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START AUDIO

Frank Gillard: He was very upset on two occasions. One, when we came to land in Italy, because he had invited me to land with him and the Eighth Army to go with him in the little boat that was going to take him across the straits of Messina and land with him in the toe of Italy, a great historic moment and so forth

And a couple of days before that happened, I suddenly received a signal ordering me back to Algiers. And I didn't know what I was going back for. I think he did, but I didn't know. And I had to say to him, "Well, I'm sorry, but orders are orders. And I must go if I am ordered." And when I got back to Algiers, I found that I was to be attached to Mark [Clarke 0:00:37] and I was to land at Salerno instead, which was a much, much tougher proposition, of course.

And he didn't like it because I was detached from him and tacked onto Mark Clarke. However, I soon got back to him again. And then there was a second occasion when- this was in the last few months of the war, but Monty still didn't like it that I was down there and the minute the war was over, he called me on- God knows how he got through, because I mean, the whole communication system in Europe was disorganised, but he got through from his headquarters in the north to Bradley's headquarters in the centre of Europe.

And he called me and said, "Frank, if you can get back here by eight o'clock tomorrow morning, you can fly with me into Berlin. I'm going in to sign for Britain, the four-part treaty." Well, I was hundreds of miles away from him. It was dark. And the roads in between were in a terrible state.

I mean, all churned up by war, bridges blown and obstructions everywhere. And I didn't know the routes and that, sort of, thing, but I was going to have a jolly good shot at it, of course. So I loaded up the Jeep with cans of petrol. I found a driver who was willing to come with me to co-drive with me. And we just went from headquarters to headquarters through the night, simply asking each headquarters to guide us onto the next one, to direct us and so forth.

And I got to that airfield within minutes of Monty's flight taking off at eight o'clock and we flew into Berlin. We flew into Tempelhof. I think I must have been the first allied correspondent to see Berlin after the war, when the war was over and this was Monty determined- really publicly showing a favour to me as the man who had- not just to me – oh dear I'm being terribly arrogant – to the BBC.

He wanted to show, anyway, you know- I'm not saying that he appreciated, he had recognised the value of the broadcasting services during the war period. Well, I wouldn't go on any more about my wartime memories, but all those stories reflect on the BBC itself in one way or another.

Interviewer: The thing that I find interesting is that Monty who one thinks of as a, sort of, improvising general and I mean that in the best sense of the word, saw, as you say better, than anyone else

what use he could make of the BBC and its rather special contribution. I think that that's very interesting.

So it's the end of the war. And now you can't be a war correspondent any longer, if you want to stay with the BBC or indeed, anywhere else.

0:03:07

So what happened?

Interviewer:

Well, I really didn't know what to do. I was, as far as my own personal situation was concerned, I was much torn. I'd enjoyed being a school master. And I quite liked that life and I found it a little bit disorientating. You see I'm a bachelor and I don't like to be totally single-minded.

I like to have more than one interest and as a school master with a broadcasting interest on the side, that was fine. When I came into broadcasting, I couldn't do school mastering on the side. So I was left with one strand instead of two. And so off I went to Bristol, a small region in BBC terms. I had a staff list of about 20 odd senior positions with all the ancillary staff.

Most of those positions were vacant as most establishments were in the BBC because the proper tenants had gone off to the war and some were not coming back. And some didn't want to come back and so on. And I had about a thousand pounds a week to spend on- that's above the line money, to spend on regional programmes for the region and the opportunity of producing a good deal of material, if it was satisfactory in competition with the other regions.

And in competition with the London departments, for network broadcasting. And on the whole, it looked a very good outlook.

So I bought Bristol. I said yes to Bristol. The problem was about all these vacancies on the staff list. And I said to Gerald Beadle, who during the war had been for some years, director of administration in London and therefore was highly trusted, I said, "Look, you are such a big figure. Surely they're not going to demand that you of all people shall go through the ordinary appointments procedures to fill gaps on your staff? Surely you can get authority for people to be appointed to these posts on your say so and mind?"

And he said, "Well, I'll have a shot. It's very unusual," but lo and behold, the answer was, "Well, exceptionally and don't regard it as a precedent, but you may go ahead and appoint your own people. Go ahead." Well, this was marvellous for me. I mean, no question of advertising, no question of nepotism or anything like that. I just went outside the BBC to all my friends. I went to Desmond Hawkins and Patrick Beach and [Nicky Crocker 0:05:29] and Owen Reed and Brandon [Acton-Bond] and so on and so on and said, "Look, come and join me. I'm just primus inter pares. We're going to be a great team, Bristol is a lovely place to work. We've got everything to play for. We'll have a marvellous time."

