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BBC Oral History

Headings for interview with Mr.Andrew Stewart CBE: Jan.25,1989

Circumstances of joining in 1926 at age of 19.
The two-hour intervew with Reith.
Brief training in London, then sent to Scotland.
Salary. Conditions of work.

Broadcasting in Scotland at this stage.
The single radio system.
Inadequate coverage.
The low powered stations: where they were located.
Working together? Overall control in Scotland, or locally run?
How much programme independence from London?
Audience reactions; BBC yet an accepted service?

Size of staff in Glasgow, and in Scotland.
Resources at Glasgow. A station orchestra?
Announcing, newsreading, singing, children's hour, etc.
An exhilarating job?
Staff calibre; staff morale.
Amateurish, or becoming professional?

Leading BBC figures in Scotland in 1920s. 1930s.
The BBC and the Establishment in Scotland.
Pressures? Any advisory bodies?
Dinwiddie.

Technical developments: high powered transmitter. Unification.
The National/Regional system.
Growth and development through 20s and 30s.
Contributions from Scotland to networks.
Your own progress: Head of Programmes, 1936.

Contacts with Reith over the years.
Feelings at his departure.
Preparations for war.
Instructions about yourself.
What happened to BBC in Scotland on outbreak of war?

Your first spell at the M.o.I. in London in 1939.
How this appointment came about.
Government view of BBC's role in wartime. Moves to take it over?
Maintaining BBC's independence in conditions of war.

The BBC people posted to MoI, and their functions.
Could they operate effectively?
Relations between BBC and MoI.
Reith as Minister of Information; his attitude to BBC.
Your own task at MoI.
Your return to Scotland, and subsequent recall to the Ministry.
Reith's departure from the MoI.

The Ogilvie story.
Subsequent wartime DGs - Graves, Foot.
Your final return to Scotland; BBC in Scotland during war years.
Haley's arrival, and his influence.

Restarting Scottish broadcasting postwar.
Resources available (Radio only) and leading people.
Programme policies and aspirations.
Successes and failures.
Entire evenings filled from Scottish studios.
The limitations and problems of this period.

Promotion to CNI. How this came about.
The directive from Haley. ("Try to get people talking about their problems. But remember, N.I. is the only Region in the BBC in which broadcasting could provoke people to kill each other")

State of affairs in N.I.
The wavelength which had to be shared with NE England.
How this ghastly arrangement was made to work. Public protests.
BBC resources in N.I. The key staff.

How BBC was seen in N.I. at this stage.
Could Radio be a medium in which a dialogue between the two communities could begin?
Were constitutional issues open for discussion?

Steps you took to liberalise BBC's position:
Agreement with P.A. fo use of its local parliamentary coverage.
Introduction of "The Week in Stormont".
Reporting news from the South.
Coverage of 12th July Orange processions. Significance of this.
How all these moves were received.

Relations with Stormont generally.
CNI's attendance at Stormont.
Relations with Republicans in NI.
Relations with broadcasters in Dublin.
Election broadcasts for N.I. general election in 1949.

Programmes in N.I. - The McCooeys
- Belfast orchestra.
Reactions from the audience.

How London viewed the problems of N.I. How much support?
CNI's power of censorship over all programmes about Ireland.

Why N.I. did not have a Broadcasting Council.
The Advisory Council, and its influence.

You arrived as a professional among amateurs? Situation changed?
True Regionalism achieved in your time?

The move to London as Controller, Home Service.
How it came about.
Hopes and aspirations.
People to whom you worked. Lindsay Wellington.
Chief lieutenants.
State of the Home Service when you took it over.
The role of Home Service in general Radio pattern. The flagship.

Where was Radio strong, and where was it weak?
Impact of Television as it expanded. Relations with TV.
Loss of good staff to TV. Morale in Radio.
Relations with Light and Third. Co-ordination.
Radio's audiences at this time.
Radio and the DGs - Haley, Jacob.
The place of News and Current Affiars in Home Service.
Achievements. Crises.

Back to Scotland as C.S.
State of BBC in Scotland now: arrival of Television.
Working with Broadcasting Council; what weight did it carry?
Resources, premises - main developments during your reign.
Relations with London, particularly in TV.
Problems of handling a period of great expansion.
How much independence and autonomy did Scotland enjoy?
Relations with DGs - particularly with Greene.

Looking back on your BBC years.

Oral History of the BBC: Mr.Andrew Stewart CBE

Summary of his contribution.

Cassette side one

His entry in 1926 at age 19.

Assistant to Northern Director, Cleghorn Thomson, based in Glasgow.

The four Scottish transmitters; low power; inadequate coverage.

The single Radio programme; local up to 6 p.m.

Post Office lines to London available from 6 p.m., so s.b.

His introductory interview with Reith in London (see also side 7)

Description of Reith's office; nature of the 2-hour interview.

Passed on to Admiral Carpendale (Deputy DG).

Finally to Cecil Graves, Director of Programmes.

Salary offered - £200 p.a. Jimmy Maxton's comment to him.

His early task - to bring the four Scottish stations, (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdoon, Dundee) together.

Special contributions of each centre to this small network.

Children's Hour always local; his own participation.

His other duties - Announcing, newsreading, acting in plays.

The local news - very local; very brief.

Audience reaction, Stewart organising promotional lectures.

Calibre of early staff - young, with professional standards.

Leading figures in Scotland - Cleghorn Thomson, Herbert Carruthers, Kathleen Garscadden, R.E.Jeffrey, Donald Sutherland, Martin Webster.

The station orchestra in Glasgow, 30 strong; studio limitations.

Drama productions, under Tyrone Guthrie.

Sergeant Gordon, the Glasgow commissionaire (a digression).

Programmes an imitation of what was being done in London.

Johnny Gough, Tasmanian, studio engineer, invents Features.

Outstanding productions e.g. "The Trial of Madeleine Smith".

Gordon Gildard as Drama producer.

Ian Whyte, Music Director, determined to have full orchestra.

London resistance to orchestra proposal, and overcoming it.

Campaign for rediscovery of Scottish music.

Specialising in music of Greig for benefit of Norwegian listeners.

Special concert in war in presence of King Haakon.
(Stewart breaks down, temporarily, as he describes this.)

Cassette side two

(Silence for first minute or so)

James Fergusson, Talks Producer (later, Keeper of Scottish Records; very distinguished family).

Controversial broadcasts not shunned; (on Scottish nationalism the speakers had to be accommodated in separate studios as they refused to meet face to face.)

Replacement of local transmitters by high-powered Regional ones.

Most areas of Scotland, and the Isles, now within reach.

The opening ceremony of Burghead transmitter. (The embarrassment of Sir Noel Ashbridge, Chief Engineer BBC)

The Rev.Melville Dinwiddie becomes first Controller, Scotland.

Dinwiddie's background; how appointment to BBC came about.

Broadcast of the launch of the SS Queen Mary.

Reith's dealings with Scotland in later 20s and 30s.

Shock at announcement of Reith's resignation (reason given a little later on, on this side).

Stewart's direct approach to Reith over a proposed broadcast by Sir Harry Lauder, which BBC Contracts Dept. was blocking.

Scotland's galaxy of BBC and programme talent in late 30s.

The "Doun the Watter" show.

Formation of BBC Scottish Orchestra; the assistant conductors (e.g. Colin Davis) who went on to great fame.

Cassette side three

Stewart's wartime involvement in Ministry of Information, London. (More details of this given on side 8)

Scottish broadcasting in wartime reduced to 2 hours per week.

Stewart moved peremptorily to London as Liaison Officer, MoI.

The role of the liaison officers.

Civil servants unused to working to broadcasting deadlines.

Canon Cockin's controversial sermon: Churchill's comment.

The BBC-MoI relationship.

Why it was difficult for MoI to take over BBC completely.

The MoI DG who wished to achieve this takeover - Frank Pick.

Lindsay Wellington, and the office opened in New York.

Government Depts. demanding airtime on BBC.

Rejection of some BBC propposals. Censorship.

Anecdote - Finding head of Film Division (K.Clark) (Irrelevant)

The constant changes of Minister and DG at MoI.

The Ministry's unpopularity.

Reith as Minister; circumstances of his departure on reshuffle.

Stewart returns to Scotland.

Cassette side three, continued.

Stewart increasingly finds MoI post "a kind of Post Office job".

Returns to Scotland as Head of Programmes in May 1941.

Ogilvie as DG BBC, and his deficiencies.

Stewart's opinion of the subsequent Foot-Graves regime. (Anecdote - Foot leaves false teeth in sleeper on visit to Scotland; Stewart's difficulties in recovering them)

Arrival of Haley; his great qualities.

Cassette side four

Restarting Scottish broadcasting postwar; his policy.

Early introduction of basic series and programmes.

Making a Scottish mark in BBC in postwar years.

Facilities fully exploited: filling entire evenings from Scotland.

BBC becomes an influential force in Scotland.

Development of recording and the great changes it brought about.

Ability now to reach highlands and islands previously inaccessible to the microphone.

Recording availability tending to lead to excesses; Stewart's dictum: "You cannot edit quality into a recording".

Offer of post of Controller, Northern Ireland.

Haley's brief: "Remember this is the one part of the BBCin which controversial broadcasts can lead to killings".

Stewart's over-riding principle in N.I. taken from BBC Charter. Requiring that all broadcasts must serve "... the interest of Our Kingdom and Northern Ireland". No detrimental voice to be heard on air.

What impartiality means in N.I., according to Stewart.

Inability of his Head of Programmes to cope with controversy.

Other staff: Ursula Eason, Sam Hanna Bell, John Boyd, Edward Boucher, all very competent.

The advice Stewart received from the Vice Chancellor of Queens.

The superiority of Ulstermen of all political leanings to their counterparts in the Republic.

His exchanges with James McSparran QC. "If Ireland was united, we would go through those in the South like a knife thru' butter".

Climate of everyday life in Belfast in early 50s.

Stewart's decision to mount an OB of Orange Day processions.

Effect of this broadcast on BBC's image.

Most artistic talent Roman Catholic, now getting broadcast opportunities.

Steps taken by Stewart to report both sides of Stormont debates.

News from Dublin now reported, if it concerned the North.

Introduction of "The Week in Stormont" (sometimes called "The Week in Torment")

How this liberalisation compares with policy of Stewart's predecessor.

Cassette side four, continued.

Obsolescence of technical equipment in NI (see later on this side)

BBC not able to be a bridge between Unionist and Republican.

Basic constitutional issues never discussed on air ("..not in the interests of Our Kingdom")

Stewart's bitter struggles with London producers anxious to open up these fundamental issues in broadcasting.

Stewart's visits to Stormont.

The issue of the Broadcasting Council in N.I. Why Stewart resisted it.

Introduction of the Advisory Council.

Stewart's friendly terms with Prime Minister of N.I.; dining and wining, etc.

Problem of technical obsolescence overcome with realisation that UK limitations on capital expenditure did not apply to N.I.

NI re-equipped before any other BBC centre.

Occasions when Stewart attended Stormont Cabinet meetings.

His need not to appear to be in pocket of Unionists.

Tributes to him on departure - "you have been very fair".

The arms dumps already being assembled in the 50s.

Stewart's warning to the Mountbattens - unheeded; tragic result.

Cassette side five

The need to share a wavelength with NE England.

All NI programmes had to be heard in NE England, and vice versa.

The animosities aroused by this arrangement.

Successful NI programmes: The McCooeys.

Creating the N.I.Light Orchestra. Good music studio available.

General Elections to Stormont; Stewart permits no Election B'casts.

Anecdote on Paisley and the BBC.

Programme relations with Dublin - Stewart permits no exchanges.

Audience reaction in NI; no longer seen as 'Belfast BBC'.

London's feelings towards NI, particularly Stewart's stand against and controversial broadcasting of controversial issues.

Stewart's veto power over all BBC broadcasts about Ireland.

Value of his Advisory Council: source of programme ideas.

The professional progres in NI during his time.

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Stewart sent for by DG Jacob 1952: offered Controllership Home Service.

Stewart keen to stay in Belfast; consults Nicolls, Senior Controller

Nicolls declines to give advice.

Side five, continued

Stewart accepts CHS post, working under Lindsay Wellington, DSB,

Earlier comment about Wellington to Stewart by Gaves (DG).

Stewart finds Home Service in very good shape.

His main assistant - Godfrey Adams, now in decline.

Anecdote about Adams, involving Malcolm Sargent.

Excellence of John Snagge as Head of Presentation. (The Edward Ist story recalled)

Ronald Lewin as planner; his high quality.

The perpetual pressures he suffered as CHS.

The rumpus when he decided to move the 9 p.m. News to 10 p.m.

Cassette side six

More about the move of the 9 oclock News.

Clare Lawson Dick, as Home Service assistant.

The general pattern of BBC Radio at this stage: Home, Light, Third

The other Controllers: Adam and Morris.

Co-ordination of the networks.

Stewart's quarterly programme plan, against which the other two networks did their planning.

Assessment of Lindsay Wellington as the Director of BBC Radio.

Wellington 'ducking out' of 9 p.m. News rumpus.

Wellington afraid of change.

Shadow of TV over Radio: Stewart's measures to counteract it.

The sting of TV talk about "steam radio".

Dealings with Cecil McGivern, Controller TV. (more later)

CHS as key BBC negotiator over e.g. Ministerial broadcasts (e.g. over Suez). Remaining networks, including TV, had to come in line with his decisions.

The "right of reply" issues over Ministerials, if controversial.

BBC had to rule whether Ministerial was controversial. Chairman (Cadogan) must make decision, but never listened; Stewart had to tell him.

CHS having very little relationship with DG.

Exception - Jacob insisted on breaking programmes to announce that Princess Margaret was not going to marry Peter Townsend.

Stewart having no control over BBC News.

His good opinion of Tahu Hole, News Editor. Haley anecdote.

Attempts by politicians to get their speeches quoted.

Stewart, enraged at inaccurate TV Panorama, draws Jacob's attention to it, and in consequence Hole gets command of current affairs as well as news. (very involved story)

Stewart's great enjoyment of his CHS years.

Cassette side six, continued:

Stewart horrified at the request to move back to Scotland as C.S.

Insists that the 'natural line' for a CHS was promotion to Director.

No wish to go back to Glasgow.

Glasgow's poor reputation: e.g. nobody ever avilable on phone between 10.30 and 11.30; all at coffee.

Glasgow "a garden grown wild".

But had to accept that no other suitable candidate was available.

The great enticement dangled before him - development of TV.

Arrives to find no money available for twelve months. Standstill.

First experience of a Broadcasting Council: Chairman Lord Balfour.

Council a well-mixed body, and powerful. Meeting monthly.

Stewart sees himself as chief executive of this Board.

Council 'absolutely solid' on any Scottish issue.

Balfour's sad end in a scandal.

David Milne (ex Head of Scottish Office) succeeds. Stewart happy.

How he was able to get Milne's name put forward.

Claims that, as a consequence, Normanbrook was offered Chairmanship of BBC Board centrally. (a windy digression)

Hugh Greene afraid of Milne; this good for Scotland.

Big premises development: fine new TV studio in Glasgow; converted studios in Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

Major programme developments: Drama, L.E., OB Sport, Religious progs.

Hugh Greene's feelings about Scotland; refusal to recognise status of Church of Scotland.

Stewart consults expert on constitutional law; finds Clause 19 of Treaty of 1717 establishes Church of Scotland as national Church.

On this basis forces BBC to separate R.B. in Scotland from R.B. in London, and obtains full staffing and independent status.

Cassette side seven:

How a Radio man adapts to TV.

Scotland's free hand in Television following Stewart's strong representations to Jacob. Special treatment for Scotland.

Normanbrook's welcome for this move. Sees Scotland as test bed.

Enthusiasm of Scottish audience for BBC TV's Scottish products.

(Waffley) Work of new writers and established writers (e.g. Bridie)

Antagonistic relations between Stewart and DG Greene.

Greene anxious to get rid of Stewart.

The harassing telephone calls to Stewart and his wife.

Psychological warfare, attributed to Greene, but no evidence given.

Greene's hatred of Stewart because he symbolised Scottish concept.

Stewart goes ex-Directory on Police advice, but calls continue. Only a few internal people now know his telephone number.

Cassette side seven continued:

Falconer (Head of R.B., Scotland) reports conversation with Queen strongly criticising low BBC moral standards and saying "it will be put right".

Stewart alleges that David Milne also indicated that Normanbrook intended to dismiss Greene.

Normanbrook's death.

How Lord Hill had restored stability to IBA during his period of Chairmanship there.

Stewart approaches Sec.of State for Scotland (Willie Ross) and proposes that Hill should be switched to BBC to do a similar job.

Later, Ross tells Stewart that his advice was being taken.

Stewart obtains photo of Greene in Moscow with "a well known East German prostitute".

Stewart passes this photo to Hill, and it leads to Greene's dismissal.

Stewart: "Nobody interferes with me and goes unpunished".

Stewart's plan to join Board of Scottish TV (commercial) on his retirement from BBC.

Greene's reaction on learning this - Stewart to leave BBC on 61st birthday.

Thus dismissed in ignominy at three weeks' notice. No farewells.

Why he restrained influential friends from protesting.

A Producer comment: "You would not treat a dog that way".

Stewart repeats astonishment that Greene should think he could ignore the Scottish constitution over Church of Scotland.

Stewart looks back over his BBC years.

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Back to 1926: possible explanation of why Reith wished to interview a new, junior recruit in person.

Growing feeling that Northern Director was not up to the job; necessary that his Assistant should "have a grip" on things.

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Description (unsatisfactory) of a typical day's work in Glasgow in 1927 office work, meetings, children's hour rehearsal, children's hour transmission; evening - reading Scottish news, announcing, rehearsaing forthcoming play.

Staff Association, when formed, stops this mixing of duties on grounds of exploitation. Stewart regrets its ending.

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This side of the cassette ends with a brief comment by Frank Gillard about Stewart's anti-Greene remarks and allegations.

Cassette side eight:

Repeat of the MoI story -

Purpose and setup of MoI.

Dual job: informing press and BBC, and controlling media.

A new field for Government; great ignorance and confusion.

Ministers coming and going; at a loss.

Civil servants not up to necessary speed of action.

Initially, Stewart a liaison officer, introducing MoI to BBC.

Reith becomes Minister. Sets up broadcasting department.

Staff: Wellington (Head), Stewart, Rendell, J.Spicer, Fergusson.

All MoI statements passed to Stewart for approval and onward progress to BBC. BBC submissions sent to Stewart for MoI approval

Mostly News items and Government announcements.

No attempt by Reith to take over BBC; unnecessary for him.

Reith and the Beaverbrook animus.

Some Ministry desire to take over BBC, especially by Frank Pick, MoI Director General, formerly G.M. of London Transport.

Pick's meetings; his Christmas card story (irrelevant).

Churchill's Government reshuffle; how Reith was removed from MoI.

Sir Stephen Tallents, BBC Director Public Relations.

His feebleness; unable to make decisions.

Tallents and the story of Chamberlain's resignation broadcast.

Tallents and the incident of a successful air battle over Thames.

Mutual Broadcasting Company of USA's Berlin correspondent, Max Jordan, before USA entered the war.

Stewart monitors Jordan's broadcasts, identifies him as a Nazi supporter. Refers this to MI5.

MI5 contacts Washington; Jordan recalled to USA, interned on Ellis Island.

Stewart becaomes a name on the German assasination list and is warned.

BBC HISTORY ARCHIVE: Andrew Stewart

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NB Stewart a very elderly, sick, handicapped man, died shortly after this interview.

BBC ORAL HISTORY

CASSETTE 1

GILLARD This is Frank Gillard and it's the 14th March 1989 and in Glasgow at his home, I'm talking with Mr. Andrew Stewart who had a unique career in the BBC, starting I think you told me, when you were only 19 in 1926, isn't that so?

