



**Voice of the  
Listener & Viewer**

# Bulletin

**Working for Quality and Diversity in Broadcasting**

**Spring 2009**

**Issue 96**

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



JUST recently the patience of our members has been tried. A letter sent to me via the VLV office contained a note: 'Has been a member for many years: never known him write like this before'. The letter, full of asterisks and exclamation marks, was to protest at what has recently seemed to be a positive torrent of bad language and offensive behaviour in BBC radio and television programmes. In the Ross and Brand case the BBC took some time to wake up to the offence caused to many people. But when it did it took stern action: the radio channel Controller and the 'compliance' officer responsible lost their jobs. Rightly — in my opinion — senior BBC executives were held responsible for what went on air.

But what happens next makes some VLV members angrier still. It is the broadcasting regulator Ofcom, outside the BBC, which now sits in judgement on most alleged breaches of the broadcasting codes, and the only penalty Ofcom can impose (other than an on-air statement of some kind) is a fine. That means it is the licence-payer who is paying the price of bad behaviour by the broadcasters.

## A Lively Relationship

In this way no less than £495,000 — nearly half a million pounds — has been lost from BBC budgets and gone to the Treasury in the past year. What a waste of the licence fee!

Some VLV members wrote to me asking why the employees responsible for incurring these fines could not themselves bear some of the financial penalty. I put this point to Mark Thompson, the BBC Director-General. Mark replied saying that while he agreed the present situation was not entirely satisfactory he could not say that it would be improved by 'by attempting to recover costs from BBC employees.' In order to impose a deduction from pay the BBC would need the express contractual right to do so — which does not at present exist. And there were practical questions: 'How would a person on £25K gross per year repay £10K?'. It would also be difficult to apportion responsibility when failings have usually been at several points in the editorial chain of command and, arguably, by management overall.

### GAZA APPEAL

Recently VLV has taken issue with the BBC on another topic — the Director-General's decision not to broadcast an appeal from the Disasters Emergency Committee on behalf of the inhabitants of Gaza who had suffered so severely under the Israeli bombardment. I was asked by the BBC what VLV's attitude was to the D-G's decision.

After taking soundings I replied that while some of us might agree with him, many would not. I went on:

'I think the first reason the BBC gives for the decision it has taken — whether aid will get through — is not really valid. The DEC is a highly respected organization that does not make appeals of this nature lightly. Whatever plans Hamas may have for taking control of the rebuilding of Gaza there is a strong body of highly experienced external aid workers capable of delivering emergency relief in Gaza — which is what the DER is raising money for.

The second reason the Director-General gives for refusing to run the Gaza appeal is that to do so would run 'the risk of reducing public confidence in the BBC's impartiality'. This I think is a failure of nerve. Of course the BBC must be impartial in its reporting — Hamas mortars fired at civilian targets in Israel may be just as much a war crime as any Israeli bombardment of Gaza — but that should not prevent the BBC carrying a humanitarian appeal from the DEC when the need is so obvious.

I think the danger now is not what the BBC feared, that it might be seen to be partial on the side of Hamas, but that it is seen to have given in to fear of what the pro-Israeli lobby might do and say.'

Whether or not you approve my reply I hope you will agree that our warm support of the BBC as our best hope of quality and diversity in broadcasting should never make it impossible to challenge the Corporation when we have questions about its policy.

**Richard Lindley**

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*Working for Quality and Diversity in British Broadcasting*

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Voice of the Listener & Viewer (VLV) represents the citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting and works for quality and diversity in British broadcasting. VLV is free from political, sectarian and commercial affiliations. VLV is concerned with the issues, structures, institutions and regulation that underpin the British broadcasting system and in particular to maintain the principles of public service broadcasting. VLV does not handle complaints.

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# Looking for a Partner?

As the commercial broadcasters struggle to survive, the search is on to forge a strong, new public service partnership.

VLV has asked Channel 4, Five and BBC Worldwide to tell us who they would like to be their partner.

## **Andy Duncan Chief Executive Channel 4**



As the UK's creative industries tackle the combined challenges of a deepening recession and the structural changes brought about by the move to digital, and viewers tell us they continue to value high quality, UK-produced content and plurality, I believe Channel 4 has a crucial role to play in sustaining creative investment for the benefit of British audiences and redefining public service broadcasting for future generations.

