

televisionexpress

Victory for impartial TV

JUST so you know, I've taken a look at episode one of **CHURCHILL**, the documentary series starting tonight on Channel 5 (9pm), and I think it's going to be OK.

By which I mean there's little sign, so far at least, of any hidden agenda.

It acknowledges that Sir Winston Churchill is a divisive figure, which is fine because obviously he is, but it's clearly not here to tell us, nor to hint heavy-handedly as other programmes might, on which side of that divide we should plant our flag.

To put it another way, it's not



**Mike Ward
previews
tonight's TV**

going to make you want to rush out like an enraged simpleton and tear down your nearest Winston Churchill statue, but nor will it insist we ought to build more, or to keep naming shopping centres after him, like the one just down the road from me that reeks of doughnuts.

By current TV standards, this

makes the programme quite refreshingly radical – treating us as grown-ups, capable of drawing our own conclusions.

In most cases, I'd imagine, we'll be drawing conclusions about Churchill that are sensible and proportionate ones, having factored in such outmoded concepts as “perspective” and “historical context” and “basic common sense”.

Hey, who knows, we might even go crazy and chuck in a bit of “nuance” as well while we're at it, for old times' sake. Remember nuance? It was that thing that died the day they invented Twitter.

Even at the peak of his

popularity, I doubt many people seriously believed Britain's wartime Prime Minister was an all-round loveable chap with rock-solid right-on views. And I doubt many will draw that conclusion after watching this series, beginning tonight with a look at his far from idyllic childhood.

People will just figure that, all things considered, if it boiled down to a straightforward fight between a troublesome, cantankerous character of questionable views and a rabid genocidal megalomaniac, you were pretty sure whose side you'd rather be on.

It's also worth noting that

Churchill – the programme, not the person – is yet another example of Channel 5 covering history rather well, taking its time with a subject and properly immersing itself in the detail.

And it's very, very accessible. There are plenty of expert talking heads, but we hear them rather than see them.

Their observations play out over assorted historical imagery and clips, which works rather well, even if most of these clips are rather random library footage, about as directly relevant as when Top Of The Pops had Pan's People dance to Bankrobber by The Clash.

PICKS OF THE DAY

DID YOU KNOW? Michael Shannon made his film debut with a small role in cult comedy classic *Groundhog*