Henry Williamson and the BBC

John Gregory

The files on Henry Williamson held at the BBC Written Archives Centre begin in 1928 with two internal memos:

> *Internal Circulating Memo*
> *Subject: Henry Williamson* *25th October. 1928*
> *From: Mr Maschwitz*[1] *To: Mr Fielden*
> *Henry Williamson wanted me to ask you whether you would allow him to give a reading of war poetry and prose on the evening before Armistice Day. I said that I thought that the programme would be all fixed up for that night, but I thought the matter worth mentioning to you as he is a good, if rather sombre, reader with a notable war record.*

> *Internal Circulating Memo*
> *Subject: Henry Williamson* *26th October. 1928*
> *From: Mr Fielden*[2] *To: Mr Maschwitz*
> *I am afraid there are no available dates for readings at present. As a matter of fact he has already been to see us about a talk. I will get into touch with him if an opportunity occurs.*

There the matter was left for a number of years, until on 17 February 1932 HW wrote to Mr Maschwitz:

> *Dear Maschwitz,*
> *I once met you in your office. My name is Williamson.*
> *I am enclosing the proof of a short story, which is being published in a volume called The Labouring Life, either in April or May.*
> *I was wondering if I could broadcast this, not being announced in any programme as 'author reading short story', but as THE FOX IN THE MOONLIGHT. I would then endeavour to read the story as though it had happened about one minute before, or the day before; in other words, I would endeavour to put over the atmosphere of the occasion itself.*
> *Afterwards, perhaps the announcer could say that that was Mr. W. reading.*
> *It occurs to me that it might be of interest to get a series up, somewhat on these lines ... I think that such writers as Tomlinson and de la Mare would be interesting. De la Mare, as you probably know, has an excellent voice.*
> *If the element of surprise were kept in, then listeners might get a slight kick out of being told to wonder among themselves, who the bloke was. If you got, say 8 authors to do it, you could publish their 8 names, and then say 'guess who this one is tonight'.*
> *Later on, you could have a series of authoresses, and if this were properly announced, I am sure that every aerial in the British Isles would be earthed for the occasion.*
> *If you don't like the idea of my broadcasting this thrilling short story, then I intend to broadcast it myself, into my wireless set; and as this will work backwards towards Daventry, my powerful voice will twist up, or rather, corrugate waves, which, entering the valves of the aforesaid station, would probably not be able to go in straight as they came out, but entering wriggly, would be sure to disturb the*

filaments, and -----the whole concern.
How well Mais is doing. His talks are darn good.

Receipt of this letter was acknowledged the next day, and then on 23 February 1932 Mr Fielden wrote to HW:

Eric Maschwitz has passed on your letter to me, as I have to deal with talks and readings. I am going to disappoint you, but before I do so please let me say that I have a great admiration for your work and think 'The Pathway' one of the most lovely books ever written. That, however, doesn't alter the fact that having read this story and having had it read by several other members of this Department I am absolutely convinced that it is not the right kind of story for broadcasting, and whether you broadcast it into your own wireless set or our microphone it will fall flat. To take just one illustration: how are you going to convey through the microphone that muddling up of the letters of 'mission'? It would simply be un-intelligible. I don't like saying this, because the whole of your letter shows that you have the right ideas about broadcasting, if I may say so, and I don't want you to be discouraged and give it up because we don't like this story ...

If you don't accept my criticism then I suggest that the next time you are in London (before you broadcast it backwards into your wireless set) you should come in and read over this story into the microphone and I will have it recorded by the Blattnerphone and played back for you. You could then judge for yourself whether it comes off or not.

Which shows at any rate that the BBC could appreciate HW's sense of humour! The Blattnerphone was an early recording machine, which used steel tape. It was first installed by the BBC in 1931, but was difficult to employ flexibly since the cutting of the steel tape was a hazardous and difficult procedure.[3] For this reason it was not used to pre-record talks for broadcasting, and all talks were given live. Henry replied to Lionel Fielden's letter acknowledging gracefully that 'The Fox in the Moonlight' would not broadcast successfully.

This time the BBC did not forget HW, and he was approached by J.R. Ackerley[4] on 22 July 1932:

We are trying to arrange a series of talks for the autumn – that is to say, from the beginning of October next – under the title of 'To an Unknown Listener'. These talks or addresses ... will purport to be personal communications from a named broadcaster to some un-named listener, upon diverse subjects of general interest.

To give you some clearer idea of the scope and intention of this series, we have the following tentative suggestions in mind:-

Mr H.G. Wells to 'An Adolescent'
Mr Desmond MacCarthy to 'A Daydreamer'
Mr Belloc to 'Someone Who is Always in Debt'
Mr Forster to 'An Indian Prince'
Mr Gerald Heard to 'A Doctor'

– though the scheme is not yet sufficient shaped for us to be able to make any definite commitments.

I should very much like however to have your views on this, and to ask whether you would care to consider contributing to it; and the suggestion I want to make to you is that you might give an address, on some date near Armistice Day, to the

Unknown Warrior. I feel that this is a very difficult subject to handle, especially in avoiding sentimentality; but I like your book 'The Wet Flanders Plain' so much that I feel you would be able to do it better than anyone else. At any rate I should like to hear what you think, and if you are likely to be up this way soon might I perhaps have an opportunity of discussing it with you?

HW responded positively: *'The idea seems fine, and I'd like to do it. Why not 10th November, if there is to be the usual ceremony. I'll hope to see you within the next month. Will you be there in August, beginning?'* A contract was sent to him by the Talks Department on 12 September 1932, the fee to be 12 guineas, and HW submitted his script three days later. It was not what the BBC wanted. In the file is an unofficial note from Ackerley to CAS, who is not identified further: *'I was nervous of this – Henry Williamson – half of it I don't make out, and the rest I don't like. All this poetic wordspinning about war ... what do you think?* CAS replied:

I expected something of the sort. The opening is dreadful. He had better leave philosophy alone. The rest is wordy – oh! so much. But I suppose more or less inevitable. He should remember there was a war outside France as well. There are names to play with in Italy and the East.

A decision was quickly reached, and it fell to Ackerley to write to HW on 22 September:

I am awfully sorry and disappointed at writing a letter which is to cover the return of the manuscript... You knew the anxiety we felt over this script, which is the most ambitious and difficult in the whole series, and I am afraid that we do not feel your script is suitable, though not, as a matter of fact, on policy grounds. It is too abstract in its philosophy, and when you come to your battle pictures, it is too wordy and elaborate. Indeed, you have tried, it seems, to put over your pictures with the use of so many selected words – it is a kind of word-painting – that they overlay it and obscure the picture, at any rate from a broadcasting point of view. To put it shortly, the whole of your approach to the subject is not really what we hoped for. The philosophic thought is too obscure and difficult, and the grandiloquence cannot be sustained.

This is a frank opinion of the manuscript, and it is not my opinion alone but the unanimous opinion of the many people, both inside and outside the building, who have read it ... I do not quite know what to do now, for I feel it is scarcely fair to ask you to have another shot at a much simpler form of address, when, as with this one, I cannot engage to accept it. We have asked one or two other people to submit manuscripts on this subject, and shall be taking that which seems to us to be the most suitable for the occasion.

This must have come as a great disappointment to HW. In September 1937 his book *Goodbye West Country* was published. This purports to be a diary of the year 1936, before his move across the country to a derelict farm in north Norfolk. His script for the proposed broadcast forms the entry for 11 November, with a short rather bitter postscript:

They asked me to talk to you on Armistice Day, they asked me to prepare a talk to the Unknown Soldier lying in the sanctity of the Abbey. They said I must write it exactly as I wanted to, as I felt it, as I knew you in the flesh. But when I sent it to the British Broadcasting Corporation they said it was not what they had hoped for, that it was

not suitable, it did not condemn war sufficiently, it was too philosophical, it would not be understood by the ordinary listener. They said also (but that didn't matter) there was no obligation on their part to pay for it, and they would not ask me to do any more work on it: but would invite half a dozen other writers to submit scripts for it. I don't know what happened about that; but no one has spoken to you, or for you, Soldier, at least on the air of the British Broadcasting Corporation. I thought the lack was most sad; for you, the dead, and we, the living, of England, are all filled with a great hunger for a new Idea – a new world.[5]

Thus ended HW's second encounter with the BBC. His third was no more successful; this time it was an indirect approach, with A.D. Peters, HW's Literary Agent, writing to J.R. Ackerley on 16 July 1934, *'I wonder if you have any room for a series of occasional talks on nature subjects by Henry Williamson? If you are interested I will come along and see you about it.'* The enquiry received short shrift from Ackerley, who replied briefly the next day, *'I am afraid we are unable to avail ourselves of these.'*

The following year HW's fortune was to change, perhaps through the auspices of his friend S.P.B. Mais, writer and broadcaster. On 17 October 1935 Lloyd Williams of the BBC Schools Department wrote to him:

Mr George Dixon, of the BBC Schools Department, who I believe you have met through Mr S.P.B. Mais, has suggested that you might be willing, on occasion, to broadcast to schools. I wonder if you could find time to call in here next time you are in town, to discuss the possibilities and speak for a few moments at the microphone to see how your voice would broadcast.

I may say that our programme is complete for the present school year but we are beginning to think of our programme for 1936-7 and to look for new broadcasters. I believe that you have not broadcast before and that you might find it a congenial medium.

There is no record of HW's reply, although it must have been a positive one, for the wheels were set in motion, and over a year later, in November 1936, HW made his only broadcast for the Schools Department.

