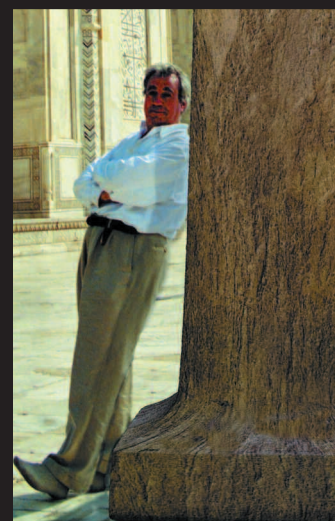# CBA Research Bulletin

## A Survey of Heritage Television Viewing Figures

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**Front Cover:** *The Story of 1 (top), and Timewatch - The Headless Romans (middle and bottom); all ©BBC*

# A Survey of Heritage Television Viewing Figures

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## Introduction and background

Heritage is a popular subject for television programme makers, with widespread coverage on both the terrestrial TV channels (BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4, Five) and numerous digital channels. However, there is only limited information on who is watching these programmes. This report presents the findings of the first heritage television viewing figures study, undertaken by University of Bristol and TRP (Television Research Partnership) with BARB (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board) data, for the Council for British Archaeology and English Heritage[2]. It aimed to provide an England-wide analysis of television viewing figures for heritage television and trend data for 2005-2006.

*Heritage Television Definition*

For the purpose of the survey, the definition of heritage television is: any 'factual' programming transmitted on both analogue and digital platforms that concerns material culture, the historic environment and ancient monuments. History programming that focuses on artefacts and sites recovered through archaeological practices is also considered to be heritage television. As such, programmes range from Antiques Roadshow through to Time Team and Horizon.

## 1.1 Aims and objectives

Firstly, there was the need to establish the range of archaeology and heritage content being broadcast on both analogue and digital platforms, how popular these programmes are, and what the audience is for them, using BARB data, to look at viewing figures, audience share and demographic factors. Secondly, it was important to provide baseline data about heritage broadcasting and audiences for inclusion in *Heritage Counts 2006* published by English Heritage on behalf of the wider historic environment sector. Finally, we sought to improve understanding of how engagement through television fits into the overall pattern of people's engagement with heritage.



*Plate 1: Timewatch - Mystery of the Headless Romans  ©BBC*

*Specific aims were:*

1) To analyse 'young audiences', with a view to establishing whether greater efforts need to be made to engage young adults.

2) To establish which audiences are reached by archaeology and heritage broadcasting, and whether greater effort should be made to engage new audiences.

3) To investigate the range of archaeological programming watched by individual viewers (using sets of programme titles).

4) To identify the overall television watching profile for those viewers who watch archaeological programming.

5) To establish how often viewers switch channels between particular transmissions and investigate the programmes and channels to which they are switching.

## 1.2 Survey Method

The study looked at the whole range of heritage TV (as defined above) over a 12-month period in 2005–06: 162 programme titles on 25 separate TV channels (Archaeology and Heritage in Television, TRP, July 2006). BARB data was used to address the points covered in the project aims. To do this, we took a broad-based approach, running general queries and looking for trends, some of which may merit further analysis.



*Plate 2: Coast ©BBC*

The following structured the analysis:

1) Where possible, data was to be split by age, social class, gender, region, ethnicity.
2) Where possible, the channels queried were to be those stated in the final programmes list. It was not possible to query all channels as some were not measured by BARB.
3) Data covered the period 1 May 2005 – 30 April 2006.

*Audience data*
BARB is responsible for providing estimates of the number of people watching television. This includes which channels and programmes are being watched, at what time, and the type of people who are watching at any one time. BARB provides television audience data on a minute-by-minute basis for channels received within the UK.

Viewing estimates are obtained from panels of television-owning households representing the viewing behaviour of the 24+ million households within the UK. The panels are selected to be representative of each ITV and BBC region. The service covers viewing within private households only.

Panel homes are selected via a 'multi-stage, stratified and unclustered' sample design. What this means is that the panel is fully representative of all television households across the whole of the UK. A range of individual and household characteristics (panel controls) are needed to ensure that the panel is fully representative. As estimates for the large majority of panel controls are not available from Census data it is necessary to conduct an Establishment Survey to obtain this information.

