

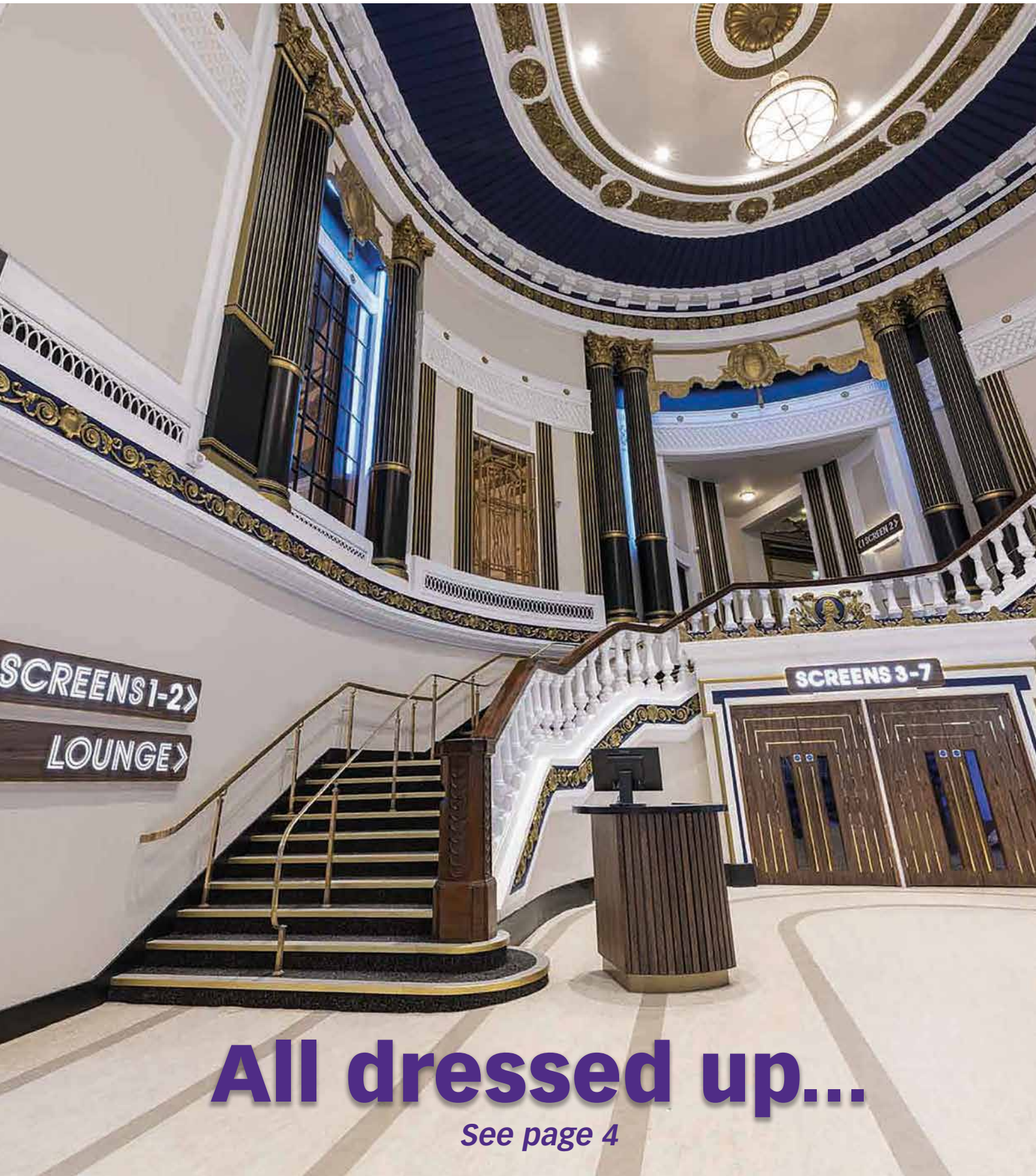


The

Veteran

ISSUE 169
SPRING 2021

The Magazine of
The British Cinema and
Television Veterans



All dressed up...

See page 4

PLUS: The Newsletter of the Film & Television Charity





British Cinema and Television Veterans

Founded 1921

An association of men and women
who have given more than 30 years
to the cinema, film or television industries

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The Veteran

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From the President



Dear Members

I hope you are all staying safe and have been reducing the risks as much as you can at least under the present circumstances, also that you've been able to have your Covid-19 vaccination or at least been notified.

