

Hoggart's week: BBC 'elitism', Attenborough and Downton dialogue

The BBC is still the world's best broadcaster – although you wouldn't think so to see the way some papers are trashing it



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□ A northern quoll. David Attenborough showed how Australian scientists had taught the marsupial to avoid eating toxic cane toads. Photograph: Jonathan Webb/AFP/Getty

■ In my experience the reviled BBC managers are like army officers: half of them are people of great intelligence, insight, charm and skill. The other half are pretty much useless. I recall one who, when [Linda Smith](#) died, said we should go ahead with a normal News Quiz, "because it's what she would have wanted". Luckily none of the regular panellists would have dreamed of doing the show that awful week, and we ran a tribute instead.

There was another middle manager who announced that a political programme I was working on was "elitist" because sometimes we mentioned less well-known MPs. Often these people had been producers, but were no good, and had to be kicked upstairs, only to do even more damage.

That said, the BBC still is by miles the greatest broadcaster in the world, and the sight of some papers trying to trash it for two admittedly serious mistakes is fairly loathsome. Just before [George Entwistle resigned](#) I was watching [Attenborough's Ark](#), a show about some of the strangest animals in creation, and reflecting that it was almost worth the licence fee in itself.