Nobody said no to me. They all came. They all came and they all stuck it. I mean, 10 years later, they were all there. And you would take a writer like Thomas Hardy, we took Thomas Hardy and every single Hardy novel was dramatized and then was acted out in our studios by first class artists of west country origin, like Barbara Jefford, and others.

And with music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, who was quite happy to come down and write music for us, incidental music and would take instructions from us. The producer would say, "I want two and a half seconds there." So just to convey the

movement from the scene to that scene and Vaughan Williams would write it. You see. Now, the rules of regional broadcasting, as far as getting material onto the national distribution systems were quite straightforward.

The controller of the Light programme and the controller of the Third programme could take anything from you that attracted them as long as they paid for it entirely. The controller of the Home service had a smaller budget than the controller of Light and controller of Third because he was expected to take material from the regions, which the regions would supply to him at no cost.

If he took a programme from a region that was scheduled between five o'clock and eleven o'clock in the evening, the assumption was that the region would have been broadcasting that anyway, and therefore would pay for it entirely out of its own resources. If it was scheduled at some other hour, it was assumed that region would not have been doing it at that time and the Home Service would pay for it.

But controller Home Service, therefore had a great incentive to take a considerable quantity of material from the regions. Financial incentive, provided the quality and the style and the nature were up to his requirements. Well, we took jolly good care to see that the stuff we came- we had to offer him were up to his requirements, was up to his requirements.

And so we got a highly satisfactory degree of exposure for our staff in the national network, the Home Service, as well as in the Third and in the Light. This has covered an enormous range. I mean, from all that natural history stuff, right through to 'Any Questions?' for example, which we invented in 1948 and any number of other programmes, which went on for years and years

and years. Indeed some of them like 'Music to Remember' is still with us today.

Interviewer: I think you've probably answered the question, but I mean, Bristol is still regarded as a happy unit and is a very creative region.

0:08:14 Was this partly- I mean, do you think the freedom you had and the choice to start with, of bringing your staff together with that enthusiasm, which starts a tradition, I mean, has this happened? Is it the siting of the place? Does the West Country have more of a soul or does it have a soul or did you recreate a soul for it? There is something rather special about this region, which starts from this time.

Frank Gillard: I certainly think it has a character of its own. And it has an individuality, which is unique, I think.

I believe though that there's a great carry over, which is enjoyed to this day from the fact that you had a team of people who liked each other and who got on well with each other; extremely well, and who took in each other's washing and took intense interest in each other's activities and so on.

And this applied, you see, when television began to come in, in the early fifties. I mean, all these activities which we'd developed in radio, we conveyed exactly the same spirit, carried it over into television. People got television training and they came back to the region and used their television skills as they'd previously used their radio skills and I think there's an inheritance there to this day.

And it's a place where people don't mind working all hours and there's a real dedication and there's a real excitement about broadcasting which is still infectious and still comes over the air, actually, I think.

[Break in audio 0:09:37]

Well, who were the leading personalities in the BBC in the last half of the forties?

There was, of course, Haley who was now director general. He very soon took over that post from Mr. Robert Foot. Haley was only the editor in chief for a matter of weeks and Foot decided he wanted to go back to his business, which was Gas, Light and Coke. And so Haley became the director general, but he was an extremely able man.

And although self-educated, he was very well-read. He was the best read-man in the building by a long way. And he was a very good businessman and an excellent administrator. His failings were on the personal side. He was extremely, and still remains, most unemotional. And therefore rather enigmatic. You don't know what to make of him.

And when J.B. Priestly called him the man with two glass eyes, that really was a very good description of him. He was a man and it was a serious handicap for him who had absolutely no social qualities, whatever. He could not make social conversation with anybody. Shortly after the end of the war, the Dutch government invited a small BBC group to go over there to receive the thanks of the Dutch nation for everything that had been done for Holland during the years of occupation.

And the group consisted of Haley and Benji Nicolls, Sir Basil, later – Nicolls – who was then the director of Home broadcasting and one or two other people and myself. And it was most embarrassing because these fulsome speeches were being made about the BBC and Haley was clearly unable to reply in the right sort of terms.

And Nicolls got us all together on the second day and said, “Look, we have got to do something to give this man social confidence. I mean, we've got to teach it him. That's all, he hasn't got it and we've got to help him. He needs support. So get in there and teach him social confidence.”

