

## The Connected Histories of the BBC

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Note by Frank Gillard.

When I first discussed the prospect of an interview with him, in the mid-70s, Val Gielgud seemed to be as lively and articulate as I had always known him to be. There was a delay of a couple of years or so before we could get down to making the recording - there seemed to be no great need for haste over it, and I was working mainly in the USA over that period. But in that period, though I was initially unaware of it, Val developed a brain tumour. Consequently, when I went down to Lewes to do the interview, I found him to be sadly incoherent. He was still eager to record, and some intelligible and useful comments emerged, but he found it difficult, and frequently impossible, to hold on to a thought for long enough to complete a few sentences on it.

Nevertheless, Richard Keen (see his memo 22.10.80) managed to retrieve quite a few usable fragments for inclusion in his Radio obituary on Val and future researchers might have similar success. There is no transcript, but here is a summary of the topics raised in the attempted interview, as set out in more detail in this attached document.

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REEL 1

From Leader -Ferrograph 7 Counter

+ 20  
11  
Unsuccessful out of work actor. Radio Times huge circulation.  
Knew Gladstone Murray, Public Relations.

085 Reith: Kind, fair and right. Early difficulty over sexual  
connotation in variety script - he accepted explanation - VG not  
aware of it. He and Haley 'out of top drawer'

150  
128 Qualifications for journalism? Absolutely none. Hired through open  
door 'literally'.

154 Wrote letters to RT complaining about radio drama. Programme  
planning in hands of Lindsay Wellington.

215 VG & Maschwitz wrote serial for RT based on fatuity of war.

245 Savoy Hill. Vociferous starlings outside window, Perpetual draught,  
sec. insisted on open door. ? 6 studios.

280 Curtain drapes, meat safe mic. Trouble w. actors persuading them  
no need to shout.

304 Henry Ainley couldn't grasp this. "10,000,000 listeners? Must let  
myself rip." 2 effects boys to hold him back by seat of pants. Busy,  
exciting, felt in on something new.

337 Early staff: too many had failed at other things, in radio fauto  
de mieux. They also began to get excitement.

365 TV - anything I say to be regarded with pinch of salt. Savoy Hill,  
impromptu, beginning to cohere. Then difficult to take long view.  
Plate always full. Yes, miracle that BBC emerged successfully-  
thanks to Reith and Haley. Clear who ran show.

- 440 Carpendale. VG wanted to do Ghosts. "Hear it's unusual." "Suppose you must do it -v.long,v.dull." Only interest, if you had a Blue. Nice man.
- 485 Rules tended to be strict
- 490 Senior member discovered in compromising circumstances with lady in entertainment room...Fired. Think right.
- 515 P. Eckersley. Thought him howling bore, shouldn't have been allowed near mic. Always fuss about divorce. Yet VG went thro' courts 4 times, nobody raised eyebrow - but this after Reith.
- 540 Eckersley. Exhibitionist vulgarian, talented engineer. Roger Eck. Sweet, nice, indefinite. Lacked force. Think Reith liked yes-men. (see 337 above). Cut out to be Sec. of Golf club.
- 612 Cecil Lewis. When started job, 12 plays by CG accepted, all terrible had to find excuses for not b/c.
- 660 Wanted to use Chesterton's 'Ballad of Lepanto', stopped by Nicholls. "We upset Turkish embassy." Think this not characteristic. Had much to put up with. Prog. judgment only fair.
- 695 Start of War. VG and Boulton went from Evesham to complain they'd nothing to do. Siegmund: "When war started, I pulled lever, broadcasting changed course." Had great influence for short time. Lionel Fielden. Exquisite suede shoes. Had been at Gallipoli, which fascinated VG. Handed over Gallipoli prog. to VG.
- 755 Hilda Matheson. Great power, carried much guns. One of 2 whom Reith never tried to bully. VG not bullied; when telephone rang from him your hand shook.
- 785 Eric Maschwitz. Dearest friend for 10 years. Went US, France, Hungary together. Did Prog. 'Nightfall in Budapest'. BBC parsimony: hiring Gypsy Band, £ 2,300 party to entertain Hungarians.

- 825 'Nightfall in Budapest' story. 4 from BBC. Taken everywhere with motorcycle escort. 4 progs. Francis Clare had affairs with barons. Control <sup>Room</sup> from parquet-paved.
- 933 Maschwitz. Tremendously good company. Gay as a grig. Excited, worked very hard. Gave cacket to variety, then dim dept.
- 967 Early progs. Felt tremendous lot to be done. Holding flash of lightning by tail. EM had tremendous idea of style. 'These Foolish Things' 'Berkeley Sq.' as good as songs can be. So many things one wanted to do, couldn't.
- 1005 Talks liveliest dept. Saw as his job to make Drama as good. Reith decided what should be b/c. EM + VG did cross-talk act at Prog. Board, infuriated colleagues. Riding blind, enjoying selves. Did what you liked.
- 1055 Pleased with 6 special drama stds at BH. Exciting building. Looked over bldg. alarmed by 2 cats.

