



**Voice of the
Listener & Viewer**

Bulletin

Working for Quality and Diversity in Broadcasting

Winter 2008/09

Issue 95

It's *not* all over — PSB beyond the BBC

THIS is going to be a testing year for everyone: for the commercial broadcasters, for independent production companies, for Ofcom and for the politicians. And VLV will have its work cut out, because we have to deal with so many specific issues — ITV's increasing abandonment of its former regional structure; what's going to happen to broadcasting in the UK's nations; how public service broadcasting is to be funded at all outside the BBC; and whether C4 can continue with its present brief; not to mention a worrying loss of trust in recent BBC editorial judgements.

VLV needs to keep two things clearly in mind. We must not be negative, endlessly bemoaning the days when broadcasting was generously funded, and finding fault with every technical or commercial development which seems to threaten programme standards. But at the same time we must not allow politicians and commercial broadcasters simply to say that if the market can't find money for good programmes then we can't have them. Our job is to argue forcefully that British broadcasting is something we are proud of and that we must find ways to maintain.

Promoting the idea of universal

access to broadband (Lord (Stephen) Carter, the new broadcasting minister, has said that as a nation we need to be both plumbers and poets, and that 'we will need to be sure we can deliver the plumbing before celebrating or protecting the poetry.' But is he right? Can we really afford to ignore what goes through the pipes while we're building the digital network? Doesn't it matter whether it's clean, sparkling water or, frankly, sewage?

VLV thinks it does. We think that the best of British broadcasting should be helped to thrive, because in the end we will be remembered not for plumbing but for the poetry, the quality of what the plumbing brought to listeners and viewers. And that is what we will be fighting for.

Richard Lindley

The VLV response to Ofcom's PSB phase two is available on the VLV and OFCOM websites, or from VLV (see required)

CELEBRITY LECTURE

Simon Schama, so well-known to television viewers for his award-winning series *A History of Britain*, has very kindly agreed to come and talk to VLV members in the early evening of Wednesday 25 February, at a central London venue. Professor Schama's brilliant programmes, on art as well as history, are exactly the sort of television that VLV members want. This will be a ticket only event. See *Diary Dates*.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Media literacy

Making the Most of New Media. The VLV conference on **Wednesday 1 April** at the BT Centre, London EC1 is aimed at the over-50s who may be struggling with digital television, radio and computers, or who have still to take the plunge. Many organisations exist to make life easier and they — along with broadcasters and internet service providers — will be offering advice in a variety of sessions hosted by broadcasters like Evan Davis from *Dragon's Den* and Roger Bolton from Radio 4's *Feedback*. OFCOM and BT are supporting the conference, with hands-on exhibits including the latest voice activated computers. See *Diary Dates*.

Spring conference

The End of Broadcasting as We Know It? That's the arresting title of VLV's Spring Conference to be held in London on **Thursday 30 April**. By then the regulator Ofcom and the Government will have published plans for dealing with the financial crisis in television — and how to maintain public service broadcasting on ITV, C4 and Five. All agree the present system no longer works. VLV is delighted that at this crucial moment two of the most important figures in broadcasting (pictured) have agreed to address our Conference, and answer questions. Michael Grade, now Executive Chairman of ITV, is trying to maintain standards in the face of falling revenue. Colette Bowe, new Chairman of OFCOM (p.7) is charged with sustaining PSB beyond the BBC.



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Voice of the Listener & Viewer

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.

VLV Office: PO Box 401, Gravesend DA12 9FY

Tel: 01474 352835 Fax: 01474 351112

e-mail info@vlv.org.uk

Office Hours: 9.30-5pm Monday-Thursday

Linda Forbes: Conference & Events Sec.

Sue Washbrook: Membership/ Board & Trust Admin.

Website: www.vlv.org

Registered address: Aercon House,
Alfred Road, Gravesend DA11 7QF

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Delegates to a conference held at the University of Navarra, co-hosted by iC Media, Spain's umbrella broadcasting and citizen grouping.