*Programme data*
Titles for this present study were selected from data available via the BUFVC's (British Universities Film and Video Council) TRILT (Television and Radio Index for Learning and Teaching, www.trilt.ac.uk) database of UK television and radio transmissions. Searches were conducted according to areas of practice (eg, archaeology, architecture, history), chronology (eg, Iron Age, medieval, 18th century), geographical area (eg, Egypt, Rome) and theme (eg, Neanderthals, agriculture, warfare).

Given the large scope of the study and the nature in which the data was extracted from the database, all transmissions of each title on the original list were covered. This included all repeats across all hours. Where a particular series episode was highlighted on the original list, the whole series was only included if it largely fitted within a heritage theme.

*Methodological challenges*
In the course of the research it was discovered that due to the relatively low viewing numbers, some titles on the list were not found within the BARB viewing data. Similarly, it was not possible to produce statistically significant figures on geographical distribution or on individual viewer behaviour over the course of single transmissions as any extrapolation based on such a small data set is not empirically valid. As such, these findings provide a UK, not an England-wide, analysis. The final section of this report suggests further research activities to address these lacunae.

## 2. Main Findings

The research showed that over this period there were 13,000 programme transmissions making up almost 9 million hours of transmitted heritage television or 2 billion 'viewer hours'. The top five programmes made a 61% contribution to the amount of viewing in the study and were all programmes about antiques; 98% of all adults saw at least one heritage programme during the year, and 20% watched at least 99 programmes during the year.

The ten top-rated heritage titles in terms of audience contribution (where audience contribution refers to percentages of viewers in comparison with the total television viewing audience) were as shown in Table 1.

Excluding antiques programmes, the ten top-rated titles in terms of audience contribution were as shown in Table 2.

In television analysis broadcasters rely on audience contribution percentages rather than raw viewing figures, as contribution demonstrates how individual programmes compare with others in terms of total television-viewing audiences.

| Rank | Title | Channel | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | FLOG IT! | BBC2 | 17 |
| 2 | CASH IN THE ATTIC | BBC1 | 14 |
| 3 | BARGAIN HUNT | BCC1 | 13 |
| 4 | ANTIQUES ROADSHOW | BBC1 | 10 |
| 5 | CAR BOOTY | BBC1 | 6 |
| 6 | COAST | BBC1 | 4 |
| 7 | ROME | BBC2 | 3 |
| 8 | TIME TEAM | Channel 4 | 2 |
| 9 | A PICTURE OF BRITAIN | BBC1 | 2 |
| 10 | EGYPT | BBC1 | 2 |

*Table 1: Ten top-rated heritage titles*

For example, while Time Team did not figure as highly in raw viewing figures, it averaged a consistently high audience contribution, ranking third. None the less, viewing figures for the top five were dominated by ancient civilisations: Egypt, Rome and China. BBC1's Egypt was a docu-drama series about the early Egyptologists and scored the highest average viewing figures of 5.7 million viewers. A less traditional series was A Picture of Britain, also on BBC 1, fronted by David Dimbleby as he travelled across Britain to bring to life past artists' views of the country. This attracted an average of 4.3 million viewers. The lavish historical drama Rome pulled in 3.9 million viewers. Other successes included The Lost World of Friese-Greene, Coast and The Story of 1.

| Rank | Title | Channel | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | COAST | BBC1 | 10 |
| 2 | ROME | BBC2 | 8 |
| 3 | TIME TEAM | Channel 4 | 6 |
| 4 | A PICTURE OF BRITAIN | BBC1 | 6 |
| 5 | EGYPT | BBC1 | 5 |
| 6 | BUILD A NEW LIFE IN THE COUNTRY | Five | 4 |
| 7 | TALES FROM THE GREEN VALLEY | BBC2 | 4 |
| 8 | AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 TREASURES | BBC2 | 2 |
| 9 | CASTLE IN THE COUNTRY | BBC2 | 2 |
| 10 | MAP MAN | BBC2 | 2 |