REEL 2

- 0 Cat story cont. Never seen another cat in BH. Thought hopeful.
- 40 Consulted on design of drama studios. Very good.
- 66 Dorothy Sayers wrote after reading 'Death at Broadcasting House'. 'Couln't take as long as you said to go from one studio to another. Hadn't realised extremely heavy doors. <sup>VG</sup> Had timed it. <sub>A</sub>
- 106 BH made a good deal of difference, as bldg specially designed for b/c. Could do things which couldn't do before. Wonderfully served by Balance and Control Engineers (what did they balance & control?)
- 160 Relig. studio desc. Consecrated, everything below also consec., incl. Variety Std. Snag.

230 Productions Director. Gladstone Narray sent for VG & offered. Wd'v given eye teeth for. Included Variety, which VG couldn't do, knew nothing of. Drama fascinated. Was 28. Why chosen? Don't know. Story that R.Eckersley said to Reith "He comes of good theat. family, knows theatre." R said "V. rude to me when we prod. 'Tilby of Bloomsbury' for amateur drama-soc. Suppose he can be rude to actors."

299 Reith played drunken broker's man, v.good. Took production like dream. Carpendale was seedy elderly gentleman. In Rudolf Steiner Hall. VG had no exp. of producing amateur drama.

335 Research Section resented his promotion. What had ruined them in Reith's eyes was that nothing they did got on air,..had no machinery to get it on.

360 Jeffrey. Only remember smoothly brushed hair, hated VG's guts. Went to Movietone News, 'golden voice of silver screen'. VG thought he left dept. a shambles.

375 Drama had done V little. Snippets of Shakespeare etc..Donald Calthrop had advisory job. VG had Virgin field to dig in. Relays from theatres didn't work - explains lack of visuals. Mics in flowerpots, corsages etc. Hence development of special radio plays.

467 Noted drama producers: Lance Sieveking, Peter Cresswell, Jack Cheadle, Archie Handing, M.H.Allen (in minor way). Only one with whom always fought was King Bull. Later urged by Michael Standing to be nice to him, gave him one brandy too many: 'Trouble with you VG, you've never met any of right people,'

506 How selected plays? Went on principle, if liked, would do, If disliked it, knew many people would like it, would probably do that too. Backbone of classics, for which VG had perhaps

506 exaggerated reverence: Ibsen, Chekhov, Greeks. First Monday night play was Hippolytus tr. Gilbert Murray.

GILLARD: Certainly making demands on your audience? Yes, had terrible time with it. Cast all over shop. Gladys Young as Nurse v. slow. After first  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour 20 mins. over time. Godfrey Tearle as Father came in. "I can deal with that". Went back to studio, picked up pace as VG never saw: masterpiece of acting. Didn't vary performance one scrap. Got haunches under him. Wonderful technical achievement.

565 Was Drama popular in scheduling? Don't think so. In earliest days regarded as sidekick. Once Monday and Saturday Night Theatres established (Nicholls thought of SNT, sold to VG) - in early stages had no standing.

592 Audience wanted storytelling? Yes, that's why they took to adaptations, e.g. Carnival which contained forbidden elements like adultery. No trouble. Great success. Years later adapter & C. Mackenzie argued, who had written which lines?

620 Radio play, theatre of mind. First to grasp Sieveking, Guthrie. Wrote 3 orig. plays. 2 done, one unsuitable, VG had to turn down.

640 Many difficult decisions? A. lot. Play about Soviet Icebreaker. Not then (1930) allowed to show Russians in good light. Nicholls was very cautious.

660 Research section. There before VG Productions Director. Emerged because Reith fancied (!) 4 originally concerned: Sieveking, M.H. Allen, Harding, King Bull. But hadn't got machinery or knowhow to get things into progs. Reith sent for VG "You take them over, or else.." Its purpose experimental, beautiful indulging label covered multitude of sins. Became Features Dept., contributed largely.

700 Regarded w. suspicion. "Experimental" = "when in doubt throw away"  
When became Features contribution enormous. Fizzled out, then re-  
emerged as Features Dept.

755 Ultimately Features covered multitude of sins and laudable  
activities. Orig. 4 had great success.

770 Why "Feature"? No idea. VG didn't choose, wdn't have. Job of F.  
Dept. ,to handle anything done in dram. terms not a play.  
'Nightfall <sup>in</sup> from Budapest' considered feature. Progs. w. multiple  
narrators, Features? Not necessarily. VG had thing about narratio  
Not to be used as stage directions - poisonous.