At our AGM in October (which we just managed to have before lockdown – see report later in this issue) I

said 2020 had been very different for us, and affected so many people, especially in our industry. We remain in that position today, unfortunately, with our cinemas still closed with a long way to go yet. We were pleased to support the UK Cinema Association with their “Keep the Magic Alive” campaign, which our webmaster, Jim Whittell, has placed on our website.

As for us, our office at 22 Golden Square remains inaccessible, with our Company Secretary Kathy continuing to work from home for the foreseeable future, and having to prepare for our busy annual membership renewal period. The renewal forms are ready to be posted out, as and when Golden Square will be open to receive the returned forms.

Re Membership Card/Cinema Pass

At this time, the advice from the UK Cinema Association is that, with the uncertainty over cinemas re-opening, when they will need all the support we can give them, it would be better to wait until there is more clarity about the situation and confirmation of which cinemas will recognise our cinema pass. Due to this, when renewing your BCTV membership and receiving your new card, the wording on the back will be different, advising you to check with cinemas and our website before use.

I am sorry that this edition of THE VETERAN is a bit later than usual, as we were waiting for the latest information on the situation at the present time. I would like to thank our editor, Allen Eyles, for his efforts at this difficult time, as I know it has not been easy for him putting our recent editions together.

Also, I would like to mention our over 80s, who have not been forgotten, and would like to thank Jacky Simons for her time spent in sending out birthday cards, as I know from our members how much they are appreciated in these challenging times.

Finally, a very big thank you to Kathy Darby for keeping us going so efficiently during lockdown at home in Bethnal Green.

Take care and stay safe.

Nigel Wolland

From the Office

Membership Renewal

In normal times members would have already received their annual membership renewal forms. The current lockdown has meant an inevitable delay to this process. We will start to post them to members once lockdown restrictions are eased and Golden Square reception will be open and in a position to receive the returned forms.

Membership Card/Cinema Pass

As a result of the continuing uncertainty around any concrete information about which cinemas will be reopening and when, the wording on the back of your membership card will be different this year. Instead of the usual list of participating cinemas, members will be asked before using the pass to check with their local cinemas or with our website for details.

Thank you for your understanding during this period.

ACCORDING TO THE LATEST GOVERNMENT INFORMATION, CINEMAS WILL NOT RE-OPEN BEFORE 17 MAY.

The Renewal Team

From the Editor

Covid-19 has seriously affected production of this magazine to the extent that this issue and its predecessor have both been delayed.

Much of the past content has been devoted to announcing and reporting on our own events and drawing attention to outside ones such as exhibitions. All this has stopped.

Features requiring some research are on hold, pending the re-opening of libraries and archives. This applies in particular to the That Was Then summaries of events of fifty and twenty-five years ago.

My ability to confer with contributors over selecting from photographic collections and to pick up on developments at industry meetings has been curtailed by travel and contact restrictions.

In addition, we have been waiting for clarification from the Government regarding visiting cinemas again.

The tedium of lockdowns seemed likely to stimulate a flood of reminiscences from Veterans – but this has barely happened. If you are thinking that your career could make an interesting story, please get in touch.

This Spring edition is the first to appear since the delayed Autumn 2020 one. If at all possible, further issues will appear more or less on schedule, beginning with a Summer one during June or July.

Allen Eyles

The Odeon Holloway and (inset) as the Gaumont on opening in 1938. All colour photographs courtesy of Odeon Cinemas. (All historic images from editor's collection.)