We currently invest around £400 million a year in original British content with a focus on alternative talent, voices and ideas. This in turn drives a much bigger economic benefit for Britain. We can give viewers programmes that the market barely supplies — long-form news, current and international affairs, single dramas and documentaries, new comedy, British film — because we don't have to pay dividends to private shareholders. But we do deliver creative excellence as shown by our consistent haul of awards, most recently with the amazing Film 4 production *Slumdog Millionaire* which swept the board at the Baftas and the Oscars.

The structural shifts taking place in media require boldness and imagination and we wholeheartedly support the proposal in both the Ofcom PSB review and the Digital

Britain interim report to create a strong, second, future-facing sustainable public service broadcasting model, with a publicly owned, public purpose Channel 4 at its heart, building on our culture of innovation, risk taking and alternative voices. The best starting point is a bold partnership with BBC Worldwide and we are already working closely together to ensure we remain capable of meeting the challenges of the digital future and delivering the same high quality programmes, products and services that viewers have enjoyed in the past.

Of course, it is important that any solutions to Channel 4's funding issues are assessed for their potential impact on the wider industry since other PSB's are also struggling in the difficult economic climate. But we do believe the ideas we are developing could bring new financial benefit to both Channel 4 and BBC Worldwide's shareholders, the British public.

## **Dawn Airey Chair and Chief Executive Channel 5**



Economic conditions are dire, structural change is fast and furious. But what really matters in any debate on public service broadcasting is the breadth and quality of what appears on screen. Viewers expect the commercial channels to compete with the BBC on quality while providing different approaches.

So the question that needs to be asked

of any link-up between Five and Channel 4 is whether it will enhance viewers' experience.

Five and Channel 4 are very similar organisations — both public service broadcasters, both commissioning programmes rather than making them, both dependent on advertising for the bulk of our income.

Putting Five and 4 together would generate serious synergies — not just reductions in overhead costs, but advantages from cross-promotion, complementary scheduling, joint acquisitions policies, and optimised channel portfolios.

All of which means more money to put back on screen, to overcome the Channel 4 'funding gap' and provide the investment in new media and new platforms necessary to fully embrace the digital revolution.

But money is not the only issue. Channel 4 has a unique public service remit that would need to be protected in any partnership arrangement. That is why we have proposed the creation of a special editorial board to guarantee the channel's character and ringfence spending on key public service programming.

Five's owner RTL has an obvious commercial interest in such a venture but it is proposing not a takeover, rather a partnership in which the government would have a majority stake.

Such a partnership would be a coming together of the complementary and the compatible — more gin and tonic than oil and water.

### **Caroline Thomson Chief Operating Officer BBC**



Our partnership proposals are designed to help address the medium to long term future of PSB beyond the BBC by tackling the root causes, rather than merely addressing their symptoms. Our proposals would ensure that PSBs benefit from: Sustainable digital revenue, increased share and reach, and provide solutions that de-risk investments.

We believe that these partnerships could bring benefits of over £120m per year to commercials funded PSBs (i.e. ITV, Channel 4 and Five) by 2014.

The partnerships include the following: Sharing BBC iPlayer; Bringing internet services to the television screen; Sharing the benefits of the BBC's investment and research into digital production; supporting the continued delivery of regional news beyond the BBC; supporting the development of Broadband Britain; Creating value through a partnership between BBC Worldwide and Channel 4.

On the last of these, BBC Worldwide have been working with Channel 4 on innovative partnership proposals (subject to BBC Trust scrutiny and approval) that represent genuine business logic.

Of course, it is important that any solutions to Channel 4's funding issues are assessed for their potential impact on the wider industry since other PSBs are also struggling in the difficult economic climate. But we do believe the ideas we are developing could bring new financial benefit to both Channel 4 and BBC Worldwide's shareholders, the British public.

## **President's talk in Sheffield**

On a February evening, Jocelyn Hay ventured up to the Psalter Tavern in Sheffield to give a talk and answer questions from a 40-strong audience made up of local Lib Dem activists, VLV members and journalism students from the University of Sheffield.

The talk entitled 'How to keep British radio and television the best in the world' prompted questions on subjects ranging from top-slicing of the BBC licence fee, community radio, OFCOM's PSB Review, Channel 4's shortfall of income, the cutbacks at ITV and the advantages of Freesat in a city of hills and woodlands.