815 Production techniques: DC panel. 2 in BH. To use techniques of  
studios w. diff. accoustic properties in combination with  
orchestra. When George V & QM visited, King sat looking v.bored,  
VG showing off DC panel, King looked more bored, VG depressed.  
Carpendale leant over "Speak up my boy, King v.deaf". HM looked  
daggers. At end, QM leant over panel "Quite all right dear boy,  
you did v. nicely". VG convinced monarchist from then on.

872 Music in plays. Complicated subject. Howard Rose <sup>Thought</sup> music should be  
as in theatre, decayed violin & accordeon in orch. pit while audy  
went to bar. Sieveking great innovator. Playing DC panel like  
Wurlitzer organ proper way, LS insisted. VG didn't entirely agree  
but thought best radio used lot of music: easier to listen to  
music, not speech. Contribution of broadcasting to language -  
made one listen to words. Technique of multiple studios could  
lead to trouble. But, e.g. "The Rescue". VG best radio play  
ever, Britten's music electrifying, he and E.Sackville West  
wedded in whole. Great thing.

934 Use of DC panel. After "To the Public Danger", (Patrick Hamilton)  
VG ended in complete exhaustion from turning knobs constantly  
and fast, using fades & cuts in way which would drive a  
contemporary producer mad.

949 Signalling by cue lights, also return switch for talkback if had to. But once started on live prod., went on...Notable occasion in "Cavalcade", one studio packed up in middle, live, by mercy this happened at pause, only bell for Q.Victoria's funeral; kept bell while Fred Bell (most admirable SM-never had enough credit) rushed round, re-organised cast, pushed around; never left <sup>with 2</sup> casts in same studio - kept whole thing going.

985 Plusses and minuses of DC Panel? Many merits. Wd vote for it. Cd do some things difficult to do now. Went out because of war. ? impulses from it wd guide bombers, but don't understand technicalities. By then was at TV, directing TV play when war broke out.

1005 Why don't they go back to DC Panel? Present mixers less flexible DC Panel self-indulgent toy for prod's? Lot of people, e.g., L.S. made mystique of it, nonsense & harmful, but it had many advantages. In other countries sliders, not knobs. V.G. didn't like.

1040 Attitude of Theatre to radio drama? Gloomy. "Cigarette money". VG put foot in it by not identifying cast: Actors screamed, VG had to give way - which didn't usually do, but this time felt had made mistake. Management adapted singular attitude: if you broadcast from theatre, will ruin box office; if don't, we get n publicity, so we should like you to b/c from theatre. Difficult to argue against - antinomian. B/c from theatres unsatis; this i why we had to go into studios,

1080 Best support from older generation of actors: Harry Ainley, Freddie Lloyd - wonderful. Took production like dreams, worked like mad, taught VG everything he knew about theatre and broadcasting. Cdn't have been nicer. Younger generation not so cooperative, inclined to be bloody-minded. Once had to throw Henry Oscar out of studio.

- 0 Saved Henry Oscar's face by pretending he was ill or something. He v. angry. Fuss w. Equity.
- 20 V.G.'s relations w. Equity always tricky. 3 or 4 rep's used to come to meetings. One was Bruce Belfrage. He always complained of fee not received for something b/c in Hong Kong 4 yrs before.
- 40 Actors who made name thro' b/c. Belle Chrystal, Mary Wimbush. On the whole, older gen. took to it and accepted direction from someone like self. To give dir. to someone one had revered in theatre for yrs was alarming.
- 78 Think ultimately a generation of radio actors did emerge: e.g. Mary Wimbush.
- 90 How trained? RADA had radio course.
- 110 Question of explaining what mic. cd, cd not, do... Question of ppl absorbing quickly; not just how far to stand fr. mic, but using human voice as never used before.
- 138 Some became fascinated by this: Carle ton Hobbs, Mary W. (except in La Dame aux Camelias, in which VG cast her: disaster)
- 175 Trick in casting? Not to cast for appearance.. Once int'd Joan Plowright. Made note: 'in any peculiar part wd stand out'. Cast her: admirable.
205. Critics showed int.? V. little. Lance exhibitionist, wd give interviews to press on any occasion. 'Listener' always int. Otherwise press had down on b/c -inevitably depressing.
- 240 But critics cd. be imbecile. e.g. Herbert Farjeon: "1405 lines cut from Henry V"
- 250 SM's. Tributes to Fred Bell, Johnny Johnstone, Patience Sheffield
- 280 FX grossly over-publicised. Celebrated occasion when Reith showed ppl round Savoy Hill, w. own hands made sound of train going into Euston on rainy day, w. roller skate and tin bath. When in doubt, cut Fx. Not nec. to have elab. FX, unless something wrong w. script. Important thing, stimulus to imag.
- 315 Some prod's cluttered up prod's w. innumerable Fx. Tried to explain to them.
- 335 Secret of successful admin: answer letters, don't stay too long on phone. Liked running dept., partic. that one. Attached to all who worked with him.