Then, on 5 December 1935, a telegram was sent to HW at Shallowford:

CAN YOU BROADCAST IN MEN TALKING SERIES DECEMBER 16TH 6.50
FEE TWELVE GUINEAS MCLAREN BROADCASTS LONDON

The telegram was redirected to Wells, Norfolk, where HW was staying for a few days with Richard de la Mare and his wife. De la Mare was HW's publisher at Faber and Faber, and no doubt they were celebrating the success of *Salar the Salmon*, which had been published that October. It was during this break that they came across a derelict farm at Stiffkey, close to Wells, which HW was subsequently to buy. The reply was swift: *Thanks will talk 16 December – Williamson*

Shortly after, HW and Moray McLaren[6] of the BBC Talks Department discussed the proposed content of the broadcast. McLaren remained somewhat unhappy, and wrote on 9 December:

I am sorry to be so sticky about the German idea for next Monday's 'Men Talking', but quite apart from the difficulty of putting over such a subject, I honestly don't see it fitting into the framework of 'Men Talking', which is essentially not a series of

talks in which people talk about things which they hold profoundly or believe passionately.

Perhaps I can give you some idea of the 'Men Talking' series by telling you what we were out after when we designed it. As you probably know, a number of people have often wanted to speak before the microphone without notes, and except in rare cases, we have rigorously set our face against it. But we thought this quarter we would try an experiment in the early part of the evening which might produce a certain number of talkers who could do well without a script, who we would put on again later next year at a reasonable time of the evening. Instead of giving our speakers set subjects, we invited them to come to the microphone for twenty minutes and talk – without a script and at most from notes – on more or less casual subjects on which they were apt to be entertaining, let us say, after dinner.

Agate gave us his dislikes – a subject on which he is always amusing; Maurice Healy amiably and aimlessly and charmingly chattered about the Irish; and a fellow called Commander Campbell, a retired purser of the merchant service and a very amusing wit, told stories about the sea, which is his main line of conversation.[7] *But we avoided subjects of importance.*

Mr George Barnes, who met you last week, was impressed by your capacity for talking in front of the microphone and came to me, as he knew we had an unexpected vacancy in the 'Men Talking' series next week. I jumped at the idea, thinking that you would probably interest a number of our listeners if you talked about living in the country. In other words, if we were to give you your head as a countryman – what you like about it, what you dislike, what is your attitude towards the town – in fact, anything you liked upon this theme.

Do you think you could manage to do it for us and do you think you could be good enough to let me have a few notes on the line you will be taking? And, when you send them to me, could you let me know whether you can come up next Monday morning for a run-through?...

HW duly sent his few notes, but defended his 'German idea':

Of course I see and know your points. The basis of all your work and acts now is to be constructive: to bring out the so-called best in people and things. So here's my idea for the light series of 'Men Talking'. I'll tell, in an anecdotal, intimate way, all the things I like. Country things – my wood fires – my children – trout in clear water etc. – creating each thing and making it live. This should be a good introduction to the wireless public – someone who is keen on a lot of things. Perhaps you'll permit me (if the Xmas Eve project can't be done for various reasons) to include, at end, a friendly feeling for the new Germany? Surely friendship and hope won't be objected to – if expressed in a clear, non-aggressive way? It's the only way one can live, i.e. think, or have one's being. T.E. Lawrence and I were about to begin something on these lines – he was killed after sending me a telegram, telling me to come 'wet-fine' to him, immediately after reading my letter. The time's ripe, now, for the wisdom of the war-generation to flow, with encouragement and friendship always for others into the world.

McLaren capitulated: *'Yes, by all means do it on the lines you suggest, and there will be no objection, of course, to an expression of friendliness towards the new Germany if you can get it in easily and with not too abrupt a change...'* The talk was broadcast on Monday 16 December 1935 as scheduled, and reprinted in *The Listener* on Christmas Eve with the title 'Recipe for a Country Life'. Perhaps HW had second thoughts about

mentioning the 'new Germany', and took McLaren's advice; or perhaps *The Listener*, with prudence, chose not to include the reference in its article, for it is not there. After the broadcast HW sent McLaren a copy of *Salar the Salmon*, with a separate letter advising that he was sending him some fresh poached salmon!

HW was full of ideas for further broadcasts, and was not slow in putting them forward. Only a few days later, on 2 January 1936 he wrote again to Moray McLaren:

> *I have a scheme for some talks, which you might like to consider to be done by me or perhaps by someone else. Here it is.*
>
> *A weekly series called, possibly, THE COUNTRY REPORTER, designed to give a living picture to the townsman: the idea being that the reporter gathers incidents during the week, and dashes up to Broadcasting House and tells them.*
>
> *One would try and recreate the feeling and atmosphere of the actual living scene, as though the listener were by one's side, and we were seeing something extremely interesting that would make us pause and watch. It would have the sense of adventure, surprise and curiosity.*
>
> *I suggest that the speaker might be anonymous – just called The Country Reporter. The talks would be prepared beforehand, and timed, and given as though spontaneously; but without any of the defects of the spontaneous talk (I have been gathering information about my solitary talk, and think I can rectify various faults next time). I am very keen on the above, and like broadcasting, and feel that very soon I can be a credit to you.*
>
> *If possible, I would also like to talk to Schools in the afternoon of the same day under my own name, on the subject of animals and the country, but of course quite differently, and graded for whatever age the Director of Schools would indicate. My talks would be designed, in the hope at least, that listeners would look forward for almost the rest of the week for what was going to be told the following week.*
>
> *This sounds colossally egoistic, but I am only trying, a wee bit apprehensively, to suggest I can do a job properly, if required.*

McLaren took time to think this over, giving a non-committal acknowledgement on 13 January. He was interested, however, and a letter followed two days later: '*... we all rather like the idea you put up the other day ... There are one or two difficulties in the way, however.*' These difficulties included another series of nature talks put out by 'the Adult Education people during that time', and the travelling up to London from Devon. However, the difficulties were overcome, and HW's approach developed into a series of eight broadcasts between March and June, under the general title of 'Out of Doors'. His fee was twelve guineas for each talk, plus travelling expenses. The talks were also reprinted in *The Listener*, with an extra fee. In the event HW did not have to travel up to London: the broadcasts were made from Bristol, in the West of England Home Service. The day after the last talk an internal memo was sent by Pennethorne Hughes on behalf of the West of England Regional Director to the 'Talks Director, Head Office', at Savoy Hill:

> *Programme Director has asked me to send you a report on Henry Williamson, who has been broadcasting for us the series 'Out of Doors'. When he started broadcasting for us he was extremely nervous, and this was reflected in his voice, which also was not of very good quality. During the course of the series, however, Williamson has improved very much indeed as a broadcaster, and the increased confidence with which he now speaks, added to the extreme sincerity which he always had, makes his manner*

extremely effective, and more than compensates for the deficiency of tonal quality. His material is usually first rate, although it is not always possible to get it out of him as early as one would wish.

The memo was passed on to Moray McLaren with a pencilled note, 'I haven't acknowledged this'.

Meanwhile, Ann Thomas, HW's secretary, was writing to George Dixon, an acquaintance from her time with the BBC at Savoy Hill, who worked in the BBC Schools Department, whom HW had met the previous year:

30th May, 1936.

Henry Williamson has asked me to write to you, wondering if you could, for the Winter, entertain a series of six talks, each one to be a biography of an English animal – a stag, a fox, a badger, a stoat, an otter and a squirrel. He wonders if you could put up that suggestion to the National programme. The biographies would be twenty minutes long each and he would make them interesting, factual, and dramatic.

At the same time, and, he suggests on the afternoon of the same day, could he give a talk to Schools on a subject that would not in any way encroach on the subject of the evening talks – the biographies – but which would be visual nature talks, dealing with birds, or seasonal subjects; such as how a river becomes frozen, how various animals hibernate in winter, what happens to salmon in the autumn and winter, etc.

Perhaps you would let him know what you feel about these suggestions.

George Dixon replied instead directly to Ann Thomas with a holding letter:

4th June, 1936.

Dear Ann,

How strange to hear from you after this long time! At the moment I just want to acknowledge your letter about Henry Williamson's suggestions and to tell you that I am trying to find the most likely person in Talks Department to be interested in his scheme.

Whether we can fit in a talk for schools on the same day remains to be seen. At the moment it seems impossible, as our programme for the whole of next year is complete. There are, however, isolated periods where talks such as Henry Williamson suggests may be very useful, but more later.

Yours ever,

HW had put forward the idea of two broadcasts in one day to McLaren the previous January, of course: it would have made his journey up to town that much more worthwhile. One suspects that McLaren was also the 'most likely person' in Dixon's letter.

On 11 August Ann Thomas was contacted by the BBC with some suggested dates for broadcasts: 23 October, when

we hope to bring to the microphone some children who keep animals or insects such as worms, bees, fishes, rabbits, poultry, pigs tadpoles, stick insects, grass snakes, silk worms, guinea pigs. We need somebody to talk to the children at the microphone about their pets. What are Henry Williamson's feelings about caged pets of this sort – if you can call a worm a pet? Do you think the idea will appeal to him al all?

and either 27 November or 11 December, for which *'We like his idea of a biography of*

an English animal, and of his list we particularly like a stag or a squirrel.'