EURALVA CONFERENCE IN MADRID

EURALVA's 2008 Annual Conference took place on 10 November in Madrid, well organised by Portuguese board member Nuno de Campos. Richard Lindley attended for the first time as VLV Chair.

Building Circles of Trust developed a theme born at EURALVA's 2007 conference in Copenhagen, when participants from nearly a dozen Central European and Balkan countries found common ground with West European colleagues around the idea of a tripartite understanding between three sets of stakeholders — broadcasting policy-makers and regulators, public service broadcasting organizations and the citizens who are their audiences, users and consumers.

The necessity of trust strongly influenced EURALVA responses to Commission consultations on key issues such as state and product (or prop) placement in programmes.

In Madrid, Spanish private sector representative EURALVA speakers stood firm on the threat posed by commercial pressures to public service values, and the related need for updated regulatory mechanisms. This democratic imperative was underlined in speeches by R. Brethes from the European Commission and M. Maggiore, the BBC Controller of European and International Policy.

Preben Sorensen, Denmark, is now EURALVA President, following Professor Vincent Porter who will continue his involvement as EURALVA's European Media Policy Adviser and representative on the Advisory Committee of the European Audiovisual Observatory in Strasbourg.

Andrew Taussig

Secretary of State talks to VLV members

ANDY Burnham's second meeting with VLV as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport took place at Westminster on 9 December. He paid tribute to Jocelyn Hay's years as VLV Chair, and to the strong foundations she bequeaths to her successor, Richard Lindley.

He referred to how the Jonathan Ross — Russell Brand debate had provided a focus on viewers' hunger and demand for standards. British broadcasting's hallmark had been high quality and integrity, and broadcasters should hold true in the face of pressures from the on-line world.

In 2009, with Lord Carter's interim Digital Britain Report and the Ofcom PSB Review, Parliament would debate the public's priorities for PSB post-2012, the date by which digital switch-over would be complete. While MPs would understandably and rightly be concerned with regional news, children's TV was equally a crucial issue for families. Consultation would also take place on product placement, and what events should be listed for transmission free-to-air. There would be debate on online content, including protection of copyright, and the follow up to the Byron Review on the safety of children on the internet.

In answer to a question on the time scale, he said that we have had the 'think tank' and had now reached the 'doing' stage. He answered worries that Lord Carter might pre-empt the Ofcom Review by saying that due consideration would be given to all the options in an ongoing process. While he would not rule out top-slicing the BBC licence fee at this moment, he later said it was 'not an option I would reach for first'.

Sylvia Harvey asked how ITV's commitment to regional news and non-news might be maintained, or replaced. He felt there was potential for partnership. His Conservative shadow was right to raise the opportunities for local TV, which could attract new advertisers. He also saw possibilities of public sector support from councils and regional development agencies.

Lewis Rudd



Congratulations in the River Room from Baroness Hayman (left), Lord Bragg (above) and Sir Michael Lyons (below).

Silver Jubilee at the House of Lords

A Silver Jubilee deserves at least one party. It has to be a good one, and it was. Very graciously the Lord Speaker of the House of Lords, Baroness (Helene) Hayman agreed to give us the wonderful River Room in which to celebrate. This is the notorious wallpaper room for which her predecessor got into trouble over the decorating bill. It is right on the edge of the Thames, with a fabulous view up and down the river: a perfect setting in which to welcome many of the great and good who have been so helpful to us over the years, and to greet many of our members. Some came up to London to enjoy the party, stay overnight and come to our Autumn Conference.

Official host for the evening was Lord (Melvyn) Bragg. A great creative talent as writer and broadcaster, he this year won VLV's award for the best individual contribution to radio. Single-handedly, it sometimes seems, he keeps the arts vividly alive on ITV with the South Bank Show, of which he became writer, editor and presenter 30 years ago. He spoke of his warm feelings for VLV. And we were so glad to be able to thank him for his strong support over the years.