You know, it was not an easy thing to teach anybody, but it was necessary. Haley's other quality was that he was a decision taker of the most ruthless kind. I mean, he knew what he wanted done. He laid the law down and it had to be done. And his job was to put the BBC on the right lines, financially.

The previous regime, the Ogilvy regime had been profligate with money and had run the BBC deeply until they entered debt. And it was Haley's job to get us back on the right side of the ledger. And so everybody was held back and we all resented it very much, but he didn't give a damn about that.

He jolly well made sure that the books balanced. And television was raring to go well, let it rare to go. You know, television, he said, “Must take its place in the national queue,” and that was it. Well, that was Haley. His deputy director general was Sir Noel Ashbridge who was the engineer and was never happen happy as deputy director general and indeed stepped down again, ultimately, and became director of engineering, but Ashbridge was a charming man and a first-rate engineer.

But really didn't understand anything about the programming side of the business, nor did he want to, and therefore he was not a success as deputy DG. The next man in the hierarchy was Nicolls, Basil Nicolls, subsequently, Sir Basil Nicolls, called by everybody, Benji. He was at one time called senior controller.

And then after Haley's reorganisation, when Haley set up the board of management, Nicolls became the director of Home broadcasting, which meant he was the overlord of both television and radio programming.

He was a man who joined the BBC right at the very beginning as a station manager in Manchester, in 1923. He'd been in the BBC ever since. He was a man of excellent intellect. Very well read, an Oxford man, of course, very experienced in broadcasting. Very adept at keeping himself out of the limelight.

So that to this day, few people know the name of Nicolls and he certainly wasn't known to the general public at all, though he was a mighty power in the BBC. He was, with all those qualities, and they were very strong qualities indeed, he was a most dangerous enemy. And a man of strong opinions who would hunt down somebody who he thought was an opponent or intriguing against him or a competitor.

And I've no doubt we shall hear about this from Sir William Haley, but he really was a man you tried very hard to have on your side and was most careful not to cross his path if you could help it. He was a man of clean desk, I remember. Every time you went to see his office, although he was sitting at the top of the pile, you never saw a scrap of paper on his desk.

It was always absolutely clean. There was this great thing about him and he was really openly contemptuous of many of his

colleagues. I mean, George Barnes, for example, who later became director of the Spoken Word and director of Television; contemptuous of Barnes, said the most awful things about Barnes and didn't give a damn who heard them.

0:14:59

Interviewer: Was this an intellectual contempt?

Frank Gillard: Oh, it was both intellectual and practical. I mean, he would say to you, "Barnes can't keep a secretary. He can't keep a secretary. He simply can't. He has to have a new secretary every six months," which was perfectly true. But, you know, it's not necessary really to go around the corporation saying that of a top man.

Well, another major figure was Patrick Ryan, who was in charge of all news operations. He was really imposed on the BBC during the war to make sure that the news was properly run. And I think it wasn't a bad appointment. He had been a number two to Sir Stephen Tallents before the war and Tallents was a number one, sort of, publicist and public relations man and all that.

Ryan, again, was an extremely intelligent, intellectual type of man with a very good grounding in journalism, which he'd gained on 'The Times'. And eventually he went back to 'The Times, as assistant editor and finished as that. But he was the news controller and he ran the news very well.

Then there was a man called McConaughey. Sir Richard McConaughey who had been in the Indian Civil Service, I think, and who was brought in to be the, sort of, Spoken Word controller. He had the funny title of Controller Home, which was, you know, nobody understood that outside the BBC, but it

meant- he held the post, which eventually became the director of the Spoken Word.

And he was the man who oversaw all spoken word broadcast for policy. And that's something that most genial and friendly, a nice man to get on with. Then the other people at the top were Sir Norman Bottomley, who was an air marshal, brought in from the Air Force on retirement to run the BBC's administration and an excellent man and very easy to get on with and very open-minded. He didn't know anything about broadcasting, but he ran the administration pretty well.

And Sir Ian Jacob who came in from the Cabinet Office as a lieutenant general, in order to be the director of the external broadcasting services at Bush House. And he was a most charming and able man and very open-minded and very, very able at his job at Bush House without any doubt at all.

And that was the top team and they were a pretty good lot really. And then the next line were the people in charge of networks and curiously enough, they were called 'Mr'. They weren't given titles. Mr. Wellington, Mr. Collins, Mr. Barnes and Haley made this an act of policy. I think he couldn't really work out a title for them to tell you the truth, but Wellington was Lindsay Wellington later, Sir Lindsay, who ran the Home Service. His background had been during war, he'd been the BBC's man in New York.