*Table 2: Ten top-rated heritage titles, excluding antiques programming*

### 2.1 Distribution of viewing

Some 98% of all adults saw at least one heritage programme during the year while 20% saw at least 99 programmes.
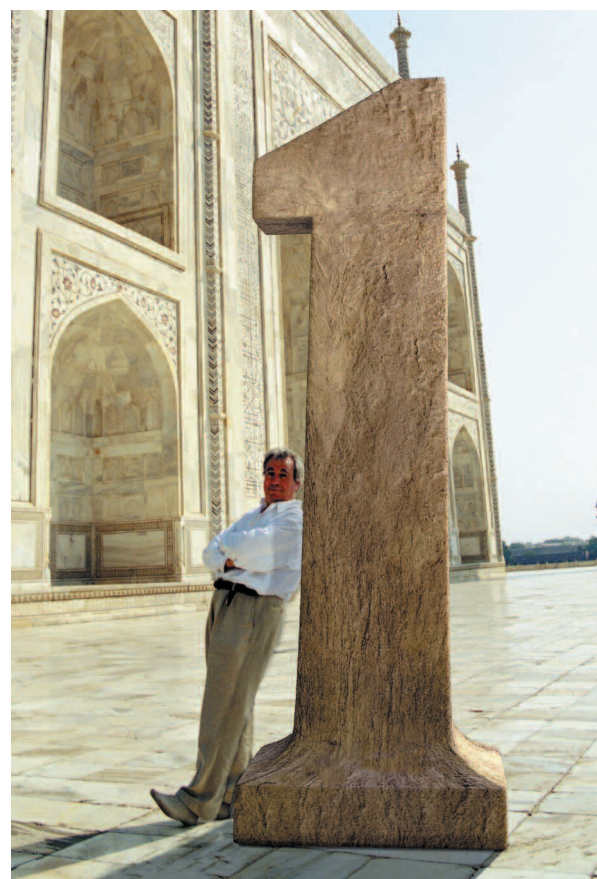


*Plate 3: The Story of 1 ©BBC*

The removal of the Top 5 (see Table 2) gives a steeper distribution curve. However, 96% of all adults still saw at least one heritage programme compared with 98% previously, as shown in the following figure.

### 2.2 Distribution of viewing by group

The reach of heritage programmes was relatively even across the genders and social groups.
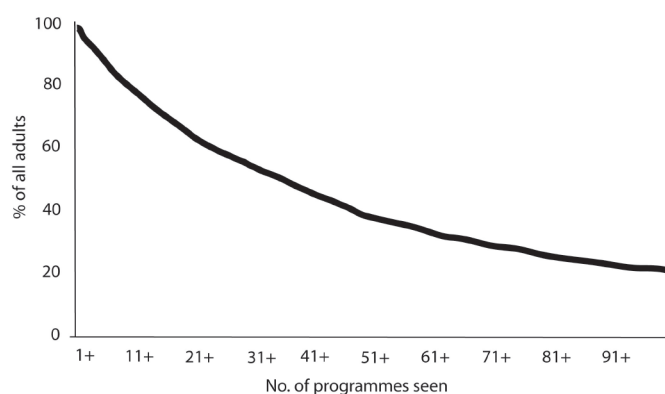
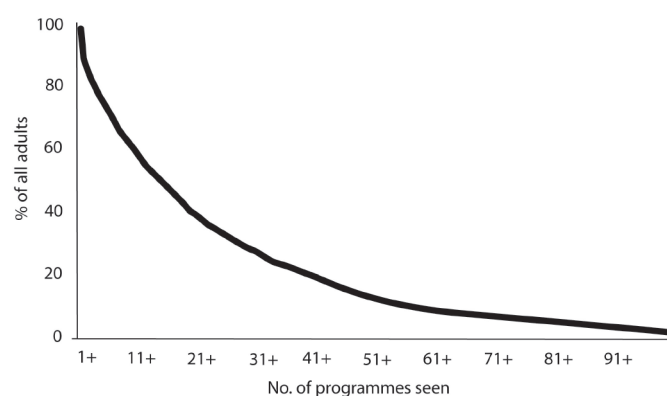*Figure 1: Number of heritage programmes watched in the last 12 months*



*Figure 2: Number of heritage programmes watched in the last 12 months, after removal of Top 5 programmes*

Adults in the youngest age bracket and those from minority ethnic groups were the least likely to have seen a heritage programme, but the percentages were still very high at 92% and 93% respectively.

