

WILKIE ON THE AIRWAVES Part I - BBC

Using BBC archives and its complete collection of *Radio Times* I have been piecing together a list of broadcasts of Wilkie Collins's works on BBC radio and television as well as programmes which discussed or involved him.

There have been a number of new discoveries, though sadly much of the broadcast material no longer exists. Just one out of seven episodes of the 1959 TV dramatisation of *The Moonstone* is found in the BBC TV archives and there seems to be no copy of any of the episodes of the 1966 production of *The Woman in White*. Copies of all the rest are in the BBC archives.

Many of the radio broadcasts were either never kept or have been destroyed. It is possible of course that they are preserved on recordings by members of the public. The oldest traced radio broadcast was a reading of 'A Terribly Strange Bed' in 1946 done for schools though the oldest broadcast which is extant in the BBC archives is the 1950 reading of 'Blow up with the Brig!' again done for schools. No other early radio broadcasts have been preserved until *The Moonstone* of 14 October 1979 – from which date everything seems to be extant.

There is little chance of the BBC re-issuing these earlier works. Until fairly recently actors and writers retained copyright in repeats or reuse of material. So finding all those involved – or their estates – and buying them out would be too expensive.

The list below shows the fairly limited group of works from which radio programmes were made. Only eight out of more than 20 novels are represented and a mere 13 out of more than 50 short stories have been used – and most of those were from the 1887 collection *Little Novels*. On television the selection is even smaller. Only *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* have been dramatised, three times each.

Collins appears as a character three of times on radio. Once in Michael Bakewell's *Life of Dickens* in 1988, again in Martyn Wade's 1998 comedy *The Man in White* and in 2004 in an adaptation of Dickens's *The Bride's Chamber*.

Biography has been patchy. Frederick Bradnum's radio portrait of Wilkie in 1868 was broadcast in 1971. And Richard Francis walked in his footsteps in 2002. Television has been worse. Gryff Rhys Jones visited Victorian London in search of Wilkie in 1996 and he was included in Reyer Banham's look at changing London in 1964. The pianist John Ogdon chose *The Moonstone* for his book on *Desert Island Discs* in 1989 and in 1997 Wilkie was Fiona Richmond's specialist subject in *Mastermind* – Andrew Gasson set the questions. In 2004 *The Woman in White* failed to win the 'Booker prize' for 1860. *Great Expectations* won.

A few items remain elusive. I have not been able to find a radio serial of *Armada* or *The Moonstone* said to have been broadcast in the 1940s.

If anyone has details of any items not on the list – or of course has recordings of lost productions – please let me know. I will be expanding this archive to include non-BBC broadcasts.

WILKIE COLLINS ON BBC RADIO AND TELEVISION
Information from *Radio Times* and records of BBC Radio and TV Archive holdings.

BBC RADIO - DRAMAS AND READINGS					
Date	Title	Parts	Type	Channel	Recording in BBC archives
12 March 1946	A Terribly Strange Bed	1	Reading	Home Service, Schools	NO
17 January 1950	Blow up with the Brig!	1	Reading	Home Service, Schools	YES
31 March 1952	Poor Miss Finch	15 daily	Reading	Light Programme, Woman's Hour	NO
15 June 1952	No Name	12 weekly	Drama	Home Service	NO
12 July 1954	The Dream Woman	5 daily	Reading	Light Programme, A Book at Bedtime	NO
19 July 1954	Mr Lepe! and the Housekeeper	5 daily	Reading	Light Programme, A Book at Bedtime	NO
26 July 1954	Miss Bertha and the Yankee	5 daily	Reading	Light Programme, A Book at Bedtime	NO
5 June 1956 repeat: 6 September 1957	Blow up with the Brig!	1	Reading	Home Service, Schools	NO
4 February 1957	The Dead Secret	15 daily	Reading	Light Programme, Woman's Hour	NO
12 October 1969	The Woman in White	12 weekly	Drama	Radio 4	NO

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26 September 1975	A Terribly Strange Bed	1	Reading	Radio 4, Schools	NO
9 May 1977	The Dead Secret	10 daily	Reading	Radio 4, Story Time	NO
30 July 1979	A Rogue's Life	10 daily	Reading	Radio 4, Story Time	NO
14 October 1979	The Moonstone	6 weekly	Drama	Radio 4	YES
21 May 1982	A Terribly Strange Bed	1	Reading	Radio 4, Schools	YES
24 October 1983	Basil	15 daily	Reading	Radio 4, Book at Bedtime	YES
22 August 1989 (recorded, not transmitted?)	A Terribly Strange Bed	1	Experimental drama	Radio 5 trials	YES
22 September 1989 repeat: 16 April 1995	No Name	6 weekly	Drama	Radio 4	YES
3 November 1989	The Dream Woman	1	Reading	Radio 4	YES
10 November 1989	The Biter Bit	1	Reading	Radio 4	YES
17 November 1989	A Terribly Strange Bed	1	Reading	Radio 4	YES
24 November 1989	The Stolen Letter	1	Reading	Radio 4	YES
1 December 1989	The Dead Hand	1	Reading	Radio 4	YES
31 December 1997 repeat: 24 August 1998	Mr Policeman and the Cook	1	Drama	Radio 4	YES
7 January 1998 repeat: 31 August 1998	Miss Jéromette and the Clergyman	1	Drama	Radio 4	YES

