

= The Quatermass Memoirs =

The Quatermass Memoirs is a British radio drama @-@ documentary , originally broadcast in five episodes on BBC Radio 3 in March 1996 . Written by Nigel Kneale , it was born out of his Quatermass series of films and television serials , which had first been broadcast in the 1950s . The idea for the show appeared as BBC radio intended to create a season of programming looking back at the 1950s , and it was the final piece of writing Kneale completed relating to the character .

The show is centered on the character of Professor Bernard Quatermass who , albeit older than in the previous series , is " the same very concerned scientist " but worried about his previous decisions . Andrew Keir , who had played Quatermass in the 1967 Quatermass and the Pit , was chosen to voice the character . Later , Nigel Kneale himself became dismissive of the serial , but critics gave the production relatively positive reviews .

= = Overview = =

The series mixes three different strands : a new monologue by Kneale in which he discusses the genesis and development of the Quatermass serials and their main character ; archival material from the television productions , and from documentary and newsreel coverage of key events of the times in which they were made , such as the Cold War , the advent of nuclear weapons and the embryonic Space Race ; and the dramatised strand , in which the Professor discloses his reasons for reclusion and discusses his demons with a persistent reporter who invades his hermitage (and ultimately becomes his friend) . This third element is set several years after the events of the third serial , Quatermass and the Pit (1958 ? 59) , and shortly before those of the fourth and final serial , Quatermass (1979) . Continuity is maintained with the 1979 serial by presenting Quatermass living in seclusion in the Scottish Highlands , while the final episode reveals that the social collapse foreshadowing the events of the final story has already begun .

= = Production = =

Kneale had brought Quatermass 's story to a close in the 1979 serial Quatermass , and for many years saw no reason to revisit the character . However , in 1995 he was approached by BBC radio producer Paul Quinn with an idea for creating a drama @-@ documentary about the character as part of a season of BBC radio programming looking back at the 1950s . Quinn told Dreamwatch magazine , " For many people who remember the seminal experience of hiding behind the sofa when the Quatermass serials came on the television , Quatermass was the 1950s . His adventures [...] have gone down in popular cultural history . " Kneale was intrigued by the idea , and agreed to write new dramatic material of Quatermass relating his memories which Quinn could then combine with archive clips from the existing episodes of the various Quatermass television serials . Kneale saw the older Quatermass of this new serial as " the same very concerned scientist who is now , in retrospect , horribly worried about what he may have done to the world through his encounters with various lifeforms that were better not contacted " . It was Kneale 's first radio work since he had written the play You Must Listen for the BBC in 1952 , and his first work for the BBC in any medium since the mid @-@ 1970s .

The programme was commissioned in July 1995 , with the original working title of Quatermass and the Ultimate Conspiracy . When Quinn discovered that some of the soundtracks of the Quatermass episodes were considered to be of too poor a quality to use , the idea for the series was re @-@ shaped to add the new elements of Kneale 's monologue and archive news reports . Kneale , however , later denied that any of the news stories which The Quatermass Memoirs suggested had inspired parts of his work had ever been in his mind at the time . He said that he had used a degree of creative licence when " explaining " these apparent inspirations in his monologue sections .

A further problem for Quinn was that none of the actors who had played Quatermass for BBC Television in the 1950s were still alive . This was solved by employing Andrew Keir , who had played Quatermass in the Hammer Film Productions version of Quatermass and the Pit in 1967 , a

performance which Kneale had liked . Keir was happy to take the part , but somewhat concerned about only being used as a " link man " and not in a fully dramatic role . The clips that were used from the original BBC episodes were all carefully edited so that the actors playing Quatermass were never heard , and thus the differences between their voices and Keir 's would not confuse the audience . Also in the cast were Emma Gregory as the journalist , Mandy , and Zulema Dene as Quatermass 's housekeeper , Maire .

The five episodes , each of approximately twenty minutes , were broadcast across one week from 4 to 8 March 1996 , as part of The Fifties season of programming . The serial was promoted in listings magazine Radio Times with an article by Kneale about Quatermass and his opinion of other science fiction programmes . Episode one was transmitted at 10.32pm on the Monday (originally scheduled for 10.05pm but delayed by a live concert broadcast beforehand) ; episode two at 9.30pm on the Tuesday ; episode three 9.00pm on Wednesday , episode four 10.15pm on Thursday and episode five at 9.40pm on the Friday . The production was made and transmitted in stereo . It was Andrew Keir 's final professional performance ; he died the following year .

The digital radio station BBC7 repeated the series on several occasions from October 2003 . In 2006 it was released on CD by BBC Audio as part of their Classic Radio Sci @-@ Fi range , with cover artwork by Chris Achilleos .

= = Reception = =

Nigel Kneale himself was largely dismissive of the serial in the years following its broadcast ; " God knows it wasn 't a very important sort of thing , " he told his biographer . " The BBC didn 't care tuppence about what they were doing , because they really don 't know what they 're doing , certainly not in radio ... [Andrew Keir] must have been pretty ill when this nonsense was going on . "

Reviewing the first episodes of both The Quatermass Memoirs and In the Fifties ? another programme running as part of The Fifties season ? The Times 's reviewer Peter Barnard was impressed . Despite thinking that such a season of programming was " a necessarily premature commemoration " , he felt that both series had " demonstrated how radio 's better moments often take conventional pegs and hang some original clothing on them " .

The Independent 's radio critic Robert Hanks was unimpressed with Kneale 's script for the dramatic sections , but praised the performance of Andrew Keir in the title role . " Lesser actors would treat Kneale 's downbeat script with a certain detachment , but Keir is prepared to charge even the most banal lines with a terror that 's both a treat and a lesson . " Hanks also felt that The Fifties season as a whole , as demonstrated by The Quatermass Memoirs , had a somewhat misleading focus . " You get the sense that a vogue for science fiction is being interpreted as the spirit of the Fifties , with emphasis being put on a handful of sci @-@ fi films . If you really wanted to read the age through its movies , you 'd have to include Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis , late Ealing and early Norman Wisdom , Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley . It 's a lot to accommodate ; perhaps sticking to terror is just less intimidating . "