### 2.3 Viewing profiles

The two graphs below compare the audience profile of heritage programmes to that of the total television audience.

| Rank | Title | Channel | |
|------|-------|---------|---|
| 1 | EGYPT | BBC1 | 5.7m |
| 2 | A PICTURE OF BRITAIN | BBC1 | 4.3m |
| 3 | ROME | BBC2 | 3.9m |
| 4 | THE LOST WORLD OF FRIESE-GREENE | BBC2 | 3.6m |
| 5 | COAST | BBC1 | 3.5m |
| 6 | THE FIRST EMPEROR | Channel 4 | 2.8m |
| 7 | THE STORY OF 1 | BBC1 | 2.5m |
| 8 | PYRAMID | BBC2 | 2.5m |
| 9 | TIMEWATCH: BRITAIN'S LOST COLOSSEUM | BBC2 | 2.5m |
| 10 | TIMEWATCH: MYSTERY OF THE HEADLESS ROMANS | BBC2 | 2.4m |

*Table 3: Ten top-rated heritage titles, excluding antiques programming, in terms of viewer numbers*

| | % |
|---|---|
| **Gender** | |
| Men | 97 |
| Women | 98 |
| **Age** | |
| 16-24 | 92 |
| 25-44 | 98 |
| 45-64 | 99 |
| 65-74 | 100 |
| 75+ | 99 |
| **Ethnicity** | |
| White | 98 |
| Black and Minority | 93 |
| **Social Group** | |
| ABC1 | 98 |
| C2DE | 97 |
| **All Adults** | 98 |

*Table 4: Percentage of viewers who saw at least one heritage programme in the last 12 months*

There is little difference in the gender and class profiles but heritage programmes have a strong bias away from young viewers and those of minority ethnic groups. To understand whether heritage programmes attract a different audience from other TV programmes, it is necessary to look at the breakdown of the overall TV audience (where total audience covers the age range 16-75+). Some 55% of the total TV audience are women, 58% are from the lower socio-economic (C2DE) groups, 6% are from ethnic minorities and 9% are aged 16-24. Of the total heritage TV audience, 60% were in social groups C2DE, which is slightly higher than the 58% of the total television viewing audience. Of the total heritage TV audience, only 3% were from ethnic minorities, which compares unfavourably with the 6% of the total TV viewing audience. Only 4% of the total heritage viewing audience was aged 16-24, which also compares unfavourably with the 9% of the overall TV viewing audience.

Once the top five antiques-related programmes are removed from the list of programmes broadcast in 2005-06 (see Table 2), a slightly different picture emerges. For more conventionally defined heritage television, only 51% are women and 52% are from social group C2DE, compared with 56% and 60% of the total heritage and 55% and 58% of the total TV viewing audience, respectively. The percentages of young people and viewers from ethnic minority groups remained unchanged.

### 2.4 Profile of heavy heritage viewers

We split all heritage viewers into three equal-sized groups (Heavies, Mediums and Lights) based upon their amount of viewing. Heavy Heritage Viewers (HHVs) are the group that

watch the most heritage programming. For the purposes of this aspect of the research, antiques programmes have been included in this category. And due to database constraints the groups were also split into viewing of terrestrial channels and non-terrestrial channels.

HHVs turn out to be heavy television viewers overall. The average UK adult watches 27 hours of television per week. HHVs of the terrestrial channels watch 38 hours of television per week, while those watching non-terrestrials consume 34 hours per week.
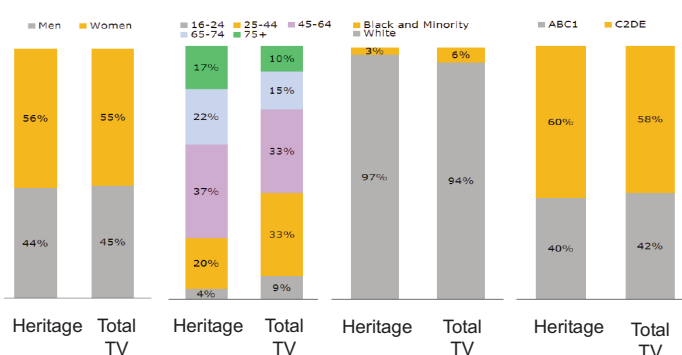


