

## Propaganda or Public Service Broadcasting? Time to Review the Status of the BBC

A Case Study of 'Little Kinsey', BBC4, 5 October 2005



Norman Dennis

**A BBC documentary, purporting to explore sexual practices in 1940s Britain, distorted its source material so completely that Norman Dennis questions whether we can still regard the BBC as a public service broadcaster.**

In March 1877 an article by Gladstone appeared in the journal *The Nineteenth Century*. I expect that he wrote it himself. The great Liberal showed remarkable prescience of a society that would soon become awash with information and opinion from the new mass media. 'A few subjects, in most cases very few indeed, are or can be known in themselves by direct and immediate study.' At best we have, he said, what 'the most accredited writers have said upon them'. Gladstone said that to reject such accreditation, not as an absolute guarantee, but as the best that can be had, is 'a childish superstition'. That a programme dealing with factual topics has been accepted by the BBC for broadcasting has been widely regarded as accreditation, in the Gladstonian sense, of the programme's journalistic and academic integrity. The supposition that confidence can be properly reposed in the integrity of its factual programmes is one of the principal bases of the corporation's claim

to public funds as a public service broadcaster.

The 'shocking' contents of 'a 1949 survey', as newly revealed by the BBC in a programme broadcast by BBC4 on 5 October, and repeated as if they were gospel in the broadsheet press and on several web sites, including the BBC's own, certainly surprised me. Very little rang true to my own experience as a 19-year-old working-class youth in 1949, who at the time of the survey was living in various RAF barracks with other young men from mixed backgrounds from all over the country, meeting whatever

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girls we could in the social situations that time and place provided. But in those days I did not study the results of statistical surveys that would put my own experience into the perspective of national trends. I certainly carried out no surveys of my own.

However, if a Kinsey-type survey had been carried out by Mass-Observation (M-O) in 1949, if the survey were a reliable source of information on sexual practices in Britain in 1949, and if the survey showed that my own experiences were representative of only a small proportion of the population, that would be the end of the matter.

I visited the M-O archive that the BBC claimed was the basis for its exposé of the magnitudes in percentage terms of people in 1949 who had engaged in pre-marital sexual intercourse; of people who had had a homosexual experience; of married men and women who had committed adultery; of men who had used prostitutes. (In addition to such statements of magnitude the programme contained statements that were not quantified. Only the programme's claims to quantification are dealt with in this article.)

The M-O archive had been deposited in the library of the University of Sussex in 1970. There was certainly no sign whatsoever either that it was a secret or buried archive when I asked to see it (quite the contrary), or that it ever had been.

As soon as I began to examine it, it became obvious that the discrepancy was astonishing between what the BBC so-called documentary said that the M-O survey of 1949 reported, and what the M-O survey did report.

## The reliability of the data on nationwide sex practices

### What the BBC4 programme called 'Little Kinsey' said about the M-O survey

The title itself of the BBC programme shows it claimed that the M-O survey of 1949 was a *national* survey of sexual *behaviour* on the *Kinsey* model of

1948. 'Inspired by Dr Alfred Kinsey's controversial survey... 24 full-time paid Mass Observers took to the streets. In all they persuaded around 4,000 people to take part in the survey either in person or by post.'<sup>1</sup>

In fact, only half of that number, 2,052, could be described in any sense at all as constituting a national survey of the general population. The figure of 4,000 comes from the 2,052 informants from the nationwide survey of the general population, plus the people who replied to the postal questionnaires that were sent to 1,000 schoolmasters, 1,000 clergymen, 1,000 doctors, and 1,000 members of M-O's own National Panel of Voluntary Observers. The BBC4 programme claims throughout that the M-O survey of 1949 provided information on the sex lives of '*several thousand Britons*'. [Emphasis added.] When the *Sunday Pictorial* gave a detailed account of the M-O survey over four weeks in July 1949 (when it was the most prominently advertised and featured content of the paper), the distinction between data derived from the nationwide sample of the general population and those derived from the other surveys was made absolutely clear, and kept clear throughout. One of the most disturbing features of BBC4's treatment of the M-O survey is the enormous decline it reveals in the standards of journalistic and academic integrity of the BBC in 2005 as compared with those of a popular Sunday newspaper in 1949.

Though, patently, much of the programme's content was not based on the M-O data, the constant impression conveyed is that the programme is either dealing directly with M-O data or illustrating its findings. The programme's opening words were: 'In 1949 a controversial sex survey asked ordinary men and women all over Britain to reveal intimate details about their love lives... Members of the public were chosen at random and assured of anonymity to encourage honest answers ... *These are their exact words*.' [Emphasis added.] The programme's closing words refer to its having dealt with 'the nation's sex

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life captured in the Little Kinsey report of 1949', from the M-O archive that had 'remained buried for more than fifty years'.

Even though abortion, for example, is not mentioned at all in any of the questionnaires, the findings of the M-O surveys of 1949 are invoked as evidence. The commentator says of 'some single girls': 'In an age when abortion was illegal, *Little Kinsey revealed* they would do anything to end their pregnancy'. [Emphasis added.] ('Little Kinsey' is how the programme referred to the M-O material from 1949.)

There are only three obscure hints in the commentary that much or most of the material did not come from the M-O survey. The voice-over in the programme said at one point: 'We combine voices from the survey with stories from men and women who lived and loved through the lost decade of 1945 to 1955'. Can the words 'stories from men and women who lived and loved through the lost decade of 1945 to 1955' be taken to indicate that much or most of the programme was to be derived from material extraneous to the M-O survey? At another point the voice-over says: 'This is the untold story of the secret sex life of the British in the post-war years, revealed through intimate memories, long forgotten archives and the country's first national sex survey. They called it Little Kinsey.' The inclusion of 'intimate memories' in the passage can by a strained interpretation and a violation of the rules of grammar be taken to indicate that much of the programme will be a matter of the (non-generalisable) intimate memories of people who had nothing to do with the M-O survey. There is a third possible hint that much or most of the material in the BBC4 programme did not come from the 1949 survey. The comment that concludes the programme says of the 1949 M-O survey that 'its value is that it brings into focus the fact that the lost decade of 1945 to 1955 were years of great sexual uncertainty and diversity...' Perhaps a top barrister would be able to convince a jury that this bears the meaning that much or most of the programme dealt with 'facts from the lost decade', and that it was a statement that the M-O survey was subsidiary in its role of merely bringing these primary facts 'into focus'.

In its letter of rejection of Civitas's formal complaint, the BBC had the audacity to claim that the introduction to the programme *made it clear* that other sources of information amounted to

75 per cent of the contributions from witnesses and actors – the bulk of the programme. Astonishingly, the BBC claimed that the programme had been neither commissioned nor produced as an exposition of the M-O survey.

