

The Connected Histories of the BBC

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Reminiscences of S. G. WILLIAMS; Television Centre 21 July 1971

These recollections are of a personal kind and, of necessity, it may well be necessary to use the first person singular, but I wouldn't want to give any impression that S. G. Williams won the war by himself! They are recollections of a long time ago and therefore may not be entirely correct, but they may give clues which can be followed up.

I first joined the Monitoring Service in October 1939. An embryonic Monitoring Service had been established before the war, started by Dick Marriott, and when I joined there was a small group working at Evesham, though the Direction of it remained in London, where it was accommodated in Scott's Hotel, one of the buildings immediately adjoining Broadcasting House. From the first, a digest of the monitored material was produced daily, as well as a more specialized 'Cabinet Report' which was sent to members of the Government. The general characteristic of the Monitoring Service at that time was one of continual expansion; almost daily the number of areas of the world that were covered was increasing, as the war developed and more and more countries were overrun. This meant that there was a continual hunt in the highways and byways for qualified linguistic staff, mainly nationals of their own countries, who had a sufficient command of English for them to be able to do this monitoring job.

The main characteristic of that early period was one of enormous and speedy development and the recognition that operation at Evesham would have to expand very rapidly, and the only method of making this possible was the building of additional huts there - huts which still stand there today. In addition, there was the very real problem, in Evesham, of the assimilation of a large number of foreigners who of course were suspect in the eyes of the local population; they disliked, on the one hand, having people billeted on them, and even more so they were worried at having to take into their homes foreigners with whom of course very few of them had had contact in the past. There was, therefore, so far as the Evesham side of the operation was concerned, a very delicate problem to which enormous attention had to be paid: on the one hand, of providing the physical working conditions which were necessary for doing the job that the Monitoring Service were doing, plus of course, the technical

facilities that were needed, and on the other, taking an alien population into a local agricultural community and both settling them down as an alien population and trying to get them in one form or another to be assimilated into the local community. Looking back over that period, it seems remarkable to me that the people of Evesham responded so well to what must have been a traumatic experience for them.

Wood Norton was, of course, a major security area and in those days the military were very much in evidence, guarding the premises and not only did we have the problem of the assimilation of the alien nationals into the community, but there was also the problem of overcoming the inherent suspicion of the military to these foreigners and, although their job was to protect the installations in the whole operation at Wood Norton, there were times when they felt that part of their job was to prevent all these foreigners getting into the premises! We did have quite considerable difficulties in the early days in getting the military, while doing their important job, to accept the fact we were a rather strange community there, and that if they kept everybody out there was, in fact, no point in any of us being there at all! The Monitoring Service operation remained divided between the Evesham operation, which consisted of the reception unit and the specialized secret unit known as the 'Y' unit, and London, where there were the report writers and what was called the Information Unit. The material from Evesham was teleprinted to London in two different phases. One was the immediate and urgent information, which went through to the Information Unit at once; the other were the longer monitoring reports which came through in slightly slower time. The function of the Information Unit was to pick out both the urgent and immediate information and other information which should be disseminated to Government Departments and our own news services rapidly. The report writers took the material and wrote their daily reports which generally summarized what had been picked up by the monitors and put it into what was a very widely distributed daily document. It was also in the Report-writing Section that the Cabinet Report was written.

It was when the bomb hit Broadcasting House that the decision was taken to shift the whole of the Monitoring Services operations to Evesham, including the Information Unit and the Report Writers. When the bomb hit

Broadcasting House it destroyed the centre studio tower. Studio 3A was at that time used a security area for those Monitoring Service people who had to remain on duty during an 'Alert', and it was one of the senior members of the Monitoring Service, a man called Sokolov, who was killed when the bomb hit Broadcasting House. It was after that incident, and bearing in mind the intensification of the bombing at that time that it was decided to shift the whole of the operation to Evesham.

I am, so far as this piece is concerned, now talking about my general recollections of the Monitoring Service. I may not have been with them at that time. As I will tell later, I left the Monitoring Service and did another job, going back again to the Overseas Service and was concerned with the Monitoring Service in a different capacity when I was in overall administrative control of the major part of the Overseas Service operations. I am going a little out of sequence in my own personal jobs into my general recollections of the Monitoring Service.