The Schools Department and Talks Department were in danger of duplication here, as the next day, 12 August, there is on file an internal memo from JMRT:

> *Henry Williamson has been used during the early summer by West of England Region, and has pretty good stuff and is a very good broadcaster. I propose that we should get him to do four 15-minute animal biographies for us ...*

That same day Moray McLaren wrote to HW

> *It was mentioned at our Talks Department meeting that you would like to do some short animal biographies in the shape of talks for us.*
>
> *I don't know whether this information is correct, but if so we could find space for about four in a short series about the end of September and in October ...*

HW replied on 14 August, giving his address 'until end of August' as c/o Post Office, Georgeham, N. Devon. He seemed in an ebullient mood:

> *Thank you for your letter of August 12th, dictated, I imagine, during intervals of blazing away from your butt on the television moors of Broadcasting House.*
>
> *I would like to give four talks, four short English animal biographies, beginning on either 28th or 29th September, and at about 10-day intervals. I suggest Red Deer, Otter, Badger, and Stoat. Many thanks for the invitation.*
>
> *We are all living rough and wild in tents and huts on this hill-top field, the Atlantic half a mile westward, Exmoor to the east, and Dartmoor forty miles south, blue mountains among clouds.*
>
> *By the way, there is in this village a most interesting good-speaking farmer (I mean, he would sound well on the air, for he has a natural gift of telling a story and putting a point), and I was discussing with him last night in the pub, an idea of ourselves doing a joint broadcast of the difficulties of making the English town people conscious of the England of fields and farms, and those who work in the countryside. He is eloquent and sad and witty; he is the last of a 200-300-year-old line of yeomen, and a year or two ago couldn't pay his mortgage rent-charge, and now lives in a cottage. I know your farming programme is probably full; but this is a wider topic: and I believe this chap and I together could give a really good, and interesting, and moving, bit of entertainment for the ordinary listener. Just to give you one sample: his sister keeps a boarding house at Morthoe and has 18 guests, and when he went there he saw scores of tins of cooked beans, carrots, (£11 a month for tinned vegetables) etc.; and all the garden run to waste. She told him she couldn't help it, it was the economic pressure; but she hoped it wouldn't be always like that, and that one day the guests would be fed on fresh vegetables grown on the farms as they were grown when she was a girl. This may sound rather thin, but as John Smith would tell it, with his almost patrician feeling for the land, it would, I am sure, be well received by listeners. I suggest such a title as 'A Plea to all Englishmen', by John Smith and Henry Williamson – leaving it just a bare announcement. It might prove popular, and I'm sure John Smith could talk interestingly on many other subjects, for he is one of the few truly patriotic men I know.*

In the meantime, as a matter of courtesy, McLaren sent a memo to the Programme Director of the West of England Region informing him of the proposed talks by

HW: '*... I don't suppose they will cut across any of your arrangements as they are quite different from the broadcasts he has been doing for you.*'

The Programme Director replied on 18 August: '*... I ought perhaps to mention that we propose using Henry Williamson in a monthly Country Topics programme, and I am just wondering if you are using him as well, if there will not be a little too much Henry Williamson in the programmes?*'

This note of caution went unheeded, for 1936 was the busiest year that HW was to have as a broadcaster. As his quoted letters show, he took every opportunity to put forward ideas for broadcasts, and perhaps his next letter to McLaren, on 21 August, provides the reason:

> *It's awfully kind of you to put work in the way of an overloaded family man (who hopes one day to get a little of his own back by putting the said family on to a spot of print): I refer to the offer to me to repeat the suggested talks on Monday afternoons following the original broadcasts at a third the first fee. Do you think they could possibly be done on a Sunday, the originals, I mean? Or on a Tuesday night, thus allowing me to do a secondary talk on a Monday, and the sequent original talk on the next day? Bristol (I think you said they would be given at Bristol) is about 3½ hours away, and if I can kill two birds in one set of journeys I should be happy to do it.*
>
> *Frankly, I want every penny I can get as I am shortly starting as a farmer in East Anglia, and for some time have been run-down, in fact almost completely exhausted. I am having a relative home from Australia, and am having him trained for a year before we start; he has no capital, but much strength and tact and happiness; while I am short of capital by about £1000 and am keeping boys at village school through necessity. All this sounds silly no doubt; but it's a struggle; and I hope it will be a success – four sons and a daughter being educated on the land; and I hope I'm anticipating a general move in that direction, in England's future. When I get going, I hope to be able to make reports, of how we pioneers get on, attractive enough for your wave-lengths. But that will be in a year's time; and meanwhile we exist down here, on what seems an exhausted soil. Heil, Bracing East Anglia! You must come and pot our birds, for geese come in on the marshes and I'm told the woods alone breed 200 brace of pheasants annually. We hope to be quite self-supporting; our own wheat for bread, etc. etc. – all off the grid, of course.*
>
> *The titles for the 4 talks.*
>
> *I suggest*
>
> *LIVES OF (ENGLISH/BRITISH ANIMALS)*
>
> *No. 1. Red Deer 2. Otter 3. Stoat 4. Badger*
>
> *Can you let me known if one-third of the fee will be £4/4/-? If so, I think I can manage it: and shall welcome the train journey, to escape from the aforesaid sons!*
>
> *Many thanks for wanting to see me in London. I look forward to our meeting. Oh, for a farmer's life – new style!!! Gosh, what joy after years of mental decadence thro imagination-life.*

The first broadcast was scheduled for Monday 28 September, and became a saga in its own right, chronicled in detail by HW in *Goodbye West Country*.[8] The first draft of the talk was submitted to the BBC, where it was read by C.V. Salmon, a producer. He wrote to HW on 24 September.

> *... I have only just had time to read your manuscript through. There is an absolute rule to the effect that the ethics of hunting are only touched in discussion, if at all. This means that from page 5 beginning 'For, paradoxically, those who hunt the deer*

are their best friends'. will have to come out entirely, and you will have to write something, if you will, in its place.

As time is so short it is no use my asking you to send the material up here. Will you send it to Pennethorne Hughes at Bristol, or – but this is very much a second best – if you haven't time to get it to Pennethorne Hughes before Monday will you arrive with the re-written manuscript not later than 6 o'clock that evening.

I am so sorry that this has happened, but there it is. I shall look forward to hearing the new version of the talk.

In the event it was rewritten and then recast again into what HW called 'the BBC sterilized version'.[9] On the day of the broadcast HW wrote a long letter to Salmon endeavouring to explain further his earlier proposal to McLaren for Farmer John Smith's 'Plea to all Englishmen:

The only idea of A PLEA TO ENGLAND being anonymous and bare was to concentrate attention on it. There will be no local politics to it; and no special pleading except that the theme will be that English people should be fed by English food. He is an old farmer, and has failed, higgeldy pigeldy [sic] (I won't state this; he will do it by inference) and I counter his bits with a sort of driving optimism that it can be done, and must be done. But I don't touch on financial interests in the City which involve millions invested in Denmark, Argentine, etc., but picture English fields wasting, weedy, losing fertility, shored up by this subsidy and that all bolstered and makeshift while the land slowly goes under and farmers are losing heart because they can't sell their stuff in English homes. Contrast of course; entertainment first and last; and he is balanced and pessimistic and rather sad; while t'other speaker is almost on fire with idea of making English country a first class place from all points of view: farming to be a way of life and not a way of anyhow profits, as now because farmer never knows if what he grows will sell less than cost. Bankrupt farms everywhere. Let's get together, and put the land in good heart again, and the country people also, and the town folk also because they can feel they are part of a great family. I think we can make a good talk; and as I want to let myself go about it, to stir the listener, I'd prefer to be anonymous. You could announce afterwards, of course if you wished. But I felt a simple announcement of A PLEA TO ENGLAND, followed by a passionate and reasoned appeal, rising to a crescendo, might be more effective than the usual worked-out dingdong give and take which most people are used to and don't specially listen to. I want also to bring in reference to my four sons, and how they are going to be brought up and educated on the land, from 6 years upwards. The NATURAL LIFE FOR A MAN. This will be countered of course by old farmer saying that I can afford to experiment, since I don't have to get my living by farming altogether, etc. etc.; and again countered, optimism and drive versus wisdom (old style) and pessimism, both points united at the end, for England.

It will be such that, anonymous, the papers will ask, Who were the two speakers last night? And is this something new in radio speaking? Revivalist-spirit.

(Of course, I don't write like this without some hesitation; but I can nerve myself to deliver the goods, since I do truly feel most of my conscious hours about this subject. We are approaching the age of each country having to support its own people out of its own resources: whereas in the declining age of the pre-war civilization it was all buy from, say, Japan, and sell to Japan; while the country-side got trodden underfoot, fouled by too-big mills, mines, etc. etc. The idea is to have just enough factories to support needs of English people, and all such work being subsidiary to life of English people, and not a be-all end-all to itself. And we won't ever get strong and

well and merry again, as a nation, until each boy and girl born in England knows and loves the soil, and tho' he has to work later in a town, never forgets it or loses touch with it. Whereas now all this splendid material, potentially, is lost sight of, and no one knows what to do, or who to follow, and most of each one is shut-up within his little ego. We're all waiting for a better idea of life; most of our social instinct is thwarted, driven-within. Hence so much communism among the young intelligentsia. Communism is dream-stuff, a waste of activity, a loss of vitality, honey turning to mead.)

Forgive this long letter; you must be very busy; but I hope it gives an idea of what I hope to do.

P.S. Reading your letter again makes [me] wonder if you would consider the above to come within 'special pleading braced by feeling (which would) spoil the issue and make it less effective'.