*Figure 3: Viewer profiles, comparing heritage with total TV viewers*
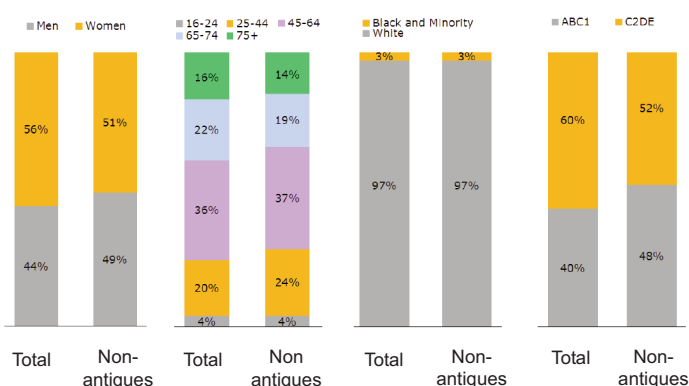


*Figure 4: Viewer profiles, comparing total heritage with non-antiques heritage programming*

The profile of HHVs varies depending on whether the viewing was of the terrestrial channels or the non-terrestrials. Both groups are biased towards the elderly, C2DEs, and white adults but by different amounts. Fans of heritage programmes on non-terrestrial channels are much more often male. Of HHVs watching all heritage programmes on the terrestrial TV channels, 56% were women, 42% were over the age of 65 and 60% were from social groups C2DE. Those watching non-terrestrial channels (eg, digital, cable) had a rather different profile, with 40% being women, only 18% over 65, and 54% from the C2DE group. Ethnic minority viewers made up 3% of HHVs for both terrestrial and non-terrestrial TV.

| TV hours per week | |
|---|---|
| All Adults | 27:24 |
| Heavy Heritage Viewers: terrestrial | 38:09 |
| Heavy Heritage Viewers: non-terrestrial | 33:50 |

*Table 5: Television hours watched per week*

## 3. Lifestyle data

We can use BARB's Advanced Panel Classification to look at the lifestyle trends of HHVs compared to the wider population. HHVs – those who watch more than the adult average of 27 hours per week – are more likely (+5%) than the average adult viewer to watch the following programming:

- Period drama
- Classical music
- Documentaries
- Nature
- Current affairs
- News

By contrast, Heavy Heritage Viewers are less likely (-5%) than the average adult viewer to watch the following programming:

- Reality TV
- US comedy
- Pop music

Heavy Heritage Viewers are more likely (+5%) than the average adult viewer to be *interested* in:

- Gardening
- Reading



*Plate 4: Timewatch - Mystery of the Headless Romans ©BBC*

| | All Adults | Heavy Heritage Viewers | +/- |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Where do you use a computer?** | | | |
| Use computer at home: | 62% | 46% | -15% |
| Use computer at work: | 35% | 22% | -12% |
| Use computer at another location: | 7% | 4% | -4% |
| Do not use computer: | 31% | 48% | 17% |
| | | | |
| I have broadband internet access at home: | 28% | 18% | -10% |
| I have a mobile phone with video: | 10% | 5% | -6% |
| I have a mobile phone without video: | 69% | 65% | -4% |
| I have a Palm Pilot, PDA or hand-held organiser: | 4% | 2% | -1% |

*Table 6: Computer use*

However, Heavy Heritage Viewers are less likely (-5%) than the average adult viewer to be interested in:

- Sport
- Music
- Beauty
- Fashion
- Computers
- Fitness
- Films

Heavy Heritage Viewers are less likely (-15%) than the average adult viewer to have access to a computer at home; less likely (-12%) than the average adult viewer to have access to a computer at work; and 17% more likely than the average adult viewer to not use a computer at all (Table 6).

| | All Adults | Heavy Heritage Viewers | +/- |
|---|---|---|---|
| Feature Films | 68% | 65% | -3% |
| Drama Series | 59% | 61% | 2% |
| Period Drama | 28% | 37% | 8% |
| Contemporary Drama | 17% | 17% | -1% |
| British Soaps | 50% | 47% | -3% |
| Austrailian Soaps | 19% | 18% | 0% |
| Reality TV | 29% | 19% | -10% |
| UK Comedy | 64% | 62% | -2% |
| US Comedy | 31% | 21% | -10% |
| Game Shows | 34% | 39% | 5% |
| Chat Shows | 22% | 21% | 0% |
| Hobbies, Leisure | 24% | 30% | 6% |
| Sport | 42% | 43% | 1% |
| Arts, Culture | 15% | 19% | 4% |
| Pop Music | 34% | 20% | -13% |
| Classical Music | 12% | 19% | 7% |
| Foreign Films | 6% | 4% | -1% |
| Science | 20% | 23% | 3% |
| Documentaries | 57% | 67% | 9% |
| Nature | 45% | 59% | 14% |
| History | 37% | 50% | 13% |
| Religious | 9% | 12% | 3% |
| Current Affairs | 27% | 33% | 6% |
| National News | 60% | 71% | 10% |
| Regional News | 56% | 67% | 11% |
| Financial | 8% | 11% | 2% |
| Comsumer | 13% | 16% | 3% |
| Property, Home | 31% | 32% | 1% |