The transfer of the whole of the operations to Evesham presented various logistical problems. In order that the reports should in fact be available in London first thing each day it became necessary for the whole of the publishing side (conversion of the reports, once written, into stencils and then into the final printed documents) to operate an overnight duplicating establishment, and this was a major operation, both in terms of getting the girls to work at nights to do the typing and, (coming back to what I said earlier about assimilation into the local community,) of an increasing number of people who had to work at night and go back to the billets to sleep during the day. At the time when we set up the whole of the duplicating operation at Evesham it was put in charge of a girl who at that time was in charge of the Duplicating Section in London, Mary Lewis, who ^{later became} ~~is now~~ the Pay Policy Officer in Central Staff Administration. When the time came, she having established the operation, for her to be replaced, as she was needed elsewhere, the job was then taken over by a girl called Johnnie Bradnock. She was a member of the Television Service staff and was in charge of the Make-up Department; as a matter of interest she returned after the war when television re-started and was a very distinguished Head of the Make-up Department for a great number of years - a small illustration

of the different talents that people produce when circumstances demand it. There was a military dispatch-rider service from Evesham to London for urgent material, and the documents used to be sent by car to London first thing every morning. As the war intensified, the utilization of petrol for this purpose was considered to be unjustified, and the documents were sent in enormous baskets by train every day and distributed from there.

I mentioned earlier that in the first stages it was the military that provided the protection for Evesham, but this function was later taken over by the BBC itself, and there was established a company of the Home Guard, who did a great number of these duties - in a somewhat less severe way than the military. As happened elsewhere in the early days of the war, the security arrangements had to be relaxed a little in order to provide the forces for service overseas. According to my recollection, there was a very strong 'esprit de corps' amongst all those who worked at Evesham, and although I was not there, I believe that the Home Guard operation at Evesham was a very satisfactory one.

The time came when it was evident that the facilities at Evesham, both technical and physical, were inadequate for the job that had to be done, and a search was made for other suitable premises. The main consideration at that time was the technical one of getting adequate reception for all the tasks that had to be done. The three chief people in the Monitoring Service at that time were Dick Marriott, Oliver Whitley and John Shankland, who was a wartime recruit. The choice of a suitable site caused great difficulties and there was a very strong clash between the senior men of the Monitoring Service and the Engineering Division. The Corporation decision was taken, based on the technical assessment of the Engineering Division, to buy the premises at Caversham. As a result of this decision, Marriott, Whitley and Shankland resigned. All three went into the Services and had distinguished war records - Shankland was killed. The move duly took place to Caversham, where the Monitoring Service is housed satisfactorily to this day. It is of interest that the Corporation purchased Caversham during a period when Government policy was to requisition premises. This decision came in for criticism by, I believe, the Public Accounts Committee but, comparing the value of the property as purchased by the BBC at that time with its value today, there is no doubt that the Corporation has created a great/national asset in the value of the present-day property! In order to make it possible for the move to take

place satisfactorily, bearing in mind what I said earlier about the difficulties of assimilation in Evesham, not only did the BBC take the present main building, but we rented - or purchased, I am not sure which - several other premises which were turned into hostels. There was one unusual feature - unusual, that is, for the BBC - in that one of these buildings was converted into a creche for married women with children, so the BBC at that time ran a hostel for kids! My recollection is that the move took place with remarkable ease even though, in that particular area, the Reading area, there were of course, unlike Evesham, a great number of industrial activities, and the billeting problem was even greater than that in the early days at Evesham. From the point of view of the staff, there was of course the added advantage of proximity to the Metropolis and I think the staff themselves felt rather less isolated than they did in the country district.

I mentioned earlier about the skills which people can produce, which one didn't know they had, yet I believe that the Monitoring Service operation as a whole and all those who participated in it, ranging from the monitors, the engineers - the engineers in particular - to those in executive positions, showed remarkable skills in building up what was in fact a totally new activity, for which there had been no previous experience of any kind. The backbone of the operation was made up of people in the BBC, senior and junior, who were not required in wartime service for their existing jobs and who were shunted into this totally new operation and built together as a team. In addition of course there were a great number of people who were recruited from outside the BBC, of all ages and both sexes, and who made a very major contribution to the war effort. One name stands out in particular, of a man who showed exactly the same qualities when he was in the Monitoring Service as he showed in his later career as a broadcaster, a bucolic, lovable character, extremely efficient, difficult to get on with but dedicated to the job he was doing; that was Gilbert Harding, who first joined the BBC as a member of the Information Unit in the Monitoring Service. There's one little ^{story} about the assimilation of staff at Evesham: there was, in the later period at Evesham, appointed a General Howard as a kind of 'Camp Commandant, though his title was in fact 'Evesham Area Director' or something of the sort, and he was in charge of the general administrative set-up. There was also a Moroccan soldier who had been seconded from the French Army to the BBC as a monitor. He was a very