STEWART That's right, I was 19 .. I was a third year student in a four year English Honour's course at Glasgow University and I was quite suddenly out of the blue offered the job and .. I was also acting with the Scottish National Players under Tyrone Guthrie who had been a friend of the then Northern Area Director, Cleghorn Thompson .. at Oxford and I think it was as Assistant Stage Manager that he thought I might be a suitable personal assistant because David Thompson was a great starter of things and then he would lose interest and see something else and I had the feeling that I was rather like a maid with a brush and pail going round after him, sweeping up the remains of the things he hadn't finished.

GILLARD What was he, Controller or what?

STEWART He was called Northern Area Director which included the four Scottish stations and Newcastle and Belfast. And in Scotland there were two main stations, as they were called, Glasgow and Aberdeen and two relay stations,

Edinburgh and Dundee. Aberdeen was a main station because of Reith's family connection was Aberdeen. George Marshall who served the BBC for a long time was in Newcastle until Beedle, who became Director of Television ultimately was in Belfast. So that he had six stations as it were and he had to oversee their output.

GILLARD Did they between them actually provide a good signal for the whole of Scotland and the whole ..

STEWART Oh no .. no. Glasgow was served from an aerial hung on three gas .. (CRASH IN BACKGROUND) gas work chimneys ... I'd better get rid of ....

GILLARD I think you .. if you don't mind.

(CUT)

STEWART No, it had a radius of about fifty miles I should think. Beyond that, you could just if you were lucky in the geography of a place, get it. Edinburgh and Dundee, twenty to twenty five mile radius. So it was a very patchy coverage indeed just round the four main cities.

GILLARD And there was just a single radio programme.

STEWART A single radio programme and the local stations supplied their own programmes pretty well until six o'clock when the trunk lines came though and you could get London and you could take a simultaneous broadcast, SB as it was called from London from then till close down.

GILLARD What we've missed out and I must get you to tell it to us is how .. before you took up the job, you had to be interviewed by Reith.

STEWART Oh well. I got the offer of the job. My father was very doubtful. He said well, at least take a degree. So the Senate at Glasgow held .. gave me permission to change from an Honour's course and Professor Rait, Scottish History and Literature took me into the Scottish History class about six weeks after the term had started, and of course in view of what I was to get in the way of jobs, nothing could have been more useful than the grounding of Scottish history and literature, and incidentally, Rait was one of the people Reith consulted about appointments. He was one, John Buchan was another, for example. And ..

GILLARD How do you spell Rait?

STEWART R-A-I-T. Again it's a north east coast name. He .. must have supported Mr. Reith because I was then sent for. That was on the 17th December 1926, I had two

hours interviews. It was a Saturday morning, in the big office overlooking the Embankment, Savoy Hill. The desk clear. "The place for papers is in the Registry". A big bowl of chrysanthemums and a photograph of his father ...a Church of Scotland Minister. And .. "Why," he went .. "Why do you want this job?" "Oh because it's never been done before, nothing like this has ever been attempted in the history of mankind. It's a fascinating thought to have .. a part in starting something of this kind." And so on and so on and then .. "Oh you're a critic of the church, are you? Well no harm in that. Changes are always necessary and .. as we well know in Scotland where we have so many branches of the church, nothing's perfect. So don't lose your critical faculties." And we went over the .. my university course .. my acting with the Scottish National Players, the kind of part I liked and I said, "Of course I'm rather split you see, because in the family, kind of two clear divisions or three, on the farming side - great uncle Robert is a Minister, great uncle Jimmy is a lawyer there's admin .. acting and administration and the other one is a railway manager in Manchester". So I'm trying to pull between the desk work and the performing. And he said, "Well that should be quite a help to you in the BBC because you may be called upon to do both kinds of jobs so just .." I remember him saying, don't make up your mind about what you want to do too soon. Give yourself plenty of time to see which way you settle.

GILLARD Do you feel he was kindly?

STEWART Yes he was kindly. Oh yes and we had a long session about the Glasgow accent, which even Glasgow Academy was subject to .. the kind of general sing song .. and then he turned me over to Admiral Carpendale who .. said, "I don't think anybody's very impressed by your Assistant Stage Managing, pulling a few ropes and pushing some scenery about .. and I want you to come and meet Mr. Graves, Cecil Graves .. who at that time was Director of Programmes and you'll spend a fortnight working under him just to learn how the programmes are put together and processed for the air. So that was really .. it all took about two hours on a bright sunny Saturday morning.

GILLARD This was at the point when the BBC company was changing to the Corporation wasn't it?

STEWART It was just on the point of becoming a corporation and he was just on the point of becoming Sir John. So he was really I suppose in rather a good mood. He was still Mr. Reith when I met him.

GILLARD How much money did they offer you? Can you remember?

STEWART Two hundred pounds a year. And I remember meeting Jimmy Maxton, a Socialist MP .. something in Glasgow and saying, really I'm astonished two hundred .. I'm

not worth two hundred pounds a year and he patted me on the back and said, "You take it .. don't believe it .. of course you're worth it." (LAUGHS)

GILLARD And there you were then and the system in Scotland was these four stations with limited range and during the daytime, they had to do their own programming. What sort of programmes?

STEWART Largely music .. a great deal of fun .. piano and singers and violin recital. There was a station orchestra in Glasgow which did a lot of sustaining work. But one of my first tasks was to try and bring the four stations together into a coordinated output. So that the other three would take the Glasgow Orchestra and every .. the other three would take the ..... from Aberdeen and so on. And a good deal of the talk understandably enough since Edinburgh was the administrative religious capital, so to speak, much of the talk came from Edinburgh, and they all had their own children's hour which were done individually and were not shared around at all. .. Kathleen ..... who's still alive ran the Glasgow children's hour in which I performed as nearly everybody in the programme staff and the station did.

GILLARD What were you then?

STEWART Oh they called me Longfellow because

of my height and .. oh we did little plays and she invented .. it must have been about the original soap opera called, "Down at the Mains" .. the Mains was a farm .. I can almost .. life on the farmhouse, on a farm, all the kind of country ..... gossip .. really a very advanced .. thinking and so many of the actors and comedians who emerged later cut their teeth in Kathleen ..... children's hour.

GILLARD What else did you do then beside children's hour, you personally.

STEWART Oh read the news, announced programmes, took part in plays. Oh it was a very busy time .. never a dull moment.

GILLARD What sort of news was it? Where did it come from, do you know?

STEWART Oh we had a contract with one of the local newspapers to supply news of Glasgow and district. It was all Edinburgh and district, Aberdeen and district, it was all definitely very local news.

GILLARD You had national news from London I take it.

STEWART It came from London.

GILLARD Yes. Did you get much audience reaction? Did people write?

STEWART People wrote, people telephoned. If you met people at parties or at the theatre, as you were in the BBC, they at once seemed to be interested in this new thing.

GILLARD I was going to ask you .. it really did catch on, as they say, did it?

STEWART Mm?

GILLARD It really did catch on then?

STEWART Well it was a bit of a struggle. Another of my first jobs was to organise a series of lectures to Women's Royal Institutes all up and down the transmitter service areas and I did a lot of them myself. You talked about what was of interest in the programmes and how inexpensive it was and what a good thing in the long winter evenings and that ran .. I ran that for about two winters up and down the country and I think we got quite a lot of interest from the women's rurals.

GILLARD Yes. But the big establishment figures weren't .. weren't interested in broadcasting at this stage?

STEWART Not at that stage, no I don't think so. It was a bit of a fight to get .. and we arranged to, I remember .... amid a conference of educationalists in ..... and it was . it was very well attended and as a result of that, an education advisory committee was set up. Now that must have been in 1927, very long time ago.

GILLARD The .. Reith himself says in his diaries .. I've been reading them at the .. I don't mean the published ones, the unpublished diaries, that he found that .. because broadcasting was so new, very few people were prepared to risk their careers as you did in it and that it meant that many of the people he appointed were chaps who .. and women who couldn't get jobs elsewhere and they were not a very good calibre. Now what were the Scottish staff?

STEWART Oh I don't think .. well to start with it was a young staff .. so the established people who weren't willing to risk their positions were simply not concerned there. Two or three of them had actually been in the first war .. more or less come straight out of the services. I mean, George Marshall, I remember, used to call himself Major Marshall because some whippersnappers in London ring up and say there's a Captain something .. and George would come back with Major Marshall here .. and he then must have been a man in his mid thirties. So it was a young staff, people hadn't risked their careers and I don't think any of us were very bothered

about it.

GILLARD Looking back on it now, would you say it was a glorious amateur operation or was professionalism creeping in?

STEWART Oh professionalism had crept in. I mean we were not .. in any sense, amateur. No I don't think so .. the announcers .. very interesting, you see .. Stuart Hibberd was the kind of kingpin of the announcers and as far as I remember, most of us did our very best to be imitation Stuart Hibberd's. It was a very proper attitude to the pronunciation and so on. No, I wouldn't have said they were amateurish .. not when I joined. There may have been .. I joined in 1926 .. it had been going here since 1924. It may have been amateurish before that but not when I joined.

GILLARD But you didn't wear dinner jackets to read the news did you?

STEWART Oh we didn't wear dinner jackets to read the news, no indeed.

GILLARD Let's talk about some of the leading figures. You mentioned just now Claycon Thompson. Tell us a bit more about him. What was his background for goodness sake?

STEWART His father was an eminent children's

specialist in Edinburgh. His brother was the Secretary of the YMCA in Scotland. He was an Oxford graduate. He used to go to John Buchan's for tea on Sunday. He wrote verses, music, little plays .. he was a kind of dabbler and he never could carry anything through to a finish. He'd pick it up and then drop it. But he did have ideas and this idea of getting all the four Scottish stations to pool their best resources was his. Oh, he was a man of .. of intelligence but what's the ... unstable as water, thou shalt not excel, that was the problem.

GILLARD He must have driven you nearly mad as his assistant running round after him?

STEWART Mm, well. It was a bit trying I must say.

GILLARD What happened to him in the end?

STEWART He became Public Relations Officer to the Coal Board.

GILLARD That doesn't sound as if he had much ability, I must say to do that.

STEWART No. He was a rather pathetic figure. I used to see him years afterwards in the Scottish arts club in Edinburgh, sitting all by himself .. because people couldn't be bothered talking .. it was a sad sight.

GILLARD He was dilettanti was he?

STEWART Dilettanti, that's the word, Frank, yeah.

GILLARD Now what about some of these other people that I remember in Scotland. What about Herbert Carruthers?

STEWART Well he was the first station director in Glasgow and he conducted the orchestra.

GILLARD How big was the orchestra?

STEWART Ah .. be about thirty. It wasn't a symphony orchestra, and indeed the studio in Glasgow Square wasn't big enough to hold the symphony orchestra. No, it's be about thirty. Very competent musician. He'd been a church organist and he knew Kathleen GARSCADDEN's father, that's how he .. she was brought in .. on the children's hour. She'd hoped to have a career as a singer and was a very nice soprano. There was Herbert Carruthers.

GILLARD What about Geoffrey? R.E. Geoffrey in Aberdeen?

STEWART Oh he was in Glasgow to start with. I really didn't know him.

GILLARD He was a drama man, wasn't he.

STEWART Yes and ..

GILLARD That reminds me. Did you do drama?

STEWART Oh yes. Well we were lucky you see. There was a Scottish National Players there, there was a body of competent actors and .. with Tyrone Guthrie as director, we did some quite notable performances in those early days. Guthrie, of course, was really a very exacting producer indeed and in terms of .. of the wireless, the need for clear diction, then he saw to it. Although of course, he was ~~as hard~~ hired ad hoc on contract .. he wasn't the permanent drama man. He was a man called Donald Sutherland .. who left, took to writing .. he wrote some very interesting books. His father was, I think, head of the forestry division of the Scottish Office. Martin Webster who went on to be a London producer; Bob Kingsley who left and became a sporting journalist. Of course one of the real characters, outstandingly so was the Commissionaire, Sergeant Gordon. Son of a police inspector in Aberdeenshire. Offered a Commission repeatedly in the first war, which his silly fat wife wouldn't let him take because she said the officers .. officers were killed first. Sergeant Gordon was an absolute lynch pin. If Professor Sir Donald Tovey got lost at a music advisory committee meeting, Sergeant Gordon would find him in the ladies lavatory. If .. if Jimmy Logan's parents were

coming to do their act, Sergeant Gordon would look after wee Jimmy and his sister Heather. If the girls couldn't get the petty cash or the stamp book to balance, Sergeant Gordon could do it for them. He was absolute waste of talent. If you were hard put in children's hour, reading the news and then having to come in for an evening rehearsal, he could produce a pie and a bottle of beer. I don't know how we'd have got on without Sergeant Gordon?

GILLARD Did you ever put him on the air?

STEWART Oh yes indeed. He acted .. we did a piece about Waterloo and he played a golden highlander and did jolly well too. I remember him saying, for breakfast, they had no fires, so they got some meal and water and made a .... you just made a kind of porridge of it. Oh no, he .. he was .. and once, the GOC visited us and when he saw Gordon, I've often heard about people starting back, but this man actually started back looking at Gordon and said, "Where in God's name did you get that?" This is the DCM .. And he turned to me and he said, "That is more difficult to get than the VC." Oh Gordon .. it was an absolute tragedy that he was not properly used.

GILLARD Was there a programme policy? I mean, did you aim to reflect and .. and promote Scottish culture?

STEWART Such as we could find, yes. But no there was no policy of that kind. It was largely an imitation of what was done in London. The best you could.

GILLARD Yes.

STEWART Should we get rid of her?

GILLARD No, she's all right.

STEWART Now let me put you here, old thing .. that's all right.

GILLARD I was going to ask you something else important .. it's slipped my mind for a moment .. What was ..

STEWART The staff.

GILLARD Well we talked about the calibre of the staff and you've said that the morale was high because everybody was pioneering and doing an exhilarating job. And you've told us about some of the leading figures. So we now come on really to dear old Melville Dinwiddie. He's a bit later -

STEWART No .. we haven't .. we'd better say

a few words about the staff first.

GILLARD Do that.

STEWART Because, it was a very interesting mixed staff. We were lucky. Producers had become rather tired of engineers who, if Sir Henry Wood was building a climax musically, they would cut back on the .. metre, so what came out was dead level. So programme engineers were recruited and we got one, a Tasmanian, Johnny Goff. Now John .. we were all native. All our institutions were things we'd grown up with. To Johnny Goff, you could go out of Five Queen Street, Edinburgh and turn to the left and walk along a street and there was the very house where Simpson and his friends had experimented with chloroform. You could go to Glasgow Green and walk between the greenhouse and the bowling green and there was where James Watt suddenly realised that you could make a steam engine. Scotland was full of manifestations of this kind, all of which John seized upon. He invented the feature programme. He made programmes about all these things. The high court fascinated him. The famous Perth murder trial where a young man was on trial for his life and his old mother was in the witness box and she could not understand the anglified prosecuting counsel and Craigey .... on the bench, said, "Excuse me, Mr. so and so, may I interrogate your witness?" "Yes m'lud." "Do you see him again, woman, harken to me. On the 9th day of June was your laddie oot the house between the hours of seven and ten? Now just answer, aye or no?" And she

said, "Aye." And it hanged her son. It was this kind of thing that led John to do the trial of Madeline Smith. In the context of which we went along to ..... Terrace to see the man who was the author of the famous trials after dinner and he produced his pipe, tobacco pipe .. so I thought, oh I'll do the same, produce my pipe and he flung his tobacco pouch across the table to me and said, "What do you make of that?" I said, "Well, it's not pig skin .. it's skin of some kind." And he said, "That is the skin of Burke the murderer - of the Burke and Hare murders. You know, this kind of thing was being thrown out by Johnny Goff .....(LAUGHA). Gordon ..... was a very good play producer, Val Gielgud who god knows is meticulous, said, "Andrew if you have a script, which you and Gordon think is worth a national show, I'll take it without further question." Ian White, very gifted musician - determined to have an orchestra and in the process of which you see, our London colleagues kept saying, "But you've got the Scottish Orchestra, what do you need another orchestra for?" To which I said, "Oh yes, a part time orchestra from October till March. But in London there are three long established symphony orchestras. What do you need an orchestra for?" So ultimately we got the orchestra and it was very timely because at the same time, there was an American researching about .. in old Scottish houses and in the libraries and in the attics, he found a great deal of music, original .. much of it in a Scottish idiom, much of it imitative of Italian but he collected all this and brought it to us and we did a series called "Music from the Scottish Past" which Adrian Boult said

was one of the most valuable things that had been done, this collection of old tunes. Because before that, apart from two Masses, Carver's Mass, very little was known. Oh and of course the Marche ecoissaise, which the King of France's Scottish Guard marched to .. the tune of Scots ..... in march time. But these are about the only three Scottish tunes that were known, before that series was .....

GILLARD Isn't it a fact that Ian White was a friend of Sibelius, the Finnish composer and any time he played a Sibelius symphony with your BBC Scottish Orchestra, he used to tell Sibelius to listen .. you don't remember that?

STEWART I think he knew .. I think he'd just met him .. I'm sure he told him. But of course what he specialised in was Grieg which came to a .. a kind of thing of almost international importance during the war because the big Burgh Head transmitter way up in the north east of Scotland was received in Norway. So we played a great deal of Grieg for the benefit of the Norwegians and whenever there was a Norwegian national occasion, I remember King Haakon's 70th birthday and we had a concert at the National Hall in Edinburgh, Grieg .. Greig Concerto and there was a lot of khaki in front and of course there usually was downstairs and they played the National Anthem and we all stood up and then they went on and played the Norwegian ..... and the entire occupants of the stalls about faced .. these young faces, facing this .. this ancient noble figure whom their fathers had chosen to be

King ..

GILLARD Very moving.

STEWART Couldn't speak ..(CUT)

BBC ORAL HISTORY

CASSETTE 2

STEWART .. and of course also on the staff was James Ferguson, son of journalist Sir Charles Ferguson, Lord Lieutenant of Ayrshire. He was .. his sense of the English language was impeccable. His editing of scripts, length of sentences, choice of words, absolute clarity. He was a real gift and I think everybody who worked for him learned a good deal about the craft of broadcasting from James.

GILLARD He went on to become what?

STEWART Who?

GILLARD He became ..

STEWART Oh ultimately, well ..... in the Ministry of Information, I brought him to London because he was so used to dealing with civil servants and he ran a diary in which he compared what Goebbals was saying now with what he'd been saying five weeks ago and he was pushed out of that to give Pat Bryan a job. And he resigned in disgust and got a job at the Glasgow Herald and then he became, very fittingly, Keeper of the Records of Scotland and he ended up as Keeper of the Records, a very suitable job for somebody with such a .. fine historical sense.

GILLARD Talking about a Talks producer .. talking about a Talks producer, were you ever able to do controversial broadcast in those days?

STEWART Oh yes .. oh yes. In fact, one was so controversial after the rise of Scottish nationalism with Professor Dewar Gibb, whose a nationalist and Professor Macky who was not, and their antagonism was such that we had to put them in different studios. They couldn't bear even to sit at the same table facing each other. Such was the intensity of feeling about Scottish nationalism, patriotism, the United Kingdom.

GILLARD Now, the time came when these little low-power transmitters that you've spoken of were closed down and replaced by high power ..

STEWART Two high powered transmitters - one at Falkirk for Central Scotland and one at Burgh Head up in the north east shoulder for the populous agricultural north east and, because of the configuration of the mountains, it penetrated right through and got to the islands. So because it took in a big highland area, we got Cameron of Lochiel to open it and I remember Sir Noel Ashbridge, the chief engineer said, "What do I call him?" So I said, "You call him Lochiel." He said, "You can't call a man 'Lochiel'." I said, "Oh yes, call him Lochiel." So very hesitatingly he did and of course Lochiel who's used to being called Lochiel didn't bat an eye

but poor Sir Noel was very very distressed about this .. (LAUGHS).