And he was a BBC man from 1924 or '25 onwards, '25. And therefore had a very solid background in BBC principles and so forth, extremely conservative in his approach to everything.

But a man who- he was an aesthete. He was devoted to standards and that, sort of, thing, but he was not progressive in any way. Then for the Light programme, a very different, sort of,

cup of tea altogether. Norman Collins who'd been brought in during the war from the publishing world and who stayed on and who was given this job of running the BBC's most popular service, well, he was a tearaway type.

He was extremely ambitious and made no secret of it. He was very determined to get what he wanted. He was a hard driver but he was very successful. He created the Light programme and he made it an absolutely first-class service.

He was extremely good. And of course, ultimately he went over to become controller of programmes and television. He never became director though. And then the third man in the radio triumvirate here, it was Barnes, who was giving them the Third programme when it was set up in 1946. And he was the man closest to Haley, always.

And he was the man who Haley felt he could talk to. Haley used to say of him, "He is my conscience keeper," he used to say that publicly and Barnes, George Barnes, later Sir George, was an agreeable man, a civilised man, a cultivated man, but oh dear, terribly weak; terribly, terribly weak, and could be made to reverse his position in conversation.

He'd take a stand in one direction at the beginning and if you worked on it, in half an hour, you'd get him through 180 degree turn. George, he was like that. And George had a little coterie and clique of people around him, which perhaps was good for the Third programme in its early days when he had- you might say, I had a clique of people around me in Bristol, you see.

But in the long run, it didn't work out too well, but there was George Barnes. Then, at lower level, heads of departments and so forth, you had Stuart Wilson as a controller of music. And he

was just a buccaneer and he was a great guy to know, most amusing, but absolutely hopeless at running the music department.

He went on to become music director of the Arts Council and got a knighthood. Goodness knows how. Val Gielgud was running drama and doing it superbly. Gilliam was running features and features were still at the top of their [reclam 0:20:23]. John Watt was running variety and he was extremely good and, you know, and very, very able.

And then you had all sorts of people like Mary Summerville who had been running school broadcasting, and now was promoted to be controller of all talks. So she had talks and school broadcasting and religion and all sorts of things under her. And Mary was an intellectual, a sweet woman, absolutely sweet, but she saw her role, not as the editor of a newspaper of the air, but as the vice chancellor of a university; that was her approach to the thing and she made no secret of it.

And so this determined the nature of spoken word broadcasting and radio for a number of years. It was still very academic in style. It was still script bound. It was still very shy about getting into controversial areas. It was very anxious to be authoritative above everything else.

And therefore, never go out on a limb with a statement unless you could check it 10 times over but, nevertheless, I mean, Mary made a great contribution there. The man in charge of outside broadcast was [Diller Binya 0:21:28], who was beloved by everybody. He was six foot eight or something like that. They used to call him the outsized broadcast director because he was so gigantic.

And he was the man who established not only for this country, but worldwide, the, kind of, commentator style that's now very common, both in radio and television because he went on to become OB director in television as well. And then ultimately he left radio behind him and became only OB director in television and so on.

And he was the guy who really taught people the art of the running commentary, as it was called, and how that you always had to have associative material up your sleeve, so that if you were suddenly faced with a hiatus of some kind, you had plenty of things to talk about, which bore on the subject and were authoritative.

And he would tear you to pieces after every performance on the air, in the nicest possible way. You couldn't complain about it. But nevertheless, he was devastating in his criticism and didn't mind being devastating, and isn't, in the nicest possible way, it was a terrific experience to go through. He used to make me, I don't know, grovel, shrink. He used to make me curl up because in his lecture, his regular lecture to the staff training school, he always played as an example of how not to do it, a commentary of mine.

And I was head of a department for goodness sake. (Laughter) I was head of programmes in Bristol, but this was a perfect example of how not to do it.

The news editor was a man called R.T. Clark. He worked under Brian, who was the controller. R.T. Clark was one of the greatest journalists I've ever known. And he was not only a first-class newsman, but he was also a great historian. He knew more about the history of warfare than anybody I've ever met and was recognised as a great authority on that.

He became a great, sort of, Denison of B.H. if I can use it that way. It started in the war when his home, I think, was destroyed by a bomb or something. So he took up residence in B.H and got himself a little, sort of, cubby hole place down in the basement. Which became his home. I mean, he slept there. He lived there.