We were also very pleased to welcome the Chairman of the new BBC

Trust, Sir Michael Lyons. Support for the BBC is an article of faith for VLV; whatever its mistakes – and there have been quite a few recently – it remains the cornerstone of the British broadcasting system, without which there would be little hope of maintaining this country's high reputation worldwide for broadcasting standards. It was a tribute to VLV that Sir Michael had asked if he might make a short speech, and good to hear him say how important an independent organisation of listeners and viewers like ours was to the BBC.

We were very pleased that Sir Michael and our other guests from broadcasting and politics could see from the assembled company that VLV members include both the still-active veterans of the last twenty-five years and new and younger recruits to the cause of quality and diversity in broadcasting.

Our last speaker — responding to many tributes to her successful leadership of VLV since the beginning — was former Chairman, now our President, Jocelyn Hay. Over the last 25 years, whenever the way we do broadcasting in this country has been under scrutiny, she has given all her efforts to making VLV a force to be reckoned with. The turnout at

our Silver Jubilee celebration and loud applause that followed Jocelyn's speech were all the evidence anyone could want of her success.

Finally a very special tribute to our two office staff, Sue Washbrook and Linda Forbes. To avoid the cost of an expensive London caterer they had assembled the excellent refreshments in Gravesend (where our office remains) and transported everything to Westminster in a van, together with volunteers Sue Walford, Jane Mills, Dawn Bright, and Chloe Washbrook, who made sure that glasses and plates stayed full. Sue and Linda saved VLV a fortune and did a superb job. And having taken everything back to Gravesend that night they were up long before dawn to run our Autumn Conference in Piccadilly. Truly remarkable: we are very grateful to them.

R.L.



Children's Television — a glimmer of hope

VLV CHILDREN'S CONFERENCE

November 2008 at the New Connaught Rooms, Covent Garden

In her keynote speech, the Playschool presenter Floella Benjamin saw herself as a Cassandra who had been warning of the need for action. She stressed the positive influence of iconic children's programmes like Playschool, the role such programmes played in cultural diversity, and how ITV's output had until recently challenged the BBC's in quality. The digital channels were too much driven by commercialisation and big business had moved into what had been a cottage industry. Ofcom, on whose Content Board she had served, had lacked the powers to protect the genre, although some present disagreed.

POLITICAL ISSUES

The first session, chaired by journalist Gillian Reynolds, dealt with political issues. Anna Home, chair of Save Kids TV, referred to the decline in UK originated new programmes — only 1% of all the programmes transmitted.

Ofcom's well-researched 2007 discussion paper had drawn attention to the crisis, indicating that the genre was 'the canary in the coalmine' — threatening all Public Service Broadcasting. In the 2nd PSB review Children's had been overwhelmed by the concern about these other genres, only suggesting Elastoplast remedies.

John Grogan MP (Labour) felt some reasons to be cheerful: the campaign had made Children's an issue, and Ofcom had highlighted the situation. Now politicians had to decide. He supported levies on new media, tax breaks for new media and liked the SKTV idea of an online portal.

Ed Vaizey MP (Conservative) agreed that the profile had been raised, and felt that tax breaks, already enjoyed by film, should be extended to children's TV and video games. He was totally opposed to an 'Arts Council of the Airwaves'. While unconvinced anything would happen quickly, he felt Stephen Carter's appointment as minister was a hopeful sign. Lord (Tim) Clement-Jones (Lib-Dem) supported tax breaks and an on-line portal.

James Thickett (Ofcom) gave some idea of how competitive funding could work, for instance as zones on existing commercial children's channels. The pace of change had been faster than expected, and Ofcom would publish its conclusions by the end of January. There was no intention to top-slice the BBC's core services; although again some in the audience were concerned about precisely what might constitute core services.