GILLARD He thought it was discourteous.

STEWART .. couldn't understand it at all. And ..

GILLARD Well now .. yes.

STEWART That served, as I was saying right across the north sea, it was well received in Norway which of course was a great .. god's blessing during the war.

GILLARD Then .. we now really come to the Dinwiddie days, do we?

STEWART Come to Dinwiddie.

GILLARD Tell us about him.

STEWART One of the nicest men. Student at Edinburgh in Divinity before the first war. The entire OTC of which he was a member was mobilised as a battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, of all the waste of officer material. Anyway Melville was .. served in the Gordons. He .. DSO, MC, Military OBE, he ended the war on Haig's staff, he was with Haig right through that dreadful German attack of the Spring of

1918 when Haig stood like a rock and I think they were very difficult, similar in temperament, both lowlanders. Both rather firm, sensible Presbyterians and of course, Haig remained Melville's hero. Melville always had to have a hero. First it was Haig, then it was Reith, then it was Binchey BENJY Nichols. He had to have some kind of major figure to hang onto. When he came out, again the Aberdeen connection of the Gordon Highlanders got him the Church of St. Machar's in Aberdeen. Reith was looking for a successor to Cleghorn Thompson and he was staying with the Principal of Aberdeen University, Sir George Adam Smith and at breakfast on Sunday morning, Lady Adam Smith said, "George, what about Melville?" "What do you mean?" "What about Melville for John's job?" So they got into the Morris Cowley and were off down to St. Machar's and Melville was invited to lunch and offered the job of Scottish Regional Director - it had become Scottish Director then. And .. well, as I say, he was a very nice man, decent and like the House of Lords in Gilbert and Sullivan, he did not interfere in matters which he did not understand. In other words, the programme staff were pretty well left as long as they observed the bounds of decency which Reith had laid down. He was very determined about the rights of these .. of his own position. When it came to the launch of the Queen Mary, Gerald Cock was determined it would be a London do. But Dinwiddie was equally determined that his OB producer, me, would handle it. And he just went right to Reith and Reith supported him. A month or two in London under Gerald to learn the trade and handle the launch of the ship which was really a very tricky proposition

because if it was dry, the King who'd been ill, George V, would inspect the Guard of Honour. If it was wet, he would not inspect the Guard of Honour. If the wind was in the west, it would drive the tide up the river and the launch would be early. If the wind was in the east, it would drive the tide down the river and the launch would be late. Meanwhile the American companies were clamouring for a time. So I said, well on the day of the launch, I'll give you a time. By that time I'd know where the wind was and I thought, I am not going to bed until I've solved this problem. So I went down to Clydebank in the car and drove at the rate of a Royal procession back towards Glasgow and ten minutes from the yard from John Brown's yard was a post office. So I went in and said to the post mistress, "Would you like to do something for the BBC?" "Yes." So I said, "As the King's car passes, I'll arrange that you'll have an open line, just say that the King is passing and that'll give me ten minutes to get everything over." (LAUGHS) So we managed the launch of the Queen Mary.

GILLARD That's a good story. Melville .. what did Scotland as a whole think of this idea of an ordained minister suddenly becoming Head of the BBC in Scotland?

STEWART Well, after Cleghorn Thompson and his kind of airy-fairy dilettanteism as you said .. a lot of people were very relieved that somebody with his world record .. who was a .. obvious, decent kindly man, whose father-in-law was a fairly prominent legal officer .. oh he was accepted.

Although .. I think the ungodly made a certain mount of fun about it .. as one would expect. But it didn't affect him one way or the other, or if it did, he never showed it.

GILLARD But what about within the BBC? How did you feel about somebody who hadn't the faintest idea about broadcasting coming in to be the boss?

STEWART He was such a relief after Cleghorn Thompson and he made no bones about having to learn the trade, so to speak .. know what it was about .. and he was so likeable you see, that I think his .. I suppose you could call it charm in a way .. just won all hearts.

GILLARD His .. I remember him as a man who never was still for a moment. He was always dashing about in my recollection ..

STEWART Yes, no .. couldn't sit still. Leave his desk in Glasgow and off to Aberdeen, irritated Reith and we kept waiting for a long time because he'd go and see Miss Kim Murray who ran a Scottish dance band. Now .. the sense of proportion was just not there. He .. moved between Edinburgh and Glasgow until .. having a secretary in both places, neither secretary knew what she .. and what the other one was doing. (LAUGHS) He really was quite .. it was quite a thing keeping tracks on Melville .. (COUGHS)

GILLARD Because he was a very senior BBC person and I remember committee meetings in London with Melville chairing them. What I remember about them is, that while he was there in the chair at the head of the table, he had on his lap a note pad and he was writing on this note pad the whole time. What was he writing, do you know?

STEWART He kept a diary and at the end of the day, he'd synthesize his notes into his personal diary.

GILLARD It was almost as if he was keeping the minutes, but there was somebody there doing the minute keeping any way.

STEWART I think of course he used it also for that purpose. He would check the minutes with what he'd been writing. (COUGHS)
(CUT)

GILLARD A story you told me years ago about Melville has stuck in my mind ever since about an occasion when the chairman, Cadogan and the DG were visiting Scotland to look at your new television transmitter.

STEWART Yes, and I'm not sure that there wasn't going to be a board meeting in Glasgow at the same time. Any way they went out to Kirkill.... and looked at the .. and really Sir Alec Cadogan couldn't be bothered with all the

technical marvels .. as long as they worked, that's all that mattered to him .. he couldn't really hardly be bothered being chairman. So he got fed up and he went out and said to the driver, just take me back to Glasgow to the office. And Melville heard this and he dashed down into his car, leaving Reith and the other official car and he drove off helter-skelter to Glasgow and in the way down Parliamentary Road, there was a red light and the traffic was held up and a great big Clydedale horse appeared to sit down on the front of Melville's car .. and bent the mudguards. And this was a kind of added attraction. He got to Broadcasting House, had to find the Chairman, dashed in, dashed up stairs. Outside the board room, where there were no clothes pegs on the wall, he hung up .. at least, he stuck his hat and coat against the wall and of course they promptly just both fell and he was absolutely astonished that they hadn't stayed up. I don't know what happened when he finally met the Chairman.

GILLARD Very funny .. very funny. Is he remembered now in Scotland, do you think?

STEWART Well his son Jimmy was a British council officer for some time and .. oh I think he's ..although it may have been .. I brought Jimmy onto the Films of Scotland Committee and of course a lot of people remembered his father. So it may have been Jimmy's presence that stimulated the reminiscences of Melville.

GILLARD Mm. During these years, did you see much of Reith in Scotland ..

STEWART No.

GILLARD Did he keep a watchful eye on you?

STEWART Not much. I mean, there were occasions, state visits and that was about all. Oh no.

GILLARD And were you aware in Scotland that he was getting rather bored with the job, that he wasn't being stretched and all that - I suppose not.

STEWART No not at all. He was just a kind of remote godlike figure to us.

GILLARD So was it a great shock when his departure was announced?

STEWART Oh yes. And people think it was a shocking mistake, which of course it was. But .. no I only had one occasion, we all had a right of appeal to him and if I may go from the sublime to the absurd is the story that concerns Harry Lauder.

Now at that time in the 30s, there was an absolute plethora of talent, Lauder, Will Fyffe, Dave Willis, Harry Gordon, Tommy Morgan .. I mean our light entertainment output was absolutely

first class and continually refreshed by ringing the changes on this body of talent. (COUGHS) And among the light entertainments, we did a Saturday night series called "A Nicht at the Burst" - A Night at the Burst. Now the "burst" were concerts held in three or four halls in Glasgow in the early years of the century to keep working men out of pubs and in the interval you were given a bag of buns and when you'd eaten the buns, you blew up the bag and burst them - hence "A Nicht at the Burst" and this was introduced by ex-bailie William Thompson JP, an awful nice man, Thompson's pianos I think are still famous. Anyway he kept saying to me, "Andrew, why do you not put Harry on?" And I said, "Well he wants an hour which is too long for the same kind of thing and he wants a thousand pounds." And he said, "Not at all .. he's the head of the profession, he just wants to know that he gets more than Willy Fyffe or Gracie. If I arrange for you to meet him, will you come and see him." So I said, "Yes." So I was invited to lunch at Lauder Ha' - H. A. apostrophe, not hall, modern building, single stair halfway up then it divided into two great wings - lunch, mince, carrots .. rice pudding, a cup of tea afterwards, presided over by his niece Greta and then upstairs .. oh yes, and he said two things which I remembered. One was that he owed his success to Scottish working men who'd supported him when he was young. The other was how much he enjoyed and he talked a great deal about it, salmon fishing with the Duke of Hamilton. Well he took us upstairs to the room where all his trophies were, these things he'd collected all over the world on his world tours. The whole room dominated a

portrait of his son, Captain John Lauder, 8th Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, handsome big chap and he showed us his treasures and pictures of himself and Shirley Temple. Shirley in a kilt with a sporran .. and oh she said to me, "What's this Sir Harry?" I said, "It's a sporran lassie, it's a wee purse to keep your money in." "Mom, give us a couple of bucks." You know, he was full of that kind of story and then down stairs .. So I thanked him, he'd been most kind .. most entertaining, most enjoyable. But you know why I came and I know .. I know why I came. But you said two things, you told me that you owed your success to the Scottish working mens' support and now with a hundred thousand of them unemployed, you won't even appear for a week in ..... even if they could afford to pay for the gallery, but you could broadcast and they could hear you. But no, I think you're more concerned now with fishing with the Duke of Hamilton. Upon which the bailie rose and said, "Harry, my old friend, this young man has spoken the true word to you .. this day I'm ashamed of you." When which Sir Harry rose and said, "Young man, you have spoken the true word to me this day .. I'm ashamed of myself ..I'll do it." So we shook hands. Shortly afterwards, entered Greta with three whiskies. On the way down the drive in his car, the bailie put his hand on my knee and said, "Now Andrew, nothing in writing. No contract, you've shaken hands and had a dram on it, but that's it." Well you can imagine how the Programme Contracts department reacted to no contract. So I had to appeal to Reith and he supported me and overruled them.

Well of course it went on, ultimately a contract was sent ..

contract was sent to Greta. (KNOCK ON DOOR) Come in. And on his 70th birthday -

(CUT)

And on Harry Lauder's 70th birthday of course, it was to be a special Lauder programme. Now by this time, the voice which had been so sunny was fading in places and Ian White made some very skilful arrangements with the woodwind covering it up. Oh of course, it had to be the symphony orchestra, he wouldn't have the variety orchestra. It had to be Ian and the symphony orchestra. Well it was over and edited and put together and he came in and listened to it. And in Ian's office, he said, "Ian, you've been very good to me." Don't think I don't understand what you've done, covering up for me. And I'm going to give you a present." And he produced a fountain pen - a gold fountain pen, very handsome indeed but one thought goodness he's gone upstairs to that junk room and taken a pen out of it .. out of the vast collection. But it was a very handsome pen, so Ian duly thanked him and said, "How kind .. " And the old man walked through the door and put his hand on a handle and turned, and said, "Ian, it was my laddies."

GILLARD Good gracious .. good gracious.

STEWART Can imagine our feelings.

GILLARD Yes yes.

STEWART Because I think the sun set for Sir Harry when his son was killed .. killed according to Professor Macky who was also an officer in the 8th Argyles, he was Professor of Scottish History here. He would not send men out on something which he did not do himself. And it happened near patrol put on for one night, and according to Macky, it was the kind of thing a corporal and a couple of privates would have done but no, no, Captain Lauder went himself and he was killed.

GILLARD Is it a fact that Lauder used to put a wet cloth over the microphone before he performed?

STEWART No, not that I remember.

GILLARD I remember reading it some place. Well I'm going to turn this off because we're going to have ..

STEWART I remember him ...

(CUT)

GILLARD You said that you felt it was very regrettable that Reith chose to go when he did. Could you expand on that?

STEWART Frank, we were conscious that war was coming. The BBC in its home and overseas activities was an obvious, much respected instrument of information at home and abroad. This was the man who had made it, who could control it, who was in charge of it. Who seemed to be strong enough to fight off any attempt to take it over and run it by civil servants. People who did not understand its principles and its working. And to lose the captain of the ship when it was just moving into a storm, seemed to me most grievously unfortunate. And I never changed my mind about that. All right, he could have taken it into the war and set it on its course and he had able lieutenants certainly, and then he'd been available for some other job. But he should not have left with the war, what a year and a half away.

GILLARD Yeah. Now in the late 30s, you were the Head of Programmes in Scotland. You'd climbed up the ladder and you'd reached that point and you had developed, as I remember it in Scotland, a considerable galaxy of talent of broadcasters. Tell us about them.

STEWART Oh well, there were the Scottish National Players - a very talented team of actors. Not professional, they were not paid because the object was to have a Scottish National Theatre like the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, so the money that would have gone in salaries, went into the kitty so to speak, because the war finished that. We had in the way of writers, Compton MacKenzie, Eric Linklater, Edwin

Muir, George Blake, John Allan and John Buchan, who although he didn't write for us would let us adapt his stories as and when we needed to. My late brother-in-law John Weir who lyrics, tunes, sketches .. he was on the lighter side and Alan Mackinnon and Roger MacDougal the two men who did these .. "This Man Is" news film, you know they were a series with 'This Man' films. Both Glasgow students, they'd both written for a college review .. I called College Pudding in a university review which after I'd left, they got me to come back and produce and they were flung up together with various singers and .. And then of course there was the comedians, Lauder, Fyffe, Tommy Morgan, .. Will .. Dave Willis, Harry Gordon and you could ring the changes on them and keep up a steady flow of light entertainment. And there was one annual light entertainment which we knew was a winner every time we did it. It was called "Doon the Watter" which means "Down the Water" which means "Down the Clyde" .. it was a Glasgow family going to Rothesay for its annual holiday and this was done year after year. I mean the cast almost didn't need a script .. (LAUGHS) by the time the war broke out, it had been done so often, but it was an absolute .. anyone thought, it can't .. he can't really do this again. But oh no you heard comments all over the place in your club and in the theatre, saying well we're looking forward to "Doon the Watter" and .. the comedy side was very well represented.

GILLARD And you were strong with your orchestra in music.

STEWART Oh indeed. The .. the orchestra of course became the backbone of the output and it succeeded in attracting talented young men as assistant conductor. Colin Davis, Alec Gibson, .. who's the chap in Manchester? There was a succession ..

GILLARD Lock .. James Lock.

STEWART .. of first class youngsters coming on and they all said the same thing that they had learnt a great deal from Ian White, who, difficult and temperamental though he was, took a great deal of pains over their apprenticeship so to speak.

(CUT)

BBC ORAL HISTORY

TAPE 3

.....Stewart's contribution to the BBC's Oral History, and we're now on the third side, that is to say the first side of the second cassette. We've just been talking about the tragedy of the loss of Reith just before the outbreak of the War. But when the war came close of course, your own participation became a matter of some interest. What happened to you exactly?

STEWART Well I had arranged with a friend, a friend of a friend, Colonel Strott, who was the Colonel of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders. He was the senior colonel in the British Army, and he was going to get me commissioned in the Argyles once I'd done my basic training. So all that was perfectly clear. However, two days before war started, Charles Siepmann rang me up and ordered me to London to go to the Ministry of Information with James McGregor as a Liaison Officer. So James McGregor took the overseas side of it, and I took the domestic side of it. And that was.. we were in the Ministry on Sunday, and the sirens went off, so I was there actually at the beginning.

GILLARD What happened to the BBC in Scotland during the war?

STEWART Well to prevent enemy aircraft

flying up your transmitter wavelength, all wave lengths were synchronised, so the BBC in Scotland was put on to a wartime basis. They had about two half hours a week for Scottish programmes, and one half hour for Gallic. Gallic programme news, and that was all. But of course the orchestra moved quickly from Edinburgh to the new studio in Glasgow which had three feet thick walls, and a three foot thick roof, and was supposed to be blastproof. The orchestra could continue to play there, air raid or no air raid, so the entire music staff went to Glasgow with the orchestra, and it fulfilled really a major part of, you couldn't call it Scottish output, but national broadcasting output right throughout the war.

GILLARD In the Ministry of Information, what exactly did you do then as Liaison Officer?

STEWART Well R.T. Clarke, the news editor would ring up and say, "Robert, there's an item here which I think will need scrutiny by the Foreign Office". So I would go to the F.O. representatives and tell them what R.T. had told me, and they would either OK it, or question it, or want an alteration, and so on all the way around, any kind of items of news that reflected upon government, government policy, was automatically referred to me, and I would go to the appropriate Home Office Department, Home Security Department, Foreign Office or what have you, and check it with them. This, of course, was a difficulty because the civil servant was used to his 9 till 5, and I would go when R.T. had phoned, somewhere

round about 5 o'clock, and they would say, "But look here, Stewart, it's 5 o'clock, I couldn't possibly give you an answer to this tonight, and I said, "Look, the red light will go on in the news studio at 6 o'clock, and this important item will either be there or it will not be there". And they found this, I must say the civil servants, rather difficult to live with until they ultimately got used to it. I was very lucky in one respect, the Director General was a retired, or an active Indian civil servant.

GILLARD This is the Director General of the MOI.

STEWART The MOI, Sir Finlatter Stewart, who said to me, "What kind of Stewart are you?" So I said, "Well I must be one of the very few remaining cadets of the Stewart of erm, Pitcastle, and he said, "Oh, well that's just across the river from Aberfeldy. I mean if you're ever in any difficulties, come straight to me". He was a charming old boy. And on occasion I did have to go to him using this strange family connection, (LAUGHS) which, and of course he too was a descendant as I was, of the so-called Wolf of Badnech(PH) so there was a kind of very dim association which he recognised, so it was lucky for me, because I had access, without having to go through endless steps to get to him. Well I, all through that period I spent time introducing MOI people to BBC people, and said, "Now, you don't need to come through me. Ring him up direct". And really by Christmas, 1939, I wasn't really

necessary. I mean the traffic was going quite smoothly, so I thought I could get out it. But one thing I do remember from the run up to Christmas, Canon Cockin was broadcasting a sermon which the Religious Department thought was not in the national interest, actually, rather against the war effort. So this was referred to me, and I referred this to Brendan Bracken, Winston's assistant. And I got a note in the Prime Minister's handwriting, said "Let Cockin say he wants, this is what we are fighting for, W.S.C.". So I made a mental note of that as having come from the very top, that censorship, interference with freedom of speech was supported at very high level.

GILLARD Did the Ministry have ultimate powers over the BBC? Could the BBC fly in the face of the Ministry?

STEWART Well they involved a formula that the BBC would be run, or would be operated in total support of the war effort, and having got that guarantee and the promise that any matter of difficulty would be brought to the Ministry's attention, they didn't press this at all in terms of taking over, because they knew that it would be far too damn difficult to take on running the BBC, a highly complex knit together organisation. So they didn't press that at all. The formula worked as far as I know.

GILLARD Were you there by any chance when Frank Pick was Director General?

STEWART Oh dear me, yes.

GILLARD Because he wanted to take over the BBC, didn't he?