The talk on Red Deer that evening was given from the studio in Bristol as if it was a live outside broadcast. This was a style of broadcasting that HW had never tried before, and very risky; it could easily have fallen flat. Christopher Salmon wrote to him on 30 September:

I can give you the date of your next broadcast of 'Lives of English Animals' – October 28th, 8.0 - 8.15 p.m., repeated on Monday, November 2nd, 5.0 - 5.15 p.m. May I have the script for it a fortnight in advance this time? I should like that very much.

Meanwhile you can believe I listened critically to your talk on Monday, and since hearing it I have consulted a good many of my colleagues who heard it too. There is a consensus of opinion that you achieved the impossible and brought it off. Some of the accounts were very favourable indeed. To be absolutely frank with you, I wasn't entirely convinced myself, but obviously you deserve to be congratulated. But I feel very strongly that as far as Nos. 2, 3 and 4 go in this series you would be unwise to attempt the eye-witness, running commentary mode again. I would rather that these talks were 'straight', as we call them. I expect you will agree with me about it. To have brought off the Red Deer like that was something of a tour de force, *but one can't be too prodigal with* tours de force. *As to your discussion with the farmer, your postscript found the mark. What you set out in your letter did seem to me special pleading pure and simple. Honestly we don't want that. We don't want the 'NATURAL LIFE FOR A MAN' kind of thing – at least not in capital letters. Here again I am sure it would pay you to think of a straightforward discussion – you, the young farmer, on the ground of your enthusiasm, and he, the old one, on the grounds of his complaints. You will have heaps of good material there, without generalising in capitals, or putting in large and sentimental pleas for the ENGLISHMAN and ENGLISH SOIL. The British public has had a certain amount of that from other sources, and I don't think we should give them any more. It's a matter simply of keeping the thing in decent limits, and rather implying than actually stating the large theme. Don't you agree with me?*

The young farmer/old farmer proposal never did reach the microphone. On 10 October, in plenty of time, HW sent the draft for his otter talk, with a note that

I fear this is too long: pity there isn't 20 minutes for it. 'Twill bleed when cut. I know it isn't a conventional 'biography' but I trust it will give an idea of an otter's life, by inference. Also it seems to me to be a story; – that which beguiles one to listen: I hope so.

Salmon confirmed Henry's fear, replying on 19 October *'I am afraid the Otter is too long by a good deal. I don't think you will have time for more than seven full pages.'* HW's talk was the story of 'his' otter, from its discovery as an orphaned cub to its disappearance after being released from a gin trap, and his subsequent vain searches for it; it is a moving story, and it is intriguing to wonder what was cut from it.

Shortly after the broadcast, Christopher Salmon invited HW to join him and some friends for what ended up as an evening of political discussion. HW evidently did his best to persuade them of his own viewpoint, with a conspicuous lack of success; it must have been a fraught few hours. Afterwards HW felt compelled to send Salmon a book which further explained his cause: what that book was is not known. Salmon wrote to HW on 3 November:

> *I was afraid it must have proved a very tiring evening for yourself. We set on you like dogs. You kept your end up very bravely, but I have to confess that I felt at the end only more strongly what I felt at the beginning. However, I shall read the book you have kindly sent me, and if that brings any change about I will tell you.*

HW wrote a long letter in reply, dated 6 November:

> *Dear Salar*
>
> *You say you set on me like dogs; I felt like a dog whose hoarse and heedless barking ruined what was otherwise a friendly and interesting talk. Opinions, opinions, opinions, no good. I am all opinions. Modern technique in writing appears to me impersonal, impartial; actually it has the same old weary bias. And modern intellectualism anti-this and anti-that and so seldom pro anything except principles (abstract) is no more and no less that the pre-war attitude which inevitably made the World War. It sounds simple and even soppy to say that one can't have peace without friendship, and no friendship without abdicating from the anti- attitude. If one objects to one's neighbours, one is unfriendly.*
>
> *But one is a fool to force doubted facts on others as I did; a fool trying to sow the wrong seed on the wrong soil.*
>
> *... But this is a weary sort of rant and an ill return for your kindness in asking me to share your hearth the other evening, when I was stray in London. I didn't send the book for your conversion; but merely to indicate some of the causes. I believe that if one understands why men are this or that, or do this or that, one's own mental suffering is lessened. And this is an age of mental suffering among almost every man of intelligence, in all countries and creeds and positions. Particularly at the top. As an example, I believe that the leader of the Idea which you do not like (and forgive me saying, do not yet perceive as a human attempt to alter the world for the better) is one who is entirely animated and fortified by the past sufferings of the common men of his country. Had he not that belief in himself, he would have been dead of exhaustion long ago. Most of his generation are done-in anyway: in the barrages and barbwire and despair of the war itself, when they were young and without horizon. TEL himself was done-in by it; and he thought night and day of a way to clarify men's minds; and gave up, feeling most poor. 'You and I are immemorially wiser than the old or the young, with the war to light all our background; but we can't do anything about it'. An illusion, perhaps; but authentic of a scattered generation.*
>
> *Forgive this long apologia; but I thought it should be sent, after the way I behaved the other night. I hope you and your friends will excuse me, and forget it.*

HW was deluding himself, as he eventually came to realise. Most English people by this time, including Salmon and his friends, could see Hitler clear for what he was. Salmon wrote a gracious acknowledgement:

> *It is charming of you to have written like that. I can't speak for my friends, but I personally have no intention of forgetting what you said, and still more what you felt the other night. With three quarters of what you write in your letter now I entirely agree. Also one of the articles of faith of which I have actually experienced the truth is that whoever likes or loves knows a person or people, and whoever dislikes does not know them. Antipathy is an exclusion. Further I do not doubt for one moment the idealism of the German people, and I can give you that Hitler must be acting for the sake of high ideas, but this cannot prevent me hating what he does, and I suppose if need be resisting it.*
>
> *I hope you and I will meet again, the sooner the better.*

HW's first (and, as far as can be ascertained, last) broadcast to schools was made on 27 November, and was called 'The Biography of a Squirrel'. The text has been lost, but the substance of it can be found in 'Goodbye West Country'.[10] F.N. Lloyd Williams wrote to Henry on 3 December,

> *The talk went down well with the schools, and you will probably be interested in the reports which we have received. The schools say:*
>
> *'Talk on squirrels very well done and most interesting. Clear and easily understood.'*
>
> *'Squirrel talk informative. Form of the talk very good.'*
>
> *'The talk on squirrels seemed to appeal to a natural instinct in the class and was listened to most keenly. It was certainly one of the great successes of the series.'*

HW's third talk in 'The Lives of English Animals' series seems to have proceeded without a hitch: 'The Stoat' was broadcast nationally on 14 December, and there is no correspondence in the file. No so with his last talk in the series scheduled for 6 February, 1937. HW's draft of 'The Badger' was sent to the Director of Talks by Salmon on 29 January, with an accompanying memo:

> *May I trouble you to consider this with reference to pages 4, 5, 6 and 8 in the light of the controversy which is blowing up about blood sports.*
>
> *I think it is perhaps a matter not for me to have an opinion on, but for you just to say whether you want it altered or not. I do think though that the manuscript can be read a little in the light of Henry Williamson, who perhaps partly from his past with us and partly from the detached, earthy way in which he deals with these things, may be allowed to have more licence than others.*

The controversy about blood sports was partly fuelled by HW's talk on the Red Deer the previous September, even though it had been toned down over three drafts, for following it, the President and Secretary of The League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports had written a strong letter of protest to the BBC. The Controller (Public Relations) had replied defending the talk, saying that

> *While we at the BBC should not, of course – and do not – takes sides in a debatable question, we cannot in fairness to listeners as a whole ask speakers not even to refer to a matter of fact because it may also be the subject of controversy.*[11]

Now the BBC was treading a little more carefully, and on 2 February Salmon was writing to HW

> *About the Badger, I don't think he is quite up to the level of your other talks. I would much rather you wrote about the life than about the deaths of badgers ... I wonder if you would have time to re-write the talk when you get back from the Vosges. That is what I would like best.*

There is no further correspondence; the talk was given as planned, was repeated on 15 February, and reprinted in *The Listener* on 24 February.

After February there were to be no further broadcasts from HW in 1937, for he had bought Old Hall Farm at Stiffkey in north Norfolk. Occupancy of the land was to take place on Old Michaelmas Day (11 October), but 'at 2.30 p.m. on Friday the 21st of May 1937 [12] he left Shallowford, together with his brother-in-law ('Sam' in *The Story of a Norfolk Farm*) for Norfolk. The months until October were to be spent in back-breaking work making up roads, laying down concrete yards, digging a well, and more. Last but not least was to gain vacant possession of, and then re-condition two cottages in time for his family to move into when they joined him at Old Michaelmas. Money was a perpetual worry, or rather the lack of it, and by August Henry was contributing once again to *The Daily Express*, which announced 'Henry Williamson has turned from writing to farming. He will report progress from time to time ... [13] It cannot have been easy after a day of hard physical work to settle down to writing, and in his article he admitted 'I began this article three weeks ago, and only today have the energy to finish it. [14]

In October HW began to think about broadcasting again, perhaps as an additional way of supplementing his income, and on 7 October Ann Thomas wrote on his behalf to the Talks Department:

> *As you may know, Henry Williamson has acquired a farm here in Stiffkey, which he takes over on October 11th of this year.*
>
> *He is going to run it himself, with a view to enrolling his four sons into farming as they grow up.*
>
> *He wonders whether you would be interested in the idea of a series of talks next Spring, giving his experiences in farming. How he put the derelict buildings in order, made up the roads; buying his first stock, etc., all from the point of view of an adventure, intimately and conversationally told, bringing in his children and sometimes digressing about the birds, geese from over the North Sea, and the game and wild-life on his 243 acres of land. They would not be technical talks on farming, but talks which would be interesting to and appreciated by the townsman or woman who knows little or nothing of the country, and to the countryman also. The whole story of the farm, from the first depressing sight of it on a raw east coast winter day, through the vissicitudes of reconditioning three condemned cottages for his labourers, with himself as builder-in-chief, the sinking of a well, the depressing advice and comments of acquaintances, the knowledge learned through experience, all lightly told and with the background of his children and the great ideal of eventually England feeding herself with English wheat, – all this should make an entertaining series. What do you think?*

This was acknowledged by John Green for the Director of Talks on October 20th,

but no action appears to have been taken until Christopher Salmon further pursued the idea in late February 1938.

