

The Times

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BBC claims an early triumph in ratings war

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THE BBC maintained its traditional dominance of Christmas Day viewing, capturing 54 per cent of the audience against ITV's 25 per cent according to unofficial figures. Nine of the top ten programmes were on BBC; only Coronation Street made it into the top ten for ITV.

ITV claimed a victory on Christmas Eve, however, with 37 per cent of the viewers against 30 per cent for the corporation.

A total of 13.7 million viewers switched on for the Queen's message on Christmas Day, according to the early unaudited figures, compared with 14.6 million last year and 28 million ten years ago. Eleven million people chose to watch her on BBC against 2.7 million on ITV.

One Foot in the Grave topped the ratings with 16.8 million viewers. The concluding episode of a two-part **EastEnders** was second with 16.1 million viewers, while the suburban snob Hyacinth Bucket in Keeping Up Appearances attracted 16 million. The first part of **EastEnders** came fourth with 14.3 million. ITV's most popular programme, Coronation Street, claimed sixth place with 11.8 million viewers.

The BBC said: Despite ITV's best efforts, we have once again grabbed the lion's share of audience figures. In the past 11 years, except one, we have had the top programme at Christmas."

Marcus Plantin, ITV network director, said: The BBC always saves its top programming for the Christmas period and traditionally the BBC does beat us on Christmas Day, but we scored a victory on Christmas Eve this year. Last year they claimed 53 per cent for Christmas Eve and I am delighted we have done more than give them a run for their money. So far the honours are shared over the two days."

TV TOP TEN

One Foot in the Grave

(BBC1, 9.00pm) 16.8m

EastEnders 2

(BBC1, 8.30pm) 16.1m

Keeping Up Appearances

(BBC1, 9.00pm) 16m

EastEnders 1

(BBC1, 7.30pm) 14.3m

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Hook

(BBC1, 4.30pm) 12.1m

Christmas in Coronation St

(ITV, 6.30pm) 11.8m

Indecent Proposal

(BBC1, 10.10pm) 11.3m

The Queen's Speech

(BBC1, 3.00pm) 11m

Noel's Christmas Presents

(BBC1, 3.10pm) 10.1m

Auntie's New Bloomers

(BBC1, 6.45pm) and Only Fools and Horses

(BBC1, 1.55pm) 9.5m

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