REGULATING NEW MEDIA

The next session dealt with the thorny problems of regulating new media, demonstrated in the Byron Review. Elizabeth Filkin, chair of the *Association for TV On Demand*, and Mike Rawlinson, from the computer games publishers association, explained the self-regulation put into effect so far, while Marc Goodchild, Head of Interactive and On Demand for BBC Children's, and Pete Johnson, BBFC's Head of Policy and Business Development, demonstrated how responsibly problems were being addressed, while making it clear that parents have a big role to play. They pointed out that regulation and technology only has a limited effect.

PLANS AND ASPIRATIONS

The afternoon looked at the plans and aspirations of public service broadcasters. Richard Deverell, BBC, affirmed the importance of providing content whose only purpose is to serve children. While continuing to entertain, the BBC did not avoid difficult or sensitive subjects. The future of children's programmes on BBC1 and 2 after switchover has not yet been decided. The move to Salford was a challenge to become the most creative community in the UK, suited to the internet age. The move would not effect budgets.

Nick Wilson, Five, gave examples of the success of the *Milkshake* strand for pre-schools. He was ambitious to extend the age-range, and offer a 12 hour daily service. He felt co-operation between broadcasters, including cross-promotion, could help meet the needs of older children.

Huw Rossiter, S4C, indicated how the Welsh language channel was increasing its service for children on digital, and from 2009 sub-titling all its output in English.

C4 AND OLDER CHILDREN

Janey Walker, Channel 4, said that the current problems were symptomatic of a bigger crisis in all genres. She affirmed commitment to the *Next On Four* £10m pilot scheme for older children, although for budgeting reasons transmissions would be delayed until 2010. It was important for these programmes to be shown when they would be found by the audience, e.g 6pm weekdays or teatime at week-ends.

A final session asked: where do we go from here? The children's writer Eleanor Updale drew an analogy with the fate of books since the ending of the net book agreement, resulting in far less money for writers. Nigel Pickard, formerly head of children's at both ITV and BBC, felt it came down to finding ways to finance more breadth of content. Media commentator Maggie Brown saw a glimmer of hope in the politicians' support for tax breaks, but was sceptical of Channel 4's commitment. All agreed that Ofcom research proved public demand is there, and lobbying was vital.

Lewis Rudd

NEW MEMBERS OF THE VLV BOARD



A distinguished academic, Matthew is Deputy Head of the Department of Film, Media and Journalism at the University of Stirling.



Shyama is a journalist and broadcaster with thirty years of experience in print — *The Guardian*, radio — *The Weekend Breakfast Show*, and television, where she presented Channel 4's *Eastern Eye*.

VLV AUTUMN CONFERENCE

THE Autumn Conference was held on 26 November at the Geological Society, Burlington House. In a short opening session, chaired by VLV Board member Norman Green, Jan Ostler, Director of the Help Scheme, Housing & Industry, Digital UK, gave a succinct but valuable update on progress towards switching the UK to digital television. And Peter Davies, Director of Radio Policy & Broadcast Licensing, Ofcom, brought delegates up to date on the position of digital radio (DAB).



Jay Hunt addressing the VLV

NEW BBC ONE CONTROLLER

Perhaps the star of the occasion was the new Controller of BBC ONE, Jay Hunt. A week, said Jay, was an even longer time in television than in politics. She remembered not that long ago talking to John Sergeant when he was a respected political editor and she was running the BBC's *Six O'Clock News*. Previously she had been trying to dissuade John from leaving *Strictly Come Dancing* and then discussing with him and his dancing partner Kristina Rihanoff how they should wow the audience for his final turn on the floor.

It would not be right to suggest that John's progress from authoritative political commentator to dance floor comedy turn is symptomatic of the 'dumbing down' in television that some of our members complain of — *Strictly* is a quality programme that surely has a place in the range of public service broadcasting; but it did raise the perennial problem for the Controller of the BBC's most popular television channel — how to keep maximum numbers watching lots of different programmes while at the same time maintaining real quality. Jay was clearly worried that television as we have known it would not necessarily continue to attract today's young people when they became adults, as it used to do. 'In a competitive multi-channel landscape, many viewers under 50 are not coming to the channel as their first port of call. We can no longer assume they will when they grow older', she said. So BBC One had to be creatively ambitious. Costume drama, for instance would get a new look with an adaptation of Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, in which we witness the impact of the second world war through the eyes of a newly arrived Jamaican woman. 'This sort of opportunity to see Britain's heritage in a new guise will be fundamental to keeping the channel feeling modern and contemporary.'