FRONT COVER STORY

And Ready To Go

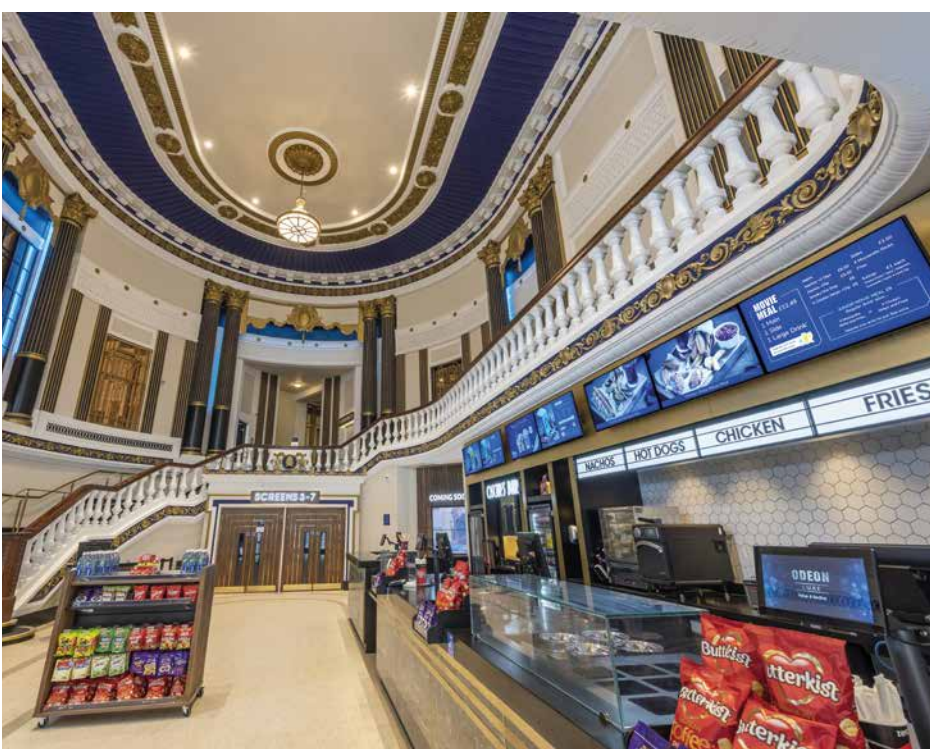
Allen Eyles tells the story of a cinema palace

The Odeon Holloway has the scale and impact of an American movie palace of the 1920s. As a result of the Depression in the United States, a leading architect of the style, C. Howard Crane, moved to London and established an office to find work here. His surviving Fox Theatre in Detroit, opened in 1928, would figure on anyone's list of the ten most spectacular cinemas ever built (its sister theatre, the Fox in St. Louis, almost identical inside, would do just as well).

In Britain, Crane became involved with the expanding Granada circuit under Sidney Bernstein. As I noted in *The Granada Theatres* (1998, page 73), "... in 1936, Granada took over a huge site at the corner of Holloway Road and Tufnell Park Road in North London for which they paid American architect C. Howard Crane the sum of £250 for design work on a cinema to seat 3,000. This site had been optioned as far back as 1930 by the Astoria circuit for an addition to their major halls at



The entrance hall in 1938 and the redecoration today with one of the replica chandeliers.



Brixton, Streatham, Old Kent Road and nearby Finsbury Park. In September-October 1936, Granada sold Crane's plans at cost to Gaumont Super Cinemas, the partnership of Gaumont-British and Hyams & Gale." In May 1938, the cinema was under construction and going to be named the State after the Gaumont State which preceded it at Kilburn.

Granada also took over Crane's scheme for a cinema at Slough in 1937 and hired him to design its new cinema at Greenwich. At both places, Bernstein substituted interior designs by Theodore Komisarjevsky for those proposed by Crane's office. Crane's best known British project was the Earls Court Exhibition Centre, opened in 1937, closed in 2014 and demolished. Crane based himself in London until his death in 1952.

In *Gaumont British Cinemas* (1996, page 95), I wrote that the cinema "opened as a fully-owned Gaumont circuit house, seating just over 3,000. The Gaumont Holloway had more impact at street level than any other cinema in the country, except perhaps the Odeon Leicester Square. This was in part due to the extreme width and straightness of the Holloway Road and the enhanced visibility of a corner site. But it also reflected an American bravura – its architect was, after all, the man who designed such colossi as the Fox theatres in Detroit and St. Louis. The massive square tower was equipped with broadcasting apparatus at the top (as was the Gaumont State Kilburn) but had no real purpose other than to dramatise the cinema and carry huge Gaumont signs on three sides (or perhaps all four?). It was broadly modern but with decorative panels and inset Corinthian columns that hinted at the design of the theatre within. One side of the auditorium block was on display along the Holloway Road above a line of single-storey shopping units. On this brick wall was mounted changeable lettering describing the week's current attraction on screen and on stage.

"Patrons stepped into a magnificently decorative, wonderfully spacious main foyer lit by three massive chandeliers. This led, via a staircase that extended around the side wall, to a café on the mezzanine level above the



The foyer seen from the balcony lounge showing steps up to two screens and the reinstated ex-café area over the entrance with new balustrading.



The balcony lounge at the head of the stairs, then and now from opposite ends.

entrance. The café seated 220 people and was to be extended in fine weather onto a loggia terrace above the line of shops for alfresco eating overlooking the Holloway Road (it had less traffic then). This, it was claimed, would be the first open-air café in a London cinema.