Just before this, HW was approached by Margery Wace of the BBC's Empire Service. The Empire Service was started on 19 December 1932, and was the forerunner of the World Service. Miss Wace wrote on 11 February 1938,

> *We wonder if you would consider broadcasting some talks in April and May in Empire programmes. We want someone who will talk about everyday life in England, not only a description of what the countryside looks like at the particular moment of broadcasting, but also anecdotes about ordinary people which will reflect the spirit of the country. I am not sure, either, that one wants to restrict the talk entirely to the country. I think it would be a good thing sometimes to bring in a reference to towns.*
>
> *We have had various talks broadcast by different speakers under the title 'Green Fields and Pavements'. They were very much on these lines, and they seem to have been popular. We thought perhaps we might keep the same title. That would, however, be of course a matter for discussion.*
>
> *Before we come to any decision, I wonder If I may have some conversation with you about it? Are you likely to be in London within the next few days? If so, could you spare the time to call on me here? Alternatively, would you be willing to make a special journey – of course at our expense – to see me? We want to get arrangements completed as soon as possible, for if we are to get publicity for our programmes overseas, they have to be fixed some time ahead. We very much hope you may be interested in this suggestion.*

HW replied with a short note the next day,

> *<u>Green Fields and Pavements</u>*
>
> *Sounds good to me, and I think I could do what you require. I'd come to London to see you about it anytime. I've got 10 acres ploughing to get through first. How about next Thursday, 17 Feb?*

The meeting evidently went well, for it was agreed that HW should give a series of six weekly broadcasts, beginning on Thursday 21 April.

On 23 February Salmon sent an internal memo to the Assistant Director of the Talks Department furthering Ann Thomas' suggestion of the previous October:

> *Henry Williamson has lately, i.e. during the last 18 months, moved to and bought a derelict farm at Stiffkey in the county of Norfolk, and he has since then been living there and putting the farm in order. When I say 'putting it in order' I mean not only is he reclaiming land but building roads, cottages, etc., and when I say 'reclaiming' and 'building' I mean doing these things himself. He has not known anything about them before, but is now learning as he works with the men he employs.*
>
> *He can, as you know, be a good broadcaster, and I think that he could give us a very pleasant series of 3 or 4 talks telling the story.*

Salmon was able to write to HW on 11 March, confirming the BBC's interest in the idea, and suggesting the title of 'Close to Earth'. Ann Thomas replied four days later.

> *Henry Williamson has asked me to write to you on his behalf ... He is out all day*

now, drilling his first barley, and I have to look after his letters.

He would like to broadcast three or perhaps four talks for you about his experiences here, and suggests, tentatively, the idea of 'English Swiss Family Robinson', wherein the intellectual life is abandoned for a natural family life on the soil, for the re-education of Father, and the education of four small sons. Would it be possible for these talks to be given during September – November, instead of July – September? Would 'English Swiss Family Robinson' be a good title, do you think?

Salmon was tactful about the suggested, rather clumsy, title: "'*English Swiss Family Robinson' would seem to me a little to stretch the point. Will you let me have some alternatives?*" To which HW answered, *'Okay. Your original title 'Close to Earth' seems all right – I can't think of a better one.'*

The 'Green Fields and Pavements' broadcasts for the Empire Service went well, and half way through the series HW sent a note to Margery Wace with his draft for the next talk:

Here is No. 4. I trust satisfactory. Is there any chance of extending the series? I should be glad of the job, or similar one ... We're so late with everything, and it's almost the deadline. This farm EATS money, and returns nowt.

Miss Wace bore it in mind. Shortly after, a problem arose on the farm which prompted HW to write to her again. The note was written in haste, and is undated but post-marked 23 May:

I must attend an arbitration case just fixed for 10.30 a.m. on 27th May, Friday, here in Norfolk; and I can't get back after broadcasting on Thursday evening, in time (except by a tedious 4 a.m. train). Would it be possible for me to record the talk earlier on Thursday, by Blattner, and so catch the 7.10 p.m. back here on Thursday evening?

The reply sent the following day was sympathetic but firm.

Thank you for your postcard. I am so sorry, but I am afraid we cannot arrange to record your talk beforehand. We have to be rather stern about keeping to our ruling that talks must be broadcast 'live'.

I am very sorry indeed, for I do realise how difficult it makes things for you. This is not red tape on our part, but simply that we have not found it satisfactory from the presentation point of view.

Doubtless this refers to the problems experienced in cutting the steel tape of this early recording machine. The talk was broadcast, and presumably poor HW had to catch the early morning milk train. Three weeks after the Empire Broadcasts finished, on 20 June, Miss Wace wrote a friendly note to Henry,

I thought you would like to know that we have just heard from a listener in Southern Rhodesia, saying how much he has enjoyed your broadcasts. He asks us to congratulate you.

How is the farm going?

This was followed by a further letter from her on 21 July:

Would you be willing to give three more talks under the title 'Green Fields and

Pavements' in the Empire Programmes in the later part of September? These talks would be given at lunch time; the date and time for the first would be September 13th at 1.15 p.m. It would be, as before, a thirteen minute talk – i.e. a script of some 1700 words. I think you cannot do better than follow the lines of your previous talks.

The main thing, I think, is to remember that you are talking about England to an audience that wants to revive memories of the countryside. I don't think one wants to dwell so much on the problems of the countryside as on its beauties and characteristics. Then I am quite sure they like to hear about it all in terms of what you yourself have been doing round about the time you are broadcasting.

We do very much hoped that it will be possible for you to give these talks.

The fee was ten guineas plus three railway vouchers per broadcast, and they went ahead as planned, at weekly intervals.

Meanwhile HW was working on his 'Close to Earth' talks. The first was due to be given on 22 August, and weekly thereafter. The draft of the first talk was sent to Salmon on 12 July:

... Please forgive rough state; one is continually harassed here, between the farming, the reconstruction of buildings (done by me!) and this writing game. And having no secretary or deputy or bailiff now, I find it rather disintegrating, amidst crash of guns and live shell roar of bombers passing overhead all day.

Perhaps you will send it back when you've looked at it. Parts 2, 3, 4 will be more or less straight descriptions of starting threshing, etc. ploughing. I can't write the true story of the money side, the valuations, the graft, the other dirty side, etc., for it would be libel. But in the book I'll do what I can to tell the entire story. God knows the end of it. I've lost £77 on 10 bullocks so far; my only stock.

Another agonised letter accompanied his draft for the third talk:

Herewith very rough copy of 3rd talk. I'll do other on Saturday. We're harvesting now and it means working all day – very tiring, carrying and pitching for 10 hours in heat – and doing this until 2 a.m. but I'll do it. Next year we hope to get the farm going. It's all uphill work, constant detail and seeing to this and that, getting this and that, all the time, never a moment's relaxation.

4th talk will be some of the 'joys' of farming. My ploughing alone, in icy winds, seeing geese etc. and the wild seas. Getting at those weeds. Just a nice sort of round up and thing coming to shape, or possibility of shape. The worst part is the dirty money part, for the negotiations with old bankrupt tenant are still unfinished. I seem to be always at a disadvantageous [sic]. *Thus the costs of getting dilapidation money, after months of arbitration, are almost as much as the dilapidation 'award'. It's all wrong, and everyone knows it, but they all know each other and I'm the foreigner. The old tenant paid only £100 year rent, and let the shooting and fishing for £105! He's done £900 worth of damage to the farm in 5 years, and gets off with £90 dilapidation. My agent was no good. He claimed £200, it should have been £500, and charges me £40 expenses to get that £90. Whereas I have to pay old tenant £100 for 'disturbing' him (tho he was bankrupt and had no stock on here to be 'disturbed by sale) and £385 for other things.*

Don't worry about the old mad woman and her husband. She is gone away, and has been mad for years. Old man was ejected last month by order of court. The cottage swarms with fleas. I could have got heavy damages from old landlord, but like a fool wouldn't do it.

I'll send part 4 tomorrow. Harvesting now. Writing until 2 a.m., working all day on pitching sheaves. It's the dirty money part that gets one down, not real honest work.

BBC Internal Circulating Memo:

From: Mr Salmon *To: A.D.T.* [Assistant Director, Talks]
Subject: Close to Earth; Henry Williamson *23rd August, 1938*

I have had the scripts of these through my hands and am very favourably impressed. It is a good story Williamson has to tell.

Williamson is anxious to extend the series. I imagine there can be no question of their being extended just like that, and I have told him so, but if you would like to have one from him as a loose box at varying times, say once a fortnight, I think he could go on without drying up for some time and be well worth listening to.

It was suggested that Henry Williamson should be invited to continue the story of his farm in some broadcasts in the new year. Salmon raised this with HW who said that he would be pleased to do it whenever he was invited.