His sleeping hours were rather odd. He never went to bed before four o'clock in the morning and he never got up until just time to shuffle into Ryan's morning meeting in his slippers, unshaven, all puffy in face. Nevertheless, very, very wide-eyed. And there came a time when, after the war, when the building was being reconstructed and returned to its normal shape; during the war of course, engineering and all sorts of other functions had been brought down into the basement because here they'd be secure, including all control room operations.

Well, R.T. Clark's little cubbyhole was next to the control room and the time had now come to move the control room somewhere else. And they wanted to knock R.T. Clark's cubby hole down, and nothing would get him to leave the place long enough for it to be knocked down. And, you know, we had- a few of us had to be induced to invite him out to a celebration lunch at the Café Royal. I forget what the event was.

So that the builders could move in and knock it down. And when he came back, he never forgave us for this, and he's quite right too. His cubby hole was gone. As he didn't go to bed until four or five in the morning, he used to perambulate the building all night long and go into office after office, and things like pencils were in very short supply in those days.

And if you had been rash enough in your office to leave your pencil on your desk overnight, it would be in R.T. Clark's little

cubby hole by the next morning. When they came to knock it down, they found thousands of pencils there. All these eccentricities added up to a most endearing man and an absolutely first-class journalist who had the total respect of people like Alistair Cooke and others

Alistair never ceases to talk about him and write about him. And one of the best journalists, I suppose, who's ever been inside the BBC and certainly a great character. And then there's Uncle Mac, Derek McCulloch who'd come in as an announcer and who became a head of 'Children's Hour', and was beloved by children nationwide, if not worldwide, and was a tremendous national figure who was stupid enough to leave the BBC to go out and work for the 'News Chronicle', because they offered him money to run their children's page.

And he knew nothing about journalism and he made a mess of it and wanted to come back into the BBC, but he wasn't greatly loved in the BBC, though, he was enormously loved by children.

And so the BBC was regretfully, unable to reaccommodate Uncle Mac when he tried to make a re-entry and he had- his closing years were rather difficult here. Because he'd been badly wounded during the war. I think he'd had, I don't know, a dozen or more operations, he'd lost an eye. He'd lost a leg. He really was only half a man and had lots of guts and courage, but oh dear, he had a very sharp temper indeed.

And he was a great schemer and a great intriguer and around him, the atmosphere was never very smooth or very happy.

Interviewer: Certainly, the reputation which lives on is of a rather-

Frank Gillard: Irascible.

Interviewer: Yes.

Frank Gillard: And then coming up, of course, were all the TV figures in the early years after the war. The first director of the television service didn't last there very long.

He was Maurice Gorham who had been editor of 'The Radio Times'. Then he was given charge of the Allied Expeditionary Forces programme, and he ran that during the war. And then he was moved into the reinstatement of television after the war, but he was an Irishman and he couldn't stay anywhere very long.

And by about 1947, he was on the move again and moved out of the BBC altogether and went back to Dublin, I think. And that was when Norman Collins was moved from the Light programme where he'd been a resounding success, into television, where everybody thought he'd be an even greater success of course. And also he took into television with him, Cecil McGivern, who had been a radio producer in features department who was a brilliant features producer without any doubt at all, who had had a spell in the film industry, who left the BBC at the end of the war and had a couple of years in the film industry and then came back in to be a controller of programmes in the early years of the reborn television service and held, sort of, position for the next 10 years or so.

And when ultimately, television had grown big enough to become a directorate, which was in 1951, the board did not appoint Collins as Collins had expected as the first director of television with a seat on board of management. Haley true to his

friends, appointed George Barnes. And it was not a good appointment because George never really knew what television was about.

He was much too much an intellectual and aesthete and that sort of, thing. He really despised television, but nevertheless, he couldn't resist this, kind of, appointment. And of course, Collins was mortally offended and stormed out of the BBC and set in motion all the mechanics which ultimately led to the introduction of commercial television in this country.

I think difficult as a colleague as he may have been, Haley would have done well to make him director of television, to keep him safely under the umbrella, and there's no doubt about it, the man was so ambitious that he would have driven the television service into great achievements because he was determined to make a name for himself.

He was determined to get his knighthood and alas he never did. And all that opportunity was thrown away. And, of course, he became one of the BBC's well, not his best friend, certainly. But that's the line-up of the, sort of, people we were working with in the years immediately after the war, a very mixed bag of people.