Jocelyn's message was that PSB faces severe challenges, and ordinary citizens need to let government know how important a part broadcasting plays in maintaining our democracy and cultural life. We must defend and support an independent, diverse and well-funded industry still capable of making quality British programmes.

**David Eggington**

## **MAKING THE MOST OF NEW MEDIA**

Actress Patricia Routledge has signed up for the conference aimed at the over 50s on April 1 — organised by VLV with support from OFCOM & BT. Patricia decided it was time to get to grips with her new laptop and intends to have some training prior to the conference, where she will demonstrate her progress with voice activated dictation and live video links with friends overseas.

Also taking part will be panels of broadcasters, expert voluntary organisations, internet service providers, researchers and technical advisers. They will be under the guidance of these well known presenters: Evan Davis, Gillian Reynolds, Martyn Lewis, Roger Bolton and Sandy Chalmers.

The day is designed to bring encouragement, confidence and advice to the audience who can also discover a piece of new technology called WAYVE. It's a simple communications device designed to live in the kitchen; it receives and sends

messages and pictures but doesn't need a key-board or a mouse. It might be the start of a big break-through so come and be one of the first to see it in action!

Stands will be there to offer one-to-one advice. Among them will be some of the voluntary organisations who provide assistance to novice computer users around the country. And RICABILITY will be on hand to give the latest technical help on preparing for digital television.

*This conference has sold like hot cakes and is now over-subscribed; however, we hope it will lead to similar events in London and around the country. Please let Linda know if you would like to be kept informed.*



**AN UPDATE ON THE  
VLV SPRING CONFERENCE  
IS ON p.6.**



# The future of radio — will it be digital?



One aspect of the Digital Britain interim report was the commitment to a switch to digital transmission of radio. VLV

has been involved in the debate about the future of radio since Ofcom began consultations in 2005 since 2008 have been represented on the Digital Radio Working Party (DRWG).

The recommendation for a switch comes from the DRWG, which suggests that the change should not happen unless three key criteria are met: at least 50% of total radio listening must occur on digital platforms; national multiplex coverage must be comparable to current FM coverage; local multiplexes should reach at least 90% of the population, including all major roads. The group expects these to be met by 2017, when switchover can begin.

Last autumn a consumer sub-group reported on the consumer impact of the proposals. We challenged a switch after only 50% of listening is on digital platforms. We think it is too big a task to move the remaining 50% during a switchover period; many will be vulnerable and ageing listeners particularly dependant on radio. On the basis of the experience with TV, we wanted the criteria to be at least 65%.

However, VLV does not consider the criteria will be met by 2017. Improvements in reception will not happen and may prove uneconomic. It has taken decades and much licence money for the BBC to achieve the current analogue coverage with VHF.

Very few cars have digital radios as reception is so poor, and agreement has only just been reached on a common system for Europe. To switch a significant number of the 30 million cars on the road by 2017 will prove very difficult.

A major difference from TV is that it will be necessary to buy a new radio: at present the equivalent of a set-top box is not seen as a way forward. Finally, there is little

unique content on digital radio to encourage consumers to make the switch

VLV has supported digital radio for a decade with regular presentations at our conferences. We continue to support the switch to digital transmission and would always suggest that members consider a dual analogue/digital radio; however the advantages for the consumer at this time are not as significant as for digital television.

We do not consider a delay in a total switch to digital radio transmission will be a problem. The present VHF analogue transmissions are fit for purpose and have served most consumers across the UK well for decades. '[http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/5700.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/5700.aspx)' is the final report of the DRWG and the report of the consumer sub group can be found on the DCMS website.

## Rapid TV Switchover

The big switch is taking off. By the end of 2009, 5 million homes will cease to receive an analogue TV signal. It began successfully in Borders TV and is rolling out through Cornwall, Devon, Granada ITV region and much of Wales.

The task — long planned by Digital UK — is in part an engineering challenge, as all transmitters must be changed, and part a public information campaign, so that every viewer and provider knows what to do. VLV has been a member of the consumer committees.

There is a hardship scheme for vulnerable groups. However, most households have already switched. Monitored by quarterly surveys, viewers' behaviour shows nearly 90% of households have converted the primary receiver, while in most areas 60% have converted all sets.

There are many reasons for the rapid take up. Most viewers can make the change by purchasing a cheap set-top box; there are many more stations available free at point of use; radio stations can be received; more

background information can be provided and subtitling and audio description are often available. In 2008 Freesat became available for a one-off payment, which is a great help to consumers experiencing reception problems, and who did not wish to be tied into an often expensive subscription.