On 6 December HW was asked by N.G. Luker to take part in 'Men Talking', a series of unrehearsed discussions broadcast on Monday nights. This took place on 12 December, when the discussion was on 'Town and Country'; it was chaired by Valentine Williams, and the other guest was Kevin Fitzgerald. It was not a great success, and Luker's internal report on the programme stated that Henry Williamson was 'not well suited to unrehearsed discussion; too nervous and aggressive by turns.' This was a fair assessment: reading the transcripts of other discussion programmes in which HW took part, it is clear that he was ill at ease. His *métier* was the prepared talk.

The new series of 'Close to Earth' – called, logically enough, 'Still Close to Earth' – consisted of three talks, broadcast on 4 January 1939, 18 February and 11 March. Vincent Alford replaced Christopher Salmon as producer, and he wrote to HW on 9 February,

Will you forgive me for hinting that it might be as well if you are on your guard in this broadcast against being too technical and elaborate on the economic side for the non-farming community? I am assuming, that is to say, that the farmers themselves will be perfectly familiar with the subjects you are treating, and that it is the non-farmers of whom you are chiefly thinking.

Following the last of the three broadcasts, Alford wrote:

I have heard from one or two people here how much they liked your talk last Saturday, and I am writing now to thank you for the work you put in on it to make it so successful.

I hope you felt yourself that the delivery was improved, and that you enjoyed the occasion as much as we enjoyed listening to you.

No further broadcasts were now planned, and HW, anxious perhaps to continue this source of revenue, sent a postcard on 18 March to the Regional Director of Programmes asking '*... if you would care to consider a series of talks on the country – personal stuff, present and reminiscence ... I spent a lot of my boyhood in Bedfordshire, tho'*

I suggest no definite locality to be named, to add to curiosity.' It was Alford who replied, on 22 March:

> *... I have canvassed the proposal here a good deal, and frankly I don't think there is much chance of anything coming of it. We should very much rather like to think of you as being able to go on with these admirable 'Close to Earth' talks every two months or so as material gathers itself and as you feel moved to shape it.*
>
> *I am sure you would like to know that we have had a pair of recent appreciations of your last talk, addressed to the BBC, the substance of which I send:*
>
> > *'The manner and matter of Mr Henry Williamson's talk were equally delightful. May his work flourish – and yet, may he have many more "adventures" and be allowed to relate them at the microphone.'*
> >
> > *'Every talk by Henry Williamson on "Close to Earth" whets my appetite for more. I only wish he gave a regular weekly talk at the same time on the same evening each week. Of course this might seriously jeopardise his work on the farm and any interference with that is greatly to be deprecated. However, this is only intended to be a note of appreciation.'*

HW was grateful for this, and his answer showed it: *'Many thanks for your letter; most helpful and kind of you. Have you been an ADC to some Governor-General? I feel the touch is there.'*

Margery Wace wrote unexpectedly on 16 May:

> *I wonder if you could manage an Empire talk on Wednesday July 5 at the awful hour of 4.15 - 4.30 in the early morning?*
>
> *If so, I would suggest another talk about the countryside, in the series called 'Green Fields and Pavements'. We would just like a talk, not about farming problems, but a description of what could be seen in the countryside round you, at the time of year at which you would be talking – a nice, pleasant, dreamy talk, to make people homesick for England!*

HW agreed: *'Yes ... 5 July 4.15 - 4.30 a.m. will be the end of the day for me.'* His fee was the usual ten guineas with expenses: nothing extra for unsocial hours!

The British Government declared war on Germany on Sunday, 3 September. HW had made no secret of his Fascist sympathies, and indeed was detained very briefly in 1940 under Defence Regulation 18b. He could not have been surprised that the BBC no longer wanted his services. And yet there is a plaintive (and crowded) postcard from Henry on file, dated 7 February 1941, and addressed to John Green at the Talks Department:

> *NO MORE TALKS THIS SIDE OF PARADISE? Farm in order: weeds gone: 1000 tons of muck pulled from dykes: 72 acres 15 inches higher out of water: snipe gone: mud on arable, 20 - 30 tons per acre: 600 tons chalk dug: hedges 30 years old replashed: mustard ploughed in, yards restored, 20 tons old marsh litter and 60 loads forest leaves into bullock muck: hills 1 in 3 ploughed 4 ins deep: roads made up (& army-lorry destroyed) & a hell of a lot of pre-war silly-ass work done and money 'lost' – mayn't this voice sometimes be heard, or is it suspect, disprized, discredited. Has all the sky turned to brass?*

A non-committal John Green replied on 15 February,

I don't think you need feel suspected and disprized. I was very interested to receive your postcard and to hear what you were doing in Norfolk.

Tragic as it should be that war alone gives the farmer his opportunity, I am sure that the seeds which you have sowed so laboriously in the past few years, will now stand a chance of bearing fruit.

I will continue to bear you in mind.

Nothing was forthcoming however, and HW never again broadcast with the same success and frequency that he had attained before the war.

It is probable, but not absolutely certain that HW was banned by the BBC during the war. There is on file the following Inter Department Memo:

From: Miss McGrath, Copyright Department
Subject: WEEKLY READINGS IN LIGHT PROGRAMME: SUNDAY, 4.00-4.15 P.M.

Thank you for your memo of 23rd October. I am afraid however, that according to D.S.A.'s Staff Administration memo of 1st July, 1943 we are forbidden to broadcast the works of Henry Williamson.

Broadcasting a reading from one of HW's books is not quite the same thing as a ban on broadcasts by him. It is quite possible – indeed probable – that the Staff Administration memo did include this. Unfortunately it is missing from the file.

At almost exactly the same time that Miss McGrath was writing her memo, HW's farming venture ended, and the farm sold. Eight years of farming had cost him dear in both nervous and physical energy.

James Langham, from the Talks Department, retained his interest in HW, and two years later, on 10 October 1947 wrote to him asking him if he would be interested in appearing on 'Books and Authors', which was recorded for the Light Programme every Wednesday, and transmitted the following Saturday. The editor and presenter of the programme was Arthur Calder-Marshall. HW replied from Bank House, Botesdale, Diss, Norfolk on 14 October:

Many thanks ... for your invitation to broadcast in your Books and Authors feature.

The idea appeals to me and I would do my best to be interesting.

At the beginning of next week I return to my permanent address, which is Georgeham, North Devon; until then my address is as above (tel. Botesdale 48).

After eight years of farming and hard physical work I have now returned to my original love of writing and feel most strongly that the basis of all true or good writing should be the healthy body. I mention this as it might suggest an idea for the proposed interview.

The interview took place, and was transmitted on Saturday 29 November. HW's fee was fifteen guineas, plus £3.18s.11d. for his fare, and 27/6d expenses.

Another two years passed, and then on 9 November 1949, A.M. Heath & Co. Ltd., Author's Agents, wrote to Donald Boyd, then the Chief Producer in the Talks Department:

I know you have used Henry Williamson from time to time for nature talks and I wonder if he could not be used again and possibly more frequently. He has now

placed his literary work in our hands, and if you have any ideas, or would like him to put up any suggestion, we should be very glad to hear from you.

This enquiry prompted Donald Boyd to make enquiries of his own about HW's suitability, resulting in this memo:

From: Head of West Regional Programmes *CONFIDENTIAL*
Subject: Henry Williamson
To: Chief Producer, Talks Dept. *17th November, 1949*

We have not used Williamson since the war. He has now been in here once or twice (once with a revolver in his pocket) and I have bumped into him occasionally outside. On every occasion he has made it clear that he would like to broadcast again. However, all the records and all the memories are dead against him. He was a dull, monotonous speaker – I can answer for this statement myself – very tricky to deal with in every way. In short, he has not been broadcasting for us because we have enjoyed the services of other people who can cover his ground better than he can himself *Frank Gillard* [15]

Following receipt of this, Boyd replied to A.M. Heath & Co., *'Thank you for your note about Williamson. I will keep him in mind, though I think I should say that we have not found his broadcasting as good as admirers of his writing would expect.'*

Gillard's devastating memo must have blighted any chance of HW becoming a regular broadcaster again. Was it true? Did HW *really* enter the BBC Studios in Bristol with a revolver? It seems scarcely credible. And was he *really* that bad and difficult a broadcaster? None of the correspondence in the files at the BBC Written Archives Centre would seem to indicate this. And yet Frank Gillard was a much respected broadcaster and commentator in his own right, who had a fine and distinguished career in the BBC, retiring in 1970 as Managing Director, BBC Radio. Now aged 84, he says of this incident in a letter dated 29 January 1993,

After forty years, I am afraid I cannot remember anything very substantial ... But as a general comment, let me say that in the post-war period we were working energetically to make Bristol the recognised BBC centre for wildlife and natural history programmes in Radio and Television. I had a small team of well qualified people working on this. In addition to their credentials as broadcasting practitioners, they were all very keen naturalists.

It would have given a considerable boost to our efforts had we been able to enrol a contributor as eminent as Henry Williamson. But he ruled himself out of consideration by his boorish attitude. He was clearly not a man who would willingly put himself into the hands of his Producer and submit to the disciplines of good broadcasting. No Producer was willing to tangle with him, and as I said in my memo to Chief Producer, Talks – there were other fish in the sea. I made it my business to ensure that the judgement against Williamson was not based on any personal or political considerations; it was entirely a professional decision.