0:29:12

Interviewer: We've gone really from the BBC, from war to peace, but is there anything else you'd like to say on that transitional period?

Frank Gillard: Yes. A great deal. Before the war, the radio services of the BBC consisted of two networks, one of which was regionalised. One of the networks was called the National and the other one, the one that was regionalised was called the Regional and they

offered contrasting programmes. It was not a case of one carried all music and the other carried all speech or anything like that.

They were balanced programmes, but when one was doing something that was entertainment, the other was doing something that required stretching the imagination and the intellect and so on.

Now, Haley came in from the outside world and he conceived that the BBC total job couldn't be done on less than three networks. And he wanted to- this is the beginning of generic broadcasting, in a way, he wanted a central, strong network service which would be what was called the Home Service, which would be a mixed programme, but for the, kind of, middle brow audience.

It would carry a mainstream music, mainstream drama with a beginning and a middle and an end to it. It would carry all these strong news and current affairs programmes and so on, it would carry the documentaries. It would be a mixed programme, but it would be aimed at a pretty broad public.

It would be flanked by an entertainment programme called the Light programme. And, God, the deliberations we went through before we found a name for it, you know, the Light programme, eventually it was. In the end, all the cracks were, "When's the 'heavy' programme coming up?" and all that, sort of, thing, you know. But the Light programme wants to be continuously entertaining, but it was to respect the intellect of its audience.

And it was to present serious things, but in an entertaining way. Well, the Third programme, of course, was conceived as a service which would appeal to the discriminating and the

intelligent listener who was prepared to take radio seriously and to work hard at it.

[Break in audio 0:31:16]

But in Haley's view, this pattern of Home Service and Light programme was incomplete. He wanted a Third service which would be aimed directly at the discriminating listener, the person who was prepared to take radio very seriously and to work hard at it and to pay attention to it and not using it merely as background noise and that, sort of, thing. And which would really do a massive job of nourishing culture and the arts and serious music and all that.

So his concept was of a three network system and this Haley was not a man who propagated Halley's comet. He propagated Haley's pyramid. It was a geometrical description that he gave to everybody, both inside the BBC and outside, of its concept, of broadcasting as a pyramid with a very broad base, which constituted the Light programme and which attracted a mass audience with a transverse section across the middle of the pyramid, which attracted a much smaller audience.

But, nevertheless, a fairly large audience and which satisfied the broad, kind of, middle of the road interests, which a large number of people had. And then at the top of the pyramid, a much smaller group of people who would be prepared, as I said, to take their listening extremely seriously. And he reckoned that about 10% of the audience would be attracted to the Third programme.

And about 35% of the audience would be attracted to the Home Service and about 55 to the Light programme. These were the kinds of figures he went around quoting. And this was how the

thing was launched. And, of course, it quickly proved that the pyramid yes was there, but the level at which the Third programme transfers had been taken, so to speak, was much nearer the top than the 10% figure, suggested it was jolly nearly at the very peak.

And the Third programme was really not drawing much more than 1% or 2%, in fact, of the total audience, nor has it ever since drawn more than about 1% or 2%. Nevertheless, there's no question about it, this set a pattern for broadcasting worldwide and certainly Europe wide which has been extremely rewarding to listening audiences down the decades ever since.

And this was Haley's concept. Simultaneously, with the institution of all this, he wanted the restoration of regional broadcasting incorporated in the general Home Service pattern. And he gave us 90 days in which to do that. And there were to be three regions in England, apart from the London area, that's to say North, Midlands and West and South.

And then there was to be Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland. So six regions outside London. And of course then there were the external services and peripheral things. Simultaneously with the institution of this new pattern, was the job of slimming the BBC down because during the war, it had grown enormously, particularly on the external side, but also internally too.

I mean, a whole lot of temporary people had been brought in, in order to run the, kind of, operations that war demanded. And they were on short term contracts and they were now to go in any case as people were discharged from the services; men and women of much higher quality were becoming available and they had to be given priority.

And also simultaneously, Haley instituted very tight budgetary control in order to bring BBC expenditures within his grasp, again. They'd got out of control during the war and he was quite ruthless about that. Absolutely. I mean, to illustrate how ruthless, the time came in the forties when it was decided up here in London, not in Bristol, that we should have a house orchestra, BBC orchestra in Bristol.

I was merely told this decision had been taken and I welcomed it. I wasn't hat over the moon about it, but I was glad to have an orchestra in Bristol. Right. When finally I was shown the plan for this, which had been approved at DG's finance meeting, I said, "But there is no mention on this financial approval of a conductor. You've provided for the salaries of leaders and section leaders and rank and file players and so forth and that's all fine, but where is the conductor?"