- 2
- 9
- 350 BBC heavy handed? Inclined to be. Perpet. fight over money. But on the whole, VG had free hand. Management realised he competent, left alone. Cdn't ask for more
- 380 Any got on his back? B.Nicholls gave trbl...inclined to regard anything VG suggested as maniac, disapproved of him.
- 400 Training of writers? Some had gift, e.g. Patrick Hamilton. His (sic) 'Flowers are not for you to pick' bang on at once. Much adaptation done in dept. Cynthia Pughe became skilful adapter.
- 440 Trick of adaptatn? Get into skin of writer e.g. Carnival. Notable for first use of seagulls, and music hall songs of period. Agreeable and nostalgic.
- 480 'Barlash<sup>s</sup> of the Guard' example where adapter got into skin. Successful.
- 495 Flood of Mss submitted? Not flood, most ppl put off by intricacies of medium, but large quantity, most useless.
- 530 Difficulty w. women, one voice sounds much like another's. A few natural contraltos were useful. (Description of audition procedure)
- 560 Believe live perf. has edge, however ingenious the recording. Nervous qual. of actors who knew cdn't make mistakes invaluable. VG used li e perf's right to end. Tension does no harm.
- 584 Rec. started w. Blattnerphone. No tricks poss. Clumsy & diff. Think first used in fx.
- 600 'Diagonalisation': ie. prog. originated on Nat. Prog. repeated on Reg. Repeat live? Think so, originally.
- 610 'Man Born to be King?' Started in complicated way. Sayers commissioned by Childrens' Hr. She was strong-minded. Prod. sent back script w. sugg. alteratns. Results dire. DLS tore up contract, posted pieces to BBC. James Welch, Dir. of Relig. rallied, got support of Archbp. of York. Lord's Day Observance Soc. went mad, gave all poss. publicity, called BBC Temple of Blasphemy, splendid. R. Speaight suffered personally - playing Jesus - got abusive letters.
- 660 VG prod. DLS stipulated this in contract. That annoyed Child.Hr. Couldn't blame them. Whole thing ludicrous.
- 675 Ridic. moment. Rehearsing 2nd play in series in cinema at Marble Arch. Had to do whole from 1st read to tx in 48 hrs. Appallingly large casts, big crowds made v. diff. Never handled a thing wh. gave so much trbl. & anxiety.

960 Did these come under you? Tiresome sit. developed. Reith laid down Reg. Directory had direct access to him. Reg prod's thought this applied to them, went over VG's head, wh. he objected to. Used to interfere good deal in Regs. Weaknesses? Parochialism of outlook. With what they cd. do, v. good. Outside that, sprawled all over place. Remen B'ham made appalling mess of Shaksp. I cd get casts wh. no Reg.cd. Also West. Evolution of Features? Enormously important. Fusing of 2 depts. v. good for both. Drama prod's got wider outlook, F.prods learnt to handle actors etc, deal w.scripts. 1000 pitiees they were divorced. D & F prod's different kinds of animal? F.prod's tended to be more imaginative, livelier, but cd've done w/o Dylan Thomas - my least favourite man. Tendency for F ppl to congregat in Stag. Once had to make clear wdn't have any of own ppl - D ppl - going to stag. F ppl were law to selves, unfortunately.

1030 Gilliam? Personal relat's amiable, but he loved riding whirlwind, directing storm. Loved Xmas Day prog. If cd find OB from obscure island in Pacific, grabbed it. Organised 1st Xmas Day Prog. After that left to LG, who made much better job.

1050 F ppl selected mainly by LG. Brot in Macneice etc. You looked on D as your ppl, F ppl you had to be resp.for? True.

1058 TV before war? Tricky. Nearly came to blows w.Nicholls. Said, if this thing gets hold, will freeze radio out gradually. N. said nonsense. VG said whole Drama output shd be under same head, to use both arms of output. Suppose that why TV dram. put under me. Merely asked to go as simple practitioner, To learn elements of job, not head of anything.

REEL 4

0 At AP found shambles. Think '37. But used to having own way for long time. Difference startling, alarming. Instead of own splend did Gram.Operator, P.Sheffield (?), 3 op's, all knitting.

32 Short of money, evthg. 2 std's. Designers - rats got into wood-work in big way. Doing prod. of St.Joan. Asked for 3 stone steps, sugg. of stained glass window. Designer filled whole of std. w. Rheims Cathedral. Imposs. to shoot fr. any angle to make sense.