... I had forgotten all about the revolver business. As I dredge it up from my memory, I think it was reported to me by the Commissionaire on duty at Broadcasting House, Bristol, that day. The Commissionaires were all ex-military men, mostly former RSMs, and they knew a gun when they saw one. Certainly the incident happened, and all the senior BBC people at BH Bristol knew of it. But I simply cannot recall what we did about it. Probably he was asked to leave the revolver with the Commissionaire for as long as he was in the building.[16]

HW did not hear of this report for over three years, but as soon as he did become aware of it, he wrote to the Director of Talks, categorically denying it.

Georgeham, N. Devon *12 May, 1953*
Dear Sir,

I heard recently, on the authority of one of the best-known of your Broadcasters, that just before the last war I appeared in one of your studios with a loaded revolver, and threatened someone or other that unless etc., etc. This 'was seriously believed in Broadcasting House,' my informant added.

Needless to say, I was delighted to think I was regarded as such a desperate character! Especially as I would never have the courage, or the sense of fun, to present even a water-pistol at anyone. It is always the modest little fellow who likes to be thought tough, even a desperado!

Whether true or just a story, I thought I would write to you and say it never happened. In my autobiography THE SUN IN THE SANDS, written in Florida in 1934 and published here in 1944, the author did confess on page one or two that in 1921, he had threatened to shoot himself with a loaded revolver, after a distressing argument with a relation, who persuaded him to swop the revolver for an air-rifle: that incident was the last of the first war hangover, for the next day he set out for Devon, and a new life of contemplation and writing books. In 1940, in Norfolk, I was taken into custody as a rumoured spy etc. (in the windy days of June) and released soon afterwards by the Chief Constable, as a 'reliable'. The C.C. took a risk, he explained, but as one old soldier to another, etc. He said he would be for it if I did turn out to be a spy etc.; and of course I said I would not let him down. One hopes that the old hopes of European unity will now come about, on a more realistic basis; apart from such hopes, one remains as in 1921, a mere contemplator, and writer and composter of soils.

This morning I heard the very welcome news that the BBC propose to do my book TARKA THE OTTER, as a bedtime story ... and the purpose of this letter is to say that if you would consider the author reading the instalments that your executives are to edit (I am perfectly adaptable, and subject to orders), or at least to a voice test, when he is next in London, after the Coronation or in the early autumn, he would be further delighted.

There is no record of a reply to this, and there the matter must lie.

The occasion which prompted the BBC next to get in touch with HW was the publication in 1957 of his book *The Golden Virgin*, the sixth volume of *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight*. This vivid recreation of the year of the Somme received wide praise, and *The Daily Mail* chose it for their Book of the Month. HW once again was news, and R.E. Keen of the Talks Department wrote on 27 October of that year asking if he would be interested in joining in a short conversation with Donald Boyd (the same Donald Boyd that had received Gillard's memo? It seems likely), to be broadcast in the new book magazine 'The World of Books'. HW was wary in his reply three days later:

... I would like the opportunity of meeting this broadcaster ... I suppose the subject would be confined to my novel, per se? Quite a number of correspondents, writing about the present novel and its five preceding volumes, have enquired about sources, how far it is my own life, etc. etc.: all wishing to penetrate an illusion created in their own minds. In the past, extending over 37 years of authorship, this author has found

again and again that to let people in behind the scenes, as it were, was a mistake. And as some of the 'characters' in the novel are still living, it is additionally necessary to avoid (I feel) going beyond the novel itself.

Is this too small a scope for your purpose?

An assurance was forthcoming, and the interview that followed was broadcast in 'The World of Books' on Saturday, 23 November.

In January 1961 HW met Marguerite Cutforth, a producer with the Talks Department, perhaps when he was either discussing or recording his interview with Goronwy Rees, called 'I Remember', although this was not actually broadcast until 10 April. Afterwards, she wrote to him, on 31 January,

I still look forward to hearing from you about the 'TUESDAY TALK' which we discussed on two occasions recently. These talks are our high spot in the week, and I would very much like to persuade you to take part in the series. There is no particular 'brief' except that we leave you to choose a subject dear to your heart; it could be an experience that made a lasting impact on you, or a particular bee that you have in your bonnet that you'd like to buzz on the Home Service.

The length of the talk is 13½ minutes, about 1,800 - 2,000 words. There is just one restriction on your choice of subject, as I mentioned earlier. So that your talk does not clash or overlap with your 'I Remember', we would prefer a non-reminiscent subject.

If you have several ideas and can't make up your mind which you like best, perhaps you could drop me a note telling me what they are and I can pick my favourite.

HW replied to her on 2 February, by postcard:

4 Capstone Place, Ilfracombe (winter quarters)
I'm delighted to hear from: having forgotten, in the excitement of London, that arrangements had been verbally made for the Tuesday Talk, 13½ minutes, 1800 - 2000 words, a non-reminiscent subject: but 'dear to my heart'.

I may be up in London at the Savage Club about 14 February for a few days, and hope by then to have sent you a typescript: so that you can have vetted it before my arrival and either approve or suggest etc. etc. (My fear is that, living so much in the past, sitting writing 7 days a week all day, my life is so dull that a present-time 'bee' – except that rivers should be cleaned and salmon return! – hardly buzzes. But I could do a talk on that subject: not a scientific 'paper' but ME (????).)

Will talk be recorded from my script, or be 'live'? If live, could it be on 9 May, a Tuesday? That is when the salmon smolts are going down to the sea – a marvellous time for them, and for me – a dream sequence in their lives, which are ordered (they have just discovered) by star-points: like some migratory birds, they 'navigate' by the night sky.

Hope to have a pint with you at the George, and/or the Fox??

They met in the second week of February, and following this Mrs Cutforth wrote an urgent memo, hastily written in pencil:

Henry Williamson arrived with his script and we discussed it and he has made some changes. However, during the course of our meeting and conversation he started to tell me about how he likes to go to the pictures in Ilfracombe and he has had a go at that too. I like it – couldn't we use that soon (it should be out-of-seaside-season) as a Tuesday Talk and put the other in a general space in May?

This talk was 'On Seeing Marilyn Monroe'. The 'Tuesday Talk' reference is rather a puzzle, as the BBC's records show that it was transmitted on Wednesday, 3 May 1961, between 8.45 and 9.00 p.m. Perhaps it refers to the day when the talks were rehearsed and recorded at the same time as HW's first script, which he had called 'The Stream'.

After 'On Seeing Marilyn Monroe' was broadcast, Mrs Cutforth made out a report on the programme for the Talks Organiser, dated 11 May:

> *ON SEEING MARILYN MONROE*
> *Henry Williamson, who has written sensitively about Tarka the Otter and Salar the Salmon, expresses the delight of a visit to the pictures in an Edwardian seaside resort he knows.*
>
> *ON SEEING MARILYN MONROE was conceived, so to speak, during an afternoon with Henry Williamson. He has called on me on his arrival in London to deliver his promised script on his favourite subject – salmon and rivers. It was disappointing. We talked it over and he asked for the script back to rewrite it during his few days in London. Our conversation got on to general terms – about himself, Ilfracombe where he winters and it was when he was describing his pleasure in 'going to the pictures' there, that I said, 'That's it! That's the one'.*
>
> *The script when I got it was fresh and delightful I thought. So these meandering conversations have their uses, and sometimes produce ideas which surprise their author as much as anyone.*

'The Stream' was broadcast on Saturday, 20 May, although Mrs Cutforth changed the title, having the courtesy to inform HW during the week before: *'I am afraid I have called your talk that goes out next Saturday, 'The River'; I hope you don't mind ...'* Later that year, at the end of August, Philippa Pearce, the Producer of 'The World of Books', wrote asking if HW would like to broadcast a short piece (800 - 900 words) in the programme. 'There is really no restriction as long as the subject is literary in some sense.' She was not entirely happy with HW's script, and wrote on 21 September,

> *Thank you for your letter enclosing your script 'On Writing a Novel-series', for the World of Books ...*
>
> *The script seems just about the right length and most interesting. I think, however, that after the first two pages (which are really delightful), the listener may find difficulties. You cover such a long period of work so allusively – the effect is rather like a synopsis or sketch for something you ought to have done in more fullness (which you can't here, of course – and I'm sorry for it.) Some of the important questions will seem to the audience to have been begged; some of the general conclusions only implied by the way. For example, I am sure that listeners would be interested in your reflections on why you chose to write a novel-series at all; what is the relationship of social and national history to personal implied in all this (I am thinking of your seeing yourself 'part of the world deteriorating through frustration of the social instinct'); and so on. On the whole, I think this last half of the talk would mean more to listeners – some of who may not know these works of yours – if you could be more selective of the chronological facts of your writing life and more reflective about them.*
>
> *I should be very grateful if you'd consider making any adaptations for our audience, in this way – and very interested to see the results.*

The talk was broadcast on Saturday, 7 October. The revised script is available in two versions: as broadcast (which can be heard on the cassette 'The Broadcasts of Henry Williamson'), and the microfilm of the actual script which includes deleted passages not broadcast.

Although this was not the last time that HW was to broadcast for the BBC, their files end there. The files are not complete, and consist almost entirely of correspondence with BBC London. HW made many broadcasts for the West of England Region, transmitted from Bristol. If that correspondence does still exist, it is not held at the BBC Written Archives Centre. Enough survives, however, to give a perhaps unique example of the working relationship between the BBC and an author/broadcaster who could surely have achieved much in the medium of radio, post-war, had he given the opportunity.

The BBC Written Archives Centre holds also a Copyright File for Henry Williamson, covering the years 1937 - 1962. It was the business of the Copyright Department, *inter alia*, to obtain an author's permission every time his work was used on the radio. Thus much of this file is concerned with various readings which occurred over the years, whether short stories from *Life in a Devon Village*, or excepts from *The Lone Swallows* and *Scribbling Lark*, or *Tarka*, read as a book at bedtime.

