, and still is, passionate about the BBC and it was not a difficult decision when he was offered the job as Director of Marketing, Communications and Audiences in 2005. Following that, in 2008 he became Director of the Audio and Music Division which included responsibility for Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4. He was made Acting Director General in 2012

after George Entwistle's short-lived tenure.

Since 2012 he has been Head of BBC Studios, the BBC's production arm. Of all the programmes produced during his time in that role, the one that fills him with most pride, and there are many, is Blue Planet 2. He thought it was a sensation and is so proud of the Bristol Natural History Unit that made it. Tim is also, like most people, in awe of Sir David Attenborough and the gravitas that he brings to any subject. It was hugely successful the world over and has had a massive impact. It appealed to all age groups and proved that people do still watch documentaries. He was also proud of the team who put together the VE Day celebrations and worked so hard to deliver the programme during lockdown.

The Davie household does have different viewing tastes so their solution is to have multiple screens but they do occasionally sit down to watch a programme together. With three teenage boys, social media is almost an inevitability but Tim doesn't use it much himself: he is not on Twitter.

In September, Tim will become the 17th Director General, the corporation's Chief Executive Officer and Editor in Chief.

It is a big role but this won't stop him enjoying many sports: he loves football, especially watching his beloved Crystal Palace FC. He explained that his grand-mother's house was only two or three roads from the ground so he has been a loyal fan since he was a small boy. Showing respect for the area in which he now lives, his second favourite team is Reading! He was once offered the job of Head of the Premier League but has no regrets at not taking it even though he would have been much better off.

He enjoys cricket too and is an avid fan of Test Match Special. Last year, he was lucky enough to be invited to Lords to watch England win during the World Cup final against New Zealand. He is also a keen skier and absolutely loves being in the mountains although sometimes he has to swallow his pride when his sons over-take him on the tricky slopes.

Tim has held various trusteeships and recently stood down as Chair of *Comic Relief*. It had been hard work and a big undertaking but it raised a huge amount of money for various projects over the years. During lockdown, *Comic Relief and Children in Need* came together and raised a staggering £70 million. The only trusteeship that he will maintain is that of the Tate Art Galleries. He has loved doing all these things but now his time is limited.

Describing his musical taste as eclectic, he enjoys 80s pop to 90s electronic dance music and a wide selection of classical music. What would be his choice for Desert Island Discs? He couldn't decide and would have to think long and hard about his eight choices which could be anything from Bach to the Chemical Brothers.

Before he commences as the new Director General, the family will grab a break. Their destination is the same as it has been for many years. They go to a coastal cottage in south west England where they live a different life: they sail, go fishing, walk, play games on the beach, potter along the shoreline and cook barbecues. Always an avid reader, Tim will make sure he has time to stick his nose in a book. Ever since he was a student, he has continued to enjoy literature: he enjoys Dickens, James Joyce, some, but not all, of Sebastian Faulks but his favourite is Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

We certainly wish him a relaxing time before he starts his new role.

Rita Hadgkiss