And the people up here in Benji Nicolls department who had prepared this estimate said, "Oh, God, we forgot about the conductor. We will have to go back to Haley." So they went back to Haley and he threw the estimate at them over the table and said, "If you are too slack to include a conductor in your original estimate, you can do without one." So we had an orchestra and no conductor in Bristol, and there was only one way out of it. I had to slim down the size of the orchestra in order to release some money to pay for a conductor.

But, Haley was like that. You made the mistake and you and I suffer; I hold you to it. And I think perhaps it was very good for the BBC to be under that, sort of, man at that juncture. They were, of course, the golden years of radio from '45 onwards until television really began to take over. There was a great flowering of radio talent during that period in almost every department that

you can think of and look back at 'The Radio Times' of those days and you'll see what I mean.

And Haley being a journalist, greatly encouraged the strengthening of news and topicality and the coverage of current affairs and that sort of thing in ways that had never been envisaged before. And he also encouraged the development of more liveliness in programmes and more controversy and less reluctance to deal with controversial matters.

Now, the talks department here was unable to go along with him in that. I mean, they just hadn't got the people who thought that way, but some of us in the regions had. And so when I invented any questions- which I mean, didn't take much inventing, did it? Can't think of a more simple formula, but nobody had thought of it until then.

It was despised by the talks department here in London. Absolutely despised, but the network controllers, both Lindsay Wellington, and whoever was running the Light programme by then, I think it was... I think it was Tom Chalmers had become controller at Light programme. And then both saw that 'Any Questions?' was valuable property.

Wellington took it on the Home Service for a year and then Chalmers took it over because it was clearly capable of attracting an audience larger even than the Home Service would normally attract.

[Break in audio 0:38:14]

But, you know, breaking through the controversy barrier took a long time and Haley was a man who encouraged us to. So these were the great years of radio, both nationally and regionally, but

there was a little cloud in the sky, the size of a man's hand, and it had the name 'television' written over it. And television was available only in London until about 1950/'51. Then it spread to the Midlands. And after that, it spread around the country and, of course, television began developing in the course of the next five or six years, we saw television takeover.

0:38:50

Interviewer: Which you accommodated within your staff in the west region, of course, as they did in most regions?

Frank Gillard: Yes, we got extra staff to help cope with it. Yes.

0:39:01

Interviewer: So you began to grow with the beginning of television in your own region, but remained very much a radio man or...?

Frank Gillard: Well, from the beginning, I took the view that it was all broadcasting and that I was a broadcasting man.

And I took the view that we were one corporation and we should use radio to support television and television to support radio. And the two should work in partnership. And in a region where you had a certain opportunity to manage your own affairs, you could do this to quite a remarkable degree. And for many years I had producers who worked ambidextrously in one and the other. I mean, a drama producer would do a television play this month and next month he'd do a Thomas Hardy serial in radio.

And I was rather sorry when that practice was abandoned, because I found that such a producer became a better producer in television because he did radio, because most television

producers had their eyes glued to the screen and they don't hear what's coming out of the loudspeaker.

But if you're a radio man, you automatically listen to the loudspeaker. Equally, it did good for radio productions because a radio drama producer often loses the sense of rhythm. And when there's a movement indicated in the script, he does not allow the appropriate degree of time to allow that movement, to take place, to convey a sense of reality to its audience.

Whereas, if you've done television, you know that you've got to allow time for a movement to take place from here to there. And you carry that knowledge with you back into radio. It's interesting how the two techniques interacted on each other.

0:40:32

Interviewer: While you worked in Bristol as director of programmes-

Frank Gillard: I was then head of head of programmes.

Interviewer: I mean you very, obviously, were traveling to London a great deal because you knew all the personalities there very well. So was it inevitable that you should then move back to London?

Frank Gillard: Well, I suppose it was in a way. Haley had said to me, right back in those days in Italy that we spent together, he said, "I think I may want you as a chief of staff one day."

And I said, "You might want me as a personal assistant. I can't see you ever wanting me as a chief of staff." He said, "I mean what I say." And during the early fifties, we're now getting onto

my story rather than the BBC's story, so let's be brief. Wellington asked me to come to his office every morning at 9:30, which was easy enough, and every evening at 5:30. His wife was a working girl and she didn't get home until late and he didn't need to get home in Hampstead until [quarter to half past seven 0:41:36], in fact, she didn't [want him there]. So that he had loads of time in the evening to sit about in the office and talk. Well, it amounted to talk, talk, talk, talk, talk.