STEWART Yes, he did but then I remember a meeting with Frank Pick. He decided the Ministry needed to have a, oh well he looked right round a meeting and Kenneth Clark, who was in the chair, and that's another story, said that Mr. Stewart's representing Mr. Wellington. "Oh" he said, "Well we shall get on faster without Mr. Wellington here to talk". And then he took a very hard look at me, and said, "I hope he thinks he's adequately represented". He went round rubbing everybody up the wrong way. He decided the Ministry was to have a Christmas card, and Kenneth Clark was bidden to produce some virgins and children which he did. And Pick, of all the Italian ones that were there, had to choose a German one, and all round the table we said, "But D.G. we're fighting the Germans. I mean as far as we're concerned, they don't go in for Christianity. The Ministry of Information of all things, cannot... " Well he went bumbling along the passage and into Duff Cooper's office. Duff was Minister at the time, and he said, "You know, Minister, I don't understand this place". And Duff's sitting, drumming the table as we discussed them, said, "Well, in that case you'd better get out". So he withdrew and met Kenneth Clark, and said, "You know, Sir Kenneth, I think I've had the sack. Aye, by God, I have had

the sack. And that was him. He was out.

GILLARD You mentioned Wellington, now you must tell us about him.

STEWART Well Lindsay had this idea of a close association with the United States, we should have an office in New York, and he put up a paper suggesting that the Ministry of Information should have a branch office in New York, and one in Canada. And everybody saw the point of this, the Foreign Office, I mean everybody consulted. So Lindsay was bidden to go to New York and set up an office. I mean he really wasn't in charge of the Broadcasting Department which Reith had formed. When Reith was made Minister, he didn't want Liaison Officers, he wanted a Department of Broadcasting. There was Lindsay, Tony Randell for Overseas, myself for Home Affairs, Joanna Spicer for kind of general intelligence, and I brought in James Ferguson, I brought him down from Edinburgh because he was so used to dealing with civil servants, and James with his connections and his O.E. tie cut a great deal of ice wherever he went. (LAUGHS) And that was the Department. It was difficult to know really what it did. All kinds of things kept being referred to it.

GILLARD At the beginning of the war, I remember a very great deal of broadcasting time being given up on the air, to endless Government announcements. Every Government Department seemed to want to pinch a bit of airtime.

Did all that come through you?

STEWART It all came through the Ministry of Information, through James Ferguson and myself.

GILLARD You could demand air time?

STEWART Yes. And we could turn down, and we could insist that this applied only to Scotland and done in the Scottish news, of that supplied only to Northern Ireland. Otherwise, England and Wales announcements stood on their own feet. It worked reasonably well as far as I remember.

GILLARD Yes, yes. Tell us about the censorship. I mean to what extent was everything that was broadcast censored, and who censored it?

STEWART Well the news desks in the Ministry got the incoming tapes, and there were high powered advisers there. There was the senior Marine, General Tripp. There was a fairly high placed civil servant who would scrutinise everything as it came in, and there was a kind of initial pencilling went on at that point, before it went out to BBC and newspapers. I would... the phrase used was 'pass for policy and security', and pretty well everything that came in, of course a great deal of triviality and didn't matter. But oh yes, there was that kind of pretty firm scrutiny to see that nothing leaked, nothing damaging got away.

GILLARD Would a comedian's patter? Would that be censored? A parson's sermon to the broadcast?

STEWART Well there was Cockin's sermon which I was telling you about. Oh yes, they were all looked at.

GILLARD There couldn't have been much that was really topical then, because this looking at, must take time?

STEWART It didn't really. It was a very quick process.

GILLARD Some censorship went on in Broadcasting House itself, didn't it?

STEWART Oh, yes. News Department, I mean R.T. Clarke, who was as shrewd a man as you had to be to be Chief News Editor, he would spot possible dangers, and re-edit an item which already had been passed for policy and security.

GILLARD Can you remember if there ever were items that got through the net, so to speak?

STEWART No, I don't remember anything of the kind. There may have been, but not in my time.

GILLARD I suppose over music and that sort of thing, the BBC, and presumably drama, the BBC had complete independence?

STEWART Oh, complete independence. If anybody, if Val for example was worried about the implications in a play, he would ring me up. I mean remembering that business in New York, when they thought they'd been invaded from Mars, because they'd heard a broadcast. If there was anything which a casual listener could have got wrong, that would be tidied up before it went out.

GILLARD It's difficult for us to realise what those circumstances were, after all this time. Was it a matter of trial and error, do you think? I mean was there a great rigidity at the beginning and it eased up as time went on?

STEWART Oh I think so, yes. Rigidity and lack of knowledge. I mean what we were there for. How would this work? Who would you go to for an answer? All that kind of... I remember a very comical incident. Sir Findlater Stewart said to Lord Macmillan who was Minister, "Must get somebody who knows about pictures to be Head of the Film Department". "Oh", said Lord Macmillan, "I'm dining with the Prime Minister. Now Mrs. Chamberlain's very knowledgeable about pictures". So he asked Mrs. Chamberlain, who knew all about pictures, and she said, "Oh, Sir Kenneth Clark". So

Kenneth Clark, who knew damn all about films, found himself appointed Head of the Film Division of the Ministry of Information, and he applied himself, and within a fortnight K. was going about talking about panning, trucking, montage and all, as it he'd been brought up at Elstree. It really was a very comical appointment. But of course a highly intelligent sensible man. It worked alright, for a time until he moved up.

GILLARD On the outbreak of war, the BBC Board of Governors was dissolved, and just the Chairman and the Vice Chairman remained. Did you have anything to do with that, or were you just an observer on it?

STEWART No, I just knew that it had happened.

GILLARD Yes, and then the Board was brought back a couple of years later.

STEWART Yes.

GILLARD It is alleged, because Lady Violet Bonham Carter wouldn't... kept nagging Churchill until he agreed to it.

STEWART (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Which sounds very probable, I think.

What about the varied... you seem to have a great deal of coming and going at the MOI. One never knew from one week to the next who was the Ministry, who was the Chief Executive or Director General. They came and went rapidly, didn't they?

STEWART In the early stages, yes. Lord Macmillan, Reith.

GILLARD Duff Cooper, wasn't it?

STEWART Duff Cooper.

GILLARD And then Bracken.

STEWART And... it was a job I think, from the gossip at the time, that nobody really wanted. You were a kind of target for the press. Anything that could be blamed on the Ministry of Information was blamed on the Ministry of Information. All kinds of fun, the Ministry of Misinformation and all - mud was thrown. But Reith, you see, on the day Winston formed his Government, around about a quarter to six, the Minister's Secretary, Lord Hood rang me up, and said, "Stewart" - I happened to be on duty. "As you would imagine there's no wireless set in the Ministry of Information's office. May we come up and listen on yours?" So Lord Reith, Sir John as he was, and who'd.. and Miss Nash I think, all came up, and Reith paced up and down my office listening to the news, Minister of this, Minister of that - Minister of

Information, Mr. Duff Cooper, and without pausing in his stride, he walked straight out of the door, downstairs, followed by Hood and Miss Nash. I shouldn't have gone, but I was kind of sucked after it. Picked up his papers, put them in his despatch case. "Goodbye, Hood. Thank you for your help. I'll see you at home tomorrow, Miss Nash. Goodbye, Stewart", and out. And that was the end. Well there apologies of course, and his reply to that was, "Where should a Minister be at a critical period than in his office, weekday or Sunday? And that's where I was, and you could have got me there". But it was a sad, kind of bitter ending.

GILLARD He did get two other Ministerial appointments, but they didn't add up to much, did they?

STEWART They didn't add up to much, no.

GILLARD He got Transport, and then he got Works. But he wasn't happy with either.

STEWART And then there was the New Towns which he was very good at setting up, and of course the Commonwealth Communications, which again with that extraordinary penetrating gift of going to the heart of the matter, seeing where the log jam was, unpicking it, putting it all together again, and it would work. He really had a great gift in that respect.

GILLARD You were saying that by the first Christmas, you felt that you'd done all the introductions and there really wasn't much for you to do in the Ministry, so you came back to Scotland. But then you returned, didn't you, to the Ministry subsequently?

STEWART Well when Reith was appointed, he set up a Broadcasting Division with Lindsay, Tony Rendell, me, Joanna Spicer, and I brought in James Ferguson. And we had some kind of... I mean we were bidden to keep in touch with what the BBC was doing, and equally the BBC was bidden to consult us, and keep us informed about what the Department's plans were, so that what was planned in Drama and Talks and so on, was immediately available in the Ministry if anybody wanted to know it. It was a kind of post office of a job.

GILLARD And how long did that last?

STEWART I don't know, because I left in May 1941, after the last bad air raid. I managed to convince the then Director General, I think it was Walter Monkton, that I'd be more use in Scotland than I was there.

GILLARD So you came back to Scotland?

STEWART I came back.

GILLARD To be Head of Programmes, too.

STEWART To be Head of Programmes.

GILLARD Well now, Reith of course, had left a great vacuum, a great void in the BBC and his first successor didn't fill it, did he?

STEWART Oh no. A nice man, intelligent man, but there was no.. I mean you never felt there was somebody in the driving seat, or somebody to whom you could in the ultimate event, turn and get a firm decision, based on the facts. He, kind of typical philosophic academic. He could examine every side of a question and come to no conclusion. But a nice man. I didn't really have much to do with him, but ...

GILLARD And in two years he was gone?

STEWART He was gone.

GILLARD And what did you make of his successors?

STEWART Oh 'one Foot in the Graves' as they said. Well of course, Graves knew broadcasting absolutely inside out. Foot, very clear headed, very decisive. They seemed to work very well as a team. I didn't see much of them, but I remember meetings in Glasgow when they would both be present, and you'd get the kind of established BBC thinking from Graves, and some presumably different approach from Foot,

and they would let this be discussed at my level. I don't know if it did them any good, but it was very interesting. But Foot, I remember on one occasion, left his false teeth in his sleeper, and we'd a dreadful time pursuing the D.G's false teeth all over British Rail or whatever it was then, from one siding to another, until we got them back. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Perhaps you couldn't get replacements in war time.

STEWART Oh no, you couldn't do anything.

GILLARD But the whole business was pulled together by Haley, when he came in.

STEWART Oh yes, you at once felt the clarity of mind, the firmness of mind, the lucidity of expression. You knew exactly what Haley meant and why he meant it, and well it was splendid. You just, I think everybody just reacted in a very positive way to this leadership for the first time since Reith had left really.

GILLARD And then, well the war ended, and you had to restart Scottish broadcasting.

STEWART Well that was really easy, because I'd had years of experience as Head of Programmes before the war. I'd a very good idea as to what lines we should go on.

Reflect the country you're serving. Part of my inspiration came from my favourite French schoolbook, Alphonse Doudet's "Lettres de Mon Moulin" Provence de la Mer, Provence de la montagne, avec ces moeurs, as legendes, ces histoires, ces paysages; tour en peuple, naif e libre. And that pretty well summarised what Scottish Broadcasting was in my mind, going to be about, and in the three months that were running up to the end of the War, I simply put together a quarter's output, had the staff and there was of course, an orchestra. We started a current affairs programme, and by the greatest of good luck, I was able to get Tom Johnson and Walter Elliot to take month about, so there was no question of balance. They were both former Secretaries of State. One, probably Tom Johnson, the greatest Secretary of State we've ever had, and from them you got incontrovertible fact, and commonsense as to what would work and what wouldn't work. I don't think we in Scotland ever did a series as helpful and profitable as Tom Johnson and Walter Elliot alternating in the monthly current affairs talk. Then, we had an arts review because of course with the end of the war, all kinds of activities which had been stopped, the theatre, concerts and so on started again, and publication, writing, and Robbie Russell came up with the idea of having a monthly arts review, which of course was a perfectly satisfactory thing to do. (I'm just trying to read my notes here).

GILLARD You're just about running out on the tape. I think I'll stop it.

BBC ORAL HISTORY

TAPE 4

..... post war years in radio, you were able, weren't you, to make a real as it were, Scottish mark from your studios here in Scotland?

STEWART Oh the output of music, drama, literature, criticism. Oh indeed, it was focused on what was actually going on in Scotland. It was aimed to find the talent, bring it on, put it on the air and if possible, get the best out of it. And this was true in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. There was no Dundee studio then, but all three stations were working on just full steam ahead. It .. I mean the sheer business of studio booking you know, at that severely practical level I remember, was well Miss Quaid, the Programme Executive ruled with a rod of iron, see Ronnie Faulkner's autobiography about his interview with Miss Quaid, and that was the way she dealt with everybody. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD But I remember entire evenings which you were able to fill with Scottish material, except for the national news.

STEWART Yes, oh yes, that's true, and there would be news after the six o'clock news, then to catch the audience, light entertainment, then probably a concert, the orchestra or recitals, chamber music, then a play, or the other

way around. Not the entire evening. I mean that would stop about half past ten and then dance music would come on. But from roughly a quarter past six till a quarter past ten, apart from the nine o'clock news. I mean we didn't do that very often, but it was quite a frequent occurrence.

GILLARD And this was real high quality professional material?

STEWART Oh high quality...good writers, good actors, a very good team of producers.

GILLARD And the BBC had by now, I suppose, become a pretty influential force in Scotland.

STEWART Oh I think so. I think so, I think from the amount of attention that politicians paid to it, and the kind of comments, you know when they would come in and make their contributions in news or current affairs programmes. What they said was always... I think in general they were for it, this highly distinctive radio output.

GILLARD This, of course, was also an interesting period for all of us, because looking back on it, one can see what a watershed time it was, because whereas before the war recording was a fairly unique and exceptional kind of thing, postwar, we had the recording instrument to play with, and so we weren't studio bound in the same way, were we?

STEWART Oh that's perfectly true. I remember before the war we did a series called Scottish country. They were half hour features from different parts of the country - I mean as the title suggests. But you couldn't get into the West Highlands because the recording machine was a 30 cwt truck which couldn't go on the ferries, and it really was quite a problem to get out into the more remote ... You could get to the islands more easily, because you could put it on a ship, and McBrains would take you out to Lewis, or Barra wherever. But you couldn't get across the ferry at Kinlochleven, and these tiny portable machines, bigger than the one you have here, were an absolute godsend, except of course that they invade in a way for carelessness, because if you didn't get it right the first time, you could to it again, and there was a bit too much of that, kind of slipshod work which had to be tidied up later. And as I remember saying to George Bruce, one of the producers, "The fact is George, that you cannot edit quality into a recording".

GILLARD That's very shrewd. It's quite true, you can't. Well all this in Scotland, came to an end for you in 1951, when you got an offer of a Controllership.

STEWART Yes. Northern Ireland. A thought that had never crossed my mind. So off we went, sad to leave our little Adam house, and as Haley said to my wife, "Well, you've just need to get a little Eve house", and erm.....

GILLARD Haley gave you a brief, I believe.

STEWART It was to try, well first of all remember that this is one part of the United Kingdom in which controversial broadcasts could lead to killing. You must try and extend the bounds of controversy, but stop short of that kind of possibility. I took the view that the charter in its preamble said "It is in the interests of our United Kingdom of Gt. Britain and Northern Ireland that it should have a service of information, education and entertainment". Now that phrase the interests of our United Kingdom of Gt. Britain and Northern Ireland, as I said to Haley, seems to mean that anybody who is advocating the break-up of our United Kingdom is not to be given publicity, because that is not in the interests of our United Kingdom. They can discuss anything they like as long at it is germane to the situation in Northern Ireland. But I would not have Sinn Fein propaganda, taking the view then, as I do now, that the people who advocate publicity for the IRA, would have put on Goebbels in 1939 in the interests of impartiality. Impartiality doesn't mean that, especially when your charter sets out, right at the beginning, the interests of our United Kingdom. I inherited a new staff. Well Harry Macmillan we pre-war, ex-journalist, ex BELFAST TELEGRAPH, highly intelligent, gifted, able, but an Ulsterman, and if there was a ripple of political trouble, he could see Harry being torn apart. He'd just be straight along the corridor of the third floor into my office, and off-load the difficulty.

GILLARD He was your Head of Programmes.

STEWART He was the Head of Programmes, and Ursula Easton who'd been kind of there during the war, a competent woman. New staff - Sam Hanabell, a novelist, a very gifted writer, John Boyd, Talks producer, Edward Boucher, Music - all talented, competent people who needed encouragement and training, which in a way I tried to give them. You'll get all this in that book which I've got next door, about the most awkward region.

GILLARD Contrary Region.

STEWART THE MOST CONTRARY REGION. They're all there, and a jolly good team they were. They produced some very good work, and quite soon after we arrived, there was a Commonwealth Parliamentary delegation, and they visited Northern Ireland, and the reception in Government House, and Sir David Keogh, the Vice-Chancellor of Queens, who was just on the point of leaving to become Master of Balliol, took me aside and said, "Stewart, as one Scotsman to another, may I tell you something which you will not believe, but if you just ask as if you believed it, it'll save you an awful lot of trouble". So I said, "Well thank you very much". He said, "Any Ulsterman, Protestant or Catholic, Unionist or Nationalist, is liker and closer to any other Ulsterman, Catholic or Nationalist, Protestant or Unionist, than he is to his so-called opposite number in the South. He's an Ulsterman and therefore

superior". Well of course this was his experience, so I took it. About six months later, I had proof of it. I had a very angry letter from James McSparran, who's still going, Leader of the Nationalists in Stormont, complaining that a Mr. E.V. McCullough had been elected Independent MP for Mid Tyrone, and we'd said he was an Independent, and he was a Nationalist. So I wrote back. I thought well, this is the kind of mistake we shouldn't make, an Franklyn the News Editor, who was a very steady chap, produced the copy of the nomination paper, E.V. McCullough, Independent, so I wrote back and said, "His nomination paper said he was an Independent. Why didn't you say he was a Nationalist? Anyway, why not come in and talk about it?" So he came in, slipping in through the back door, in case he was seen coming into this unholy place, the BBC. And we went on in that way, "Why didn't you say he was a Nationalist?" And this black spider face came across the table and said, "Because you knew he was a Nationalist, and you should have said he was a Nationalist". So the conversation went on, and they ended that bit of it by saying, "The fact is, Mr. Stewart, if Ireland was united and we were in the Dail, the likes of Sir Basil Brooke and me, we would go through them like a knife through butter". This from the Leader of the Opposition. And then, oh there was some point about farming, and I said, "Of course, it's awfully impressive, these great fields in North Antrim, plough line horizon to horizon, what wonderful crops they grow, and yet, in the middle of the field, so that about half an acre of ground is lost, there's a hawthorn tree". To which, his reply was: "I am not saying,

Mr. Stewart, whether I believe or do not believe in fairies, but they're certain knolls, mounts and hillocks on my farm in North McQuarrie, into which I would not put the spade", but which he left, and I was left, "This is the Leader of the Opposition. This is our Mr. Attlee. He believes in fairies. I mean in the name of God, what kind of place have I come to". (LAUGHS) And there it was.

GILLARD Of course all this was twenty years before London put the troops into Northern Ireland. What was the political climate of everyday life in Belfast in those days? The general climate. I mean could you be happy and lead a peaceful life?

STEWART Oh yes. I thought it was absurd that a great more than local event, the 12th July procession, was not covered in any way, apart from a short paragraph in the broadcast news. It seemed to me just to be sticking your head in the sand to ignore something which, in Belfast and in every main town in the province, was a big occasion, a national holiday. And I set up an OB on the Belfast procession, and it caused no trouble. I mean the broadcast turned out to the Nationalist community to be I suppose less of a provocation than the thing itself. The thing was there, they could all see it, so there was no reaction of disfavour from the Catholic Nationalist community. On the other hand, it did a great deal to popularise the BBC with the Prods. because at that time the BBC was known as a Belfast BBC. I mean the idea of the

recording machines we were speaking about being taken into the remote districts of the Province and recording Ceilidhs and Ceilidh bands, that was the way I tried to broaden the thing out. I put on what the Protestants like Sir Basil Brooke regarded as Sinna propaganda. Ceilidh bands, folksongs. Most of the artistic talent, in fact, lay in the Roman Catholic community, the actors, most of them, the singers, many of them. So that that community began to get quite a showing on the air through its acting or musical talent. And I think that gave a great deal of pleasure to people.