distinguished-looking man, and wore his very elegant uniform with an extremely elegant cloak which was white on the outside and red on the inside. There were certain complaints by mothers of Evesham of the association of this Moroccan soldier with their daughters, and General Howard sent for him and tore him off a strip and told him that the ^{good} name of the BBC was being endangered by his association with the girls of Evesham and, in future, when he left Wood Norton and walked down into Evesham he must always wear his cloak, which would thus give the girls the opportunity of seeing that he was coming and getting out of the way. It did, in fact, have the reverse effect; when they saw him coming, they stayed where they were! I suspect that his cloak was used to cloak the activities that the mothers didn't wish him to pursue!

Going back now in history to the period when there was the major blitz on London, I was at that time released from the Monitoring Service and my place was taken by George Allport. During the intervening period, while I was awaiting my call-up, the blitz started and I was called in to organize the sleeping accommodation in London. This required, I think I am correct in saying, sleeping around 400 people each night, and there was of course first of all a major organization problem: how did one set about allocating this accommodation? Even more important was finding the accommodation in secure areas and, later, the problem of cleanliness. This all had to be done on a crash basis, and the main areas that we established for sleeping were: the Concert Hall in Broadcasting House, where mattresses were laid out on the floors - all the seats having been removed - this being regarded as a safe area, we had some mattresses laid in the inside corridors in the lower areas of Broadcasting House, down in the basement areas, in the Paris Cinema, in the Criterion Theatre, in the basement part of Scott's Hotel which I mentioned earlier, which was propped up with wooden props. I led at that time a troglodyte existence, being up all night and trying to find somewhere to sleep during the day. We obtained all the mattresses we could and people were given a mattress on the floor plus a couple of blankets. The arrangements for the booking of the sleeping accommodation required some kind of expert organization; my father-in-law at that time was Manager of the Palladium, which had closed, and I borrowed from him and had put on temporary BBC contract, two of the Palladium Theatre booking clerks, and they just moved in on this booking arrangement with true expertise; we had no more problems in this area because they knew how to prepare theatre plans

or bed plans. Although mattresses had to be removed from certain areas during the day, the House Staff had their plans, and they put them down in exactly the same positions the following night, and the individual was given a ticket when he booked his bed, which had on it, 'Your Bed' and showed the actual location and the actual place where the bed would be. We also had the problem of cleanliness because, as I said earlier, we started off with a couple of blankets, a mattress and a pillow - the pillow was just the ordinary striped tick, without any cover on it and the mattresses also had no cover. We solved that problem by seeking advice from the Youth Hostels Association, and we adapted a method which they themselves had pioneered, of having calico sleeping bags made, which were in effect sheet sleeping bags with an integral cover for the pillow. This overcame our problem of cleanliness and these were issued to individuals; if it was for one night they handed it back the next morning, and if they were staying on for a week they kept it for the week and then handed it back for laundering. We had great difficulty at that time in finding the calico, which of course was done by Buying Department. The difficulty was a somewhat macabre one, the tremendous demand for calico because of the expectation, which fortunately was not fulfilled, of very, very many casualties, and the local authorities were seeking this same material for possible use as shrouds. The seriousness of the situation at that time and the problem of the staff getting their rest in order to be able to fulfil their very important wartime duties was perhaps underlined by the fact that for a period of a fortnight, when what was then known as the Control Board (equivalent to today's Board of Management) used to meet daily, I used to have to report every morning to the Control Board on the current situation: how many people had been bedded down the night before, what the current problems were, whether more authority was required in order to fulfil the responsibility which had been placed on my shoulders, and I suspect that that was the only period in the history of the BBC when a member of staff had reported ~~the~~ to the Control Board or Board of Management daily wearing a pair of slacks, an open-necked shirt and unshaved! This was not the shape of things to come in terms of 'with-it' dress, but it was simply impossible for those of ~~us~~ us who were involved in the job at that time to pay particular attention to the hour of the day and the seniority of those to whom we were reporting. We were not able to accommodate everyone in the place where they were working, and it was necessary ~~for~~ ^{to} shift people, say from Broadcasting House to the Paris Cinema

or the Criterion or to other places where we made beds available. There was a night-time transport ride which had to be timed in between the attacks over London. Here again it was quite remarkable that, in spite of the almost continuous air-raids, we had very little difficulty in persuading the staff to move under those circumstances. Why I say it was surprising that we had very little difficulty was that, although all of us living at home obviously had to put up with those conditions in our own homes, nevertheless there was the danger of sort of 'troglodyte feeling' amongst those who were working during the day and had to clear down to air-raid shelters when there were air-raids causing them not to be willing, when on duty, to come out into the fresh air. This was another of those tasks which had to be tackled immediately, and which involved a great number of people, not just one person; I just happened to be the chap who was put in charge of it, and after a relatively short time, the pattern was established and the machinery for dealing with it continued to be available in one form or another until the end of the war although, fortunately, there was very little need for it in the later period.