*Table 7: Which of the following kinds of TV programmes do you especially choose to watch?*

| | All Adults | Heavy Heritage Viewers | +/- |
|---|---|---|---|
| Watching Sport | 41% | 42% | 1% |
| Playing Sport | 16% | 9% | 7% |
| Food | 38% | 39% | 2% |
| Gardening | 40% | 53% | 13% |
| Reading | 53% | 58% | 5% |
| Cars | 21% | 18% | -4% |
| DIY | 29% | 32% | 2% |
| The Arts | 13% | 14% | 1% |
| Music | 36% | 22% | -14% |
| Evening Classes | 7% | 7% | 0% |
| Animals | 31% | 33% | 2% |
| Healthy Eating | 32% | 32% | 0% |
| Investments | 8% | 7% | 0% |
| Property | 13% | 10% | 3% |
| Beauty | 20% | 14% | -6% |
| Fashion | 23% | 16% | -7% |
| Environment | 17% | 19% | 2% |
| Travel | 26% | 26% | -1% |
| Politics | 11% | 12% | 0% |
| Computers | 23% | 17% | -6% |
| Business | 7% | 6% | -1% |
| Watching TV | 67% | 71% | 4% |
| Fitness | 25% | 19% | -6% |
| Films | 36% | 22% | -14% |
| Museums | 26% | 28% | 1% |

*Table 8: Which of the following subjects are you particularly interested in?*

## 4. Conclusions

The popularity of heritage as a significant niche programming strand is evident, especially if heritage is considered in its widest sense as covering what has been passed on from previous generations in whatever form, as artefacts, photographs, art, archaeological sites or landscapes. The dominance of antiques programmes and ancient civilizations, particularly those in docu-drama form, perhaps supports recent arguments that viewers are drawn towards content that provides the 'affect' of excitement, the 'exotic' and 'spectacular' and the possibility of encountering the unexpected (Hill 2005; King 2005; Piccini in press). The popularity also of programmes that deal with the local and with landscapes, eg, Coast, or with the local social histories of people, eg, The Lost World of Friese-Greene, indicates the impact of the 'power of place'. For all the criticism that archaeologists and historians may level at dramatisations like Rome, they are undeniably more popular than conventional voice-over documentaries. These factors suggest that not only do viewers want the people putting back into the past, and a human story to bring the past to life, but also the immediacy of spectacle that makes heritage something to welcome into their living rooms.

The social background of viewers is complex. More disadvantaged social groups are clearly engaged with TV heritage and television appears to be a major source of information about heritage for those without computer access. This significant viewership contrasts with museum and heritage site visiting profiles: the Heritage Counts research itself and academic work in this area has repeatedly demonstrated that disadvantaged social groups are the least likely museum and heritage visitors (eg, Bourdieu 1979; Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Merriman 1992; Piccini 1999). This specific contrast between television watching and museum and heritage site visiting is significant and requires further analysis. An obvious explanation may be that television watching is a different order of activity than heritage visiting. Put simply, do people watch heritage television in order to acquire information about the past, or is it the thrill of the spectacular, or is it a form of virtual tourism? It is very likely to be a combination of factors that will differ across audiences.