GILLARD You also did something about coverage of parliamentary affairs, didn't you? You bought.....

(INTERRUPTION)

GILLARD At that point, we ceased our recording on March 14th, and it's now March 15th, and the morning of March 15th, and we're resuming our conversation, Frank Gillard, with Mr. Andrew Stewart. We've just been... he'd just been telling us how that he arranged for the 12th July Orange processions to be broadcast in Northern Ireland during his term. I wanted to ask you a little more about the steps you took, because I know you took several in order to liberalise the situation. One of the things you did was you made a new arrangement for local parliamentary coverage while you were over there.

STEWART Oh, I had to. The arrangement when I went was unsatisfactory. It was supplied by the Northern Ireland Government's press agent, and justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. I mean even suppose the man was journalistically impartial, nobody believed it. So I wanted the BELFAST TELEGRAPH to take it on, but old Mr. Henderson, very stubborn, would have nothing to do with it whatever. He refused to give us any supply of news. So, I got the BBC's News Executive in London to make an arrangement with the Press Association for a supply of news from Stormont. Actually, of course, it was the BELFAST TELEGRAPH's man whom they had to use. But, there was no way out of it for Henderson. We got the news from the PA, and that was, of course, publicised so that, as I was saying, justice would be seen to be done. Impartiality would be obvious.

GILLARD I think you did also about permitting and encouraging the reporting of news of from the South.

STEWART If it affected Northern Ireland, but anything that was manifestly or kind of deliberate, all-Ireland basis, or suspect.

GILLARD And you've no means of checking it, I suppose?

STEWART Oh well, journalistic contacts,

Robinson, our Press Officer, had contacts in the Republic and the.. it was always possible for him to find out from his friends what was going on. But one had to be careful, because anything affecting the status of Northern Ireland, just had to be watched.

GILLARD And speaking of Stormont, as we were just now, you also brought in a weekly report, THE WEEK IN STORMONT, I believe.

STEWART (LAUGHS) THE WEEK IN STORMONT, which was widely known as "The Week in Torment", and it was particularly unpopular of course, because of the shared wavelength with the North East of England, who couldn't really have given a damn about what went on in Stormont, and oh, it was a perfectly straightforward journalistic piece of parliamentary coverage. Perfectly professional and I think useful, because it pulled together as all these weekly parliamentary programmes did, what had been going on in a way that one tended to miss it, if you were just listening, ad hoc daily, or not daily. It filled the gap. But by God, it annoyed the North of England.

GILLARD Yes. But it must have given a lot of satisfaction in Northern Ireland, I should have thought.

STEWART Oh, I think it was widely received, because of course it was in BBC terms impartial. I mean the

Nationalist contribution at Stormont was reported, and analysed as well as the Unionist, so that it was an honest job.

GILLARD And this was a move away from the policy of your predecessor, was it?

STEWART Oh yes. I mean he just had taken the .....issue from the Stormont Press Officer, you see and the fact is you see, that during the war there was no broadcasting from Northern Ireland at all, and he'd simply got out of the way. I mean it really wasn't his fault, a kind of atrophy set in, and there was no, as it were, conscious policy. It had become a kind of social job. His wife was the hostess, the official hostess for the United States' armies in Northern Ireland, and there was a great deal of socialising went on, and no broadcasting, and of course all the gear was obsolete, pre-war. If you handled a pot-meter and turned it round if it would turn, then the arm wouldn't touch the buttons on the way round. You just got jump, jump, jump. And if it was tight enough to touch them, then you couldn't turn it. I mean it really was unbelievable junk. Sorry, I mean that was rather changing the subject.

GILLARD No, but I understand. It gives us a picture of what circumstances were like. Did you.. did you find in any way that the BBC could be a bridge between the two main parties in Northern Ireland. Could they speak to each other through the BBC so to speak?

STEWART No, I don't think so. I think the divide... with the exception of what became the SDLP. John Hume, who's now a SDLP Member, I found was sensible, reasonable, and he could talk to both parties. I mean he could come and see me and what I said to him would then go both ways. He was a very useful, and I am sure still is, a very useful Member of Party, of Parliament.

GILLARD Could the basic constitutional issue in Northern Ireland ever be discussed on the air?

STEWART No. It was not in the interests of our United Kingdom to suggest taking part of it away from it. And I mean that was my policy quite firmly and Haley supported it. It led to many a battle with my colleagues in London who of course, in the sacred interests of impartiality wanted to provide coverage of the Sinn, the Nationalist case, and the interesting thing of course was that until you actually lived there, and had a kind of gut reaction to it, you are in no position to judge. Anyway, I wouldn't have it.

GILLARD And what were your own relations with Stormont? Did you, yourself go to Stormont Castle much?

STEWART Not a great deal. I was invited on various occasions. The Government wanted to know what I thought about some situation. For example, should they have a National Broadcasting Council? And I had a long meeting with

them, and advised strongly against it, because the essence of these councils as I found in Scotland when I went back, was that you got a consensus. The Scottish Council had Tories, Liberals, Socialists, but on issues affecting Scotland they were always unanimous. Whereas in Northern Ireland, you could never get unanimity in that kind of body. Hence, I advocated an Advisory Council, under a very strong Chairman, which we got in Sir Harry Mulholland, who'd been Speaker of the Northern Ireland House, and was both a very entertaining and a very formidable man. And they took my advice, and went for an Advisory Council. On the whole, we were on very friendly terms with the Brookes'.

GILLARD Who were they?

STEWART The Prime Minister, Sir Basil Brooke and his wife. We dined with them. They dined with us, and with Maynard Sinclair, who was Minister of Finance, who was particularly helpful because I was complaining to him about the state of the gear which my new staff, learning the job as they were, had to cope with, as well as all the other difficulties. And Haley had told me that it was pointless, because under the Plowden submissions, it was going to be years before the BBC got re-equipped. And Maynard laughed and slapped me on the shoulder, and said, "Well that's fine, because Plowden doesn't affect Northern Ireland". So I went back to Haley like lightening and said, "The Minister of Finance is prepared to give us the go-ahead. So we got, and it was the one place in

the BBC that got new up-to-date equipment, when nobody else was getting it. So in that one respect, the Northern Ireland staff was highly favoured. They had good gear to work with.

GILLARD But it used to be said, or understood, and probably quite wrongly then, that you occasionally actually sat in on Cabinet meetings in Northern Ireland.

STEWART Ah well, the meeting about the Advisory Council for example, was a Cabinet, a full Cabinet meeting. I think there were one or two other occasions when some kind of problem faced them, and they wanted an outside view, and I was really the only outside view that was available because the newspaper owners and editors were all themselves Ulsterman, and partis pris, and they couldn't... well as Sir Basil Brookes said to me, "You see, you don't have this internal turmoil about Ulster politics. You can stand apart from it and weigh it up". And there were occasions when that was exactly what they wanted.

GILLARD I expect you had to take care not to be supposed to be in the pocket as it were, of the Unionists.

STEWART Oh, indeed. And when I left, old Tim Healey, the Nationalist, rang me up and said, "Well they're saying this and they're saying that, but I am saying you've been very fair". And the Cardinal telephoned, and said much

the same thing, and then ended by saying, "I'm sorry I can't give you my blessing, but I'll pray for you". You know, and it was encouraging and comforting to have that from what was basically the other side.

GILLARD Yes.

STEWART You've been very fair.

GILLARD Of course all this was what, twenty years before the real troubles began.

STEWART Oh, although by the time I left, every cargo of agricultural tractors and so on from the United States had its quota of machine guns tucked away, and they were being built up in four dumps around the border, and the Garda knew, and the Ulster Constabulary knew, and the British press knew, but for fear of bombs in a letter box, nobody said a word about it.

GILLARD You couldn't do anything about it on the air I suppose?

STEWART Well of course it was all secret. It was security. I mean the police in Northern Ireland did not want the IRA to know that they knew all about the imports and where they were being stacked. And I remember Lady Mountbatten passing through, they had a place in the West of

Ireland, near where one of these dumps was, and I gave her tea in the office, and I warned her about the danger they were in. I told her about this armoury dump, and she laughed and said, "Oh, the villagers couldn't be. They couldn't nicer, could be more kindly". And I said, "Oh yes, the villagers, but then people can come in from outside the village. I really think you should be awfully careful". And in the event, of course, we know what happened.

BBC ORAL HISTORY

TAPE 5

GILLARD .... so it will be Side 5 of the conversation with Mr. Andrew Stewart for the BBC's Oral History archive, and we're talking about his years in Northern Ireland. I wish you would tell us now about the tremendous handicap you suffered because you had to share a wavelength with the North East of England, I think.

STEWART That's right. There weren't enough medium waves to give everybody, so somebody had to share, and the Corporation decided that Northern Ireland, which was a very small region, and the North East of England, which populationwise was bigger, must suffer this joint arrangement, and we had to put up with their programmes, and they had to put up with ours, and a very unhappy state of affairs it was. They, when we started our weekly parliamentary report, THE WEEK IN STORMONT, they at once called it THE WEEK IN TORMENT, and so on. There was a great deal of a kind of mutual horse trading about it at times, and so I remember dealing with the North of England Controller about swapping periods, really very awkward, because especially in religion, where you have the strong Presbyterian Ulster, and the Church of England of course, and they were getting Presbyterian services and we were getting Anglican. It was such a mess, you didn't really bear to think about it.

GILLARD Everything that you put out had to be heard in the North East, and everything North East put out, had to be heard in Northern Ireland?

STEWART Yes, at least had to be broadcast, I wouldn't say they had to hear it, because I don't think people listened. I found that the BBC Scottish transmitter in Falkirk was very well received, and an awful lot of people in the North, North Antrim and so on, County Derry, listened to Scotland, the Scottish Home Service, in preference. And of course coming across the water, the reception was perfectly good.

GILLARD Mmm, yes.

STEWART And that was not of course what I was there for, but still, it eased the situation. Nevertheless, you did work up some very good programmes and programme series in Northern Ireland. I remember the McHueys.

STEWART Well in Scotland we had a family called the McClannells, and this was the beginning of the kind of comic soap opera, and I thought, well if it would work in Scotland, with a Glasgow western Scotland family, we could get the same kind of thing in Northern Ireland, so after a great deal of consultation with Joe Tomelty, the author/actor, Harry McMillan came up with this idea on McHuey, it's really Huey. It's a play on the Americanism, "it's all huey". But what kind

of family? If you go into a small house in Ulster, and you look above the mantelpiece, you know at once whether they're Protestants or Catholics from the decoration, and one had to be very careful with the McHueys to make no mistakes about putting them into one group or the other, because if they had been Prods, the Catholics wouldn't have listened, and if they'd been Catholics, the Prods wouldn't have listened. So they had to be religiously emasculated, shall we say. But Joe Tomelty was a very gifted author. I mean they were very funny, and very soon catchphrases from the McHueys were in common usage really all over the Province. You'd hear their catchphrases, as with the McClannells, repeated over and over again. And this happened really within weeks of the start of the series. It was jolly good.

GILLARD And it was a weekly thing?

STEWART Oh weekly, yes. Yes. We couldn't manage twice weekly. I don't think the North of England would have stood the twice weekly McHueys. I never found out whether they listened to it or not.

GILLARD Then what about music? Did you have an orchestra in Belfast?

STEWART No, we didn't have an orchestra. There had been a station orchestra before the war, which a bit augmented, provided public concerts. But a great interest in

music and I started working to try and get a small orchestra, kind of chamber size, but capable of playing folk music, of playing the Irish rhythms kind of thing, and I got the Scottish, the BBC Scottish Orchestra come over and play both in Belfast and Dublin, and that kind of gave a boost to musical interest. I remember the Governor came to the BBC Scottish Orchestra's concert, and for some reason, the given oratorial seats were not furnished with their usual cushions, and the Governor was uncomfortable, shall we say, and made his feelings very widely known about that. Somebody in the Ulster hall suffered for that, I am quite sure. But there were two very good concerts, both in Belfast and Dublin, and this kind of gave a kick to the idea of an orchestra. So I went on working at it, and I think it was Pat Hillyard, the Head of Variety got together with the Music Department, and they sent this Czech conductor.

GILLARD Towski, was it?

STEWART His name was Wilhelm Towski, a Czech refugee, who had conducted the Opera House in, I think it was Brunod, and somewhere else. He'd conducted in two opera houses in Czechoslovakia, and he was very good at, as it were, putting an orchestra together. Not so much training as massaging them all into a body. And he enjoyed doing this, and he enjoyed the range of work from the kind of very light classics, to the Irish folk tunes, for which he made himself some very good arrangements. Then the Leader, Ian White, the

Conductor of the BBC Scottish, knowing that I was getting this orchestra together, said that his deputy leader was ripe to become a leader, and we arranged for him to transfer. I think he had Irish blood in him, Irish ancestry. He was willing to come and took over the orchestra, and of course by the time it was established, the business of having to play in public, oh well he couldn't bring a small orchestra that size into the orchestra hall. So, one had to import extras, mostly from Dublin. And so the origins of the City of Belfast Orchestra from these occasional, fairly regular concerts given by the Northern Ireland Light Orchestra, augmented conducted Towski, led by William McNulty. It ... I had a great deal of help, I must say, both from the London Music Department and Light Entertainment Department, unlike my experience in trying to set up the Scottish Orchestra, where as I was telling you, there was nothing but opposition. And of course we had an admirable big studio, because Broadcasting House had been built before the war. It had bare brick walls when I went there, but you know with plasterboard and curtains, it was perfectly easy to get it acoustically acceptable, although it didn't look very nice to start with.

GILLARD No. You, of course, were the only area covered by the BBC which had its own parliament, it's own domestic... Now what did you do when it came to election time in Northern Ireland Did you have party political broadcasts?

STEWART No, going back to what Haley had said to me at the beginning, about this being the one region in which you could lead to violence through broadcasting, we reported speeches as fully and as regularly as possible. But I really didn't think that party political or election, a series of election broadcasts would be workable, because you'd have had to give them their head, and God knows what some of them would have said. Mr. Paisley was there then. He came to see me on one occasion, with a deputation of Ministers. "It's very strange, Mr. Stewart, that they should send a Roman Catholic to take charge of the BBC in Northern Ireland". I said, "Well, it would be, but as it happens I'm not a Roman Catholic. My tradition is the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and I think you should know that my great uncle Robert was Minister of Blairgowrie for fifty-two years, and a most respected figure in the Kirk". And dealt with Mr. Paisley for once. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Yes. What about relations, programme relations with the South? Did you have any programme exchanges, or how did you get on with them in general, the RTE people?

STEWART Personally, we got on perfectly well. I mean we were both professionals. But we didn't have programme exchanges, because well the shared wavelength for a start. Why put on Dublin programmes for the North East of England? It just didn't make sense. But in terms of exchanging information about broadcasters, or showing each

other scripts, and arranging about the BBC Scottish Orchestra's visit to Dublin, they couldn't have been more helpful.

GILLARD Now there you were through these years, despite all the difficulties, building up a good solid broadcasting service in Northern Ireland. Did you get much reaction from the audience? You were saying that they picked up the McHuey's catchphrases.

STEWART By the time I left, it had ceased to be called the Belfast BBC. I mean it was more accepted as their thing, because of course OB's, documentary programmes, meant that staff were always on the move throughout, what is after all quite a small area, so that BBC people were seen to be, and met, and known to be going about the whole of the Province, and I think that helped a great deal, and of course once the kind of personal contact was made, one assumed that this... they'd met Sam Hannabell on a features programme expedition, they would automatically listen to that programme when it came on the air. I think that's what went on. And in a way, you see, the small size of the six Counties made that almost personal contact possible.

GILLARD Yes. Did you, yourself become a known figure?

STEWART No, I don't think so. I mean I was invited to speak, I remember once in Londonderry. There was a

Belfast Society of St. Andrew, it's a kind of welfare body, set up originally to look after poor Scotsmen down on their luck. So I joined it, and spoke there twice, but of course that was as it were, nepotism. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Of all the broadcasting units at the BBC of course, you were a very special case. Was this recognised in London? What was the feeling of London towards you, and your feeling towards London?

STEWART There was a great deal of resentment that I wouldn't let the Features boys, for example, Gilliam's department, in to do programmes about Irish Nationalism. I mean just sheer resentment that a Controller in Northern Ireland had the power to stop this, supported by DG and the board. Talks were very much more understanding. I mean Mary Somerville was a very sensible woman, and Drama, we got quite a few plays taken nationally, so for once a shared wavelength didn't matter because they were getting it in any case. But there were several very good writers. There was Joe Tomelty, I've mentioned, John Stewart. Oh, I've forgotten, but there were three or four quite distinguished authors, and the Drama Department under James McGeehan, who'd started life in the theatre with Sir Frank Benson. I mean he was an old pro. Jimmy, and he was a thoroughly competent producer, and of course these were his native characters he was dealing with in the plays. They set one very imaginative piece called "Apollo in Mourne". It was about the God Apollo who got lost somewhere

and came down in the mountains of Mourne. I can't remember much about it. But it was imaginative. It was in verse, but they managed to do it.

GILLARD Nowadays, any references to Northern Ireland, or come to that, Ireland in general, that the BBC's going to make, have to be cleared first with the Controller Northern Ireland, and he has some sort of power of veto over them, radio or television. Did you have that?

STEWART Oh yes, yes. I... that's what I was trying to say the resentment in Features Department because I wouldn't let them come in and make programmes about Irish Nationalism.

GILLARD But apart from that, if they were programmes that were going to be made in London, but on the themes touching with Ireland, even those have to be referred to Controller.

STEWART Oh indeed, indeed. If it was, if the theme was Northern Ireland, or Ireland, then the expertise of Controller Northern Ireland had to be brought to bear and to say whether this could or could not sensitively be broadcast by the BBC.

GILLARD And that was not well received, I can well believe.

STEWART Oh the Features Department particularly were continually trying to get ways round it.

GILLARD And you were saying earlier that you had lieged against the creation of a Broadcasting Council, although there now is one at long last, and you had instead at this advisory body with Sir Harry Mulholland in chair. Was it of any use to you?

STEWART Oh indeed. There were various intelligent, imaginative people on it, who threw out ideas for programmes. There's no doubt about that at all. Two women in particular kept coming out with good ideas, not just for women's programmes, but in terms of talks series and so on. Oh no, it was a useful body and under Sir Harry's humane, humorous but very firm chairmanship. Oh I think it served its purpose.

GILLARD Did they serve as your ambassadors in the Province, do you think?

STEWART I wonder! Some of them must have, because one was seeing newspaper reports that Mrs. So and So, or Mr. So and So, and been speaking at a Roman... or a rotary club, and yes.

GILLARD The history of the BBC in Northern Ireland has been written up in a book called THE MOST CONTRARY

REGION, as you know, which says that you arrived in Northern Ireland as a professional among amateurs, but when you left the regionalism had been fully achieved over there. Does that statement make any sense to you?

STEWART Partly. It hadn't been truly achieved. I hadn't finished my job there when Jacob removed me. But oh yes, it was enormous professional progress in these years, and the fact of course that I had been both actor and producer meant that I could sit in a control room with the producer and say, "Look boy, don't do it that way. Do it this way" which, I suppose because of my reputation, they just took from me. But I'd done a lot of teaching of that kind, to sitting in with them, and they responded very well. I sat in this very room with the author of that book, doing what we're doing now. I mean that's where he got his ....

GILLARD I see, I see, I see. Well now so your term then came to an end, about 1951, wasn't it? '51? 52? it was round about then?

STEWART End of '52.

GILLARD The end of '52. So Haley had gone by now, and Jacob was Director General.

STEWART Jacob was Director General.