I should like to add one other point to the Monitoring Service story, where my memory isn't particularly good, but it may well be worth following up. When the major transfer to Evesham took place, we did have a sub-unit of the Monitoring Service in a security area in another London building and, in case that was damaged, we also duplicated it in a block of flats in Carlos Place. I think I am right in saying that the London base was provided in a building in Stratton Street, with an alternative in the block of flats I mentioned in Carlos Place, which was also an area used for sleeping accommodation.

Coming now to the blitz period and to the operational activities of what at that time were the Empire and the European Services, the main Empire Service operation was moved to Abbey Manor, which housed the Empire Newsreel and what would now be called the Presentation side, and it became the main operational headquarters of the Empire Service. The European Service operations were at that time in Broadcasting House and at the time of the bomb on Broadcasting House the Empire Service Direction side were moved to Bedford College together with, I believe, a part of the European Service Direction side. The studio operational side of the European Service was

largely conducted from Maida Vale. I recall, the day after the bomb on Broadcasting House, standing on a chair in Bedford College, with a black-board, and people teeming around me wanting somewhere to sit and somewhere to carry on their jobs. We had taken the building at short notice and there had been no time to put telephones in - there were about three telephones in the building at that time. In a very short space of time it was converted into a very satisfactory working area. I don't remember how long we were there, but there was even then there was clear evidence of having to proceed even more rapidly with the finding of other accommodation. It was at that time (though the date would have to be checked) that the European Service first moved into Bush House. I recall that the first area that we obtained in Bush House was the J. Walter Thompson studio and a very small suite of offices associated with it; that was the beginning of our squeezing other people out of Bush House by requisition and by negotiating with the Ministry of Works, because it was also the area where the Political Warfare Department with whom the European Service had such close associations, were housed, and we had a very strong claim to be alongside them. This was the beginning of the great development of the European Service, always in Bush House. I don't recall the detail of all that, because in the early days that was not one of my direct responsibilities.

So far as the Empire Service was concerned, it became clear at an early date that it would not be possible to continue at the distance at which we had to operate at Abbey Manor, and we also had other operational aspects there: at Evesham - the Latin American Service was moved there, and the Arabic Service. The news continued to come from London and the Direction side came from London. We were still in the situation where it was considered preferable not to come back into the centre of London with all its difficulties, and so we requisitioned the premises at Aldenham, which were at that time occupied by the Ever-Ready Company (batteries). Aldenham was a good place from the point of view of communications and it also had the merit of being a fairly large community because it was again necessary for billeting to be organized there. The first people to move out of Evesham were the Empire Service people from Abbey Manor to Aldenham. As part of the longer-term planning we then searched again (the dates I don't recall) for more accommodation for the expanding service; it was apparent that we could no longer continue with the Direction side and the operational side being

separated, and we then planned to move into a secure block in central London. We made a very wide search in central London in conjunction with the Ministry of Works and we looked at such buildings as Mount Royal and what was the Gamages building near Marble Arch, which has since been given up by Gamages and is used for other purposes. I mention these two buildings because it was an illustration of the importance attached by the Government to the activities of the BBC; in a sense the world was almost our oyster in terms of buildings that could be requisitioned providing they were not directly involved in the war effort. Our search ended with the Peter Robinson building, later known as 200 Oxford Street - Peter Robinsons had the two buildings at that time, their present one and 200 Oxford Street. I recall handing, personally, the requisition notice to the Directors of Peter Robinsons and, although their outward face was one of dismay, if not anger, it seemed to me that they were really crocodile tears, because it was quite evident that they no longer had the goods or the business to operate in the two buildings.

Our need at that time was for secure operational areas below ground, or at least that was our need at the time we took the building and started planning it. The above-ground accommodation was really to be a duplicate of the below-ground, but the assumption was that we would be working below ground most of the time; in fact, as things turned out, when the building was ready the blitz had ended and the accommodation above ground was occupied more often than the accommodation below ground. This in itself presented us with problems because the whole construction had to be of a very austere nature, with short partitions and only a limited number of the offices with direct access to outside windows; nevertheless it enabled us to achieve what we wanted to do, which was to pull the operational elements of the Empire Service together and provide them with an adequate number of studios for what was then an extremely large operation.