Furthermore, it is of significant interest that young adults and visible ethnic minorities are significantly under-

| | 6.30pm, 19.6.05 | 6pm, 26.3.06 |
|---|---|---|
| Women | 471,700 | 911,300 |
| Men | 377,300 | 1,079,200 |
| 16-24 | 80,100 | 145,200 |
| 25-44 | 262,000 | 492,500 |
| 45-64 | 254,200 | 882,400 |
| 65-74 | 124,400 | 260,300 |
| +75 | 113,300 | 156,300 |
| ABC1 | 427,700 | 937,300 |
| C2DE | 421,400 | 1,053,200 |
| Ethnic minority | 10,900 | 24,200 |
| White | 838,100 | 1,966,300 |

*Table 9: Time Team, C4 transmission data*

represented amongst heritage TV viewers, as they are amongst visitors to historic environment sites. This is clearly more complex than 'social exclusion'. Again, substantial research in this area is likely to throw light on the reasons for the lack of viewers and may point towards strategies to attract steady and consistent audiences among these two groups. The work of the HLF-funded Opening the Doors project (www.youngpeopleandmuseums.org.uk), which has looked at museum use by young people outside of formal education and by young asylum seekers, may contribute to future research. While heritage television has not succeeded in engaging young people, it is notable that the growth of both drama-based and factual crime forensics television has led to a sharp increase in the number of young people enrolling on undergraduate forensics courses (Lemaine 2004). Are there perhaps lessons to be learned from one of archaeology's more high-profile cousins?

Television is a major source of contact with heritage for many people and can do much to bring about a more active engagement for some, for example through the BBC's Restoration series. While significant existing audiences should be catered for via proven genres, the data suggests that humorous approaches to heritage and docu-dramas are particularly popular with a wider spread of audiences than is attracted to the more serious end of the factual genre.

## 5. Future Research

This present study has produced useful baseline data on UK heritage television viewing trends for 2005-06. However, there is a range of more finely detailed issues that could be explored in order to identify specific types and kinds of programmes as they relate to particular audience groupings. Furthermore, research should be undertaken on broadcaster scheduling as it impacts on viewing profiles. The table below details broadcasts of Simon Schama's A History of Britain on

the digital channel UKTV History. Note that due to extrapolated averages and the absence of viewing figures for those under 16, totals are not equal across categories.

Arguably this series would be commonly understood to attract a similar audience across its individual programmes. The table above clearly indicates that this is not the case.

| | 8.00pm, 5.8.05 | 3pm, 10.3.06 |
|---|---|---|
| Women | 225,000 | 110,000 |
| Men | 425,000 | 506,000 |
| 16-24 | 41,000 | 0 |
| 25-44 | 31,000 | 91,000 |
| 45-64 | 203, 000 | 245,000 |
| 65-74 | 297,000 | 114,000 |
| +75 | 46,000 | 167,000 |
| ABC1 | 272,000 | 532,000 |
| C2DE | 378,000 | 85,000 |
| Ethnic minority | 1,000 | 0 |
| White | 649,000 | 617,000 |

*Table 10: A History of Britain, UKTV transmission data*

Perhaps most interestingly, the daytime broadcast attracted the fewest C2DE and over 65 viewers, which raises important questions about the commonly held view that people in lower social class groupings and older people are more likely to watch heritage on daytime television.

Again, there is significant audience variation across individual programme figures. On 19 June 2005, 56% of viewers were women, 50% were from social class C2DE, 9% were 16-24 and 1% were from ethnic minorities. By contrast, on 26 March 2006 46% of viewers were women, 53% were from social class C2DE, 7% were 16-24 and 1% were from ethnic minorities. Under the present scheme of research it is not possible to speculate as to the reasons behind the wide variation in the numbers of women watching Time Team. None the less, they are clearly significant and warrant further investigation.

Suggestions for future research in this area would be to augment this baseline data research with a longitudinal qualitative study of a number of audience groupings, in keeping with the important research undertaken over the past decade in the heritage and museum sectors in a higher education context (eg, Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Bagnall 2003; Piccini 1999) and also in the field of television studies (eg, Ang 1991; Morley 1992; 1995). Specific methods could include focus group discussions within formal settings and ethnographic

research — from participant observation to audio analysis of recorded interviews — within a domestic setting in order to tease out the specific identity politics of heritage television. Although it is problematic to use such qualitative research to extrapolate generalised meanings, and certainly any researcher has to be alive to his or her own influence within the research context (Lotz 2000), such methods can assist in identifying new questions to ask of data and can suggest new research avenues to follow. While beyond the scope of the commissioned aims and objectives of this report, it would appear that in order to understand how to make a greater impact with young people and people from ethnic minority groups, such detailed research on a programme-by-pro-gramme basis is necessary. Such case studies would work in tandem with the data produced by BARB and analysed by TRP to produce ground-breaking research in this field.

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