73 Live TV created probs. Working under appalling handicaps.

- 700 DLS curious character. Expected feminine Peter Wimsey, came in tweeds, mannish, sq. shouldered, brisk, downright. We got on like house on fire. Admirable as author. One enormous virtue: never addressed cast direct, only thro me, unlike some authors - always led to confusion: actors didn't know which line to follow. Encouraged authors to come. Liked have author there at first read thro'. Anything wh. needed changing cd. be changed on spot, by orig. author. What did L. <sup>in DLS</sup> stand for? Don't know. MBTBK 12 episodes.
- 765 VG never enjoyed doing anything more. Done twice since- Peter Watts. Peter Cresswell? Think time to consider doing it again, live.
- 800 Childrens Hour? VG complained of its twee aspect, that it neglected all relevant material, e.g. E. Nesbit, Mowgli, made for b/c. Brot up at Prog. Board - this led to 'Do it yourself'. Don't think improved C.H., too close to other things
- 835 Think part. resp. for getting rid of Aunties & stuff hidden behind coalscuttle. Old brigade protested. 'New broom being too smart'. Used to such crit. Mainly from outside. McCullough and May Jenkin objected strongly, though MJ had caused row with Sayers. They had built up considerable tradition, hated new broom.
- 860 McC curious man. Felt sorry for him, mashed up in War. Think vain. Prickly, took offence.
- 880 Found same difference in other broadcasters between public & private personalities? Only remem. Frank Phillips. Quartered w. him at Evesham at start of war. He insisted on telling VG of love life, squalid, boring. Vanity there too.
- 95 Annars didn't impinge much. Think they all tended, esp. when estab by name at beginning (sic) of war; to develop vanity.
- 912 Principal characteristic of BBC before war? Consolidation. Established condition of acceptance & respectability. 1 of Reith's great contrib's, appealed to middle class in big way.
- 925 You aware of Reith's trbls w. Board? Faintly aware of arguments w. Lady Snowden. But one was too small.
- 940 Don't think did as much w. & for Regions as should have. V. diff. to get to Reg's. Never went to Belfast, but visited others. Reg's contributed considerably, spec. fr. North, Jack Dillon, Bridson, March of 45.

- 12
- 90 Leading personalities: Gerald Cock, Cecil McGivern (one of my people). GC made great contrib.
- 113 Thought prog's like hell. No coherent policy. But all I say abt. tv. shd be taken w. grain of salt. There 18 mts. Never worked so hard w. so little result. Gt enthus. Difference tween BH & AP fantastic. Lack of proper direction.
- 160 TV ppl always yearned to film arena. This always was, will be trbl. Average tv. prod. wishes he cd make films. Not recognised that tv was extension of b/c? No, unfortunately.
- 183 Rehearsing tv play when war broke -Maugham's Circle. (Wondered what happened to rackets & tennis balls in Welbeck Mews where reh. Still rotting away?) Telephone message.
- 223 Prob's teaching to act for tv? Tendency to overact like mad, in voice & gesture. Curb all time.
- 245 When war began, already told wd go to 'Hogsnorton', Evesham. (In Germany, 38, someone asked, 'How's your hideout, Hogsnorton?') Whole dept. went, incl. 26 Rep. Extraordinary house, fleurs de lys everywhere, even weathercock. Bearpit in garden. Complained bitterly nothg to do while Poland being chewed up. (wh. upset me good deal) House belonged to French pretender. Not adapted for b/c. Agony. All typewriters on parquet floor (only seen in Budapest). Not cheerful accompaniment to thought.
- 320 Billeted in houses. VG had Siamese cat w. him. Hosts objected, dangerous wild animal. Had to take furn. house.
- 340 Not much room for drama in war output. Memo received "½ hr. plays, partic. if of Childrens Hr. type, might be acceptable". That broke camel's back, sent V.G. to London to int. Siepmann, Boulton supporting. They complained, doing nothing. 'Lever' quote (see above).
- 374 Ultimately got drama back, largely when got back to Lon, did Shaksp. in old Queen's Hall. First went Manchester. Trbl: sec's insisted I had strong personal reasons to want to go to M. Leathed it. Always dark, never saw light of day. Temp. interlude. In M night of Xmas Eve bombing. Exciting, on roof of BH, pretend. to be Home Guard. Went down to bank vault. Bridson came in: white. 'Not out in this, Geoffrey?' "Yes, saw tobaccoist's hit, went to see if I cd do something, cdn't, place in flames." Put hand on DGB's shoulder, soaking in blood. Pulling ppl out of wreckage.
- 450 Ret. to Lond. SNT estab'd self, became radio thing no one wanted to miss. SNT, knew popular, hoped good. Monday Night, knew good, hoped popular. True SNT put radio drama in big league. Plays in SNT?