GILLARD And how did the change come about? You moved from Northern Ireland. You came to London to be Controller, Home Service.

STEWART Home Service, that was right.

GILLARD How did that happen?

STEWART I've no idea.

GILLARD You didn't apply?

STEWART Oh heavens no. He sent for me, and I said, "But I've really got about, I should think another two years to polish up the job in Northern Ireland". But he wanted me for the Home Service. So I said, "Well, a little time to think, please", and went off to see Benjie Nicolls.

GILLARD Benjie, this was Sir Basil Nicolls.

STEWART Yes.

GILLARD And who was he?

STEWART Oh, the whatever it was called. Director of...

GILLARD Programmes. Senior Controller,

wasn't he?

STEWART Something of a kind. And asked if he could give me advice and he refused. He said, "No, I couldn't advise you at all". So there is was. But Jacob was quite insistent that I should take over the Home Service.

GILLARD Now you succeeded Lindsay Wellington?

STEWART That's right.

GILLARD And Lindsay was moving into Benjie Nicolls place, wasn't he?

STEWART That's right, yes.

GILLARD As Director of Sound Broadcasting.

STEWART That's right.

GILLARD Now Lindsay was an old acquaintance of yours, of course.

STEWART Oh, we'd know each other I think as long as I'd been in the BBC. He was in very early on, and oddly enough I remember Cecil Graves saying to me, "Of course, Wellington should never have been a Controller, an Assistant

Controller was as far as he should have gone". And I said, "But he's intelligent and so on". He said, "Yes, but that's my experience and that's my judgement on it". Very odd!

GILLARD Did you have any special hopes or aspirations for the Home Service. What did you think of the Home Service at that stage?

STEWART Well it was the flagship of the fleet. It was the programme for the 'whole man', as the phrase went. It ranged across all respectable human activities. The Wednesday symphony concert was an established national occasion. The Monday and Saturday plays were outstandingly good under Val.

GILLARD Val Gielgud.

STEWART Yes. The Talks Department was under Mary Somerville, very competent, and I mean the resources for sound broadcasting and on keeping the Home Service schedule full were first class, and you could draw on the regions for whatever they were particularly good at. And some of them were, well as you know yourself, the West of England there was specialisation in nature programmes. Somebody looked after agriculture. Oh, the work was pushed out up and down the country.

GILLARD And who did you have to assist you?

STEWART To assist me?

GILLARD To start with the man whom I thought would get the job, Godfrey Adams, able, but overtired for too long, and poor chap he'd taken to the bottle. There was a reception in the Council Chamber and I remember Malcolm Sargent coming up and taking me aside and saying, "Look, I think we'd better get our friend out before he collapses". So we kind of shepherded Godfrey out and sent him home in a taxi. I mean it was pathetic, he was such a good decent chap. But then of course as Head of the Presentation staff, was John Snagge, a man whom nobody could have been better. I mean he was absolutely first class, both in his personal performance as a newsreader and announcer, and at his handling and training of the announcing staff. I mean his own great shame was when... and I've forgotten the man's name, reading the morning news, the eight o'clock news.

GILLARD Lionel Marsden.

STEWART No, I don't think so. No.

GILLARD Anyway, he was reading the eight o'clock news.

STEWART On the day the Stone of Destiny had been removed, and referred to it being taken from Scotland by Edwardist. And I really thought John was going to blow himself

apart with sheer rage and frustration at Edwardist. Then on the....

GILLARD Do you know that he went to... he put the announcer on the carpet and the announcer said to him, "John, as soon as I said it, I knew I'd made a mistake. I knew it ought to be Edward Ist. (LAUGHS)

STEWART Oh, I hadn't heard that, how funny really. On the planning side, there was Ronald Lewin. He'd been a Talks producer, he produced the Reith Lectures, highly thought of in his own department. Highly thought of by Reith lecturers, highly intelligent, gifted. I mean his subject would be a biography of General Slim. He became a ...

GILLARD Military historian, really.

STEWART Military historian, got the Gold Medal for it. So he was absolutely first-class in terms of intelligent planning, what to pick and where to put it. And he learned very quickly, and I must say I relied on him. He could have, he should in fact have succeeded me as Controller of the Home Service. He was.. I don't know what happened to keep him out of it.

GILLARD Well he was given the title Head of Home Service, Chief of Home Service, wasn't he?

STEWART I don't know.

GILLARD Yes. But well I knew him and he was a bit over the top, you know. There were times when he was a little bit unstable. One couldn't trust him.

STEWART Really. Ronald Lewin. Oh I never knew that.

GILLARD Yes, and I had to get him a job outside. I got him a job with Hutchinsons the publishers.

STEWART How every interesting. I would never have thought so.

GILLARD Well you know brilliance often goes that way, doesn't it?

STEWART It must have been too much for him.

GILLARD Yes it was.

STEWART Once thing of course you had in that job was perpetual pressure. Pressure groups, pressure for change, pressures not to change. And I remember I got really awfully tired of the Wednesday symphony concert having to be trimmed so that the interval would fall at nine o'clock for the nine o'clock news. Well I mean you really cannot deal with

symphonic works in that way, so I moved the nine o'clock news to ten o'clock, and of course the uproar. The sacred nine o'clock news, been there all through the war, Big Ben, the silent minute, and you really thought I was committing a sin of some kind to move the nine o'clock news. But, in the interests of the decent treatment of symphonic music, it just had to be done. And I suppose that under that kind of storm, there are a lot who may have been upset, possibly.

BBC ORAL HISTORY

TAPE 6

GILLARD Change of timing of the nine o'clock news surprise you?

STEWART Yes, it did, and oddly enough, I thought that it was a kind of manifestation of the loyalty of the solid loyalty of the basic Home Service audience that anything as structurally important as the nine o'clock news could be moved. No, I think it touched them in what I can only feel was a rather odd way.

GILLARD You, of course had other members in your team besides those you've mentioned.

STEWART Oh yes, well the No.2 on the planning staff was Clare Lawson Dick, clever, intelligent, experienced, and I hesitate to use the word 'cultured', but she was essentially that. Her judgement in terms of artistic music activities was very sound and shrewd, as was her feeling for where they should be placed in the schedule. What kind of time suited them best. And she was also very good at dealing with other departments, who maybe didn't like the timing they were being given or wanted to have a series of six instead of four and so on, and I suppose you'd call that charm. She was a very valuable member of the team.

GILLARD Have you any recollection of how much of the BBC's money you were spending in those days?

STEWART No, I don't remember what the programme allowance was at all.

GILLARD It must have been hefty.

STEWART It must have been pretty.

GILLARD Ran into millions for sure.

STEWART Oh, I doubt that, but ....

GILLARD Not per annum?

STEWART Of course it was difficult. You see the symphony orchestra had its own budget. It was not charged against the Home Service Secretary. I suppose, yes, I agree with you. If you were to charge as it were, the departmental budgets like the symphony orchestra, the concert orchestra and so on, and the variety orchestras, against the Home Service, my goodness. But these budgets didn't concern me.

GILLARD Now let's talk about the general pattern, because you were running the flagship service, which was the full time network. Then there was the Light Programme, which was a full time network, and the third, which was an

evening only programme. Who were the people in charge of the other networks.

STEWART Light Programme was Kenneth Adam, who subsequently became Director of Television, ex-MANCHESTER GUARDIAN journalist. He .. there was somebody else involved there, a Canadian, Pelthia(PH). But Kenneth was obviously the boss, and then the Third Programme was run by John Morris who had been in one of the Mount Everest expeditions, and knew both Hillary and the carrier who was with him when they climbed Everest. Very interesting, and one would discuss programme times with them, so that the same kind of output, you wouldn't have three plays in a row on Home, Light and Third, you'd try and have a mixed pattern of entertainment at any given time.

GILLARD How was that arranged? Did you have a little Committee, or what happened?

STEWART No, I think we just.. well of course we planned, at least I planned the Home Service quarterly, and had quarterly regions with the Regional Programme heads to see what they were offering. So that once a quarter, I would come out with a budget of drama, music, talks, OBs and so on, and having got that, you could then see Kenneth and John Morris about what my intentions would be, and was this in any way cutting across something they had in mind.

GILLARD Now you all three worked to Lindsay

Wellington, as he was called Director of Sound Broadcasting in those days

STEWART That's right, yes.

GILLARD And did you find in your working with him, that Graves' estimate of him, that he should never have been more than an Assistant Controller was justified?

STEWART It never crossed my mind till Graves said it to me. But I can see that there was a certain, I mean while Lindsay was very lucid and wanted facts, he sometimes was rather hesitant about putting them together and coming to what I thought was the obvious conclusion. He would haver a bit. He ducked right out of the change in the nine o'clock news. He just left that to me, and he said to me very generously on several occasions, "you are making a far better fist of the Home Service than I did", which was very handsome of him. I think that he was glad to be rid of the Home Service.

GILLARD But he didn't act as a co-ordinator between you and Kenneth Adam and John Morris?

STEWART No, he didn't. He left that to us. Mind you, I suppose he could have, but I don't remember him doing it. We would, when we got our schedules together, put our heads together.

GILLARD I always, and I don't mean this in any way to denigrate him, because it's in many ways something to be admired. I find him always a very conservative man. I think he felt that he had helped to build something very good indeed in BBC Radio, and he did not want to see any change in it. Did you ever get that impression? I mean I couldn't budge him over for instance the introduction of local radio or anything of that nature. He simply wouldn't have it.

STEWART Yes, I see what you mean. I don't know the cause was what you said. I think he was afraid of change, so the primia..... you put one foot on the slide and you never know where you'll stop. He was a highly conservative and well, his attitude to changing the nine o'clock news was just, as I say he ducked out of it.

GILLARD Yes. Where did you... Well I'll first ask you this. Of course during your term, the shadow of television must have been beginning to hang over you.

STEWART Oh dear. It hung over us very much, because obviously the visual medium was going to be very powerful indeed, and one struggled against it for a bit with the news at six which was...

GILLARD Your news.

STEWART ....highly much listened to. And then the, I put a band of light entertainment right along at

6.30, to try and keep, catch the audience early in the evening and keep them there. I don't know if it worked. I think it worked for a bit, but I remember it going, walking with Pat Hilliard down towards his office, and seeing in the gutter a little figure standing with his hat out. This was Arthur Askey. (LAUGHS) So I mean he went straight into the 6.30 light entertainment band, I remember. He was a very comical little sight.

GILLARD Yes, he must have been. And what about the loss of staff to television? That must have been very distressing.

STEWART I didn't feel it, because you see the Home Service didn't produce programmes. It must have been upsetting for Drama and Light Entertainment to see their star producers drained off, and the television people really didn't help it by talking about "steam radio, ha, ha, ha". You know, "I wonder how long you'll last", that kind of thing. It stung you.

GILLARD Did you have any relationship at all as Controller Home Service with people like George Barnes, or Cecil McGivern, the Director of Television and the Controller of Programmes.

STEWART Only in so far as in terms of ministerial broadcasts. I mean for example at the time of

Suez, the Controller Home Service was the first port of call about the Prime Minister, Opposition reply, when were they to go on. And these other services had to take the timing and the information, and the instruction from me. At that point the Home Service was still the flagship of the fleet, and in order to save confusion and multiple approaches, CHS was the chap who took the PM's Private Secretary and the Opposition and laid down the law about when we had to have an application for the right of reply. And this depended on the Chairman deciding if what the Minister had said was controversial, which of course, in nine cases out of ten it was. And the Chairman at that time, Sir Alec Cadogan couldn't be bothered listening to them. (LAUGHS) He'd say to me, "Well what he controversial?". (LAUGHS. Quite funny. But the old civil servant who knew too much really. But that was my main con... and of course, you know one met them and visited television studios and having acted in my youth and produced, I took an interest in the technicalities in the limitations of the cameras and screen. But that was purely on a personal basis, not professional.

GILLARD What did you make of McGivern?

STEWART Well I liked Cecil, but one always felt there was a kind of quicksilver quality that probably wasn't very steady. I thought he flickered, let me put it that way. But on the other hand I liked him very much.

GILLARD You didn't feel he was arrogant

towards radio?

STEWART No, not with me. Of course I'd known him a long time before he went to the television.

GILLARD As Controller Home Service and the control of the flagship in radio, did you have much contact with the actual Directors General, with Haley and Jacob? Did they take an interest in what you were doing? Or did they manifest an interest?

STEWART I don't... I can't remember anything particular. The one time Jacob took an interest was over Princess Margaret's marriage, when he insisted that the programmes be broken into to talk about poor Princess Margaret and her carry on with the Church. And I remember saying, "But it's now twenty past eight, can't this wait until the nine o'clock news". I mean it was obviously a headline piece for the news. "Oh, no, no. Must break the programmes, it's so important". Which I must say, I couldn't see the constitutional importance. I mean she wasn't the heir to the throne. However, that was the only occasion, and I remember Haley and Jacob really taking more than an interest. They'd issue an instruction.

GILLARD This, I presume, was when the announcement came out that she'd seen the Archbishop and told the Archbishop that he could put his books away, and she wasn't

going to marry Townsend.

STEWART That was it.

GILLARD What about news in the Home Service? How did it get.. because the news was an independent empire really, wasn't it? You provided air space for it. Did you provide money for it? I suppose you did in a way,

STEWART No, they had their own money.

GILLARD They had their own budget?

STEWART Oh yes.

GILLARD But you provided the air space?

STEWART I provided the air space.

GILLARD But you had no control over what they did?

STEWART Oh no, I had discussions with Editor News, Tahu Hole and Arthur Barker, his deputy, with both of whom I got on very well indeed, and as Haley once said to me, talking about the length of interviews with Tahu Hole. He said, "Yes, but if you just have the patience to sit it out, you'll always find that at the end of it, there's a piece of very valuable commonsense, based on fact. It takes him a long

time to work his circuitous way there, but he always gets... at least I've always found that at the end it's been worth it. Oh I remember Ministers sending up copies of speeches that they were going to make that night in Birmingham or Wolverhampton or what have you and saying, "Could you put this in the six o'clock news, and say I'm going to say it". And Tahu would absolutely not regard it as news until it had happened. There might be a car accident on the way to Birmingham. He might not make the speech. He might leave that bit out. What confusion. And on that kind of point of principle, he was dead right.

GILLARD He's.... I must say that in this archive, he's been a much criticised figure. On the other hand, I'm also bound to say that before he died, he and I had a long conversation as we're doing today, and he put his own case very strongly, so that he's well represented in person. But the criticism levelled against him was that he was extremely rigid and conservative, and every news item had to be confirmed three times over before it could be broadcast, and he was pretty brutal to the staff in one way and another. You didn't come across these things with him?

STEWART Oh yes, because when I was in Northern Ireland, the GOC Bertie... Bertie what was his name? Woolley? It was.... forgotten. Anyway, he went to be Governor of Bermuda, and when I was Controller of the Home Service year later, the Features Department did a programme on Bermuda in which the island was presented as being in the hands

of three or four very crafty looking half-caste Jews, and the Governor, Bertie Woodall, General Woodall, was presented on the tennis court, in shorts, sweating, as being a kind of silly elderly playboy who let all this go on under his nose. And of course, I knew that Bertie Woodall, whom I'd seen a good deal of because he was a Royal Engineer, and when Jacob came on one of his visits to Northern Ireland, I had Woodall to dine with him, and it was perfectly obvious from my contacts with Woodall which were much greater than with other GOCs Northern Ireland, that the man was absolutely no fool, because in fact he'd been sent there because his predecessor, if you'll excuse the phrase in a kind of typical upper middle class English way, thought that all this Irish problem is nonsense, "I can settle this in three easy movements", and he started having a good deal to do with Dublin. And of course, he was a very silly man. He'd obviously forgotten that the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Sir Basil Brooke's brother, was Alan Brooke, the CIGs, so he was whistled out and they had to look round for a soldier who would not behave in this silly fashion, and they sent Bertie Woodall, who I knew from my experience here was no fool at all. So next day, I rang up Jacobs and said, "Did you see.. hear last night's PANORAMA, or was it PANORAMA? Maybe it wasn't. It may have been a feature. I think it was PANORAMA. Not it was... It <u>was</u> PANORAMA. We were talking about Tahu Hole that's what reminded me. So I said, "Well sir, I think you should, you know General Woodall better than I do. And the presentation in which he was involved was to my mind absolute perversion of the truth. So he heard it, and he raised hell

about it. And that was what started his campaign in which news and current affairs were put under one editorship. And he insisted on Tahu being Editor News and Current Affairs, so that this kind of perversion, stupidity would not happen again. I mean there they were, out for their story, never mind whether there's a word of truth in it or not.

GILLARD Never let the facts spoil a good story. (LAUGHS)

STEWART Get your facts right before you twist them.

GILLARD Never let the facts spoil a good story, that's a Fleet Street maxim. Yes, it sounds as if you really rather enjoyed your Home Service time.

STEWART Oh indeed yes. There was always something. I mean it was a very talented staff, my own, and the various departments. Ideas were always coming up, and the challenge of finding money for them and so on. Oh no, I enjoyed that alright, and of course we lived very near the Albert Hall. There was the Wednesday concerts to go to. Malcolm Sargent became a great friend. Such an entertaining, witty creature, and apart altogether from the office, it was an enjoyable period.

GILLARD And I don't suppose you were too

pleased about coming back to Scotland as Controller?

STEWART Horrified.

GILLARD As much as that?

STEWART Well the Controller of the Home Service was always made a Director. Had been. It was the natural line of succession, as I said to Jacob in that paper I showed you. And we'd had all the trouble of moving three times, nothing fitted, finding a house in Trevor Square, so that I could walk across the park to Broadcasting House and keep myself in good trim, concerts, theatres. No, I had no wish to go back to Scotland at all. I'd done my stint there. On the other hand, poor Dr. Dunwoody had been kept too long. Glasgow was known throughout the service as the office in which you could get nobody on the telephone between half past ten and half past eleven in the morning because they were all at coffee. I mean it had, the garden has grown a bit wild, and Melville for all his keenness and drive in earlier days, had got past him. And I could see Jacobs' argument because I couldn't think of somebody who could have gripped the Scottish situation. I wish I could, but with the best will in the world, I couldn't go to him and say, the Head of Programmes, Aiden Thompson or Gordon Gildard or so. M... Kelsall or somebody like that could take it. It just was not on.

GILLARD There was, of course, the looming prospect of substantial television development.

STEWART Oh well this was dangled to me, that this was what I was to oversee, and the money would be available. In fact, of course, it was a bad hiccup, two year in, and the BBC had simply run short of money, and I had to say, "Well alright, we'll just stop where we are for a financial year", so that my plans were sadly interrupted.

GILLARD Now you had now to work with a Broadcasting Council for the first time. What did that mean? And what sort of a Council was it?