**Robert Clark**

## Sarah Montague of Today to present the VLV Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting



The ballot papers for voting in the final round are enclosed with this Bulletin. We hope you will find time to return these straight away, as the goblets must be engraved in time for the Spring Conference. Sarah Montague, famed presenter of the *Today* programme, has kindly agreed to hand out the trophies. Once again we thank Roberts Radio for their sponsorship.

Over 100 different programmes each were nominated for the best TV and radio programmes, and 70 each for the best *new* TV and radio programmes. More than 80 individuals were voted best contributors to TV and over 70 to radio. Seventeen children's programmes were selected; however there were insufficient votes for specific digital television or radio stations to warrant a final voting stage.

**Carol Cattley**

◆ Due to a diary mixup Professor **Simon Schama** had to cancel the celebrity evening event on 25 February when he was due to come to talk to us at the Reform Club. Simon has sent his apologies and we hope we can arrange another date before too long.

# OPTIONS FOR ONLINE REGULATION



**VLV board member Sonia Livingstone was a panellist on the Options for Regulation session of the Westminster eForum's conference, Taming the Wild Web — Online Content Regulation on 11 February 2009. Her contribution focused on the role of parents in regulating — or mediating — their children's internet use.**

Lord Carter's recent *Digital Britain* report follows last year's *Byron Review* in calling for a one stop shop for internet safety information, better parental control software and improvements to parents' e-safety skills. As Secretary of State Andy Burnham said in the House of Commons, when debating *Digital Britain*, we must 'give parents the information and tools necessary to protect children from harmful or inappropriate content'.

In the USA, the Internet Safety Technical Task Force, which reported last December, stated that parents should educate themselves about the internet and the ways their children use it, explore and evaluated the effectiveness of available technological tools, and be conscious of the common risks youth face.

What does this mean for parents? It seems that we need to think hard about the difference between **empowering parents** (which everyone surely wholeheartedly supports), and **relying on parents** to mediate their children's internet use and safety (about which research suggests serious reservations).

For any media, including now the internet, research finds that parents try to do three types of management:

1. They impose rules and restrictions
2. They use technical tools – filtering, monitoring
3. They use social approaches – watching, sharing, talking about the internet with their children.

## SOCIAL SOLUTIONS

Parents prefer social solutions: for younger children, because they wish to share their experiences; for older teens, because rules don't work with them; and for all children because they wish to trust their child, treat them with respect and not check up on them, invade their privacy or act the heavy authority figure.

So — rules and restrictions don't fit well with the ethos of modern parenting. Further, when researchers interview both parents and their children, they find that parents claim many more rules than their children recognise. And last, perhaps surprisingly, it remains to be seen whether rules and restrictions really reduce risk. So far, we only have evidence that they reduce opportunities.

What about technical solutions? Five years ago, the UK Children Go Online survey found that a fifth of parents said the child's computer has no filtering or monitoring software installed

— though only 15% of parents said they were good at installing such software.

Last December, a Eurobarometer survey found 88% of UK parents claim to have safety software installed — an improvement over recent years, putting the UK at the top of the EU for use of safety software, against an EU27 average of 59%.

But, among those who don't have it, 1 in 5 say they don't know how to install it. The persistent difficulties in use of filters is confirmed by the EC's Safer Internet programme's recent evaluation of filters on the market — they show some year on year improvement, but are still fairly difficult to install and use. Moreover, filters are better for online pornography and violence (especially if searched for in the English language) than they are for anorexia, gambling or self-harm sites, especially if searched for in Polish or Urdu; and they do not address what the child posts, only what they may receive. Last, as often stated, the suspicion — little researched — is that those determined to get around them will do so.

So, that leaves the social solutions — the ones parents prefer. The good news is that across Europe, the Eurobarometer survey shows that British parents are among the most likely to stay nearby, sit with their child or check the computer afterwards. This is especially the case among parents who use the computer themselves. So, the safety messages are getting across.

Moreover, worries are most common among those who don't use the computer themselves. Since worries remain fairly high — the Eurobarometer survey shows that 59% of UK parents are worried about their children seeing sexual or violent content, 48% worry about online grooming, 42% about children accessing information about self-harm, suicide or anorexia online, and 39% worry that they'll be bullied online — getting all parents online themselves is a good move.