Following the move to 200 Oxford Street, the Latin-American Service and the Arabic Service then moved from Evesham to Aldenham and both operations then settled down satisfactorily. I mentioned earlier the problems of foreign nationals and living together in a small community; we found that quite a number of the problems of personnel that we had when the Latin-American and Arabic staff were at Evesham became less when they came nearer to the centre

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of things and were able to make their social and personal life somewhat more separate from their official life, in other words we had to pay somewhat less regard to their personal activities than was necessary when they were in a much smaller community such as Evesham. There was, however, the same characteristic as at Evesham and Caversham, in that the housing was arranged by billeting and of course each one of these moves brought in its train the necessity to open up new areas for billeting or to replace one type of billettee with another type, but to my mind it was quite remarkable that we had so few problems with the staff, whether at Evesham, Caversham or in the Edgware district; it must have been a really traumatic experience, for many people to find that they had to take into their homes, compulsorily, billettees and in particular billettees who were foreigners of all nationalities, with all the suspicion that there naturally is about the habits and behaviour of foreigners, and I think in that way, in terms of association with foreigners, the population of this country, ~~which~~ was far less sophisticated than it is now with all the foreign travel that people have indulged in since. An interesting little point there in regard to the cost of living is that the standard billeting fee at that time for bed, breakfast and evening meal was one guinea.

It is perhaps interesting to recall, in these more violent days, that in my association with the various evacuation areas and the billeting in which we were involved I don't recall any incidents which were of a violent or dangerous nature. There were certainly occasions where for some reason or another there was an incompatibility between the owner of the house and the individual who was being billeted, and that was coped with by arranging a sensible transfer, but I can't personally bring to mind occasions which were of a serious character which called into question in any important way the behaviour of the individual. I don't think there was any comparable area of activity which involved so much the association with the local community. There were of course people being billeted from factories and industrial areas but, having regard to the nature of the ^{employed by the} staff/~~which~~ BBC, it would perhaps have been reasonable to expect that they would take rather less kindly to the conditions which billeting involved than some other categories that had perhaps lived in less sophisticated circumstances in their normal daily life.

During these major periods of the war, where I was involved as

Monitoring Service Executive, later as the Administrator of the Empire Service, and after that, as what was called Assistant Director of Overseas Programme Administration, where the various Overseas Executives worked to me, I had a very close association, as indeed we all had, with the Engineering Division. This was because so much of our activities depended on the skill, drive and energy of the engineers. There was a major committee during the war period, called the Studio and Equipment Committee, and we used to meet weekly with representation from all branches of the operational side of the Corporation; I was a member as the representative of the Overseas Service. We were generally concerned with keeping an eye on the developments which were taking place, in particular in the general utilization, deployment and obtaining of equipment, and the decision to get equipment had to be made having regard to the general manufacturing capacity in this country and overseas, often well in advance of the need, and this was the place where we used to assess future requirements and try to plan for the future in terms of the ordering of equipment. At that time I recall that we were dependent for our TD/7s on the United States; there were of course very important to the requirements of Overseas broadcasting and also of course for the Domestic Service, and at the time of the battle of the Atlantic we really were in the position that we had various delivery dates all planned and we didn't know exactly when they would occur because we didn't know the times of the convoys, but we were often faced at our regular weekly meeting with the report that, although we were expecting four TD/7s, we weren't going to get four for another month because the ship carrying the TD/7s had been sunk in the convoy. This was therefore a very important committee at that time and was very much concerned with the operational aspects of the BBC and, as happened during that period, though subsequently there was enormous co-operation, we used to have enormous fights there - of the friendliest kind - but somehow or another we used to manage the usual compromise and try and arrange both the priorities of the engineering work to be done and the priorities in terms of equipment available in a manner which we believed was in the best interests of the Corporation as a whole. That seems a very trite remark but on the other hand it would have been very easy at that time for all of us to have become extremely parochial and to have overlooked the fact that what we were really doing was to try to achieve a result which was in the best interests of the various important aspects of the BBC at that time, none of which could be regarded as being more important than the others - the Home audience was

as important as the Overseas side,,and it would have been very easy for all of us to have got the situation out of perspective at that time. During its most important period the Studio and Equipment Committee was chaired by Mr. Wynn, then Senior Superintendent Engineer; he later went on to be Chief Engineer. In view of the part I played on behalf of the Overseas Service, pressing our needs, he referred to me on one occasion as an 'awkward little b*****', and during the years that followed, at meetings on other occasions, he often referred to me using the initials ALB - long after the experience which caused him to coin the title for me - and there were a number of occasions subsequently, when we had both achieved much more senior office, when he addressed me as 'ALB' and people used to wonder what job I had held in the BBC which had those initials!