When she took over BBC One six months earlier, said

Jay, it was her dream job, and it still was. She felt it a huge privilege to preside over a channel that impinges so directly on people's lives. 'I want it to continue to deliver moments that bring the nation together', she told us. 'I want it to try even harder to connect with the widest range of audiences. In this job you can't always breed consensus. But you can make great content that engages people and gets them talking. That's the conversation I want to be having about BBC One, and I am grateful to you for letting me start that conversation today.' This was an excellent session, ably chaired by the distinguished journalist and currently television critic for the *Financial Times*, John Lloyd.

RADIO HAS BECOME AUDIO

In the main afternoon session Gillian Reynolds, that sage and insightful radio reviewer, interviewed the BBC's new Director of Audio and Music, Tim Davie. A former marketing man, Tim was clearly still feeling his way into the world of broadcast programmes, but VLV members were heartened when he talked of how passionately he cared about radio — or, as we must apparently now learn to call it, audio. Tim emphasised the huge benefits he saw in audio, for listeners rather than viewers — it builds a great sense of connection to the broadcaster that no other medium quite seems to match; it can allow the real exploration of ideas; and it requires the listener to think and to imagine. All of this was music to VLV members' ears. We were pleased to hear Tim say that while he was challenging all his creative teams to keep their sense of ambition in programme making of all kinds his overwhelming focus was on core strands like *The Archers*, the Radio 1 and 2 daytime schedules, *File on 4*, *The News Quiz* and the *Afternoon Play*. We look forward to hearing Tim talk to us again.

Richard Lindley

NATIONS AND REGIONS

Readers will be aware of VLV's activities in **Scotland and Wales** where debates about broadcasting have their own particular flavour and context.

Recent developments have engaged VLV members in discussing what kind of provision broadcasters make for specific needs of listeners and viewers in the nations. Three publications highlight these issues: the Scottish Broadcasting Commission reported in the autumn to the Scottish government. Amongst other matters it has recommended the establishment of a Scottish Public Service Channel, at a cost of around £75 million per year. Also that broadcasters should ensure they better serve the needs of viewers and listeners in Scotland, and the rest of the UK, by providing news and current affairs more in tune with the changing face of a Britain with devolved government. (Available on www.scotland.gov.uk)

Meanwhile the BBC Trust has produced the Nations Impartiality Review. Written by Professor Anthony King of Essex University, it looks at BBC reporting on the UK network and provides evidence of a number of problems where reporting is insensitive at best and inaccurate and misleading at worst. If the BBC is to achieve its purposes, it has to do better, but then again, ITN news is often Londoncentric. This well written report is available from www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/research/impartiality/ Or call 03700 103 100 or text 03700 100 212 Mon-Friday, 9.30-5.30pm.

The Welsh Assembly has followed the Scottish Parliament in calling for the establishment of a Welsh English language channel, to avoid a situation in which 'Wales is on track to be a passive consumer of programmes rather than have its own voice.'

ITV Wales output is due to fall to 5.5 hours a week in January, amounting to 4 hours of news and 1.5 hours non-news. The group suggests annual investment for its proposals would be around £50 million. 'Taking BBC Wales and ITV Wales together there is a danger that the annual value of television output in English for Wales will decline by £25-30m from its 2006 level by 2013', said the group.

VLV is a UK-wide body with members across the nations and regions and hosts conferences in the nations. We welcome contributions to these debates.

DIGITAL BRITAIN

In the autumn Bulletin we noted that Stephen Carter, formerly of OFCOM and adviser at Number Ten, had been elevated to the House of Lords and appointed Minister of State at DCMS with responsibility for Communications and Broadcasting.