- 486 Spread all over place. Ukase, 8 Shakesp. plays a year. Always did. On the whole, adaptat. fr. theatre. Shakesp. in SNT? Occasionally, seldom.
- 510 Monday Night, no title. VG's pride & joy. Opportunity for things I liked, believed public ought to like, ultimately did. Unprom. start: Hippolytus, Eurip. tr. G. Murray. Godfrey Tearle saved bacon, picking up 20' overrun (see above)
- 540 Support fr. hierarchy? v. good. Believed on right tack. L. Wellington, Nicholls to some extent. He thought of SNT, nourished.
- 560 War Features. Under VG. Covered enormous field. One end, Xmas day prog. VG's Gallipoli prog, Lionel Fielden helped, had been there. (this before war).
- 592 McGivern enormously talented prod. 1000 pities he got mixed up w. tv. racket. Star prod. Junction X, Bomb Doors Open in best features trad., v. good. Think when features closest to documentary most successful. War Report? Yes, LG partic. exercised over.
- 623 Victory Week? Don't rememb.
- 630 Post War. Home, Light, 3rd. Completely approved of Haley: start on Home, move up to 3rd. Deserved to succeed.
- 647 Relats. w. Light never imp. HS & 3 were. H adopted SNT...
- 660 Light did stuff like Dick Barton, wh. appalled me. First skirmish w. Norman Collins, Controller... DB his pride & joy, VG thought rubbish (inevit. clash between someone who liked Chekov, someone who didn't).
- 685 LP drama of scruffy description. Martyn Webster i/c LP drama. Had been v. good w. F. Durbridge fr. B'ham. Bro't these scripts to London, v. successful. Real LP stuff, in my view fairly contemptible.
- 706 You isolated self fr. LP drama? Afraid true. Thought cd. do better.
- 720 Home drama. Sunday aft. miscellaneous. Lindsay Wellington, Godfrey Adams, Clare Lawson Dick at 2nd hand. V. encouraging, no trbl. Ever said no to play? Must've, but settled quietly in corner w/o advertisement.
- 742 TP Haley's pet. Had to be so considered. To me most int. Covered all experim. drama apart fr. classics.
- 757 Huis Clos? Think only sensation.. 1st time lesbianism on air. Didn't personally regard as artistic success? Didn't like it. On TP dealt w. George Barnes till went to tv, Etienne Amiot w. whom never est. relat's, Howard Newby, v. good, w. whom never exchanged harsh word. TP enlarged frontiers, susceptible to experimental, opened fresh fields,

12/4

TAPE 12-NOTE Lower Track has mod.

800 Relats. w. heads of TP always agreeable, cordial, friendly. Trbls. solved peaceably in corner. Exasperation I always felt, accountants always managed to find TP surplus in Jan. Told must be got rid of by March. Must gen up casts, have more expensive actors. Not always desirable...money can always be better spent.

835 Intro. of Soap Opera: you contemptuous? Yes. Hated Dick Barton, Mrs. D's Diary, even Archers. Lower than beasts that peñish, but didn't. Reason? Murder for prod's to be turned on such job. Charles Lefeaux, Betty Davies shdn't be turned aside to waste imag. on Mrs. D's D. Ludicrous. Tho gave pleasure to millions?

860 Wonder how much pleasure. Think exasperated as many as gave pleasure to.

865 Other end of spectrum: discussion plays? Thought had enormous fut. Wrote 1 of 1st, Red Tabs, c.1928, whether one entitled to sacrifice a Division to achieve objective. Out of this arose yen for disc. play, one of most int. sort of things we ever did.

890 Party Manners? At worst, v. bad joke. Wrote in NY, w/o thought it wd. cause furore. Only play I wrote ever received leaders in every paper fr. N.O. Wto Times. Perfectly childish little farce, on which I had no partic. opinion. Had no more idea I wrote it against Lab. Party than that I shd fly.

910 Story of Lab. Minister. His opp. no. had been his fag at pub. school. Drawn fr. fact that George Strauss had been my fagmaster at Rugby (this better be oblivion). I got idea amusing to have confront. betw. 2 pillars of estab. Only scene I thought funny, when these 2 elderly gents got tight at dinner, discussed offspring's romantic assoc's, of wh. took poor view. Result: done on air. N. Collins said 'Went less Chekov, more comedy'. I showed him this play, wh. had handy. 'Wd. you mind if I did this?' 'No'. So did it. Then did TV play on Sun. nights, rep. live on Thursd. In this case, Lord Simon of W. interfered, banned rep. This caused trbl. Every paper in Eng. got hold of it, Liberty of subject, freedom of expression, everyb. screaming place down. Our view: edn't make out what fuss was about. Haley backed V.G. to back teeth. Splendid. Sent forme...saw Simon, v. stuffy & difficult, took serious view. I said I might resign. Lord S. said didn't wish that, but this raised all kinds matters of princ, BBC shd know better that to do such thing, VG shd've known better. Press blew up.