One of the two key objections to the programme, namely, the discrepancy between what the BBC programme said the M-O survey said about the general population nationwide, and what the M-O survey actually did say about the general population nationwide, was completely ignored. (Whatever proportion of the programme these discrepancies occupied.)

The second main objection, that the programme treated the M-O survey as a report on the sexual *practices* of the general population nationwide, when nationwide it was a survey of sexual *attitudes* only (with the exception of 22 postal questionnaires) was dealt with by the BBC talking in the rejection letter as if the programme had been only about ... sexual attitudes.

- *Proportion of happy families*
  - o Mass Observation's (M-O) 1949 Survey—high
  - o BBC's version of M-O's 1949 Survey—low
- *Proportion of families unhappy because of the man's behaviour*
  - o Survey—low
  - o BBC—high
- *'Unreservedly' in favour of life-long monogamy*
  - o Survey—58 per cent
  - o BBC—not dealt with
- *Divorce*
  - o Survey—1 in 100
  - o BBC—1 in 9
- *Men using prostitutes*
  - o Survey—low
  - o BBC—high
- *Homosexuality*
  - o Survey—low
  - o BBC—high
- *Adultery*
  - o Survey—hardly mentioned
  - o BBC—strongly featured
- *Pre-marital conceptions leading to maternities*
  - o Survey—didn't ask
  - o BBC—1 in 3 maternities
  - o Official statistics—1 in 8 maternities



## What the M-O survey said

On sexual *practices*, Tom Harrisson said, in his Preface to M-O's unpublished Report No. 18, '*It cannot be too emphatically stated that this is not an attempt to do a British Kinsey Report*'. [Emphasis added.]

Of the 2,052 people interviewed nationwide, only 22 answered a questionnaire on their sexual conduct, as distinct from their sexual attitudes. A less secure basis for calculating percentages for the population of Great Britain can scarcely be imagined than the percentages discovered in twenty-two questionnaires returned by a self-selected remnant of a non-random sample of 2,052.

The national survey of 2,052 was not in statistical terms a random sample survey. It was, therefore, of extremely limited use for the purposes of generalising its findings to the national population. Harrisson made this quite clear. He insisted that haphazard sampling meant that the survey was 'essentially a

*preliminary reconnaissance into the field. It makes no claim to be more than that.*' [Emphasis added.]

## Attitudes to sex

### The national sample

The M-O sample that in some sense covered the general population was not a random sample but an *opportunity* sample. An opportunity sample is one in which interviewers get answers from anybody they can find who agrees to be interviewed. Results from a random sample can be generalised to the population from which it is drawn, with calculated margins of error. Results from an opportunity sample cover the general population, but can only be suggestive of what a random sample or full census would show.

### The members of the National Panel of Voluntary Observers

M-O regularly used the services of a National Panel of Voluntary Observers. In 1939 there had been 2,000 of them. In 1949 there were about 1,200.

## Are Our Morals on the Decline?

This was the title of an article in the *Sunday Pictorial* of 31 July 1949 concerning the Mass Observation study. 'Those who say our moral standards are getting better attribute the improvement to increasing sex knowledge and freedom of behaviour. Those who say they are worse describe incidents they have read about with disgust.' These photographs and their captions give an idea of the sort of behaviour that disgusted people in 1949.



'Dancing cheek to cheek ... Immoral or harmless? Again there are wide differences of opinion throughout Britain.'



'Necking in the park. A common enough scene in London and other big cities. But some towns would be shocked, for all boy-and-girl behaviour in public must be restrained.'



'This sort of thing – walking with arms around each other's waist – is considered to be wrong in many quiet British towns.'

In statistical terms the National Panel in this regard was not a sample, but a population. As a population, the members of the National Panel were not at all representative of the country at large. They were public-spirited citizens with time to spare. They were imbued with the progressive belief that everything was better by being in the open. They were inquisitive about their neighbours' affairs. They had to have the time and inclination to keep diaries for M-O, write monthly reports, fill out regular questionnaires on different topics, and so forth.

In the 1930s and 1940s not many factory workers or miners or their wives had the leisure, facilities, or educational background to do that: many believed strongly in the prudence and indeed in the moral imperative of minding their own business.

Leonard England, who was the main organiser of the 1949 M-O study, says in one article that all 1,200 members were sent the same attitude questionnaire as was administered to the national sample of 2,052. In another article he says it was sent to 1,000 of them. Of those sent the attitude questionnaire, just under 700 replied.

#### *Postal questionnaires to 'opinion formers'*

Questionnaires were sent to doctors, clergymen and teachers, one thousand from each group, whose names had been randomly drawn from the respective year-books of their professions, asking their opinions about the state of the country's sexual morality.

### *Sexual practices*

#### *Evidence on sexual practices—the nationwide sample of 2,052*

Kinsey had studied the sexual *practices* of a nationwide sample. Harrisson pointed out that the M-O survey of 1949, by contrast, had collected no systematic data on the sexual practices of the nationwide sample. 'We decided... more or less to by-pass sex habit', Harrisson wrote, 'instead to confine ourselves largely to the study of *attitudes*.'

It was left to the discretion of interviewers to ask or not ask informants if they would be willing to fill in a postal questionnaire on their own sexual practices. According to Leonard England, 11 per cent of the sample of 2,052 did express willingness to do

so. 'There was still a possibility, however, that some of the 200 [sic] had not understood the interviewer, and for this reason—and also to get their acceptance in writing—a letter was sent to each one asking them to confirm their willingness.' Only a third replied to this letter. Only a third of these actually returned the completed questionnaire. The national sample, 'from Scotland to Cornwall', as England writes, therefore yielded information on the sexual practices of *fewer than two dozen individuals*.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Evidence on sexual practices—the National Panel of Voluntary Observers*

The only difference in the questionnaire sent to the 1,200 or 1,000 members of the M-O panel of observers and the nationwide questionnaire was that there was a final question on the M-O panel questionnaire asking if the informant would be willing to answer a second questionnaire on his or her personal sexual life.

Of the 700 or so members of the panel who had returned the postal questionnaire on attitudes to sex, about 560 said that they would be willing to answer questions about their own sexual conduct. Leonard England says that 409 eventually did.

A count in the archive boxes showed that 80 per cent of those who answered questions about their own sex lives were men. We therefore have the astonishing state of affairs that a BBC documentary programme claims to reveal national figures on how women behaved sexually in the whole of the British Isles in 1949 (the M-O survey included Scotland) on the basis of about 82 questionnaires filled out by an unrepresentative sample of an unrepresentative sub-population.