## SURVEILLANCE OR TRUST?

However, there are some problems with the social solutions: It relies on parental surveillance. But the 2008-9 Childwise survey finds that 37% of children go online in their own bedroom, including more than a quarter of 5-10 year olds. Given this, parental monitoring is difficult.

It requires trust. The Eurobarometer survey found UK parents are least likely to report that their children ask them for help with online problems — only 15%, compared with an EU27 average of 32% - although when children do ask for help, they are most likely to ask about bullying/harassment/strangers etc rather than, say, technical problems.

It assumes responsible parents. As the ISTTF report made clear, it is unfortunate but true that vulnerable children may be least likely to have parents who help them online — or, arguably, offline. So, relying on parents may further disadvantage those already 'at risk', perpetuating cycles of disadvantage.

To conclude: we must empower parents, to improve their use of all the available solutions; but we must not rely on them, especially expecting them to provide the stop gap solution where other regulatory strategies are found to be insufficient.

## NATIONS & REGIONS

For many years, VLV has organised an annual Scottish conference so that the particular national issues and perspectives in and from this nation can be addressed. This conference was often the only one where broadcasters and the public were able to debate the place and importance of broadcasting in Scottish society.

Now that we live in post devolutionary times and Scotland has its own Parliament — albeit with powers over broadcasting being reserved to Westminster — the debate has moved on and readers of the Bulletin will be aware that the Scottish Government set up a Broadcasting Commission to look at the future of the industry north of the border. Commission Chair, Blair Jenkins, had already spoken at a number of VLV conferences and the report remains a template and set of aspirations against which future policies and provision will be judged.

In essence however, the challenges for broadcasting in Scotland mirror those of any small nation. How do we best ensure what kinds of investment in staff and skills, in content and distribution, in the creative industries and broadcasting, so that our lives are enriched and enhanced by quality programming which speaks to, for and about us and other cultures as well?

In this context, STV — like ITV in England and Wales, is seeking regulatory relief, i.e. public funding for news and current affairs or other forms of support for or reduced commitments to the full range of psb. The problem is perhaps, more acute, when there is a need for TV and radio beyond the BBC to play a part in the democratic and cultural life of the nation beyond gameshows and soaps, although they have their place.

How can the British or Scottish State ensure that this happens and what kinds of investment and from where — hopefully not the licence fee — should be deployed to achieve these goals. Of course, what also would happen to editorial independence if there was direct state investment in and for news and current affairs. Would the hard won lessons endured by the BBC and the structures of independence be replicated in

a new system or would this be another step in what some call the decline of public service broadcasting.

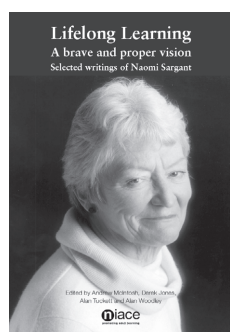
And of course there is always the thought that the SNP Government might — despite the Scotland Act — have some influence on the overall ecology of broadcasting in Scotland. The launch of BBC Alba, the Gaelic digital channel, has been a great success. Others may follow.

These and other issues will be debated at the VLV Scotland Conference on Tuesday, 12 May at the Netherbow Theatre, Royal Mile, Edinburgh.

As always, the editor of the Bulletin welcomes contributions from readers in Wales, Northern Ireland and England, both the English regions and the Metropolis as well as from Scotland.

**Robert Beveridge**

### Book review



*Lifelong Learning — A brave and proper vision. Selected writings of Naomi Sargent. Edited by Andrew McIntosh, Derek Jones, Alan Tuckett and Alan Woodley. Published by Niace. Price £20.*

Naomi Sargent was one of the most distinguished adult educators of the post-war era; she believed passionately that everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from life long learning. As professor of social research and pro-vice-chancellor of the Open University, Channel 4's first commissioning editor for educational programmes, and advisor to many government and non-governmental organisations on consumer and education issues, she recognised how the power of television could be used to promote adult education, especially for those who had missed out on conventional schooling and higher education.

She worked tirelessly on behalf of women and the under-privileged, and in recent years on the Board of VLV, she was particularly concerned to highlight and resolve the problems of the growing 'digital divide' between those who have access to

digital technology and those who do not.