- 15
- 988 Thought Simon wet. Not positive character. Think Party Manners done later on SNT.
- 998 Attitude of superiors & playwrights to you as playwright?  
Privileged posn, choosing own materials, bread out of mouths?  
That was expressed, not w. partic. signif.
- 1005 Which more important to you, BBC career or career as author?  
Think B infinitely more signif. & important. Owe everything to B. That's long & short of it. As far as books & things concerned, v. grateful that B allowed me to be writer in spare time. Wrote book a yr, apart fr. what did in office-usually betw. 2 & 4 in morning. In those days, v. active character.
- 1025 Death at BH? Gift, once had idea. Orig. idea E. Maschwitz's. He tried to sell to friend, Philip Jordan (a war corresp). No one wd touch w. end of pole, everyone looked at w. great distaste. Ultimately Rich & Cowan took it, did reasonably well, I think. Never dramatised for radio. Wd've been v. difficult. They made film.
- 1048 DL Sayers crit. plot (see above)
- 1054 Features: soon after war lost F group? F had won spurs, largely owing to L. Gilliam, had justified hiving off. Personally was sorry to lose. Felt we'd lost great deal, wider horizons taken away, F, lost because not given discipline of dealing w. actors. coping w. scripts. Why split decided? Don't know. Personally regretted, bad for both. Think Nicholls decided. Pressure from LG? Not as far as I know. Poss. but not aware he yearned for independence. Tho quite entitled to. Feeling of ordinary F. Prod's? Pleased to be on own? Think so, think pleased to have mailed fist removed.
- 5
- 0 Tv after war? Idea of single drama head looking after tv & radio. Still think good idea. Killed, I think by Nicholls, who didn't take good view of me & thought whole thing too complicated. So it proved. When went back to AP found whole thing disaster fr. my p.o.v. Never worked so hard, so fruitlessly. Suppose so set in radio groove that cdn't underst. why ppl looking after gram recs. in Gallery wd knit, whereas used to ppl on ball in radio std.

- 63 McGivern made fatal mistake of going into film bus. for short time before tv. 1st class Feature prod., cdn't carry corn, cdn't carry alcohol. BBC's attitude to him insane. Gave him enormous power, also access to unlimited alcohol. Tragic. Really tragic figure. Liked much, had worked pleasantly w. him.
- 110 Diff. posn for you? Didn't work out badly - I went to him as soon as got to tv, said I hoped he didn't feel embarrassed by sit. No emb. arose, except at tv meetings he wd send me little notes, passed down for everyone to see. Unnec., annoyed me. Usu. couched in offensive terms. "Do This", "Don't do that", "We've had enough of this."
- 140 Was there discrimination against bringing radio ppl into tv? Definitely. Strong prejudice. Think went back to Gerald Cock. Made things v. diff. for ppl seconded from radio. Gilliam, Martyn Webster all came to grief, cdn't stand. atmo. Tv hierarchy thought shd get staff fr. film? Every tv prod. I met yearned to make films. That's what they enjoyed. I think disastrous. Shd be thinking how to illustrate radio.
- 190 Return to Radio? Unhappy in tv, said to Nicholls not working, sugg. return to radio where I give satisfaction. In VG's absence Archie Harding head of radio drama. Remem. hideous occasion when called on him, surrounded by scripts unread, mountains piled round him.
- 220 Personal feeling disapp. on return? Yes felt had come to grief over something worth doing. Had tremendous belief in tv, had committed self in writing (Asa Briggs mentions) that BBC shd grip tv firmly by scruff of neck. Never did. This was whole trbl. Lack of BBC grip.
- 240 You realise this crit. of Haley? Suppose so. But don't think he passionately int. in tv, more int. in 3rd prog. Return to Radio, felt coming home, thoroughly enjoyed being among ppl who believed I knew what talking about, no longer surrounded by gadgetry of tv wh. found so disagreeable. Welcomed? Everyone seem pleased to see me, not so at tv.
- 275 Felt returning to something w. fut? Yes, felt, statistics show, radio by no means dead. Persists in curious way to this day. SNT still functioning (as far as I know. If isn't ought to be) But you always said tv wd kill radio drama? Always felt, as soon as you cd see as well as hear, plug wd be pulled out under radio as such.