These respondents on their own sexual conduct were much more left-wing than the general population. At the General Election of 1950, 40 per cent of the general population voted Conservative. In this group only 16 per cent said they supported the Conservative Party. Only nine per cent of the general population voted Liberal in 1950. In this group 21 per cent said that they supported the Liberal Party. The rest of the 1949 'sexual conduct' informants supported the Labour Party (53 per cent), the Communist Party, and a spread of other left-wing and internationalist parties.

M-O Report No. 18 insists repeatedly that these 409 informants are unrepresentative, and that the conduct of these 409 can by no means be generalised to the population at large. Leonard England in his articles insists on the same point. Although he used 'Little Kinsey' in the title of his *Political Quarterly* article written for an American audience (Winter 1949-50), he does so only to strengthen his denial that the M-O survey was a Kinsey survey. The M-O results, he wrote, were 'in no way intended to be similar to Dr. Kinsey's'.

*Evidence on the sexual practices of others—  
provided by informants and observers in  
Worcester and Middlesbrough*

In Worcester and Middlesbrough officials were asked what they thought the sexual practices of others were. They were not asked about their own. Observers tried to find out about sexual practices by 'chatting to the general population'; 'observing pubs, dance halls, parks, etc.'; and 'interviewing officials'.

*Evidence on the sexual practices of others  
— provided by doctors, teachers and clergymen*

M-O sent postal questionnaires to doctors, teachers and clergymen, again, not to ask about their own sexual practices, but to ask about their thoughts on the sexual practices and beliefs of other people, and their thoughts on trends in national sexual morality.

## Marriage and the Family

### What the programme 'Little Kinsey' said the M-O survey said about stable family life in 1949

Hardly anything. There were no references to any of the statistics given in the M-O sex survey of 1949 on the existence of benefits from the culture of life-long monogamy. Only one of those interviewed was a happily married man. In the programme's 58 passages of commentary, only two sentences refer to happy marriages. 'Not all couples in the post-war years were unhappy with their sex lives, however. Having saved themselves for their wedding day, Albert Gillett and his wife found that marriage lived

up to their expectations.' Albert Gillett then talks about his happy marriage. But the comment that immediately follows is that 'few couples in the *Little Kinsey survey* were as blissfully happy as Albert and his wife'. [Emphasis added.]

That few couples at any time have ever been 'blissfully happy' is a fairly safe generalisation. But the M-O *nationwide* survey did not ask about the informants' own married lives at all. The 270 married respondents from the unrepresentative National Panel were only asked the question, 'How satisfied are you on the whole with your married life?' There are therefore no grounds at all for making a statement one way or another from the M-O survey on the proportion of 'blissful' marriages in 1949.

## What the M-O survey reported

### *Attitudes*

The M-O survey paints the picture of a marriage- and family-centred Britain. M-O reported that nearly 60 per cent of the 2,052 informants in the general nationwide sample were '*unreservedly*' in favour of marriage as marriage was understood in 1949, that is, as life-long monogamy and life-long fidelity to a single person of the opposite sex. The weak and plural meanings of 'marriage' and the 'family' in 2005 must not be read back into 1949.

Only 4 per cent of informants, M-O Report No. 18 said, 'gave unfavourable comments' on the institution of marriage in the form in which it existed in Britain in 1949.

### *The happiness of the family home*

Seventy-five per cent of the national sample claimed that their parents were happily married. Only three per cent said that their parents were unsuited or even quarrelled. Only two per cent said that the marriage was spoilt by their father's behaviour. These figures do not, of course, relate to the proportion of happy marriages in 1949, but (with some overlap because the parents of many of the informants would have been still alive) to the marriages of a previous generation. Nevertheless, these are the figures M-O supplies.

Four per cent said that the marriages were spoilt by drink. But drink, according to the M-O survey, was



‘a declining factor in upsetting marriages’. The only evidence M-O presents on the *trend* in the happiness of marriages, therefore, hints at improvement rather than deterioration.

The only evidence of the happiness of marriages in 1949 provided by the M-O survey was that of the 270 members of the M-O’s National Panel. The 700 or so members of the Panel who answered questions about their attitudes to marriage and so forth were on every measure the least committed of all the sets of people in the M-O survey to the institutions of marriage in their 1949 form. The 270 were the married people among the 409 or so of the 700 who also answered the questionnaire about their own sexual conduct. Even so, three-quarters of the 270 ‘said they were satisfied, often very satisfied, with their married lives’. Only five per cent of them said that they were definitely dissatisfied.<sup>3</sup> None of this was touched upon in the BBC4 programme’s unremitting portrayal of marriage failure among the Panel members.

## Divorce

### What the BBC4 programme said about the prevalence of divorce in 1949

The BBC programme said that ‘in 1949 one in nine marriages ended in divorce’.

### What the M-O survey said about the prevalence of divorce in 1949

Report No. 18 says that ‘figures show that one marriage gets dissolved each year for every nine that take place’.<sup>4</sup> This, of course, is an entirely different matter to ‘one in nine marriages ending in divorce’.

### What the BBC4 programme said about attitudes to divorce in 1949

“‘Little Kinsey’ [meaning the M-O survey of 1949] revealed’, the BBC said, ‘that 83 per cent of those interviewed agreed with divorce, reflecting a new popular acceptance of marriage breakdowns.’

### What the M-O survey said about attitudes to divorce in 1949

The only question on divorce asked of the nationwide opportunity sample was: ‘What are your feelings generally about divorce?’

In the nationwide opportunity sample of 2,052, not 83 per cent, but 57 per cent said that they ‘more or less approved of divorce’. Given the vagueness of the question, it is interesting that in 1949 it was still the case, on this figure, that 43 per cent of the population still *disapproved of divorce*.

The figure of 43 per cent still disapproving of divorce as it existed under the stringent restrictions still in existence in 1949 is the striking figure from 1949. This contrasts with the almost universal acceptance, in 2005, of (for all practical purposes) divorce on demand, and the almost complete disappearance of any stigma attached to being divorced.

The figures for those who ‘more or less approved of divorce’ among the ‘opinion makers’ who returned postal questionnaires were: doctors 75 per cent; teachers 70 per cent; and, the least approving of divorce, clergymen, 33 per cent.

Again, the striking figure is not that given by the BBC, 83 per cent approving divorce in 1949, i.e. only 17 per cent disapproving of divorce. It is that in 1949 one quarter of doctors still disapproved of divorce—and nearly one-third of *teachers* still disapproved of divorce. Two-thirds of clergymen still disapproved of divorce. What would those proportions be today?