Some time before D-day, when the Allied Expeditionary Force was established under Eisenhower, the BBC was asked to be ready to introduce what was an Allied Expeditionary Forces' Programme. This was a programme to be directed specifically to the British, Canadian and American troops once they landed in France. We had, of course, no date for this - we had to be ready for it. The responsibility for setting up the programme was given to Maurice Gorham, former Editor of the Radio Times who later became the North American Service Organizer, and there were 'advisers', both from the Canadian, American and British forces directly seconded to us, and I acted as Administrator - as well as my other duties - to the A.E.F.P. The British Colonel who was seconded to the operation was a man called David Niven; there was an American Colonel called Colonel Kirby - the name of the Canadian I don't recall. The efforts of the three countries were put into this important development: there was a Canadian band headed by Robert Farnol, there was a British band headed by George Melachrino and an American band headed by Glenn Miller. While working with the A.E.F.P., Glenn Miller had what I believe was an unauthorized trip into France and was killed on that journey. So far as the BBC was concerned, we were very heavily stretched in terms of available people, and we asked that certain senior staff who were already in the Forces might in fact be seconded back to the BBC in order to take on responsibility for the A.E.F.P., and I recall standing in the Entrance Hall of Broadcasting House on the morning when these BBC chaps were due to report, and there turned up a number of people whose instruction had just been, 'Report to the BBC'; they hadn't the faintest idea what they were

expected to do. There was Major Max Muller, Captain Royston Morley, Ronnie Waldman, who was an N.C.O. in the R.A.F., and one or two others whom I can't recall. They, together with the BBC programme departments, engineers and the rest of the organization, created the programme which was due to start on D-day, and on D-day it started. It was mainly an entertainment programme and we had access at that time to a great number of popular American and Canadian shows, and of course we put on popular BBC shows. This was, I think, part of the Eisenhower plan of having a joint programme, since the troops overseas were associated in their battles and all their activities, which would be 'Allied' in character. The records would need to be checked on this, but my recollection is that the programme did in fact start on D-day, though I can't recall what notice we had of the setting up and planning so that we could be ready to start on D-day, whenever that was. The characteristic of the operation was the totally new service which was required for the Allied Expeditionary Forces, compounded of American, Canadian and British elements under BBC control. If further detailed information is wanted about the A.E.F.P., a very good source for that information would be Ronnie Waldman, now Managing Director of Visnews.

In my remarks about the search for new premises and the fact that we took 200 Oxford Street, and moved into Bush House and took extended premises there, I should perhaps have mentioned that there was an earlier phase in terms of the Overseas planning for the development of the Overseas and European Services; this was the possibility of concentrating the Overseas and I think the European Services, though I'm not quite certain about the latter, at Aldenham. This first started in 1941, when the Overseas and European Services were looking ahead into the future requirements and future development of the Services; there was also a forecast at that time of the possibility of what was known as 'triple expansion'. This was in many ways a farsighted thought developed in the circumstances of the time, and a great deal of effort was put into the planning of a possible centre at Aldenham to house these services, including the provision of houses for staff, but it eventually came to nothing for a number of reasons. These reasons are, I think, recorded in official documents and were related on the one hand to continuing assessment of likely developments and the probability that the extent of the possible expansion had been overestimated, both in terms of

actual requirements and in terms of the physical and personnel resources available during wartime to carry out such a major expansion, and on the other, to the fact that events were taking place so rapidly that the reliance on a major building operation of the size that was envisaged for Aldenham would be unrealistic in terms of the time we had to provide the facilities and accommodation that was required in the immediate future as distinct from a possible long-term future. This plan for Aldenham was drawn up in great detail and, although it was abandoned so far as the Overseas and European Services were concerned, there was I recall consideration given as to whether this might also be a possibility in terms of the post-war period for the BBC in the meeting of its longer-term accommodation and operational needs. However, it ran into the sand for economic and practical reasons and the policy was then adopted of seeking alternative existing accommodation which could be adapted for our purposes. It was, however, an imaginative plan for a Broadcasting Centre with the associated staff accommodation, but one of its weaknesses in postwar terms would have been the provision of the housing which would have been necessary at that time - to create a 'broadcasting community' in terms of living together as well as working together could, and I remember expressing this view at the time, become unduly 'incestuous' in regard to the associations: cultural, educational and all others; it desirable for us who are concerned with broadcasting to live in general community and not in the narrow community, just of broadcasters. But it was perhaps an indication of the fact that, although we were all totally preoccupied with our day-to-day operations, nevertheless we were still trying to do some kind of long-term planning and not just to plan for the day and the day ahead - it was a good concept which was dropped for good practical reasons.