But statistics bear out (I believe) that radio and increasing, largely owing to faults of tv. Mainly on popular side increasing? Don't know comparisons. Richard Imison cheerful.

330 View of fut. of radio drama? To maintain what Haley called best poss. prod. of best poss. plays. He was v. emphatic abt this, this one's job.

350 Which DG's you saw most of, which best? Reith, Haley to both. Both seen a lot, both kind to me. Haley endeared self to me, had one of those lunches, terrifying with cold pebble-like eyes glaring, afterwards asked me to stop, talked, explained -which endeared him to me for ever - as office boy at Times he collected books from Lit. Ed's desk, took along to cubby hole beside stove, read all night. Looking back put Haley top. Didn't have Reith's fairly grim outlook. Jacob only saw once- one immensely respected his record.

410 Greene I disliked heartily, found quite intolerable. Cdn't bear that he liked going out drinking w. engineers. Being faintly a snob myself I had no use for that. All this so called democratising of org. greatest poss. mistake.

Yet you wanted to put Ibsen on? Well...  
430 Difficult policy decisions on plays sailing too close to wind, too risky for b/c? Somewhere you draw line? Yes, was v. positive about it (I'm afraid). We had <sup>trbl.</sup> (Mentioned Soviet Ice Breaker, Party Manners). I confess I did feel strongly abt certain things, used as yardstick.

460 Pol. sit's easier than matter of taste? True. Always seemed to me that taste was what qualified or disqualified one for job. Found change of taste over 35 yrs? Think a broadening from abt. 1930. Yardstick extended. But as in the case of Fx, my view "when in doubt cut."

490 Ever in trbl for allowing b/c of play considered indecent? Don't think so. Always managed to skirt the indecent. Greater license in TP? To some extent. Blessed word 'experimental' covered multitude of sins. TP dealt w. subj's not poss. on Home.

500 Did you feel b/c shd follow on set trends in pub. taste? Felt shd set trends. Being by nature positive, having strong views on almost every subject. If not, wd find selves in mess.

Did you manipulate drama output for that purpose? Another factor to take into a/c, but v. important one. Fact one was using a medium of extreme power & influence affected one a great deal, one was extremely conscious - I was - of personal responsibility. Unbelievable luck had got job, felt shd do it w. extreme sense of responsibility.

545 Public response? Always thought Aud. Research greatest waste of Corp's money wh. ever existed. Loathed it. Cd prove anything by it. Again & again went to Prog. Board, wd. say "This AR figure v. bad, that proves play good.", or vice versa... Never believed AR, thought books cooked. Own judgt more important.

575 If had time again, what wd. do differently? Wd take more trbl over relationship w. various individs. Don't think ever made proper use of Lance, King Bull. Think they deserved better of me. Partic. Lance. Think of him w. nostalgic regret, think I was always in his hair. I regretted this, fond of him personally.

90 No ambition for other post? Only other post offered, Director of Regional Relations. Can't imagine anything for which less suitable. Rejected w. <sup>contumely</sup> absolutely right. Knew nothing abt. Reg's, they wdn't have welcomed me.

515 You metropolitan figure? Right. No other posts you wanted to apply for? Don't think so. V. happy where was. the longer there, better I liked. Enjoyed work, apparently to ppl's satisfaction.

35 Looking back on BBC? Gave greatest opportunity any man ever had. Stroke of monument. luck I got job, ditto that I had capacity to handle. Don't regret for one moment. Not bed of roses.

50 Anything left out? Orig. prod. of 'The Rescue', final prod. of 'Brand', of both inordinately proud. 2 prod's of 'Hassan', both infinitely better on air than in theatre. Basil Dean made mistake of turning up lights on final scene, revealed only painted cardboard flats. One was fantastically lucky that so many of older gen. of actors were apparently pleased to work for one. Owe them phenomenal debt.

0 Proud of BBC's track record? Inord. proud to have been assoc. w. it. Few org's wh. wd have given one the opportunity I had, or have encouraged one as they did. Fundamental feeling, of overwhelming gratitude.

18

707 MBTBK story retaken. VG accepted nativity play by Dorothy Sayers, "He That Should Come". Result of success of this, DS insisted I shd prod. MBTBK - greatest compliment I ever had as prod. Largely owing to support of James Welch, Relig.Dir, we managed to override Lord's Day Obs. Soc., got home.

726 Embarrassing moment. After second episode, handling cast in studio, saying "For God's sake, come down out of stained glass windows, act like human beings" - believe this what DS wanted - cast eyes to Gallery, saw enormous quantity of high powered episcopal characters, led by Archbishop of York. LDOS objected to dramatisation of Christ. Press picked up. Fizzled out v. quickly, largely because plays great success, everybody liked, thought good. DS couldn't have been more complimentary, got on v. well.

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