By contrast (once again), the unrepresentativeness of the Panel of Voluntary Observers is thrown into stark relief. The figure in the ‘Little Kinsey’ programme, 83 per cent approving divorce, comes from the 700 or so who completed the attitude questionnaires, an unrepresentative sample of an unrepresentative group. That is the only figure quoted by BBC4, claiming it is the proportion ‘of those interviewed’, i.e. claiming the figure was from the national sample of the general population, for they were the *only* informants who were ‘interviewed’.

### What the most reliable figures available say about divorce in 1949

The ‘divorce rate’, as generally accepted for statistical purposes, is the number of divorces in a given year as a proportion of all existing married couples in that year. From 1980 to 2005, the annual number of divorces in England and Wales has been as high as 165,018, and never lower than 141,135. In none of those years was the divorce rate higher than 1.2 per

cent. In these years of soaring divorce numbers, that is not one in nine but one in 84. *In 1949 there had been only 34,856 divorces.*

The figure for 1949, even on the highly eccentric definition used by the BBC programme – the number of divorces in a given year as a proportion of the number of couples getting married in that year – was not one in nine but one in *eleven*.

## Adultery

The national sample of 2,052 was asked, as was the National Panel, ‘How do you feel about sex relations between people who are not married to one another?’ In 1949, what did the informants take those two terms, ‘sex relations’ and ‘not married to one another’, to mean? (By contrast, the clergymen, schoolmasters and doctors were clearly asked to respond separately to a question about sex between unmarried people, and adulterous sex.)

***What proportion of the informants took ‘not married to one another’ to mean only unmarried, i.e. premarital sex?***

The first ambiguity is that ‘pre-marital’ sex relations, as well as adulterous relations, are *both*, in the plain meaning of the words, sex relations between people not married to one another. The most logical answer would be one that did not distinguish between sex relations of two unmarried people, and sex relations where at least one person was married to somebody else. There is certainly no way of separating those who were responding in terms of fornication from those who were responding in terms of adultery.

***In 1949, did the term ‘sex relations’ mean, to the people questioned, ‘penetrative sexual intercourse’?***

There is a second ambiguity in the term ‘extra-marital sex relations’. What did the people interviewed in 1949 take ‘sex relations’ to mean?

Perfectly conformist ‘courting couples’ in 1949 used their hands and lips, and had bodily contact with one another, in ways that were prohibited to other people. They could and did kiss and embrace in ways that were clearly differentiated from their kisses and embraces as daughters and sons, cousins, nephews or nieces.

In its pervasive *suppressio veri suggestio falsi* style, the programme ‘Little Kinsey’ treats the answers to the questions as answers about penetrative sex.

## What the programme ‘Little Kinsey’ says about adultery in 1949

Much of the hour of the BBC’s ‘Little Kinsey’ was taken up with two long accounts of adulterous relationships.

One was the adultery of Rose Howell’s redheaded husband with the woman in the flat below. Ms Howell used to think that her husband had gone to the toilet when she felt his side of the bed empty at night. But when the woman in the flat below had a red-haired child she hired a private detective, Mr Christmas. They tracked Mr Howell and the woman from downstairs to a shared chalet at a Butlin’s holiday camp, thus yielding the proof of adultery required by the divorce courts of the time... and so on.

The other was a long, smug account of Edgar Storer’s own adulterous life ‘in the late 1940s and 50s’, and of his regret that he did not fully appreciate at the time the gem he had in a wife who did not kick up a fuss about his serial infidelities.

People in the 1940s and 1950s were well aware that there were adulterers and adulteresses. The best-selling Sunday newspaper of the period specialised in reports on adultery, and it had a circulation of eight million. The claim that Mrs Howell’s and Mr Storer’s accounts were ‘revelations’ of a ‘secret history’ of Britain in the ‘lost decade’ of 1945 to 1955 is bizarre. The only thing that could have given the programme any historical value in this matter would have been its supplying what it claimed it was supplying—and was not—namely, statistics on how much more widespread adultery was than had hitherto been generally believed.

Dr Hera Cook, described by *The Daily Telegraph* as ‘a sex historian at the University of Birmingham’, said that ‘one in five women admitted to having an extra-marital affair’. Dr Cook gives this figure clearly in the context of *adultery*, for she says in connection with the figure that there was less *adultery* in working-class than middle and upper class homes.



## What the M-O survey said about adultery

M-O Report No. 18 dealt almost exclusively with *pre-marital* sex in its analysis of the ‘extra-marital sex’ questions.

The double ambiguity of the question on ‘sex relations between people not married to one another’ permeates Report No. 18 and the archive. There is very little in Report No. 18 that can be definitely taken to be a reference to adultery nationwide. There is no possibility of providing a *nationwide* figure on adultery from M-O’s data, and M-O never remotely claimed that it was providing one.

A few members of the National Panel, in filling out their self-administered questionnaires, did give accounts of whether they had had pre-marital intercourse with their present spouses and/or other people, and whether they had had adulterous relationship while they were married. The figures on premarital intercourse and adultery given in the programme as nationwide figures come only from these people.

Of the 409 whose answers on their own sexual conduct were used (the 20 or so from the sample of 2,052 who answered questions on their sexual conduct were not used) only 20 per cent were women. Leonard England, the author of Report No. 18, says in a journal article that only 66 per cent of the 409 were married.<sup>5</sup> Applying that percentage to the women, there were about 53 married women. (The Sussex archive was closed, and is still closed, before I could check the actual numbers from the interview schedules.) On the basis that one in five of these women answered yes to the question, ‘Have you had sexual intercourse with someone other than your husband/wife since your marriage?’, we have a figure in the region of ten women.

Such was the basis of the BBC4 programme’s generalisation to the British population that in 1949, or in the period 1945 to 1955, one in five British women committed adultery!

## Pre-marital sexual intercourse

### What the programme ‘Little Kinsey’ said about pre-marital sexual intercourse in 1949

The BBC programme’s theme on this topic was: the contrast between the public condemnation of pre-marital ‘sex relations’ on the one hand and, on the other, the high figures of pre-marital ‘sex relations’.

To an unknown but perhaps very large extent, sex relations short of penetrative sexual intercourse are all transmogrified by the ‘Little Kinsey’ programme into penetrative sex.

### *Pre-marital sexual relations—practices*

‘Nearly half’, the BBC’s programme ‘Little Kinsey’ said, ‘admitted’ to ‘having pre-marital sex’.