On occasion the Copyright Department, anxious to do the right thing, approached HW's literary agent. The earliest letter from HW in this file is dated 20 February 1937:

> *For some reason unknown to me all the correspondence ... about the proposed Salmon broadcast has come a roundabout way through Messrs A.D. Peters, literary agents ... can the roundabout be closed, please? For I do not consider myself an author with a literary agent, and wrote and told Mr Peters this in 1931. I mention this in case it happens that other suggestions of mine may be considered by you, as I hope, directly between suggestor and considerator.*
>
> *... Actually Bristol and I had discussed the matter several times, and when it was referred to you, there was no question of an intermediary.*

The Copyright Department were persistent in their correct approach. Many years later the BBC were considering a dramatisation of HW's only book for children, *Scribbling Lark*, and on 16 February 1951 the Copyright Department wrote to A.M. Heath & Co asking if Henry Williamson would be agreeable to this, subject to payment of the standard fee. Heath's replied on 19 February, ' ... *we are probably relinquishing the agency for Mr Williamson's work and I have therefore sent on to him your agreement form for his personal consideration.*' Notwithstanding this, nearly a year later, in early January 1952, the Copyright Department wrote again to Heath's, asking permission to include a reading of 'Tiger's Teeth' by Henry Williamson in their 'Prose and Verse Readings to Schools' on 28 April. This time Heath's replied, a little more testily.

> *I have passed on to Henry Williamson the agreement form for the broadcasting of TIGER'S TEETH. Would you please note that we are not representing this author any longer. I think you should approach him about future broadcasts at his home address, Georgeham, North Devon.*

The next letter of interest is from HW to Miss Ross of the Copyright Department,

following an enquiry about using *Tarka the Otter* in Children's Hour. This is dated 20 December 1961:

> *I have hesitated to reply to your letter, owing to a great amount of urgent work, and also from memories of hearing, one reading only, of Tarka as a book at bedtime some years ago. I know that the reading for children would be entirely different, but in the bed-time editing only the 'action' bits (the worst bits in the book, which is a sort of travel book) were included. All who listened to it, or failed to listen to it, said Why did you allow it?*
>
> *There is a Swedish edition for children that I have; it omits the tragic ending, and much of the hunting per se: which, as the father of eight children, to whom I used to read bits, is right for the childlike imagination. Indeed, I have long thought of writing a special version for children, much shorter, and lyrical; ending, like the Swedish edition, on a note of Tarka's defence of his mate and her cubs giving them freedom to wander on, Tarka a sort of Horatius holding the bridge.*
>
> *Would you consider my making this version for the Children's Hour, much shorter if required, and reading it myself, gently, quietly, and with no emotion; much as I have heard the admirable Wind in the Willows read in the past? If so, I would come to London to discuss this with the Programme Director in the New Year.*

Miss Ross passed this letter to Michael Bowen, Organiser of Children's Programmes, West Region, who replied to HW on 16 January 1962:

> *Our Copyright Department have sent me a copy of your letter about the proposal to broadcast a serial reading of 'Tarka the Otter' for children. Your letter has been seen by David Davis, Head of Children's Programmes (Sound), and Desmond Hawkins, Head of West Regional Programmes, and we can all fully appreciate your concern about the adaptation.*
>
> *Mr Davis would very much like to place the serial reading in the April June Quarter of this year, and has provisionally allocated thirteen instalments, each of twenty minutes. From this you can see that we are anxious to avoid any drastic editing – with this amount of time at our disposal it should be perfectly possible to give the book its full and true flavour. We would indeed welcome a new, special version for children on the lines you mention, provided it could be fitted into the length and number of episodes we have in mind.*
>
> *As for the question of the reader, we have been fortunate in arousing the interest of the well-known actor, Paul Rogers, who is a great admirer of your work. He is anxious to read this serial on the air and we think he would do it extremely well. As you probably know, he is a Devonian, and we are sure that you would be satisfied with his manner of reading. After all, the reading of serial stories on the air is a separate professional skill, and we should be sorry to lose the benefit of his experience ...*

There is no further correspondence in the file about this project, but an abridged version of *Tarka the Otter* was read by Paul Rogers over ten episodes, weekly, between 1 April land 3 June 1962. Did HW write a new ending for it, as he suggested he might? It seems unlikely that the answer will be found.

Finally, a tantalising 'might have been': on 25 June 1968 John Henderson, Assistant Head of Copyright, wrote to Henry.

Our Television Drama Group are interested in the possibility of making a dramatisation of 'The Flax of Dream'. Would you be good enough to let me known whether the television rights are available in principle? This is a preliminary enquiry only ...

HW wrote back immediately in the affirmative, but beyond a confirming memo from John Henderson to Lennox Phillips that the rights were available – 'Do you want me to make a bid ...?' – there is nothing more.

Notes:

1. Eric Maschwitz (1901-1969), joined the BBC in 1926. He was Editor of *The Radio Times* from 1927 to 1933, and was awarded the OBE in 1936. In 1940 he joined the Intelligence Corps, and in 1942 inaugurated the Army Broadcasting Section, War office. He finished the war as Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of Broadcasting, 21 Army Group. From 1958 to 1961 he was Head of Light Entertainment (Television) BBC, and in 1963 joined Rediffusion Television as Producer (Special Projects).
2. Lionel Fielden (1896-1974), joined the Artists Rifles in 1914, and transferred to the Royal Garrison Artillery, in which he served from 1915 to 1919, in Gallipoli and Palestine. He joined the BBC in 1927, and was Head of the General Talks Department from 1930 to 1935. From 1935 to 1940 he was Controller of Broadcasting in India, and in 1941 was made a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire. In 1941 and 1942 he was in the Ministry of Food, then the Ministry of Aircraft Production. He was Director of Public Relations, Allied Control Commission, in Italy, in 1944 and 1945, and lived in Italy after the war.
3. The recording of programmes on steel wire or tape became a practical possibility, if a very cumbersome one, when Blattner developed the 1925 Stille electro-magnetic machine. The value of his machine lay in the fact that immediate play-back was possible, along with electrical editing and 'wiping' of the tape for re-use. In 1931 a Blattnerphone recording machine was installed at Savoy Hill, being transferred the following year to Broadcasting House. The Blattnerphone was an awkward piece of apparatus and the cutting of steel tapes was a hazardous procedure, required 'battle-ship'-driving machinery. It made recording feasible, but difficult and expensive. (See Asa Briggs: *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol. II: The Golden Age of the Wireless*, Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 99-100.)
4. J.R. Ackerley (1896-1967), novelist, dramatist, poet and editor. In the Great War he served on the Western Front, and in 1916 was a lieutenant in the 8th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment. In the same battalion, and a friend of his, was Captain Wilfred Nevill, who achieved posthumous fame by providing his men with footballs to dribble before them as they crossed No Man's Land in their attack on Montauban on the opening day of the battle of the Somme. 'Billie Nevill was killed that day, and Ackerley wounded. Later in the war he was captured, and in 1918 wrote one of the best plays inspired by the war, *The Prisoners of War*. Ackerley worked for the BBC from 1928 to 1935 as an assistant producer in the Talks Department. Thenceforth, and until his retirement in 1959, he was Literary Editor of *The Listener*, a post he served with distinction. (See R.E. Harris: *'Billie': The Nevill Letters, 1914-1916*, Julia MacRae Books, 1991.)
5. *Goodbye West Country*, Putnam, 1937, pp. 342-350.

6. Moray McLaren (1901-1971), author. In 1924 and 1925 he was Assistant Editor on *The London Mercury* under Sir John Squire. He joined the BBC in 1928, and was the first assistant editor of *The Listener* when it was founded in 1929. He was appointed the first Programme Director for Scotland in 1933, and then Assistant Director, Talks, and afterwards Features and Drama between 1935 and 1940. Between 1940 and 1945 he was attached to the Foreign Office as Head of the Polish Region Political Intelligence Department. At the end of the war he returned to live in Edinburgh and write.
7. Stuart Hibberd, the noted broadcaster, wrote in his diary, 'At last we have found the right man for the *Men Talking* series, a Commander Campbell, RNR, a man with a good broadcasting voice and a collection of sailors' yarns which must be unrivalled – spun not by the yard, but by the mile.' (Asa Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 152.)
8. *Goodbye West Country*, pp. 277-303.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
10. *Ibid.*, p.107-115
11. *Ibid.*, p. 306-307.
12. *The Story of a Norfolk farm*, Faber & Faber, 1941, p. 145.
13. *The Daily Express*, 7 August, 1937
14. 'Have You Ever Worked With Your Hands?', *The Daily Express*, 7 August, 1937.
15. Frank Gillard (1908-), was a schoolmaster from 1932 to 1941, becoming a freelance broadcaster in 1936. He joined the BBC as Talks Producer in 1941, as well as being a BBC War Correspondent. He was BBC Head of West Regional Programmes from 1945-1955; Controller, West Region, BBC, from 1956-1963; Director of Sound Broadcasting 1963-1968, and Managing Director, Radio, BBC from 1969 to 1970, when he retired.
16. Frank Gillard in a letter to John Gregory, dated 29 January, 1993.

A complete check list of the Radio broadcasts made by Henry Williamson can be found in an Appendix to *Pen and Plough: Futher Broadcasts* edited by John Gregory (The Henry Williamson Society, 1993).

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