In this selection of her writings between 1973 and 2006, edited by her husband Andrew McIntosh and colleagues from the Open University, Channel 4 and Niace, we can share her vision and hopes for British society at a time of unprecedented social and technological change. **Jocelyn Hay**

## SPRING CONFERENCE

### The End of Broadcasting As We Know It?

On 30 April VLV will welcome as main speakers two of the most important figures in British broadcasting today.

Michael Grade, Executive Chairman of ITV, heads a once great television network that rivalled the BBC. But ITV is in deep financial trouble, cutting back on staff, original programme production and its historic PSB obligations.

Colette Bowe is the new Chair of Ofcom. Once the broadcasting Regulator's word was law, but in the face of a remorseless decline in advertising revenue which has until now funded commercial television, can Ofcom hope to 'maintain and strengthen the quality of public service broadcasting' — as Parliament intended?

Local Television — Is it Really A Runner? Participants include Steve Hewlett, television journalist and consultant and presenter of Radio 4's weekly Media Show, and Peter Williams, independent television producer and former ITV This Week reporter. With regional television being stretched so thinly, is the real future local?

Sarah Montague, former Newsnight and BBC 1 Presenter, now a Presenter of Radio 4's Today programme, will present VLV's 2008 Awards for Excellence.

VLV Chairman Richard Lindley points out: 'A television system that for half a century has given us high quality programmes and a prosperous television industry has broken down. In a multi-channel, digital world Ofcom the Government and the companies are struggling to find new ways to maintain television standards. But we mustn't leave it to them. It's up to us, the viewers, to make sure we have our say about the shape of things to come. This Conference will give us the opportunity to do so.'

(Further details on p.8)



## Letter to the Chairman

### BBC NOT A PLAYTHING

Dear Richard Lindley,

Thank you so much for your letter and all the material about the inputs and actions of the Voice of the Listener and Viewer.

At 91 I'm physically incapable of playing a part in any of these activities but I like to know about them and be reminded of my own participation during the many years of my membership as a member of BBC staff.

More than ever is it essential for the BBC to maintain its position as a public service and not a plaything for big business. Although I cannot attend the various events described I wish to contribute this cheque for £75 to the public service we all believe in.

**William Ash**, London W2

## VLV STUDENT ESSAY COMPETITION

### £500 in Prizes plus Work Experience offered to Winners in 2009

Prizes totaling £500 have kindly been given by Channel 4 for VLV's fourth Student Essay Competition. The winners and runners-up in categories equivalent to under and post graduate levels will also be offered two weeks' work experience with a leading television or radio production company. The competition is again sponsored by Voice of the Listener Trust. **Jon Snow**, presenter of C4 news, will lead the judging panel.

Broadcasting is changing more rapidly than ever before. Digital technology and the internet have brought new services which now threatens the viability of the commercially funded public service broadcasters, ITV, Channel 4 and Five. The implications for the BBC are also profound. At the same time, new technology enables more and more people to generate their own content through podcasts, webcasts, blogs

and vlogs. How will this affect the broadcasters' ability to fulfill their public service remits? Is the concept of public service broadcasting any longer viable?

VLV invites entries from students studying for a UK registered undergraduate or postgraduate degree, or similar professional qualifications, on the following subject:

**What is important about public service broadcasting and how should it be funded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

There is no entry fee. Entries should be submitted as a written essay of a maximum of 2,000 words by Monday, 1 June 2009 to: VLV Student Essay Competition, PO Box 401, Gravesend, Kent DA12 9FY. Full details and an entry form, which must be completed, are available from [vlv.org.uk](http://vlv.org.uk) or in writing, enclosing an s.a.e

## Visit to the Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit



IN 1923 the BBC's first general manager John Reith tried to broadcast the King's speech at the State Opening of Parliament. His request was firmly rejected. The Lords and the Commons have always been extremely wary of the broadcasters, fearing that they would be caught by the cameras fast asleep, or their solemn deliberations would be lightly treated. Radio broadcasting finally came in 1978, but it was not until 1990 that television became a permanent part of broadcasting from both Houses.

On 5 February, in atrocious weather, a large group of VLV members was warmly welcomed to the home of Parliamentary Broadcasting by its Director Timothy Jeffes at its Westminster base on Millbank. We learned that while it is MPs and Members of the House of Lords who have the final say in how their proceedings are recorded by the remotely-controlled cameras and microphones

it is the broadcasters who then decide how to use the 'clean feed' of the sound and pictures in their different programmes.