### *Pre-marital sexual relations—attitudes*

There are very few references in the ‘Little Kinsey’ programme, perhaps only one, to ‘ideals’ as a motivating force in social life. The ‘Victorian ideal’ of the ‘virgin bride’, the programme said, was still ‘celebrated’ in 1949. The assertion that ‘virginity at marriage’ was a peculiar invention of Victorian England, and was still hanging on as a cultural curiosity in 1949, before it began to disappear rapidly in a revolution originating in that year or thereabouts, to be completely replaced by the ‘normality’ of 2005, is not supported by the M-O survey of 1949. It is not supported by either history or anthropology.

Sexual restraints in 1949 were treated by BBC4 mainly, however, as destructive restrictions, externally imposed on each other by members of the hypocritical public, few of whom were internally committed to what were claimed to be their high moral standards.

### What the M-O survey said about pre-marital sexual intercourse in 1949

M-O Report No. 18 gives two figures for those ‘experiencing sexual relations before marriage’, one for the well-off, one for the poor. The figure for those earning over £15 a week (the well-off of those days) was given as 66 per cent. The figure for those earning under £10 a week was given as 49 per cent. The BBC’s ‘Little Kinsey’ programme seems to use the latter figure of 49 per cent.

Neither figure is from the only one of the surveys that has the slightest claim to being representative of the population of Britain in 1949. But had the figure of only 49 per cent been derived from a representative national sample, it would have been remarkable evidence of the sexual abstemiousness of the English working class. *That* would have been a ‘sensation’ for a BBC documentary to ‘reveal’ from a ‘secret archive’.

### *Pre-marital sexual relations—practices*

Mass Observation's Report No. 18 says specifically that it did *not* ask any questions about the sexual practices of the general sample.

### *Pre-marital sexual relations—attitudes*

On the basis of the answers given to these ambiguous questions, which nevertheless *include* pre-marital sexual relations, the M-O survey of 1949 reported that '*More people are more strongly opposed to extra-marital relations than to any other subject in the survey*'.

*Sixty-three per cent* of the sample of 2,052 disapproved of 'sex relations' except between a man and a woman who were married to each other.

The striking *atypicality* of the Panel of Voluntary Observers is again shown in the fact that *only 24 per cent* of them were classified in M-O Report No. 18 as 'disapproving extra-marital relations'.

## **Pre-marital sexual intercourse resulting in the birth of a child**

### **What the programme 'Little Kinsey' said**

The 'Little Kinsey' programme said that, in 1949, if a girl became pregnant the only thing she could do was to get married. The M-O survey of 1949 had found, the programme said, that 'one in three pregnancies was pre-marital'.

The programme 'Little Kinsey' then concentrated on a woman who became pregnant as a young teenager. She and the baby were put into a home. Their babies were taken away from most of the other girls in the home, to be cared for by adoptive parents. The woman (or someone acting her part for the purposes of the programme) herself refused to give up her child, but she recalled the great sadness of the other young mothers. 'Most' of the girls, she said, were pregnant by their fathers, uncles or brothers.

### **What the M-O survey of 1949 said**

There is nothing to be said against a television programme devoted to the prevalence of incest in 1949. An informant's account of her own experience is of great value. But the value of any generalisation she makes has to be treated on its merits. Oral historians and qualitative social scientists sometimes

neglect, perhaps, the point made by Dickens's Mr Justice Stareleigh in one of his rulings (*Pickwick Papers*). Just because a soldier said it, that doesn't make it true.

For present purposes that is beside the point, for M-O Report No. 18 gives no figures on incest. It is absolutely certain that there can be nothing in the archive that would constitute any evidence-based generalisation that 'most' of the girls in any given home for unmarried mothers, or anywhere else, were the victims of incest.

The M-O survey gives no figure on the nationwide prevalence of premarital intercourse that resulted in a pregnancy.

The BBC can therefore fairly claim that what the programme said about incest and premarital pregnancies was additional to the parts of the programme that purported to depend upon M-O data. My remarks can therefore also be fairly taken as my additional comments, here and in the following few paragraphs, outside the main framework of the relationship between what the M-O data show, and what BBC4 said they showed.

### **What we know from the most reliable available sources**

In fact, the percentages of extra-maritally conceived maternities for the year 1949 are figures that are, and for more than 50 years have been, exceedingly public, and exceedingly easy to obtain.

The actual figure for babies conceived and born outside marriage was *five per cent*. The actual figure of 'maternities within marriage that were conceived before marriage' was *seven per cent*. The figure of conceptions outside marriage in 1949 was therefore not 33 per cent, but 12 per cent. If 'pre-marital' is taken as meaning 'before the couple did get married', then the figure drops to seven per cent—not one in three, but one in fourteen.

It makes little difference to the figures if 'maternities within marriage that were conceived before marriage' are calculated as a percentage of maternities within marriage, instead of a proportion of all maternities, inside and outside of marriage. The figure rises to 7.5 per cent. The only way to arrive at anything like the figures alleged in BBC4'S 'Little Kinsey' is by taking only first births—but that calculation is never mentioned.

The programme 'Little Kinsey' implies where it does not assert that all or most of the 'maternities within marriage that were conceived before marriage' were within forced marriages. We do not know that and we cannot now ever know it. But it is pure tendentiousness to exclude the possibility that a proportion of that seven per cent (not 33 per cent!), perhaps a substantial proportion, was accounted for by couples who, while breaking the rule of pre-marital chastity, were fully committed to their life-long sexual fidelity to their spouse-to-be, and fully committed to the other *mores* of life-long monogamy.

## Men using prostitutes

The heart of the M-O survey was the opportunity sample of 2,052 interviewees. Here, at least, some primitive attempt was made to make the sample representative of the general population. None of the other sets of informants were representative of the general population at all, nor did Mass Observation claim that they were.

### What the 'Little Kinsey' programme said

Dr Hera Cook said in the course of the programme, '*One in four men have been with a prostitute*'. This figure of 'one in four men' (*implied*: 'in the general population') was widely quoted in the press and on the web in one form or another.

The BBC's 'Little Kinsey' programme implied, though it did not directly state, that one in four men in the general population were using prostitutes in 1949. It was a 'habit'. Many men, the programme said, had got used to it during the war. The *BBC News Magazine* article 'Britain's secret survey', in dealing with the programme, said that 'many men became accustomed to using prostitutes during the war'.

Viewers were told that a combination of repressed attitudes, and of couples being forced into wedlock, meant that women resorted to adulterous affairs and men to prostitutes.

A major part of the programme was then devoted to a sex therapist explaining why prostitution in 1949 was so rife, and to a practitioner and once notorious organiser of parties explaining why it was such a boon.