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Date	Title	Parts	Type	Channel	Recording in BBC archives
14 January 1998 repeat: 7 September 1998	Mr Marmaduke and the Minister	1	Drama	Radio 4	YES
21 January 1998 repeat: 14 September 1998	Miss Bertha and the Yankee	1	Drama	Radio 4	YES
28 January 1998 repeat: 21 September 1998	Miss Morris and the Stranger	1	Drama	Radio 4	YES
21 November 1998	Mr Percy and the Prophet	1	Drama	Radio 4	YES
11 November 2001	The Woman in White	4 weekly	Drama	Radio 4	YES
20 July 2003	Reading from <i>The Moonstone</i>	1	Reading	Radio 4	YES
10 December 2004	The Woman in White	8 weekly	Reading	Radio 2	YES
24 January 2005	The Law and the Lady	1	Drama	Radio 4	YES

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BBC RADIO- BIOGRAPHY, TALKS AND MISCELLANEOUS					
Date	Title	Description	Series	Channel	Recording in BBC archives
28 January 1971	A Terribly Strange Man	Dramatised portrait of Collins in 1868	-	Radio 4	YES
22 May 1988	The Best of Times the Worst of Times	Dramatised life of Dickens - includes Collins as a character	-	Radio 4	YES
24 September 1989	Desert Island Discs	The pianist John Ogdon chooses <i>The Moonstone</i> as his book	-	Radio 4	YES
15 September 1994 repeat 5 February 1995	Classic Storylines	PD James examines why <i>The Moonstone</i> is still influential on crime writers	-	Radio 4	YES
6 April 1998	The Doctors	Leslie Forbes on Collins and Thackeray being indebted to their doctors	-	Radio 4	YES
3 September 1998	The Man in White	Comic fun with Collins and writer's block in 1858		Radio 4	YES
21 November 2002	Thinking on their feet	Walking in Wilkie Collins's footsteps		Radio 4	YES

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Date	Title	Description	Series	Channel	Recording in BBC archives
25 June 2004	The Bride's Chamber	Adaptation of ghost story in <i>The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices</i> in which Collins has a part		Radio 4	YES
3 September 2004	Wilkie Collins's Women	Interview	Woman's Hour	Radio 4	YES
16 September 2004	Interview	Opening night of musical <i>The Woman in White</i>	Front Row	Radio 4	YES
22 June 2005	Discussion	Interview on publication of <i>The Public Face of Wilkie Collins</i>	Front Row	Radio 4	YES

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BBC TELEVISION - DRAMA					
Date	Title	Parts	Adapter	Channel	Recording in BBC archives
23 August 1959 repeated 16 August 1960	The Moonstone	7 weekly	A R Rawlinson	BBC	Only episode six
2 October 1966	The Woman in White	6 weekly	Michael Voysey	BBC 1	NO
16 January 1972	The Moonstone	5 weekly	Hugh Leonard	BBC 1	YES
14 April 1982	The Woman in White	5 weekly	Ray Jenkins	BBC 1	YES
29 December 1996	The Moonstone	2 daily	Kevin Elyot	BBC 2	YES
28 December 1997 repeated in one part 25 December 2000	The Woman in White	2 daily	David Pirie	BBC 1	YES

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BBC TELEVISION - BIOGRAPHIES DISCUSSIONS, QUIZZES					
Start date	Title	Type	Writer	Channel	Recording in BBC archives
12 June 1964	A city crowned with green	Biography in programme about how London has changed	Richard Banham	BBC 1	YES
15 May 1982	Did You See?	Discussion of <i>The Woman in White</i> serial iust ended	Ludovic Kennedy	BBC2	YES
22 December 1996	Bookworm	Visiting Victorian London in search of Collins	Gryff Rhys Jones	BBC 1	YES
27 August 1997	Mastermind	Quiz: Fiona Richmond chooses as her subject The Life and 1860s novels of Wilkie Collins.	Andrew Gasson set the questions	BBC 1	YES
1 March 2004	Before the Booker	Discussion of which book published in 1860 would win the Booker Prize.	<i>The Woman in White</i> was dropped and <i>Great Expectations</i> won.	BBC4	YES