

**The Centre for Broadcasting
History Research**

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Radio archive



Introduction

The Centre for Broadcasting History Research, in association with the British Universities Film and Video Council, is developing an online audio archive of UK commercial radio, from 1973 to 1992. Work produced before the Broadcasting Act 1990 represents a different ethos to the role commercial radio played, and subsequently, continues to play, in the UK.

The change in commercial radio since this period is extraordinary. It is impossible for the young student of radio, born since this time, to imagine that such independently funded radio could have existed. As a result, it is vitally important that these programmes be preserved, as part of the evolving history of post-war British broadcasting.

The collection is in three parts, appearing online on the BUFVC website as an inter-related archive of nearly 12,000 hours of radio, over a period of three years. The material is available for students and academics studying in the United Kingdom and to BUFVC member institutions to access for non-commercial use.

1. **The Programme Sharing Archive**
The Felicity Wells Memorial Collection of independent radio (1973-1990).
2. **The Wessex Film and Sound Archive Commercial Radio Collection** (1973-1990).
3. **The LBC/IRN Audio Archive** (1973-1992).

The project involves the conservation, digitisation and dissemination via the BUFVC website over a period of three years, completed in 2009.





The ILR Programme Sharing Archive

The Felicity Wells Memorial Collection

The scheme, organised by the IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority) and subsequently the AIRC (Association of Independent Radio Contractors), encompassed a concept which enabled features, drama, music and news producers working in commercial radio around Britain to offer material. This includes a significant body of speech-based programming produced locally. The information was circulated via a 'Programme Sharing Sheet' and programmes were copied and distributed to interested stations by the AIRC. No monies were exchanged and programming was therefore available to smaller stations on a 'quality only' basis. The scheme also enabled many producers on small stations to gain national recognition for their work.



As a result, many subsequently progressed to distinguished broadcasting careers. With the Broadcasting Act 1990, the demise of the IBA and birth of the Radio Authority, the cultural map of commercial radio in Britain changed radically. The Act permitted National Commercial stations, community stations and independent production companies with the facility of selling programming to BBC radio. In many ways it was a liberating event in broadcasting history. The Radio Authority was a 'light-touch' administrator compared to the IBA. On the other hand, its relaxation of speech programming requirements on local stations meant it was no longer incumbent on companies to produce the type of community-based content represented by the Programme Sharing Scheme. It is no coincidence that 1990 saw the death of the Programme Sharing Scheme.

The Programme Sharing Scheme is a unique record of a key time in the history of British Commercial Radio, one which has been largely forgotten and was in danger of being obliterated forever as the oxide on the original tapes progressively degenerates. The Archive was held in store at the National Sound Archive, consisting entirely of tapes transferred from a centralised copying facility established in 1985 which operated until 1990. Many of these stations no longer exist.

The archive is valuable to radio studies/radio research because it represents a style of commercial broadcasting which no longer exists in Britain. The efforts of broadcasters in early ILR (Independent Local Radio) resulted in programmes of impressive quality, which are worthy of study today.

The work is of interest for its self-selecting quality and its unique place in recent British Broadcasting history. Many of the programmes provide insights through their content into issues – local and national – of the time, together with the valuable of interviews with personalities many of whom are no longer living.

Felicity Wells was a key figure in organising the Programme Sharing Scheme. She coordinated the exchange of programmes between the then ILR (Independent Local Radio) network, a growing group of stations which ultimately became the foundation of the changed geography of 21st century commercial radio. Felicity passed away tragically early in her life during the 1990s. The archive is named after her in recognition of her contribution to a memorable – and lost – period in UK commercial radio history.

The LBC/Independent Radio News Archive

The London Broadcasting Company/Independent Radio News audio archive consists of 7,000 reel-to-reel tapes in a collection that runs from 1973 to the mid-1990s. It is the most important commercial radio archive in the UK and provides a unique audio history of the period.

This project, funded by the Joint Information Systems Council, (JISC) focuses on the most noteworthy content – 4,000 hours of recordings relating to news and current affairs. The archive to be digitised includes invaluable recordings of a wide range of broadcasts including coverage of the Falklands War, the miners' strike, Northern Ireland and the whole of the Thatcher period of government. It includes the first hours of UK commercial radio and the first commercial radio news.

When commercial radio in Britain was launched in October 1973, Independent Radio News (IRN) and its sister organisation, the London Broadcasting Company (LBC) were granted their licences. A joint LBC/IRN archive of programmes and news items was established and this, together with its catalogue, constitutes the archive in its current form. It forms an important part of the history of radio broadcasting since it provides an alternative source of radio journalism and news and current affairs broadcasts to the BBC's own collection.