### What the M-O survey showed

Only one question was asked specifically about prostitution in the survey of the general population, the sample of 2,052. '*How do you feel about prostitution?*'

There is nothing about the informant's own use of prostitutes. There was another question covering all sexual attitudes dealt with in the questionnaire: '*Would you mind telling me how far you think you live up to your own standards in all these things we have been talking about?*' A search of the archive might disclose some men who volunteered to the interviewer that he had used prostitutes, but from the point of view of quantification of the phenomenon any such comments would be quite worthless.

*M-O Report No. 18 did not give any figure from the national sample on either the number of prostitutes or the number of people using prostitutes.*

All the evidence on the extent of prostitution came from either (a) the studies of Worcester and Middlesbrough or (b) from the tiny number of highly unrepresentative males in the National Panel of Voluntary Observers.

### M-O Report No. 18 on prostitution in Worcester and Middlesbrough

#### Worcester men using prostitutes

The evidence provided in M-O Report No. 18 on Worcester was provided by the Chief Constable. 'There are *no* known prostitutes operating at all... Soliciting may be practised in a limited way in the public houses—but it is doubtful. We would know about it if it was going on.' [Emphasis added.] We are not discussing whether or not the Chief Constable was factually correct in saying that. The issue here is the same as the issue elsewhere: not 'was the M-O survey correct in anything it reported', but 'to what extent are the BBC's "Little Kinsey" statements, *where they claim to be based on the evidence from the M-O survey*, in fact based on that evidence?'

#### Middlesbrough men using prostitutes

The evidence provided in M-O Report No. 18 on prostitution in Middlesbrough, given in quotations from the Chief Probation Officer and someone in the venereal disease clinic, was that in Middlesbrough 'the prostitute problem is *very small*, confined to



a few around the docks—but it is not a serious problem. It only affects a few’; and ‘Middlesbrough is a port, you know... a lot of Scandinavian seamen come here—they’re a pretty tough lot; they bring it [sexually-transmitted disease] to the town’. That is, even in Middlesbrough in 1949, an iron and steel town and a port, on the evidence quoted and the conclusions arrived at by ‘Sex Survey 1949’, the problem of prostitution was non-existent or very small, and where it existed it was blamed on foreign users.

### *Men in London using prostitutes*

M-O Report No. 18 adds: ‘The picture, moreover, does not seem to be very different even in London. “Pockets of vice” are much less frequently encountered than is often imagined; a social investigator who had spent a number of years working as a part-time prostitute in Soho, had never come across either pornographic films or organised brothels—although she was wrong in believing that organised brothels, at least, do not exist in London.’

### *The men in the Voluntary Panel who filled in the questionnaire*

The ‘Little Kinsey’ programme claimed that the figure concerning the use of prostitutes by one in four men was derived from the M-O survey question, ‘Have you ever had sex with a prostitute?’ No such question was asked of the nationwide sample of 2,052 informants.

M-O Report No. 18 did find users of prostitutes in one of its sets of informants, namely, the males among its Voluntary Observers. ‘One in four of the male members of Mass Observation’s National Panel’ the report states, ‘admitted experience of sex relations with prostitutes’—that is, a total of about 82 informants in the whole population of Great Britain. But M-O Report No. 18 does not claim in the slightest that even this one in four of the males among the Voluntary Observers were *regular* users of British prostitutes.

It does not claim, what is more important, that one in four were using prostitutes in 1949. ‘In most of the cases’, Report No. 18 states, ‘the use of a prostitute was ‘at least five years distant.’ This is not correct. It appears that two-thirds of those who had ever used a prostitute had used one in the previous

five years. But that is what Report No. 18 states, and ‘at least five years distant’ is a clear reference to service in the armed forces all over the world from 1939 to 1945.

### *The M-O’s own conclusion on prostitution*

M-O Report No. 18 regarded it as ‘certain’ that, whatever the exact frequency specifically of brothels, by 1949 they had become ‘fewer and more furtive’ than in previous years. It concluded its evidence on prostitution by saying that it ‘suggested very strongly that professional prostitution at least is of relatively minor importance in the life of our towns and cities as a whole’.

## Homosexuality

### What the programme ‘Little Kinsey’ said

The programme’s theme was that a facade of respectability concealed the reality of Britain’s ‘sexy life’ in 1949.

The BBC programme ‘Little Kinsey’ says that people were asked ‘What is your attitude to homosexuality?’ Twenty per cent of men reported that they had had a homosexual experience at some time in their lives.

Dr Hera Cook explained this high figure to viewers. In 1949, she said, male homosexuality was still taken for granted in public schools. The *BBC News Magazine* that dealt with the programme said that it would show from the M-O survey of 1949 that one in five respondents had had a homosexual experience, ‘a higher number than today’. The war was thought to have contributed to this high rate in 1949.

### What the M-O survey showed

There was no question about homosexuality in the questionnaire administered to the cross-sectional sample of 2,052 informants. There is therefore nothing in the M-O Survey from which a nationwide figure of one in five could be derived.

The figure of one in five comes, in fact, from the answers given on their sexual practices by the small number of men in the demonstrably non-random sample of the highly atypical Panel of Voluntary Observers. Leonard England, who published the results of the M-O’s 1949 work, and who oversaw the content of the *Sunday Pictorial* articles, gives a

figure for Panel respondents who had 'homosexual relations' not of 20 per cent, but of less than half that, eight per cent. A further 12 per cent, he wrote, had 'homosexual leanings', with no mention for this 12 per cent of either homosexual experience or homosexual relations.<sup>6</sup>

But even if the figure had been derived from a random sample, what would the figure itself have told us about the proportion of *homosexual* males in the population in 1949? The questions answered by the 409 members of the panel who returned the questionnaire on their own sexual practices said: 'Have you ever had sex relations with anyone of the same sex as yourself?', 'When did this last occur?', and 'How usual has it been for you to experience a sexual climax in these relationships?'

The only meaning that the programme 'Little Kinsey' gives to the figure is that the experience of one in five men was that of him *acting* in a *homosexual* manner at some time in his life. *That cannot be derived from the figure at all.* A boy who is not sexually developed who is inappropriately touched homoerotically by the person doing the touching has had a 'homosexual relation'; but he has not himself acted homoerotically.

Even when it does involve erotic activity among males, 'homosexual relations' is a concept that potentially covers a wide gamut of practices, from a range that could start with a couple of boys heightening their excitement by being together when they were experiencing heterosexual stimulation.

As a footnote: the 'Little Kinsey' programme gives the figure that is interesting to people in 2005: one-third of the informants in 1949 did not even know the *meaning* of the word 'homosexuality'.

## Conclusion

Whether the BBC's record in recent years has generally deteriorated in the separation of facts from the prejudices of its programme makers, and whether the BBC has become increasingly culpable in this regard in its treatment of topics touching on trends in cultural aspirations and concrete sexual practices, are large topics, now difficult to make the subject of empirical research.