The recording is done by a commercial contractor working to strict rules, based on the principle that the dignity of the House is to be protected at all times. The cameras mainly focus on the Member who is speaking and though the director can cut to a relevant reaction shot, or a wide shot of the House, he may not show the press or the public galleries. And if there is a disturbance it should not be shown – although viewers will remember that the wide shot not long ago caught some highly dramatic scenes in the Commons when hunt saboteurs invaded the floor of the House.

VLV members were taken to the galleries deep in the basement where the remote-control camera operators sit, not with the cameras in the Chamber but beside the director, using a joystick control to get the shot they want. It was most interesting to see how coverage of debates from Parliament that we now take for granted is actually brought to us.

This was a most informative visit, for which VLV is very grateful to Tim Jeffes and all his colleagues at Millbank.

**Richard Lindley**

◆ **Toni Charlton**, a former BBC Outside Broadcast Producer and new VLV member, volunteered to do some very useful work up-dating VLV's lists of media contacts. We are very grateful to Toni. Is there any other volunteer ready to help finish the job?

## Advertisements

Please refer to VLV when responding to advertisements. VLV Ltd cannot accept any liability or complaint in regard to the following offers. The charge for classified ads is 30p per word, 20p for members. Please send typed copy with a cheque payable to VLV Ltd. For display space please contact Linda Forbes on 01474 352835.

### VLV GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Give a VLV membership as a gift to a friend or relative. We will add an appropriate greetings card and a FREE copy of the Radio or TV User's Guide. Fill out the subscription form below and state which publication and card type you would prefer.



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audio books

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## Diary Dates

### Tuesday, 31 March

*New ways to communicate*  
10am at Ofcom, Riverside House, London, SE1  
Members of the Strategy and Market Developments team will provide an overview of emerging trends in the audio/visual media sector. The two-hour session will include a technical demonstration of new services such as WebTV and 3DTV and questions and answers.

### Wednesday, 1 April

*Making the most of New Media.* One day conference at the BT Centre, 81 Newgate St. London EC1 (opposite St. Paul's tube station). 10.30am-4.15pm. Tickets £10, including a light lunch.

Speakers include: Philip Graf, Ofcom; Tony Ageh, Controller of Archive Development, BBC; Adam Gee, Director of New Media, Channel 4; Carmel Giblin, Head of Corporate Responsibility & Accessibility, BSkyB; Tim Blackshall, Broadcaster & Presenter, Border TV; Lindsey Etchell, Ricability; Rachel Thomson, NIACE; Emma Solomon, Digital Unite; Mike Cushman, LSE; James Thickett, Director of Market Research, Ofcom; Nick Lansman, DG of the Internet Service Providers Association; Peter Barron, Head of PR for Google UK; Emma Wilson, Head of Public Affairs, Vodafone UK. See also p.3.

### Tuesday, 21 April

Visit to BBC Editorial Complaints Unit, London W12. 2-3.30pm

### Thursday, 30 April

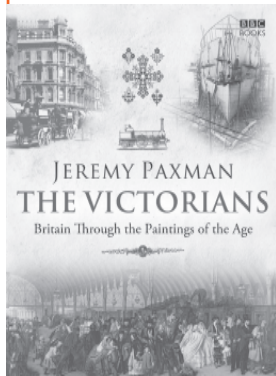
*The end of broadcasting as we know it?* VLV Annual Spring Conference will be held at the Geological Society, Burlington House Piccadilly, London, W1 10.0am-4.00pm. Registration 9.30. More details on p.6.

### Tuesday, 12 May

*Visions of the Future*  
VLV Scotland Conference will be held at the Netherbow Theatre, Royal Mile, Edinburgh. Representatives of STV, BBC Scotland, BBC Alba, OFCOM, C4 and Scottish Government have been invited..

**For all tickets or enquiries please contact Linda Forbes**  
tel: 01474 352835, email: [linda.forbes@vlv.org.uk](mailto:linda.forbes@vlv.org.uk) or visit [www.vov.org.uk](http://www.vov.org.uk).

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Replies on a postcard to Spring Competition, VLV, PO Box 401, Gravesend DA12 0FY or by e-mail to [info@vlv.org.uk](mailto:info@vlv.org.uk) by 24 April 2009. Winner of VLV's Winter competition for Simon Schama's *The American Future* was Miriam Haywood who works at the Royal National Institute for the Blind in London,



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