Stephen Carter spoke at the 2005 VLV conference and several members took the opportunity to quiz him about OFCOM's approach to PSB. He is now leading a group which will produce a *Digital Britain* report in the Spring. Amongst the issues being examined are:

How to ensure that the UK maximises the benefits of convergence right across the economy and society? A strategy will be developed to secure four key conditions: open markets, empowered and informed consumers and citizens, universal access to public service content, and a responsive regulatory framework. Priorities in each of these areas will be:

**Broadband Development,
Digital Radio**

**Internet
Public Service
Broadcasting/Content,
Independent Production
Intellectual Property**

VLV will want to take a view on these matters and members are invited to do whatever they can to make their own views known to us and to the UK Government.

Report on the VLV Annual General Meeting

The 6th AGM of VLV Ltd was held on 26 November, following the Autumn conference. Chaired by Richard Lindley, appointed at the EGM of the Company on 2nd October, Jocelyn Hay, Chairman until 2nd October, presented the annual report for the financial year to 31 August 2008. Hugh Peltor, Treasurer, presented the annual accounts to 31st August 2008. Both were accepted unanimously.

Warren Newman and Brian Groombridge retired from the Board and Dr Matthew Hibberd, University of Stirling and Ms Shyama Perera, University of Westminster, were elected. (see p. 4)

VLV AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN BROADCASTING

Awareness of how lucky Britain is to have such a variety of quality public service broadcasting — a situation possibly at risk — lends special relevance to the nominations VLV members will send in for favourite television and radio programmes seen and heard throughout 2008. Again we thank Roberts Radio for sponsorship of this.

Nomination papers for both the television and radio selections accompany this *Bulletin*. We urge you, please, to complete and return these as soon as possible, the deadline being Thursday, 12 February. Such a variety of programmes are chosen that counting always takes time.

Ballot papers with short lists for voting in each category will be sent with the *Spring Bulletin*, when the celebrity presenter will be announced. Please also return these straight away, as the goblets must be engraved for the Awards Ceremony at the Spring Conference on 30 April.

It goes without saying that programme-makers and presenters treat the VLV Awards with great respect. The winners usually collect their engraved goblet in person, although last time Andrew Marr sent a helicopter message while filming his 2008 series on Britain from the air.

Carol Cattley

Letters to the Editor

BIG BAND MUSIC

I am appalled that Radio 2 presenter Malcolm Laycock has been instructed by his programme controller to stop broadcasting British music from before 1940! For over 30 years, since the days of Alan Dell, Radio 2 has proudly broadcast a programme of music from the 1920s and 1930s, featuring dance bands playing the great songs from the dance floors, films and shows of those pre-swing days.

Malcolm Laycock announced that the BBC would no longer broadcast 30 mins of British dance band music. With the loss of a proper classic jazz programme and now dance bands, add to that Richard Baker's light classical show, we have completely lost half a century of pre-pop popular music. So, no 1930s music, yet in one week the same *Beyonce* record can be heard 30 times.

John Wright, Coventry

This was one of a number of letters and emails on this topic: The BBC response was that the change in emphasis would allow the whole of the big band era to be better reflected.

SWEARING ON THE BROADCAST MEDIA

Following the Brand/Ross debacle there appears to be something of a public protest building about the preponderance of swearing on television and possibly radio, although thankfully not on Radio 4.

I appreciate this may not be the most important matter concerning broadcasting at the moment, but it reduces the value of programming in the eyes of those offended by it and does nothing to improve the literacy of those for whom it is a way of life. I would like to see this point made most strongly to programme makers whenever an appropriate occasion arises.

Miss E.J. Clayden, Ashstead, Surrey

VLV VISIT TO SALFORD QUAYS

Thank you for making all the arrangements at such short notice so that two friends and I could join the VLV visit.