But the effect, certainly, of the 'Little Kinsey' programme, whatever the mixture of conscious intentions, unconscious prejudices or just plain

idleness and ignorance, was to transmit the message to viewers that proof had been provided that the moral doctrines of their fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers were, for a fifth, a quarter or a third of them, a hypocritical veil for their sexual licence, and that the professed morality of 1949, therefore, could have no legitimate hold on the morality of today's young. There is no basis for such a claim.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Kinsey, who had established an Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction in 1937 (still in existence as the Kinsey Institute) carried out a survey of male sexual behaviour in the United States, including male paedophilia. The results were published in Kinsey, A.C., Pomeroy, W. and Martin, C.E., *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, Philadelphia, PA: Saunders, 1948. Its sample of informants, the crucial basis for any generalisation to the male population of the U.S.A., was immediately condemned by the American Statistical Association, as being in no sense a sample in the statistical sense, that is, a true 'random' sample capable of being applied within measurable margins of error to the population from which it was drawn. It was a convenience sample of people (a) who knew one another and (b) were willing to disclose what by the standards of the time were their sexual delinquencies. Twenty-five per cent were prison inmates. Five per cent were male prostitutes. Paul Gebhard, Kinsey's successor at the Kinsey Institute, reworked the figures by excluding the prison inmates. He also excluded certain informants whose representativeness had been demonstrably and grotesquely exaggerated in the original report. He concluded that their exclusion made virtually no difference to Kinsey's figures. He could do nothing, of course, about the more important fact of the sample's lack of randomness. John Tukey, a notable statistician of the time, said that 'a random selection of three people would have been better than 300 selected by Mr. Kinsey'. 'John Tukey, Statistician', *The New York Times*, 28 July 2000.

<sup>2</sup> England, L.R., 'Little Kinsey: an outline of sex attitudes in Britain', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Winter 1949-50, 589.

<sup>3</sup> *M-O Report No 18*, Chapter V, 'Marriage'--Box No.3 of the M-O archive. The archive was closed for microfilming at a crucial time, so all the figures are close estimates within margins of error that do not affect any of the arguments of this article to the slightest degree.

<sup>4</sup> Liz Stanley put together a version of the M-O survey as 'Little Kinsey' in 1995, composed mainly, but not only, of the contents of unpublished Report No. 18. (Personal conversation.) The remark about 'one marriage being dissolved each year for every nine marriages that take place' is to be found in her *Sex Surveyed, 1949-1994: from Mass-Observation's 'Little Kinsey' to the National Survey and the Hite Reports*, London: Taylor and Francis, 1995, p. 123.

<sup>5</sup> England, L., 'A British sex survey', *The International Journal of Sexology*, 3, 3, February 1950.

<sup>6</sup> England, L., 'A British sex survey', *The International Journal of Sexology*, 3, 3, February 1950.

## The 2006 Essential Guide to the European Union'

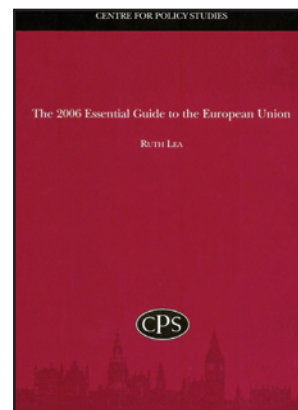
Now in its third edition, Ruth Lea's *Essential Guide to the European Union* (Centre for Policy Studies 2005) is one of the clearest and most straightforward explanations available of the workings of the European Union. As she stresses in her introduction, the EU is a dense and often poorly understood area of politics, yet one which has ever more influence upon British political culture and daily life. With this book, those attempting to understand the EU maze have a valuable aid, which provides a historical and thematic overview of all the key areas of EU policy. With admirable brevity, Ruth Lea covers the establishment and history of the EEC and EU, its law-making, economic powers and the many other areas where the Brussels government now has legal authority.

Besides being a handbook, however, this is also a work of subtle political criticism, casting a questioning eye over the ever-expanding remit of

the EU and making a clear call for a less rigid form of European co-operation. Lea concludes with a powerful call for an open and honest debate on the future of Europe, providing her own vision of an *à la carte* EU as a catalyst to this necessary and overdue discussion.

*Wil James*

*'The 2006 Essential Guide to the European Union' is available to Civitas members for a special price of £10 (including p&p). Orders, mentioning Civitas, should be sent to: Centre for Policy Studies, 57 Tufton Street, London SW1P 3QL. Telephone: 020 7222 4388 Email: [mail@cps.org.uk](mailto:mail@cps.org.uk)*



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## Euro-sceptic talks for schools

*John Butters*



*John Butters*

The main problem that Euro-sceptics face is that people do not know very much about the European Union. If they understood its endless regulations, daft agricultural policy, self-serving trade practices and unceasing will to acquire power, they would be even more Euro-sceptical than they are already. In the debate about Britain's future in Europe, we have the stronger case. The important thing is to get that case heard.

That is the thought behind Civitas's programme of talks for schools. Over the past year, we have found 130 people around the country to give sceptical talks about the EU to sixth-formers, and arranged almost 120 talks. Our approach has been to work in partnership with committed teachers who are determined that their students should think things through for themselves. Sometimes we arrange speakers for extra-curricular 'enrichment sessions' or politics classes, confident that good teachers will challenge their students to think critically about what

they hear; and sometimes we set up debates, with speakers from the European Movement – because if you have a better argument, there is nothing to fear from proper debate.

It is in that spirit that we have decided to make information about the European Union available in other ways. We are organising a sixth-form conference in March 2006, with speakers from across the spectrum of opinion, who will speak on subjects that are directly relevant to the syllabi for economics and for government and politics. As well as improving students' knowledge of the Union, this fits well with Civitas' main aim: to improve public understanding of the legal, institutional and moral framework that makes for a free and democratic society.

We are also producing unbiased fact sheets about the European Union. For students who, in their earlier careers, may have encountered the Commission's appalling comic books (on the environment: 'Yes, solidarity is the only answer'), or even [www.captaineuro.com](http://www.captaineuro.com), in which our hero battles swarthy international investor Dr. D. Vider, balanced information about how the EU actually works, from



a non-partisan think-tank, is probably long overdue. The fact sheets must be, first and foremost, a resource for the committed teachers who get in touch with us, so their format has been designed by an experienced teacher to be easy to use and photocopy. We plan to have a pilot version ready, on the internet and on CD, within the next few weeks.