“Alternatively, patrons could proceed to an auditorium that belonged more to an American movie cathedral of the Twenties than a modern British cinema in the Thirties. [...] The proscenium surround was richly moulded in gold with blue highlights and flanked by Corinthian columns. A dome in the ceiling was surrounded by eight light fittings that gave the effect of a gigantic ring of light. The illumination generally was intended to suggest a South of France sunshine amber. The side walls were richly decorated with pilasters, drapes and other fittings while the seats were upholstered in rose pink. The cinema was so old-fashioned that ten panels of painted landscapes made an appearance on the walls underneath the balcony.

“The stage was 54 ft. wide and over 30 ft. deep, extending to 50 ft. when a life rose to cover over the orchestra pit. The Wurlitzer organ was also on a lift that revolved. Besides several dressing rooms, there were also two large rehearsal rooms, an organist’s private rest room, and a fireproof music library. In the box, there were three Magnus projectors. With a large car park and waiting space to hold nearly an entire change of audience within the building (mostly under the shops), the last of the Gaumont palaces was an altogether special building.”

It opened on 5 September 1938 with 3,006 seats. A few days before, police were needed to control more than five thousand people who were there when the box office opened at 10am to sell first night tickets. For the opening night, Will Hay, Moore Marriott and Graham Moffatt performed a sketch based on their currently shooting Gaumont film production, *Old Bones of the River*, while other top Gaumont stars, Jessie Matthews and Will Fyffe, also appeared.

The Gaumont offered a “new style in entertainment” – one film, shorts and variety totalling three hours – and had an orchestra of fourteen to accompany the stage shows.

However, it was hit by a German bomb which inflicted huge damage on the auditorium and kept the cinema closed from 11 August 1944 until 21 July 1958 when it re-opened with an entirely new, very plain auditorium and seating reduced to 1,987.

The building was renamed Odeon on 25 November 1962. In 1973, the rear stalls were closed off and converted to two mini cinemas seating 216 each with the balcony functioning as a 614-seat main screen from 6 May. Then, in 1988, the balcony was walled off and split into two new cinemas with the front stalls area becoming a separate auditorium. A sixth screen was added by enclosing the old café area over the entrance for a mere 78 more seats, blocking out a lot of the daylight that used to flood the foyer. The total number of seats was 1,708. Subsequently, two further screens were added in the stage area.

The Odeon Holloway is one of the comparatively few traditional cinemas on the circuit to have prospered through the era of

modern multiplexes. Not only that, but it has now been upgraded into an Odeon Luxe at a cost of around £7-8 million with specialist cinema architects McFarlane Latter in charge. Re-design options were explored in 2015-16 and designing the Luxe scheme and statutory applications commenced in early 2018.

The cinema had become a Grade II listed building on 5 October 2000 for “the exceptional quality of the principal elevations and foyer areas” while “The auditorium has been subdivided into smaller cinemas and is not of special interest.” Consequently, work on its exterior and foyer had to receive listed building consent, including the colour scheme which involved tweaking the standard Odeon blue. Historic England had previously put the Odeon on the Buildings at Risk Register, noting “The cinema has been in poor general condition, with cracking and damage to faience decoration. Inappropriate modern shop fronts in poor condition have undermined the design aesthetic.” But Historic England noted that major upgrading works were at an advanced stage.

David Latter describes the exterior as “the major element of the project” with the external faience tiling being repaired and cleaned, a new canopy constructed to the profile of the 1938 original, the original high-level Crittall-style windows of the foyer being refurbished or sections replaced, and Odeon Luxe signage installed.