And going through his tray and things that he didn't want to deal with, he handed over to me. I pleaded with him. I said, "Let me have responsibility for something; programmes, administration, finance, whatever you like, but something, let it be mine." He said, "I can't do that because I've got people in charge of all those things and they're all senior to you. I can't push you in over them. No, no, you continue to sit here with me, you know, we'll be all right. We get along together."

In coming to London at that moment, this is 1955, I had hoped that I would be able to persuade Lindsay and persuade the people above him to use VHF, which was now coming into circulation at long last, to introduce local radio in Britain, because I had long been- this derived from the fact that from the early fifties, the BBC had sent me to America almost every year to report on what was happening in what was then called the educational broadcasting world over there. That's the non-commercial world.

And the thinking was that all this was locally based operations throughout the United States. So it was far better for a regional man in Britain to would watch it and comment on it than for somebody at the centre. And I had seen what local broadcasting could do for communities, even when it was starved of resources as it was in the United States.

And I had considerable concept of what BBC local radio could do. I reckoned that there was as much of a job for radio to do within the local community as there was for it to do, and it had already done, in the national community. And I wanted to see us developing local radio. And I was sure that if we didn't, somebody else would eventually.

So I hoped that by coming here and sitting beside Lindsay Wellington, I would be able to persuade him to sponsor the development of local radio. Well, I failed. He decided that for the time being at any rate, VHF should be used – to use his phrase – “To reinforce the existing service.” And, of course, medium wave reception I have to admit, was very bad indeed. Especially after dark and long way reception also wasn't very good.

So there was no doubt that it did need a certain amount of reinforcement, but there was so much VHF about that we could have spared some for local radio too, I felt. However, it was obviously not on and I found this thing of chief assistant to DSP was quite a non-job. And this was recognised here in London and I was immediately pushed on every working party that existed.

And every committee of inquiry and so on, I was a, kind of, statutory member of them all. One of them sat for two years to try and plan the reorganisation of the radio services. And I'm afraid we didn't come up with anything very exciting.

We took two eyes off the Third programme every evening, started it at eight o'clock instead of six o'clock and gave six to eight to adult education and that, sort of, thing. The press called it, 'the fretwork network', if you remember, because we dealt with hobbies and all that, sort of, thing in that period.

The other one, the other working party I was on, which was much more serious, really, was set up by Jacob to advise him on how news and current affairs programmes should be organised and controlled. Because these were days when news was news and current affairs was current affairs and there was absolutely no relationship between them at all.

The experts, the parliamentary correspondents, diplomatic, economic, and so forth in news were not allowed have any dealings with current affairs and current affairs never consulted news about anything, equally.

And Jacob was very unhappy about this and so was the board. Well, he set up this working party, which consisted of John Green, who was controller of talks and radio now, as chairman, and John was a real civil servant type of- you never saw him without his bowler hat. He always wore a black jacket and vest and striped trousers and was very much a precedent of the union man and very lofty and he was a big fellow and a very intellectual.

And certainly, he was the university vice president and journalism to him was a dirty term. And then John was the chairman of this committee and the members of it were [Tarhu Hull 0:45:51] who was editor of news and a very controversial figure indeed in the BBC and Cecil McGivern who was this mad hat who was director of television programmes and, myself.

And we sat for more than a year working on this wretched problem. And at one stage, since we never got anywhere near agreement, we all went down to Brighton for two or three weeks to the Metropole Hotel, hoping that separation from London and

the infusion of sea air and all that, sort of, thing would inspire us to unity.

We all finished the Brighton conference thinking we had achieved unity, when the poor wretched secretary who was Richmond Postgate presented what he thought was a fair transcript of what we'd agreed, we all with one voice said, "It's not what we agreed. We don't agree with this," but we all agreed different things.

So we came up in the end with four, quite separate sets of recommendations, to Jacob, which was a very unhappy outcome for him in this prolonged business. And he took a little bit from here and a little bit from there, and I'm glad to say, I think he took more from mine than from most people. And the one thing I most of all wanted to see was the creation of the post of director of news and current affairs because Jacob himself was not a journalist.

And I felt somebody on the board of management ought to be, and he gave it to the person I hoped he would, namely Hugh Greene. And that was the big outcome, which I thought was what mattered on that.

END AUDIO

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