There is another area of what I believe is historical interest, and this was the BBC's first major operation overseas, in Singapore. The Foreign Office had a broadcasting station in Singapore, which I believe was called the Far Eastern Broadcasting Service - I'm not quite sure of that name. This had been a wartime propaganda service which at first had had its origins in Radio S.E.A.C. and then moved to Singapore and was broadcasting to the Far East, partially relaying BBC programmes and partially creating programmes for itself. There were a certain number of BBC staff who were seconded to this operation. The Overseas Service recognised the importance of having

high-powered transmitters in the Far East, whose range could extend beyond our area of direct broadcasting, and the whole future of the Foreign Office station at that time came under review. It was agreed in principle with the Foreign Office and the associated Government Departments that it would be sensible for the BBC to have an operation in the Far East, based on Singapore. The Foreign Office were very ready to get rid of their commitment in Singapore; in the postwar period, this separate operation of a basically propaganda kind would no longer be appropriate, and we entered into discussions with the Foreign Office and with the War Office who, for various reasons, had a certain stake in the operation as well, on the possibility of the BBC taking over what was then the Far Eastern Broadcasting Service installation. We had reservations about taking over the operation as it stood, because we wanted to consider, first of all, what type of operation the BBC wanted in that area, and we would not be content to take over just an existing organization. Allied to this was the fact that the transmitters which were then being used by that station in Jurong would not in fact have provided the signal/^{that we}required in terms of high-power transmitters. There were only low-power transmitters at Jurong and Singapore and what we wanted was high-powered transmitters. J. B. Clark, then Controller of the Overseas Services, and I visited Singapore in 1947 to make a general survey of the situation and to enter into discussions with the British High Commissioner in Malaya over the possibility of obtaining the Tebrau site for the BBC to install transmitters. This had of course been preceded by an engineering survey, and their conclusion that this particular site in Malaya would be a suitable site for the BBC's transmitters. During our visit we negotiated with the then High Commissioner over the acquisition of the site in Tebrau on a lease basis; even at that stage there were difficulties and reservation about the possibility, in view of the British involvement in the Far East, of having a local transmitter in a country like Malaysia relaying BBC programmes. There was concern at that time about the type of operation that we were doing and we were able to assure the High Commissioner that the intention was that these would be high-powered transmitters relaying what the BBC was transmitting from London to give a higher-powered signal throughout the Far East, and that we were not in fact concerned in broadcasting to the local population. These negotiations were successful, and we then pursued our secondary objective, which was to sort out what we would require of the existing Foreign Office set-up in Singapore, so that we would not have the

responsibility for disposing of staff and physical resources which we didn't need, and when we took over the operation we had it set up on the basis which we ourselves would require without being involved in the difficulties and odium of disposing of staff which were not our concern at all. At the same time, and this was my responsibility, it was necessary to be absolutely certain as to who owned the various properties which were in use and which would in fact be handed over to us, and we were determined at that time that we would not accept any responsibility for the operation until it had been streamlined to our own requirements and until we knew who owned the various properties and who owned the leases, because some were controlled by the Custodian of Enemy Property, some were in the hands of Radio Malaya, which at that time dealt with both Singapore and Malaya, and there was a real mish-mash of ownership of the various properties. It became my responsibility to handle that side of it and, although we went there in October 1947 and they wanted us to take over in April 1948, I think I'm right in saying that we took over in October 1948. Utilizing the transmitters in Jurong and the facilities and accommodation of Radio Malaya - part of the deal we made was that we could use their studios and their office accommodation on a rental basis - we set up our own operation in October 1948, but totally related to the improvement of the signal of the Overseas Service, with a certain amount of locally-injected material, but only of a 'presentation' character. We then started the building of the high-powered transmitters at Tebrau. In the meantime, however, we still wanted a high-powered signal until Tebrau was ready. There existed in Ceylon under Radio S.E.A.C. two 100-kW transmitters and a number of 7½-kW transmitters which were owned by ~~the~~ War Office and which the Ceylon Government wanted in order to develop a short-wave radio system to broadcast a commercial service outside their own country. In consultation between the BBC, the War Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office, the proposal arose that H.M.G. ^{might} give the Ceylon Government one 100-kW transmitter and one 7½-kW transmitter, withdrawing the rest, but on condition that the BBC had time on the air for 8½ hours a day on the high-powered transmitter for 2½ years until such time as Tebrau was ready. I went out to Ceylon in 1948 together with a representative of the War Office following a meeting held in London with representatives of the Foreign Office and the War Office under the Chairmanship of the then Commonwealth Relations Secretary, who was Patrick Gordon-Walker, in which the plan was agreed, and I was given negotiating powers by that meeting, in

