



HISTORY & POLICY

Connecting historians, policymakers and the media

Meeting the history programmers!

H&P and BBC Radio 4 meeting for historians

Wed 23 May, 10.30-12

Old Committee Room, 2nd level, King's Building, Strand Campus

Executive Producers James Cook and Phil Tinline will outline three staples of R4 history programming: *The Long View*, *Document*, and *Things We Forgot to Remember*. Historians are invited to meet James and Phil to hear how these high profile programmes work, what they look for, and to discuss if your research might be of interest. Coffee and tea will be provided.

Please note:

- The event is open to King's historians and PhD students, and H&P historians nationwide
- Places are free but limited. RSVP is essential – Fiona.holland@kcl.ac.uk
- Please send a brief (one or two paragraphs) synopsis of your research interests that you feel may interest programme makers

THE LONG VIEW

The Long View is Radio 4's Historical comparison series presented by Jonathan Freedland. Broadly, the programme takes a story that is in the news and finds an illuminating historical comparison. It sheds (so to speak) some old light on new stories. For example, the last series in June compared the euro and the gold standard and looked at the decommissioning of the 19th century oceanographic vessel HMS Challenger in view of the decommissioning of the Space Shuttle. Previous series have compared the Wikileaks revelations with the capture of Charles I secret papers during the civil war and fears about internet gaming with fears about the novel.

At its core is the unfolding of the historical story - around which comparison with the present is made. The historical story has to be interesting in its own right and is illustrated with readings from primary sources. Ideally it has a twist or an unexpected ending. The programme is split into three scenes and guests come in and out but the historian is always present. We record entirely on locations related to the historical story. We record about 2 hours of

material but recording can take most of the day. The comparison doesn't need to be exact, points of difference are interesting too. The programme is 28 minutes at broadcast, the presenter is Jonathan Freedland.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006s7d6>

THINGS WE FORGOT TO REMEMBER

A revisionist history series that takes aim at popular understandings of history. Presented by Michael Portillo.

It is based round a heavily formatted proposition;

- 1) We remember event A
- 2) We have forgotten event B
- 3) A and B have a relationship
- 4) The reasons we have forgotten B are interesting / revealing / nefarious...

So the programme both explains the events we have forgotten and looks at the process of forgetting itself. In that sense it is the programme most interested in the making of 'history' itself.

For example, a good one recently was the police strike of 1918/19. Michael Portillo was able to open by saying "We remember the General Strike of 1926 when the police, famously, did not go on strike. But we've forgotten the Police strike of 1918/19. Which is the reason why the police didn't go on strike in 1926. And the programme was able to unfold the genuinely dramatic events of 1918 that saw a thousand police men march on Whitehall and a warship deployed in Liverpool to quell riots.

Others recently include:

- The English Armada of 1589. We remember the Spanish Armada but we've forgotten that we sent one just as large back the very next year. (It was an unmitigated disaster and doesn't fit with our Protestant underdog ideas).
- The French resistance after the war. We remember the French resistance during the War. But we've forgotten that they were far more influential after the war shaping the post war politics of France.

The programme is 28 minutes at broadcast. It's recorded partially on location (which can be abroad) and partly in studio interview. Again, illustration from primary sources is welcome.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qsr0>

DOCUMENT

Investigative history series that takes as its starting point a freshly revealed document that tells us something new. It is NOT new subjective interpretations but new facts that change our understanding of certain events. The bar is quite high - but it aims at being both forensic and genuinely revelatory.

So it's the nugget that gets your book publisher excited (if you have one). Often people find these nuggets along the way of other research. A recent example is the Vichy programme – based on a memo from Chief of the Imperial General Staff Allan Brook in May 1942 setting in train a secret plan to arm Vichy France to fight the Germans involving Allied landings on the French coast. This was found by Eric Grove from Salford in the course of researching other matters.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006sk3k>