STEWART Well the Chairman was Lord Balfour, A.J. Balfour's nephew, who at that time was Chairman of the Coal Board. Very forthright, very ... spoke his mind. There were Conservative, Liberal, Labour elements on the council. Two very good trade union members. Balfour insisted that we look round and get a Church of Scotland Minister on too, very sensible. He and I would prepare an agenda for the monthly meeting which he chaired and I attended as their Chief Executive, answered questions, argued for anything I wanted to argue for, and in spite of the very diverse backgrounds of the council, I found that in one thing, if it was in the Scottish interest, they were absolutely solid, and the Chairman would go to London and say, "I have a unanimous Council behind me", and it was jolly difficult to overrule a National Governor of the temperament of Lord Balfour. And when he retired, he didn't retire, he resigned as a kind of scandal. His poor son. There

was a shooting accident. His son was cleaning out a shotgun, and shot himself. And Balfour said to me, "The awful thing was I feel the family must pull together, stand very close together. It's affected my wife in exactly the other way. She has simply gone apart". She actually went abroad and just left him the prey to a Hungarian harpie, who made a scandal for him, poor man. So he resigned. And then luckily, the Head of the Scottish Office, the Permanent Secretary, David Milne, had just retired. Now there was a man who knew all about Scotland and how it ticked. And I had no hesitation at all in getting his name put forward. And at the Home Office was Charles Cunningham. David told me that he'd learned one thing from Sir Godfrey Collins, the pre-war Secretary of State to whom he had been Private Secretary. He said, "I learned always bring on two men behind you. It may be a bit rough when you go. On the other hand, it often sorts itself out". Well in this case it sorted itself out, because Rab Butler, who was a cousin of Alec McCaren Smith, Lord Balerno(PH), looking round for a head of the Home Office, took Balerno's advise about having Charles Cunningham as head of the Home Office. So when the Milne appointment was in prospect, I got hold of Charles Cunningham and said, "Now, would you just exert all the pressure you can to see that David Milne gets this job". So David got the job. And the same kind of thing operated when Lord Norman Brook was made Chairman. Cunningham said to Milne, "David, you're a Governor, you know the form. Have you anybody in mind?" And David Milne said, "Yes, indeed, what about Norman?" Just as simple as that. And Lord Norman Brook was appointed Chairman

on that basis. Milne was an excellent Chairman, tolerant, let everybody say his piece. Very quick mind, summed up a whole situation. And whereas Balfour had lost his temper with Hugh Greene, given him a red-haired rage, and he would twitch for forty minutes, he was in an odd way, afraid of David Milne. He tried never to cross David Milne, which of course, as far as broadcasting in Scotland was concerned, was perfectly splendid. We just did what the Council said, and the National Governor saw that it was alright.

GILLARD What were the main developments then during your period? Mainly on the television side I suppose?

STEWART Oh yes. New studios in Glasgow, properly designed and equipped television studios. One converted studio in Edinburgh for news contributions. Aberdeen, the same kind of provision. Development of light entertainment, drama. I had two very good producers, Alec McClaren, and oh that chap who went to London. He's dead, unfortunately.

GILLARD Yes, I can't think of his name.

STEWART I can't remember his name either. The main television, and of course in Outside Broadcasting, football, the kind of national mania.

GILLARD Addiction.

STEWART Exactly, and Saturday Special arrangements and oh, and of course in religion, you see the network was dominated by Anglican services, and Greene, his feeling about Scotland was really quite extraordinary. He could hardly admit that the Church of Scotland was an established national Church. I remember Arthur Ford had to rebuke him. Our meeting was at the Pilkington Committee, one of these committees, and Ford had to shut him up, and I, when I went back to Scotland, realised the situation and said to Ronnie Faulkner, "Who is the expert in constitutional law?" And he said, "Oh without a doubt, Tom Taylor, the principal of Aberdeen University. So I went and saw the principal, and he spelled out to me the implications of the Treaty of 1707, clause 19, in which the Church of Scotland is established as a national church. I mean there are other elements in the clause about the law, but that was the church. So I came back with a brief by this eminent constitutional lawyer, and presented it to Lord Balfour, who simply pushed it through the board, and Faulkner got additional staff, money, the right to put on Church of Scotland services on Sunday. Things he'd been fighting for for years, absolutely up against.....

BBC ORAL HISTORY

TAPE 7

GILLARD .. Stewart's contribution. We're now on the fourth cassette and this, therefore, will be side 7.

And we were talking, at the end of the last cassette, about your period as Controller Scotland. Of course, you were a radio man but you were now coming into a situation where television must have predominated. How do a radio man .. how does a radio man adapt himself to television?

STEWART I didn't find much problem because, if you watch television and if you yourself, when younger, have acted and produced for the stage visually, the problems presented by a .. a television camera and the size of the screen are simply technical problems which you can quite easily master. I remember Tyrone Guthrie saying to me once, 'The fact is apron stage, proscenium arch, whatever kind of stage it is, is absolutely immaterial. The one thing that matters is: does a producer have it in here within to make actors do what they want?' And you've no further problems.

GILLARD But in radio, as you've described to us, you, in Scotland, had a fair degree of autonomy. You had lots of air time ..

STEWART Oh yes.

GILLARD .. and you had money and you .. you could, therefore .. you had a free hand in planning a programme. Now, what about television?

STEWART Well, I made the point to D.G. Jacob that it was logical and inescapable that the same degree of autonomy should go to the Broadcasting Council in television as they had in radio. The National Governor, the Earl of Balfour, of course, entirely agreed with that. It would simply be silly to have control of one medium and not of the other. There must be a kind of unity of purpose about the Council's activities. So that .. that was fairly easily solved.

GILLARD Well, it's one thing for you to decide it in Scotland but did London agree with you?

STEWART It didn't really matter whether they agreed with me or not because with a National Governor like Lord Balfour and .. a strong minded Council, under the Charter they were responsible and they jolly well saw that they were responsible and so did I.

GILLARD Did that mean that then that Scotland had .. special privileges .. I mean, special allocations of resources of one kind and another, over and above other regions?

STEWART Oh I think so. I mean, I can remember twice we got .. grants of fifty thousand pounds or something. I mean, in .. in today's terms that doesn't sound anything but twenty years ago fifty thousand pounds is a lot of money. Yes. I would say that under both Lord Balfour and Sir David Milne the Council and its chief executive, the Controller, had a very free hand indeed. And this was in a .. an interesting way welcomed by Lord Normanbrook who, as a civil servant .. and regarded Scotland - with a population of about five million as against a UK population of fifty million - as a very useful place in which you could try out something without committing yourself to too much expenditure in the way of money or manpower. So, again you see, with support from Lord Normanbrook in the chair, we got experimenting away.

GILLARD And .. did your Scottish audience .. respond favourably to your Scottish programmes?

STEWART Oh yes, absolutely. Absolutely. I mean a Scottish play, light entertainment, what was it called? THE WHITE HEATHER CLUB. There was a great deal of .. Scots country dances. Boys in the kilt and the girls in .. wearing sashes. And .. my namesake, Andy Stewart, singing A SCOTTISH SOLDIER. Um .. that was a very popular Saturday night entertainment.

GILLARD And drama, you did a fair amount of.

STEWART We did .. we had two very good producers. There was Faddick McLaren (ph) and .. oh.

GILLARD I .. I remember the man but he's dead, isn't he?

STEWART London borrowed him.

GILLARD Yes.

STEWART For three months, for a specific .. and he never came back. And poor chap, he died. His .. his wife is now a journalist and writes for the GLASGOW HERALD. His widow, rather. But I had two .. producers in which I'd have staked everything. And both very talented chaps.

GILLARD But most of their material was .. most of their productions were seen all over the country, weren't they?

STEWART Well, I think so. In many cases. And, of course, again you see we were lucky. There were some new playwrights but, of course, you always had a kind of standby in James Bridie who .. the strength of his plays was in the dialogue. It .. was .. even if it was on radio, it didn't matter that you didn't see them because the meaning was always perfectly clear but for television .. I remember the .. head of drama in London did .. his play about the .. oh, I've forgotten

its name. Oh the SLEEPING CLERGYMAN. And because the clergyman was asleep and this was all going on in his head he did it with one camera. It was an extraordinary technical achievement of .. and there was no recording then for television. It was live. An absolutely brilliant performance. But he didn't leave that to us, he did it himself. (LAUGHS) Not that it mattered.

GILLARD Well, your reign in Scotland, nevertheless, must have been overshadowed by the fact that you and the Director General in London were not really on very good terms with each other, were you?

STEWART No, we weren't on good terms. It was a very strange .. he had some antagonism to Scotland. I don't know what it was. I mean, he couldn't agree that the Church of Scotland was an established national church, like the Church of England. He .. he wanted me to .. he wanted to get rid of me, there's no doubt about that, and he tried to get at me through my wife. He was famous in his Malaysian .. Malayan days for psychological warfare. Well, that's what he tried on us. My wife was subjected to frightening telephone calls. Injury, rape, death, kill your dogs - that kind of thing. And the police said go ex directory and change your number. Which I did but the calls continued. Now, these calls .. that .. that number was only known in Broadcasting House. So you could see where the .. the psychological warfare was coming from.

GILLARD Was his voice actually identified?

STEWART No, they never identified voices. There were all kinds of voices. Many of them women's voices. Oh that .. it ..

GILLARD This is a very bizarre story, isn't it?

STEWART Isn't it. Quite extraordinary but it went on for quite a long time. And then, after we changed the number, it went on. And the people who'd got our number never had any calls but we with a new ex directory number kept getting them. So I've no doubt about that at all.

GILLARD I never heard anything like this about Hugh Greene before. I .. it's astonishing.

STEWART Well, in simple terms, and with all modesty, he hated me because I, in some way, symbolised this .. Scottish concept. Now, it so happened that my religious broadcasting assistant, Ron .. Dr. Faulkner (?), was invited to preach at Crathie and stayed at Balmoral, when they told me that the entire conversation with the Queen at dinner and after dinner was about the BBC and its failings and how it had fallen away from its principles and decency and even attitude to truth .. she went into - he said, obviously, having watched and listened a great deal - went into detail about all this. 'But'

she said 'I assure you all this is going to be put right'. And on his way to bed with the Lord in Waiting, Lord Plunket, he said, 'Her Majesty seems very certain things are going to change'. And Lord Plunket said 'Oh yes, we have it from your highest authority'. Well, that could only be the Chairman. So I told my National Governor, Sir David Milne, who, of course, was a friend of Lord Normanbrook's. And David, the most cautious of men, more or less looking over his shoulder, said, 'Oh yes, Norman is going to sack Hugh and you'd better be ready to move back to London'. Well, of course, the cardiac asthma killed poor Lord Normanbrook and the BBC was left without a Chairman. Well, it so happened that Sir Robert Fraser, who after all had created the Independent Television Authority, every now and again acted as though he was the Authority and not the Authority's executive, and he'd been going through one of these phases when Lord Hill was Chairman of the Authority. And Lord Hill very quietly just restored order. Restored authority to the Authority and put the chief executive where he should be .. to carry out the Authority's wishes. So, I asked for an interview with the Secretary of State, who was an old acquaintance, Willy Ross, and went to see him in Dover House. And there he was seated below the portraits of Prince Charles Edward Stuart and Henry Benedict, Cardinal Duke of York, on permanent loan from the Queen. And I said 'I realise, Willy, that you must be under considerable pressure. I'm sure the Prime Minister at his Tuesday audiences is hearing about what must be done for the BBC.' And he agreed that they were under pressure. And I said 'Well, I have a suggestion to make. May

I put it? Lord Hill, he has reduced Bob Fraser and Bob Fraser is tough to the core, whereas Hugh Greene's rotten at the core.' I saw Willy Ross again at the garden party at Holyrood House in July and he said, very quietly, 'You'll see we've taken your advice'. Which, of course, they had. I mean, you'll remember the uproar in the BBC at the thought of Lord Hill as Chairman. However, there he was. Well, then hubris sets in. People in high positions begin to feel that they're above .. that they're out of reach, that they can't be got at. Hugh Greene was going to Moscow and stopping off in Eastern Europe. He was photographed at Moscow airport, coming off an Aeroflot with a well known East German prostitute. And a .. a copy of this photo came into my possession. And through a third party I sent it to Lord Hill who sent for the DG on his return and said 'Hugh' - or at least so I'm told - 'how could you do this to me? You'll have to go'. So that extraordinary arrangement, whereby he resigned and joined the Board of Governors for a short period. And that was the end, the ultimate end, of my relations with Hugh Greene. And a very good example of our old motto - Nemo me impuni lacessit (ph).

GILLARD Meaning?

STEWART Well, in English, Nobody interferes with me unpunished. Or in the Scots, Wha dar meddle wi me (ph).

GILLARD And how did you end up your career

in the BBC? How did that happen?

STEWART Oh. Um .. it was very interesting. The Commonwealth Games were coming to Edinburgh. And I was invited to lunch by Bill Brown, the .. managing director of Scottish Television. And I assumed it was about the Commonwealth Games and sharing facilities because we probably just had about enough between us to cover the events. But, in fact, it wasn't. When STV got its new licence, Sir Robert Fraser said to Hugh .. to .. Roy Thomson, 'For god's sake, try and get somebody on your Board who hasn't got a title and who knows something about it'. And Bill, knowing that I was sixty, said 'Let's ask him'. And Lord Fraser agreed and I couldn't have been more surprised. It was a thought that had really never crossed my mind. But the next of it was that, instead of being allowed to complete the development programme which Ian Jacob had appointed me to do, I was to be told to leave on my sixty first birthday with about two years to run. And I pleaded that really they should let me finish this because, when you're in the middle of that kind of big physical development, you've got it all in your head. If anybody suggests a .. a difference, you at once realise what the knock on's going to be, how it's going to affect other parts of the development. But, no, Greene wouldn't have it. I was to go. Um .. and I was to go on my sixty first birthday. Meanwhile, he heard that this STV offer had been made and he asked Bob Fraser who said 'Oh yes, it's true'. So, in a rage, he ordered me out within three weeks. I had to leave without the usual

governor's dinner, in ignominy. My staff rallied round and gave me a wee party and a presentation. But .. I was just out and that was it. And various people .. Lord Balerno (ph) in the Lords and Rab Butler in the Commons wanted to raise this ridiculous retirement. And I persuaded them not to because the retirement age is sixty and I was over sixty. I said to them a .. a perfectly smooth answer saying that .. Mr. Stewart is .. over the normal age of retirement, somebody else can easily pick up the development programme and there is no reason at all why he should be kept on when it's not necessary. So I persuaded them both to do nothing about it. And .. as one of the producers in Glasgow said, 'You know, you wouldn't treat a dog that way'. So that was my ... the end of my forty two years with the BBC.

GILLARD Does it colour your memories of the whole of those forty two years? Or how do you look back on it?

STEWART Oh no. Not on the whole .. it .. I mean, this was entirely Hugh Greene and this extraordinary attitude to Scotland. Um .. how he could imagine that you could ignore the constitutional position, under the 1707 Treaty of the Church of Scotland, I simply do not imagine. Except again, that hubris .. you think you're above treaties and what the constitution requires. But in dealing with David Milne, who'd been Head of the Scottish Office, he was up against somebody who knew a damn sight more about the constitution than he did. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD But how do you look back on, at any rate, the more pleasant part of those forty two years?

STEWART Oh. Head of Programmes in Scotland, Ministry of Information, very interesting. Northern Ireland, a challenge, something to start really from the roots up: new staff, new gear, teach them everything. The Home Service, I mean the 'jewel in the crown' - all that most enjoyable and .. jolly lucky to have had it.

GILLARD I think that's how most of us feel. Yes. You don't regret the BBC and having ....

STEWART Oh, indeed, no.

GILLARD Thank you. Now, one or two things have occurred to me and I wanted just to pick up a couple of points from our earlier conversation that we can cut into the tape. Right back at the beginning, when you came into the BBC and you had your famous interview with Reith in December of 1926, that still surprises me that the Director General of the BBC - which was then four years old and quite a large company by then - should want personally to interview a .. a young recruit coming into .. coming into Scotland, a long way from London. Was it customary for him, do you think, to see every recruit in that way? Even at that stage in the BBCs history?

STEWART I think he interviewed new recruits

but mostly to rather more senior positions. On the other hand, the development in Scotland .. his native country, under a Director about whom he had doubts, meant that it was very important whoever was going to assist that Director would have enough sand in his nature to take a grasp of things. And, again, if I was recommended by Professor Rait, then there must be something to me because Professor Rait, who became Principal of Glasgow University, was a very wise man in his generation. So there were various factors, I think, which .. and, of course, a free Saturday morning. So .. he'd plenty of time for it.

GILLARD You were .. in other words, a bit of an exception, probably.

STEWART Maybe. I .. I simply don't know but that is very likely.

GILLARD Tell us just .. I'm sorry.

STEWART The exceptional .. circumstance being what was going to happen with the Scottish Director. How stable was he going to be? Better see that he gets an assistant who .. take a grip on things. I think that was what had to do with it.

GILLARD And .. I .. if you could, just briefly, take us through what might be regarded as a typical

day in .. in BBC Glasgow in 1927.

STEWART 1927. All right. In, probably, about half past nine. Deal with the mail: what the secretary could deal with, what should go on to other departments for advice and comment, what should go direct to the .. to the Scottish Director. I was organising a series of lectures for the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes, so there was usually half a dozen rural institute lectures to be .. studied .. given dates for. And arrange which of us was going to give the lecture. So that would take up possibly till about eleven. Then about eleven or eleven thirty there could be a meeting: planning, choice of plays, that kind of thing. That would probably go on till about half past twelve. Afternoon. Um .. well, of course, you then had your letters to sign but .. come three o'clock Children's Hour rehearsal. In with Miss ..... Aunt Kathleen, about what you were to do, what you were to sing, what you were to recite, what play you were to take part in. And that would go on nearly till half past four and then a break for tea and then on to the Children's Hour at about five o'clock. Then, if it wasn't (?) your day, after the six o'clock news from London - I mean, the trunk lines came through at six, so you then got the news from London - you then read the Scottish news, which was supplied by a local journalist on behalf of a local agency. And then, probably, Sergeant Gordon would produce a pie and a bottle of beer and then from seven till ten the rehearsal of a play, with you either taking part or producing. And this'd go on .. oh, four

or five days a week. You .. aimed .. you got most Sundays off. But, if there was a charitable appeal, then we took it in turn to come in and rehearse the speaker and put him on the air and take him off the air. So that one Sunday in ten or so we were on.

GILLARD Sounds like a very full life. You didn't have much time for a private life, obviously.

STEWART Oh, there was no time for a private life at all. You were just at it most days from ten in the morning till ten at night. And, on the other hand, this was a new thing. This was what we'd all wanted to .. have a part in and, by Jove, we were having a part in it. When there was a staff association formed, they stopped all that because, if you were a talks producer, you produced talks; if you were a music assistant, you couldn't have anything to do with drama. Whereas I always took the view that the young chaps coming in as studio assistants would never learn anything unless they had some part in production, whichever kind of production they were interested in. And I remember the secretary of the union thought this was really a most regrettable attitude of mine, exploiting these youngsters. I said, 'I'm not exploiting these youngsters. They'll never learn the trade, if they don't get their hands on it. They want to do it.' So we had quite a .. quite a time.

GILLARD Yeah, you obviously did.