company with the representative from the War Office, to try to sort out what could be achieved in Ceylon. The end result was that we had an arrangement whereby ~~the~~ we had time on the air for 2½ years to ~~gain~~ give us the same sort of signal as we wanted from Tebrau, but not to the same extent, and we had that for 8½ hours a day until Tebrau was ready, and when Tebrau was ready we closed down that operation and the whole time on the air was handed back to the Ceylon Government.

So far as the Singapore operation was concerned, and the building of Tebrau, the closest co-ordination was clearly necessary between the External Services and the Engineering Division, and at that time it was Francis McLean, who ~~acted~~ was then Head of Engineering Services Group and was the central figure, while on the External Services side the central figure was myself, and we developed an extraordinarily close and happy relationship in terms of responsibility. Detailed control as well as close co-ordination were needed and, by virtue of the powers that were delegated to the two of us or the powers which we assumed unto ourselves, we did in fact get on with the job and I think the net result was satisfactory to everyone concerned. This involved of course areas in which the BBC had not been involved at all. I had to invent the conditions of service of the staff, I had to sort out their different conditions of service - some were previously on War Office strength, some on Foreign Office and some were civilian employees - we had to provide a proper staff structure, we had to provide something in terms of the Trade Union relations structure, we had to sort out lines of command and all the other things which go to the running of a broadcast organization. It was fortunate that we were able to act, obviously within corporate policy, to establish what was necessary in terms of local conditions. The one very important decision that was taken - important for a number of reasons and even more so now - was that our operation should be based to the maximum extent on local employees, and the training that was done there was of the utmost importance, particularly on the engineering side. Things have obviously changed since then, because at that time we had the operational side in Singapore and the transmitters at Tebrau; the operational side has now virtually disappeared and there is much more direct relaying from London and very little interspersion of presentation material, so the whole operation has now been co-ordinated and transferred to the one place, which is at Tebrau. The decision taken at

that time of training local people and relying on local staff suitably trained and not making this a place where there was a large number of U.K.-based staff has worked out satisfactorily, but also it would have been increasingly difficult as the years have gone by, having regard to Independence and so on, to staff the place by U.K.-based people - it was another example of what really can be done if people are properly trained in enabling them to do jobs which at first sight one would feel that they would never be able to do.

I mentioned in earlier remarks the undesirability, in my view, of living communities being established consisting totally of broadcasting people; it's better for us to be assimilated with the rest of the population. In the case of Tebrau it was essential that ~~some~~ housing accommodation be built. It was immediately after the war, and there was no accommodation in Malaya, and one of the conditions which was, quite correctly, imposed upon us was that we should house the people on our own site. Now of course, many years later, housing conditions have changed; there were at that time what were called the 'labour lines', but our accommodation was vastly superior to the type of accommodation which a number of the manual staff generally occupied in Malaysia. Now, with the removal of the British troops from Malaya there is more accommodation available, there is this undesirability of the total community now coming to the fore, and one of the problems that we are faced with in Tebrau as I understand it is the desirability, if it were possible to do so, for more of the staff to be housed outside the community than inside it although, at the time we did it, it was essential and turned out to be of enormous value at the time of the 'Mau Mau' in Malaya, when it was possible for all our people to be in the one compound and to be guarded. Now, of course, consideration does have to be given and is, I believe, having to be given by the External Services to the plan for the next phase of the operation, having got renewal of the lease there, and the transmitters are being modernized. The problems, I know, are being looked at, as to what the housing situation will be there in the years ahead. In addition to this brief exposé of the Far Eastern Broadcasting Service, there is, I think, quite a lot of documentation existing in various files because, although in the wartime period, in terms of the development of the Overseas ~~Network~~ and External Service I think there was very little documentation in view of the necessity to take immediate day-to-day decisions, I think it would be found that there is really quite a lot of material in the files on the setting up of that operation.