We enjoyed it very much and the trip to the Granada Studios was an added

treat. The weather prevented us from going over the BBC building site but the BBC and Peel Holdings presentations at the Lowry Centre were very informative and we were able to view the site from the comfort of the Centre.

We were given a very warm reception by the BBC representatives involved. I hope the VLV will hold further events in the North West.

Margaret Pollard, Stockport, Cheshire

JOCELYN STEPPING UP

I much enjoyed VLV's autumn Conference and I do want to say how much I have admired your leadership of such an important organisation. You have certainly influenced many government ministers, broadcasting moguls and critics + as a long time practitioner in the media, I recognise just how valuable it has been to have such a valiant fighter for truth and high quality. Good luck for the next 25 years. With lots of good wishes

Monica Sims, London W2

WHO'S WHO IN BROADCASTING

Nigel Chapman is stepping down as Head of the BBC World Service.

Nigel has been a good friend of VLV hosting receptions for our international conferences etc. We wish him well in his new venture as head of Plan, the international children's charity.

Roger Mosey has been appointed the BBC's Director of London 2012.

The new chair of OFCOM is **Dr Colette Bowe**. The Commons Business and CMS select committees will now hold a public scrutiny hearing in line with parliamentary procedures.

Dr Bowe trained as an economist and has held a number of senior roles in the public and private sectors. She began

her career as an economist at the Department of Trade and Industry and subsequently worked at the Independent Broadcasting Authority, the Securities and Investment Board, and as Chief Executive of the Personal Investment Authority. OFCOM has appointed two new members to the Scotland Advisory Committee: **Thomas Prag** and **Professor Philip Schlesinger** — the latter now as Chair.

OBITUARY

We regret to note the death of **Professor Sir Bernard Crick**. Bernard spoke at the 2008 VLV Scotland conference and his trenchant views were equally appreciated by both the young students and older attendees.

VLV members visit BBC World Service

Twenty four VLV members visited the BBC World Service at Bush House on 21 October 2008.

Nigel Chapman, the Director, briefed members on the role and activities of the BBC World Service, which has a weekly global audience estimated at 182 million. The service broadcasts in 33 languages on FM, as well as via satellite cable, podcasts, mobiles and online — in addition to short and medium wave. In March 2008 BBC Arabic television was started. Later this year a Persian television service will be launched. After the briefing members were allowed to observe a studio in action. We were most grateful to the Director and his staff for a very interesting and impressive visit.

Hugh Peltor

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.

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Diary Dates

Thursday, 5 February

Visit to Parliamentary Broadcast Unit, Millbank, London SW1 (waiting list only)

Wednesday, 25 February

Celebrity lecture with Simon Schama, 6-7.30pm. London venue to be confirmed.

Tuesday, 31 March

New ways to communicate
Visit to OFCOM, Riverside House, London SE1. 10am-12noon
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 media literacy 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.

Tuesday, 21 April

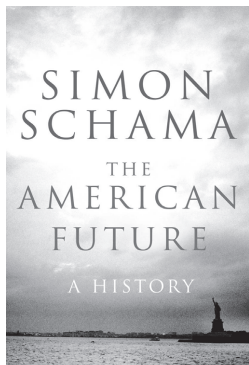
Visit to BBC Editorial Complaints Unit, London W12. 2-3.30pm

Thursday, 30 April

The end of broadcasting as we know it? VLV Spring Conference at the Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, 10.30am-4.30pm (see p.1 for speakers)

For tickets/enquiries please contact Linda Forbes tel: 01474 352835 or email: linda.forbes@vlv.org.uk or visit www.vlv.org.uk

WINTER COMPETITION



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As President Obama commences his term of office, take the opportunity to gain a richer insight into where the United States has been and is going.

Q: In which year did Simon Schama receive a VLV award?

Replies on a postcard to Winter Competition, VLV, PO Box 401, Gravesend DA12 0FY or by e-mail to info@vlv.org.uk by 12 February 2008. Winner of VLV's autumn competition for a copy of Rick Stein's *Seafood* was Paul Mayhew, London, WC1.



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