This is Frank Gillard. Andrew Stewart has left me for a short time. He'll be back for Side 8 but, in his absence, I'm taking this unusual step of recording a brief postscript to the charges he brought against Sir Hugh Greene, in view of the fact that Sir Hugh is no longer alive and able to speak for himself. And, during the period involved, I was Managing Director of Radio and Director of the Regions, so I'm fairly well acquainted with the facts. Now, Mr. Stewart makes it plain in his recording that he bitterly resented being sent back to Scotland in the late '50s. And his resentment was first directed towards Sir Ian Jacob, as Director General, who took the action in the first place, and then, when Hugh Greene took over as DG in about 1959, these bitter feelings on Mr. Stewart's part became somehow intensified. And there were constant small battles. Stewart revelled in small pin prick victories, like his success in establishing the constitutional status of the Church of Scotland. For Hugh Greene, as I well remember, this was so negligible a matter that he gave it only passing attention. Now, Stewart alleges that Lord Normanbrook, Chairman of the Board, was about to dismiss Greene as Director General but died suddenly before he could take any action. And it's true that Sir Charles Curran, who eventually succeeded Greene, has also hinted, publicly, at the same thing. But there is no supporting evidence on this of any kind. And as one who constantly saw them both I can attest that their relationship appeared to be smooth and cordial always. But, more important, Sir Robert Lusty, the very active Vice Chairman of the Board and a man totally in Normanbrook's confidence, has

firmly stated in a letter to THE TIMES, that this rumour was utterly false and that there never was the slightest suspicion that Normanbrook or the Board were dissatisfied with Greene. Of course, it's not in the Chairman's power to dismiss the Director General on his own, he has to have Board support and, as a member of Board of Management at the time and very closely in touch with all the Governors, I can assure you that the Board of Governors was very solidly behind the Director General in these important years. Now, one must accept Stewart's account of harassment by telephone but his assertion that Greene was originating and inciting these telephone calls is quite grotesque. Greene had his faults but he was a big man in all respects and it's unimaginable that he'd stoop to such despicable and mean and unworthy actions. For .. for Greene, Stewart was just a .. a petty problem. Stewart, on the other hand, was a stern, unbending Reithian who nursed his grievances, who couldn't adapt himself to the more liberal approach to broadcasting which came in with television and, particularly, co .. commercial television and with the .. the '60s and with the Pilk .. Pilkington Report era. Stewart's unsympathetic rigidity brought him many enemies within the BBC and it's most probable that it was a disgruntled member - or ex member - of his own staff who was responsible for those telephone calls. He produces absolutely no evidence whatever, I point out to you, that it actually was Greene who was inciting them. Hugh Greene learnt of Stewart's plan to join the Board of Scottish Television, on his retirement from the BBC, in circumstances which caused him - that's Greene - some

embarrassment. Roy Thomson, the Chairman of Scottish Television, gloated about it publicly to Greene's face at a Government reception in London. Stewart had not had the courtesy to tell Greene of his intention. So it's perhaps not surprising that Greene reacted - with the support of the Board, including the National Governor for Scotland - by requesting Stewart to pack up and leave the BBC prematurely. It was the Board's policy in those days to require instant departure from BBC when staff accepted posts in commercial television. This action was intended simply to minimise the risk of BBC programme plans for the future falling into the competitor's hands. And now about Greene's visit to Moscow. This was an official visit inspired by our own Whitehall Government, keen to develop what were called 'cultural relations' with the Soviet Union. Greene was accompanied by his fiancee, a lady rather older than himself to whom he got married a short time later. He'd known this lady since his pre war days in Berlin where he was a foreign correspondent for the DAILY TELEGRAPH. She was a very well known and much admired, high class artiste of the German stage and screen and cabaret. And to label her, as Stewart does, as an 'East German prostitute' is an actionable and scandalous lie. She was a Berliner, a decent lady and totally anti Nazi. And I remember that, when she died in the early '80s, the Berlin and West German press published long and laudatory obituary notices of her. Stewart's deceiving himself, if he seriously thinks that by sending that photo to Lord Hill, the BBCs Chairman, he brought about Greene's dismissal. Hill, actually, has recorded for this

confidential archive a full and detailed account of Greene's departure from the BBC and it contains no mention whatever of this photograph business. Moreover, Greene was the only Director General of the BBC to become a Governor on retirement. Even Reith didn't get that honour, much as he craved it. Had there been the smallest stain of indecency, say, or disloyalty, as .. as Stewart is hinting, on Green's record, Greene's name would never have been submitted to .. by the Government to the Queen for appointment as a BBC Governor. Well, this grim and sorry story is just one thread in the history of the BBC which this archive is recording. It's importance, I suppose, lies in the light it throws on the sort of internal tensions within the BBC which seldom are revealed, even to historians. But such chronicles need to be properly balanced, hence this brief interjection by me, for which I beg your indulgence.

BBC ORAL HISTORY

SIDE 8

GILLARD .. with Mr. Andrew Stewart. And we're going to talk right from the beginning again about his experiences at the Ministry of Information. Now, correct me if I'm wrong. I understand the situation was that the Government, under the Emergency Powers Act, had special powers in wartime which, among other things, concerned the dissemination of information to the public.

STEWART Oh yes, indeed.

GILLARD And, therefore, a Ministry of Information had to be set up.

STEWART Both to inform the BBC and the press and .. to, as it were, be a kind of entrepot for all news .. a kind of prime stage in censorship .. for policy and security to make sure that anything that was not in the national interest or .. endangered security was stopped before it got currency.

GILLARD Now, you .. you, therefore, were right at the centre of this Ministry. The Ministry was presided over by a Minister.

STEWART By a Minister.

GILLARD Because it was a new field, they came and went, didn't they? They didn't know their way about very well.

STEWART Absolutely. I mean, Lord Macmillan of Aberfeldy, who was the .. the .. first Minister, was absolutely delighted. He used to go down to the news room and watch the ticker tape and say how interesting it was to see the news being made. You know, there was that degree of .. of innocence about it. Um .. Sir Findlater (ph) Stewart, the Director General, an Indian civil servant .. well, he knew a bit about .. policy and security from his experience in .. in India .. keeping things away from Congress and so on. But, again .. he had no experience whatsoever of .. of broadcasting, of the immediacy of broadcasting. You needed .. time to .. consult and consider which, of course, in terms of .. of news bulletin timetables did not exist.

GILLARD Well, in due course - and it wasn't very long actually - I think the third Minister was none other than our dear friend, Lord Reith.

STEWART Indeed.

GILLARD And he set up a broadcasting department.

STEWART Yes, you see, initially James

Macgregor and I were sent as liaison officers. And I introduced everybody in the BBC to the people in the Ministry whom they needed to consult or vice versa. And said now, there's no need to go through me, get on direct to the producer or to the Foreign Office officer or the Home Office chap. And by Christmas, 1939, I'd done all that so I .. I really thought I didn't need to stay, I could go back and be called up and ultimately commissioned into the Argylls. Well, I was hardly back when Lord Reith became - Sir John, as he was - became Minister. And there was no question of liaison officers for him. Broadcasting was too important. He created a department of broadcasting with Lindsay Wellington as head of it ..

GILLARD For broadcasting.

STEWART Of broadcasting. Tony Rendell (ph) for Overseas, me for Home, Joanna Spicer who was brought in from the Ministry of Labour, I suppose to give a kind of .. woman's point of view. And then I brought down from Edinburgh, James Fergus .. or James Fergusson .. who was very used to dealing with Government departments in the Scottish Office. So that was the broadcasting division.

GILLARD Now, what exactly was the job of the broadcasting division then?

STEWART Any Ministry department who wanted to have something broadcast, their first port of call was the broadcasting division. I mean, depending on whether it was for Home or for Overseas. This would then be in Tony Rendell's

hands or mine to weigh up what they wanted and, if it was .. if it was a starter, put them in touch with the right bit of the BBC. Which mostly was .. the news department. I mean, mostly they wanted announcements about .. home security, farming and fishing, that kind of thing. And it was all perfectly simple but .. but Reith channelled all that through his broadcasting department.

GILLARD Yes. Did .. did you hold daily briefings on the war situation for the BBC?

STEWART No.

GILLARD No. I wondered if you did. Later .. they did happen. When I was in the news division, Pat Ryan (ph) used to go down to the Ministry every morning at eleven o'clock for a briefing. Then he came back and briefed us. And he said Malta will fall next week. That sort of thing.

STEWART Yes. No, if anything .. how should we put it? Out of the way .. out of the ordinary .. news worthy came up, there would be that kind of meeting called ad hoc. There was provision for it but it wasn't a matter of routine.

GILLARD I see. Now, did Reith show any special anxiety to take over the BBC at this time? I mean, he'd longed always to keep his .. to have a strong hand on it,

GILLARD According to .. to the printed record, there were people in the Ministry - and I'm thinking particularly of one Director General, Mr. Frank Pick - who thought the Ministry really should take the BBC over completely and make it the voice of the Government. Was that really so?

STEWART I think so. (LAUGHS) Ah. An extraordinary story, Pick. When Reith left the Ministry and Duff Cooper was appointed, Duff Cooper said to the Prime Minister, I'm told, that he knew nothing about administration. And the Prime Minister said 'Well, go and consult Reith, he knows all about administration'. Typical Winston. Rubbing salt in the wound. So Reith said, 'Well, there's one man who's publicity conscious and that is Frank Pick. You know all these nice posters about .. on London Underground about 'What's (?) in Epping Forest?', Pick could be your man'.

GILLARD Because he'd been a railway man, hadn't he?

STEWART Yes. So .. so Reith picked Pick and sent him to the Ministry under Duff Cooper. Pick really wanted to run everything. He couldn't devolve really all the .. the detail that stuck somewhere about his office. Meetings would go on and on and come to no conclusions. I remember the first meeting of Pick I went to. Sir Kenneth Clarke was in the chair who said, 'Broadcasting represented by Mr. Stewart, Mr. Wellington can't come' to which Pick said 'Well, we shall get

didn't he?

STEWART No. I don't think so. He ..

GILLARD He was in a position to command the BBC while he was Minister, wasn't he?

STEWART He was. But .. and, indeed, as far as I can remember on any occasion he .. just got his way because he was a much more .. he was a stronger personality than Ogilvie (?) and .. he knew far more about it than anybody. And .. he knew who in the BBC did what. I mean, he didn't .. he was no outsider asking or telling the BBC to do something. He knew jolly well what could be done and who would do it. Oh no.

GILLARD I was wondering whether, since his entire expertise was on the broadcasting side, whether he leaned there .. that way because he was no lover of .. of Fleet Street journalism at all. And I .. he .. he would have been a bit at a loss surely in dealing with the press, wouldn't he?

STEWART Oh there was .. quite obviously .. the Beaverbrook .. the Beaverbrook animus was there. That's perfectly true. I mean, he .. he was always .. he was available for the press but he'd nothing like the .. the community of interest for the .. the printed word that he had for the .. broadcast word. No, no.

on faster without Mr. Wellington here to talk'. And then took a very hard look at me 'And I hope he thinks he's adequately represented'. A little charmer. And .. you'd discuss all kinds of possible campaigns, publicity campaigns, at enormous length with .. Pick always had some idea because he knew about posters for the Underground and he knew about these things, you see. And seemed to want to get his way and .. (SIGHS) ..

GILLARD He .. he didn't last very long there.

STEWART Well, he couldn't because he wanted a Christmas card and Sir Kenneth Clarke was commissioned to produce a selection of nativity Christmas cards and they were nearly all Italian except one which was German. And Pick chose the German card. And all the way around the table it was said but 'DG, it's German. Think what the press will say. Ministry of Information publicising German christianity. The thing's impossible'. So he left the meeting and went toddling along to his office and looked in at the Minister's office and there was Duff, I'm told, sitting drumming the table as was his wont. And he said, 'You know, Minister, I don't think I understand this place'. To which Duff said, 'If you don't understand it, you'd better get out'. So he got out and met Sir Kenneth Clarke and said 'Here, Sir Kenneth, I think I've had the sack. By gum, I have had the sack'. And he went. And very sad because he wasn't a bad chap. I mean, they gave him canals to look after or something but it broke his heart because this was

.. this was to have been the crown of his career.

GILLARD Yes. He'd been the manager of the Great Western Railway, if you remember, before ..

STEWART Oh had he, before he ..

GILLARD Yes.

STEWART .. took London Transport.

GILLARD And then London Transport, yes. Yes. Now, Reith's reign, as Minister of Information, was quite brief and you were a witness of the end of it, when Churchill came to power and reconstructed his Government. Tell us that story.

STEWART It was a Sunday and I happened to be on Sunday duty. And about a quarter to six the telephone rang and this was Lord Hood, the Minister's secretary, who said, 'Stewart, as you might well imagine, there's no wireless set in the Minister's office in the Ministry of Information, may we come up and listen on your set?' So I said indeed. So up they came. Reith, Lord Hood, Miss Nash, Reith's personal secretary. And the news was entirely Minister of this, Minister of that, Minister and so on. Minister of Information - and all this time, Reith was pacing up and down the room, never stopped - Minister of Information, Mr. Duff Cooper. And

Reith, without pausing in his step - straight out of the office and downstairs, followed by Lord Hood, followed by Miss Nash and I was kind of .. I shouldn't have gone but I was kind of sucked after them and I .. I couldn't stop myself. He gathered his papers, put them in his brief case. 'Thank you, Hood, for your help. See you at home tomorrow, Miss Nash. Thank you, Stewart. Goodnight.' and off he went. And that was the end of Reith as Minister of Information. And he never held really high office again, although his work for the Commonwealth Communications Conference and turning the ground in that scheme into the Commonwealth Development .. Association - under new terms all first class - cos he .. was a magnificent organiser .. but Winston, who called him that .. that 'bristling height (?) .. that .. something 'height'.

GILLARD Yes. 'Never let that ..' No. I don't know. But it's .. it's .. 'wuthering height' wasn't it?

STEWART Yes, that's it.

GILLARD 'Never let that wuthering height darken my doors again'. Now .. just finally, where .. I have in my mind the shadowy figure of one, Sir Stephen Tallents (?). Now, where does he come into this whole picture?

STEWART Well, he was appointed before the War as head of publicity or head of public relations. Director of Public Relations.

GILLARD At the BBC.

STEWART In the BBC. He came from the Post Office and he'd supported John Grierson in setting up the GPO Film Unit which was a very good thing. Anyway. Um .. but he couldn't make up his mind or make a decision. I remember .. and this was typical, shortly after Mr. Chamberlain resigned, he wanted to broadcast and I was again on weekend duty. It was a Saturday afternoon. And about half past two ..

GILLARD You were at the Ministry.

STEWART I was in the Ministry. On duty. And this was Sir Stephen Tallents.

GILLARD What was his office then? He was .. Direct ..

STEWART Well, he .. he was ..

GILLARD Deputy Director General? Of the BBC?

STEWART He may have been but he was on weekend duty. I can't remem ..

GILLARD At the BBC.

STEWART He'd be Deputy DG or in that kind of ..

GILLARD At the BBC.

STEWART At the BBC. And he said that they'd had a message that Mr. Chamberlain wanted to broadcast and .. did they have permission for that. So I said, 'Sir Stephen, Mr. Chamberlain was Prime Minister, he is now an ordinary MP. There is no requirement for the BBC to consult the Ministry of Information about ordinary MPs broadcasting. So, if he wants to broadcast - and I've no doubt all he'll want to say is to wish the country well - it's up to you'. An hour later the phone rang again. 'Even suppose he was Prime Minister, it's not quite the usual position'. So I said, 'No, I agree. On the other hand, the rule is the rule and, if you once start creating a precedent, you're putting your feet on a very slippery slope and you never know where it'll stop and who will need permission before he can broadcast. Um .. I think the decision is entirely for the BBC to make.' Half past .. four. 'I'd really .. Stewart, I'm sorry, I don't want to appear rude but would you please get in touch with your Minister and ask him?' So I said, 'Well, the Minister's in the country and he's le .. left very clear instructions that only on a matter of great national importance is he .. is he to be disturbed.' 'Still, I'd be glad if you would'. So I said, 'Right.' Rang the Minister, Mr. Duff Cooper, who said 'I wish to .. to hell the BBC would mind its own bloody business'. So I said, 'Thank you, sir' and rang off. And rang Tallents and said 'I'll quote the Minister's exact words.' 'Oh. Oh. Oh really. I see. Ah. Thank you, Stewart'. And, of course, they put him on.

And it was .. good wishes for the success of the War. Um .. and then shortly after six o'clock, R.T. Clarke, the News Editor, rang me up and said 'Brother, I have on my desk a long piece of paper purporting to be .. reports of conversations by telephone with Mr. Andrew Stewart at the Ministry of Information. And nobody's going to convince me that you're such a bloody fool as to have set it out (?) (LAUGHS) So Tallents had obviously covered himself. And that was typical of Tallents. He's a man of straw. There was another occasion when he was on over the weekend in the BBC and I was on at the BBC ..

GILLARD You were on at the Ministry.

STEWART And two air craft - I was in the Ministry - two aircraft of ours had a dog fight over the Channel and shot down two German fighters. On he comes .. on comes Tallents .. said 'What should be done about this?' So I said, 'Well, obviously, it will lead the news and, if we can get any interviews out of the Air Force - and god knows they're only too anxious to have publicity - get them on. Cancel the nine o'clock post script but .. but get the victors in this dog fight.' 'Oh, do you think so?' Backwards and forwards. I mean .. the thing was so obvious. Here was .. almost the first victory of the War and there he was havering away about not putting on these men. You really wondered how anybody got into that kind of .. high position with so .. not meagre qualifications but no qualifications at all.

GILLARD And yet he wanted to be the Director General and nearly did, I think.

STEWART Well, god knows what would have happened to the BBC if he'd .. I mean, the Ministry of Information would simply have taken it over.

GILLARD And that would be fatal. Yes it would. Well, unless you've .. more you want to say, .. (LAUGHING) .. I think we've done a good job on this interview.

STEWART Well, there's .. there's my .. Mutual, Max Jordan story.

GILLARD Oh yes. Do tell us that. Yes. Mutual Broadcasting Company of America.

STEWART That's right. That's right. Early in the War, the BBC started a monitoring service. They listened to enemy broadcasts, foreign broadcasts and, of course, they listened to the comments made by United States correspondents in Berlin. NBC, CBS and Mutual - the Mutual Broadcasting System. And the Mutual reporter was called Max Jordan. And my business .. I was sent from the Transcription Service every day a copy - a text - of what had been monitored. And my first duty was to read this and alert any department in the Ministry which might have been interested in the subject. I, of course, was primarily interested in what was broadcast by

the Americans. And there was one thing that rather puzzled me. I couldn't think what it was at first. But the NBC and the Columbia reporters always, if they were quoting from a German newspaper, said 'quote' and read the piece and then ended with 'unquote'. And in the transcript which I saw this was contained in .. in inverted commas. And then it struck me what the difference was in Max Jordan's pieces for Mutual. There were no inverted commas. So I got the monitoring service to listen over a period of three days to see if Jordan did or did not say 'quote unquote'. And they telephoned and said 'He does not say "quote" or "unquote" '. So I then got into touch with Isa Benzey (ph), who'd been the BBCs European Director before the War, and said 'What do you know about Max Jordan?' And she laughed and said 'Oh, he's absolutely in their pocket. Any meeting putting up a kind of joint broadcast internationally, Jordan's .. leaps in at once with both feet, supporting them'.

GILLARD What? He was a Nazi?

STEWART Supporting the .. the ..

GILLARD Germans.

STEWART .. Reichs..... (IN GERMAN) And .. she said 'Oh no, he's just in their pocket'. So I put all this together as succinctly as I could and telephoned my contact in MI5, on the red telephone, asking for 'H', and I told 'H' what I've just told you. And he said 'Oh, send me your paper, old boy. Named officer to me and named officer by dispatch

rider'. So I did this. And a fortnight later he telephoned me and said 'Got him, old boy. He's been recalled for consultation and when he reaches Ellis Island he'll be put in jug and he won't be seen again till the War's over. Good for you'. So that was that, I thought. Three weeks later, I was summoned by the then Director General of the Ministry. 'Where do you live? How do you get into the office? How do you get home? What do you do at the weekends? Walk on Hampstead Heath?' So I said, 'What is .. why all these questions?' And he said 'Well, we've just learnt that your name .. is now on the assassination list. But .. oh, they wouldn't execute you by yourself. You'd be machine gunned in batches of forty'. So obviously there was a mole in the Ministry of Information who had access to the files, who knew what I'd done in the way of Major 'H' and had reported back to base. So that was my real enduring memory of the Ministry of Information: to be told for the first time that you're on a .. an extermination list.

GILLARD You're lucky to have survived the War, Andrew. (LAUGHS)

STEWART And Northern Ireland because, of course, I was on the list there. I'm still on the list. Once you're on the that list, you're never off it. If I see some funny looking parcels where they shouldn't be, near the house, I just ring the special branch.

GILLARD Quite right, too. Well, hope you

survive for many more years.

STEWART And you, Frank. Nice to see you.

GILLARD Thank you very much, indeed. Yes. Right.