There is a lot more to do. Our fact sheets need to be revised and edited until they are as good as they can be, and for that we will be asking teachers with whom we have worked before for some help next year. And, of course, we have reached only a minority of students, and only the ones doing their AS or A2 exams this year. To really improve public understanding of why we have a free and democratic society, and why it is being eroded by the EU, we will have to work at this for many years to come.

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## Dying with Dignity

As the population ages, and as family ties weaken, many people are fearful of experiencing chronic and untreatable health problems, possibly extended over a long period, which will leave them helplessly dependent at the end of their lives. This has led to calls for the legalisation of assisted suicide, or euthanasia. Opponents of euthanasia warn that it may lead to pressure on the old and the sick to agree to terminate their lives, and the word carries connotations of the racial hygiene programmes of Hitler's Germany. To get away from this, the Voluntary Euthanasia Society has now changed its name to Dignity in Dying, and is campaigning in support of Lord Joffe's Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill (ADTI) Bill. According to Civitas member Anthony Fathers:

'The House of Lords Select Committee concludes that whilst palliative care has much to offer, some competent terminally ill adults want to die with dignity and for them that means being able to control the timing and manner of their deaths. When the ADTI Bill becomes law doctors would only be allowed to prescribe terminally ill, mentally competent patients medication that they can choose to take themselves to end their unbearable suffering. The Bill does not allow doctors to directly administer the medication to the patient' (*Richmond and Twickenham Times*, 25/11/2005).

For those opposed to any process that deliberately ends life, the hospice movement offers an opportunity to put their beliefs into practice. Hospices represent almost the last gasp of the spirit of voluntarism in healthcare, deriving most of their income from donations. Large hospices like St Christopher's in Sydenham and St Joseph's in Hackney have a national fundraising profile, but most areas have their own small hospices which are always in need of help.

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## What a Welcome, if Somewhat Unexpected, Turn-Up for the Book

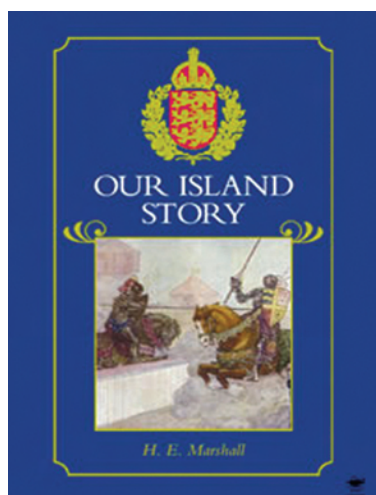
If there be such a thing as a *Zeitgeist*, Civitas can certainly lay claim to being fully in touch with it in deciding to republish, in a joint venture with Galore Park, Henrietta Elizabeth Marshall's one-hundred-year-old children's history book *Our Island Story*.

One of Civitas' aims was to provide a free copy of the book to as many schools in Britain as we can afford to send them to, courtesy of Civitas supporters and *Daily Telegraph* readers who between them donated £35,000. So far 2,500 primary schools have received copies, and we have now extended the offer to secondary schools.

'Thank you so much for the complimentary copy', wrote one primary schoolteacher. 'I'm absolutely thrilled with the book and plan to start reading it to my class of 8/9 year olds today', she wrote. Later, she wrote to inform us that her class of boys had been 'enthralled by the story and interested to hear how Civitas came to send them a copy.'

'I must congratulate you on the quality of the book – it is first class', wrote the headmaster of a Devon primary school, before going on to add that he 'was fortunate to have been brought up on these stories; they fuelled my boyhood interest in history which I subsequently studied at degree level.' Another head of a Gloucestershire primary school wrote to express her gratitude, adding that 'the book exceeds all expectations and we are delighted with it.'

As well as the free copies to schools, nearly 40,000 copies have already been sold to date. The overwhelmingly favourable customer reviews to have appeared on the Amazon.co.uk website indicate that the general public is no less hungry for



the sustenance provided by its style of history than have been the teachers who have sought copies. ‘Civitas have done this nation a great service in reprinting this beautifully written history of Britain... It is the perfect antidote to the lifeless, fragmented history that children receive today.’

‘This is big, bold sweeping history, at once charmingly simple and accessible for children and sufficiently courteous and informative for adults... We learn how all sorts of great moments or phrases

have passed into our folklore and idiom – such as “England expects” – and all is rendered with an impressive sense of chronological cohesion.’

‘An excellent book in all regards – outstanding... It is beautifully written with simple, image-filled prose... The stories are short, unusual, colourful and upliftingly positive. I read two or three stories to my son each evening. I find it as interesting as my son, perhaps, even more so – but he loves it too... For a book written 100 years ago, it is surprisingly up to date with regards to sex-equality.’

‘What a pleasure it has been to read this excellent story to my children. They were enthralled from the outset... For them, it has made a delightful respite from the socially engineered tripe that children are force-fed along with turkey twizzlers in the state schools of England today... If you feel that we have completely lost our way as a nation since 1945 then I believe you will find this tome extremely comforting.’

It is not often that a book published by a right-of-centre think-tank receives commendation from a review in such a trendy metropolitan weekly as *Time Out*.

‘*Our Island Story*’ ran its review ‘is so beautifully told and charmingly illustrated that it deserves to be regarded as more than a mere curio. Moreover, its tight focus on the virtues of courage, wisdom and patriotism keep it both valuable and tolerant.’ The *Economist* described the book as ‘more cutting edge’ and went so far as to assert of the book that ‘with its brave mix of truth and myth, it is impeccably post modern.’

However, there is an even more important indication of just how in tune with the times Civitas has been in its decision to republish H.E.Marshall’s book. There has been, finally, long overdue recognition on the part of the history teaching profession as well as of Her Majesty’s Schools Inspectorate of the need to bring back the study of narrative history to its teaching in schools. To help the process along, Civitas is about to launch an essay competition called Our Island Stories, inviting children in years 6 and 7 to write about momentous events in Britain’s history in the hundred years since H E Marshall wrote her classic text.

David Conway

CIVITAS is an independent research institute. CIVITAS is independent of political parties and accepts no government funding. It relies entirely on private donations to fund its work.

The aim of CIVITAS is to deepen public understanding of the legal, institutional and moral framework that makes a free and democratic society possible. Our object is to revive civil society, that network of voluntary social institutions, charities, mutual aid organisations and other collective bodies that lie between the individual and the state. We believe that in social affairs the alternatives to government are not exhausted by commercial services alone.

We have established a reputation for work on social issues that transcends party boundaries. Our authors examine, analyse and report on views about the best way forward on particular issues. The object is to raise the quality of informed debate. For further information about CIVITAS and how you could become a member, please email us at [info@civitas.org.uk](mailto:info@civitas.org.uk) or call +44 (0)20 7799 6677.

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