This project conserves in digital form as much of the news and current affairs in the archive as possible and place the material within a teaching and research environment where it can be exploited for future knowledge. One of the most significant developments in the field of media and communications studies (including journalism, broadcasting and cultural studies) has been the growing interest in history and archives. Making archived programme material, together with searchable databases, available online has major

implications for learning, teaching and research across the humanities curriculum. The understanding of this has informed this project from the start, as it has the related archive digitisation of the other collections described in this brochure.

The archive comprises approximately 7,000 mainly reel-to-reel audio tapes covering the period 1973 to 1995 (when digital storage was introduced). Examples of archived programmes to be digitised include:

- The live reporting of UK election results from five general elections, giving a sense of the political shaping of the country, particularly during the Thatcher years
- Extraordinary material relating to the conduct of the Falklands War
The whole of the *Decision Makers* series 1974-86: weekly 30-minute programmes of political and current affairs analysis which provide a unique insight into politics and its reportage within the UK at the time

- Significant material relating to the ending of apartheid in South Africa, including State President PW Botha's speech at the opening of the South African parliament in which he announced that the era of apartheid was over. There is also accompanying political and journalistic analysis of this event

- The project is to transfer approximately 4,000 hours of the news and current affairs contents of 7,000 quarter inch reel-to-reel audio tapes to a digital format

- The profiling of content for delivery over the web to UK HE will be managed and implemented by BUFVC, which has extensive experience in working with digital moving image and sound and associated metadata. The project will be supported by a catalogue containing metadata taken from the packaging of the tapes and, if necessary, by listening to tapes, and from the card and computer indexes saved by Bournemouth University.

Radio archive



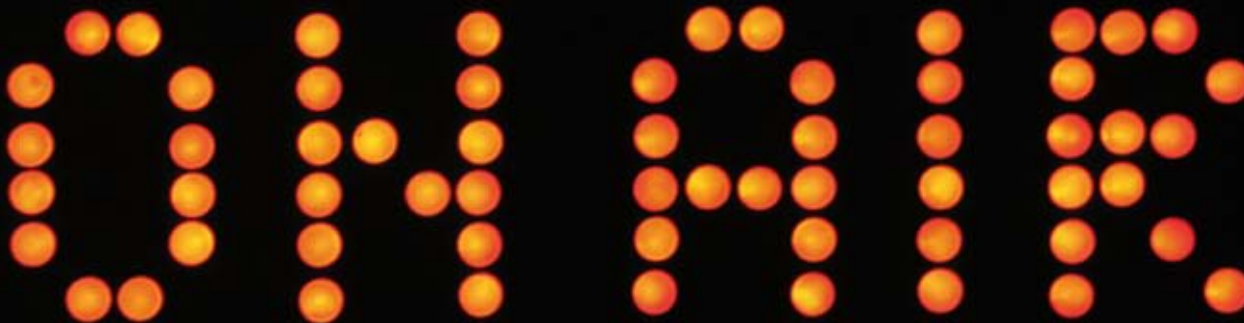
The Wessex Film and Sound Archive Commercial Radio Collection

The project, funded by a grant from the Arts & Humanities Research Council, will digitally preserve and catalogue speech recordings from local commercial stations operating within the Central Southern region of the United Kingdom between 1975 and 1990. Stations represented in this archive are Radio Victory, Ocean Sound, Radio 210, Reading and 2CR.

The intervening years have demonstrated that the medium of magnetic audio-tape is time-sensitive in its fragility. The material in its analogue form had previously resided in the

Wessex Film and Sound Archive at the Hampshire Record Office. As with other elements of the Centre for Broadcasting History Research's collections, it represents a style and structure of commercial broadcasting

now gone forever. Additionally, it chronicles significant social events within its region, making it of intrinsic historical value to both local and national scholars and broadcasters.



The Centre for Broadcasting History Research

Director: Professor Seán Street FRSA

The Centre for Broadcasting History Research was established in 2002 to:

- **Stimulate an interest in the study of the history of broadcasting**
- **Create and develop partnerships with other organisations and institutions, both nationally, and internationally in shared areas of historical interest**
- **Work for the preservation of important at-risk archival collections**
- **Develop new approaches to the interrogation of existing resources through the application of innovative technologies.**



Initiatives developed by the Centre include:

- **The Charles Parker Day Conference** is an annual event which draws radio practitioners and academics together to discuss and debate the art of the radio feature past present and future within the context of the work of the great producer, born in Bournemouth, and creator of *The Radio Ballads*, Charles Parker.
- **Conferences based on current affairs broadcasting**, notably the 'This Week' conference held at BAFTA in 2005
- **The Southern Broadcasting History Group.** Co-ordinated by Centre member, Dr Hugh Chignell, drawing on the collective expertise of academics working in related areas of broadcasting history at Universities within the South of England.

The Centre is supported by an international advisory panel drawn from academic institutions in Canada, USA, Australia and Holland.

For more information please visit the Centre's website at www.bournemouth.ac.uk/broadcasthistory