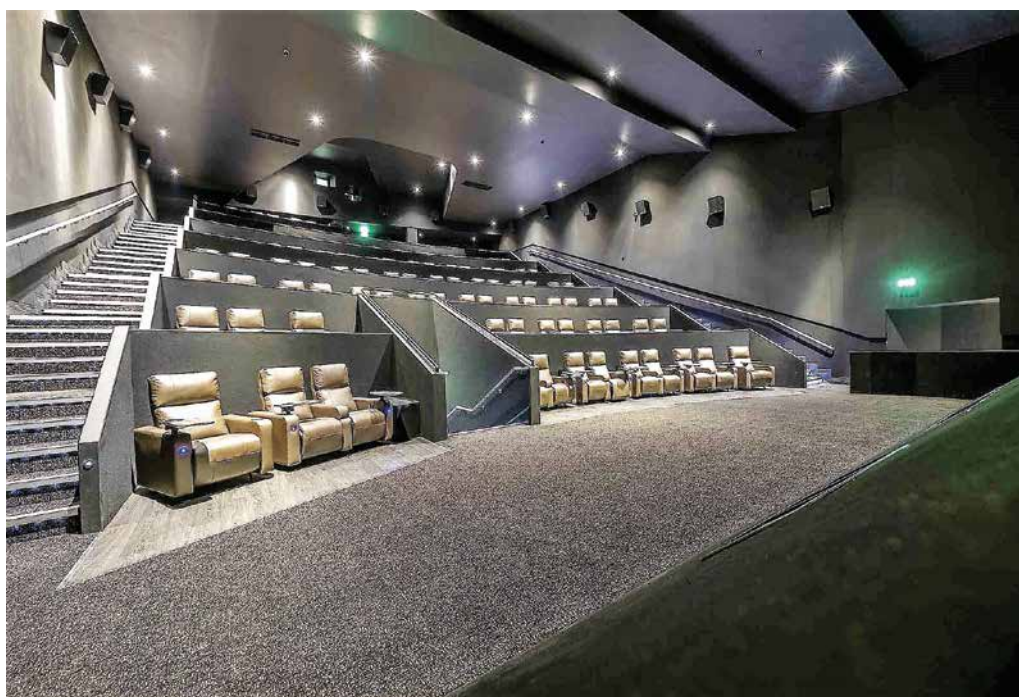
Inside, the auditoria were redesigned in Odeon Luxe style, re-stepped to accommodate recliner seats and with new finishes. Closing off the upstairs allowed Phase 1 (screens 1 and 2 in the original balcony) to be completed between September and December 2019 with the screens now seating 109 and 101 seats. The screen in the original café space was thankfully removed, providing a seating area with potential for private hire. The other auditoria downstairs remained open.

Phase 2 (ground floor) commenced in January 2020 with the upstairs screens remaining open, was interrupted by the first lockdown and completed in July 2020. Screens 3 & 4 under the balcony now seat 71 and 58. Screen 5 (in the old front stalls) seats 82. Screens 6 and 7 on the original stage have 43 and 35 seats.

On the practical side, lift installation was a major challenge to provide wheelchair access to all screens. In the foyer, original plaster work was repaired or reinstated and bespoke chandeliers commissioned to match the originals, using LED lighting to reduce maintenance. Part of the original balustrade had been removed when a screen was constructed over the entrance so a section had to be fabricated to match the rest of the staircase when that cinema was removed.

With its total of seven screens and 499 reclining seats, the Odeon Luxe Holloway is well positioned to welcome back audiences. Let lockdown end and the shows begin! 

With many thanks to David Latter, Mike Bradbury and Nigel Wolland.



The 1938 auditorium destroyed in World War Two and views of modern auditoria as the Odeon Luxe.

THE BRITISH ENTERTAINMENT HISTORY PROJECT

SIR PAUL FOX CBE TELEVISION EXECUTIVE

Interviewers: Norman Swallow, Alan Lawson

Dates: 24 March 1993, 13 April 1993,
13 September 1993

Production Media: Audio

Duration (mins): 330



Sir Paul Fox has been a member of the BCTV President's Council since it was formed and spoke at a Reunion Lunch as our special guest in October 2005.

The following extracts from the BEHP interview have been edited for publication. The full interview is free to access on the BEHP website – just search “BEHP” and then enter “Paul Fox” in the Search space at top right.

Interview copyright © The British Entertainment History Project

I'd been Controller at BBC1 for seven years and I'd always been one of those people who had moved on to other jobs. The set up at the BBC at that time was that Huw Wheldon was the Managing Director, David Attenborough was the Director of Programmes, I was in charge of [BBC] 1, Robin Scott was in charge of BBC2. It was a splendid arrangement, worked wonderfully well. Then David Attenborough suddenly decided that he'd rather go back and put his shorts on again. And the reason for that was that I had a gap in my Christmas schedule one year – I suppose it was '71, maybe '72. The programme that was needed, unquestionably, was a natural history documentary and I knew the chap who could do it better than anybody else – and that was David.

David jumped at the chance to go off, did a most wonderful programme which got an audience of eleven or twelve million at Christmas. And David suddenly thought: By golly, I can go back to the old stuff and to hell with this bureaucracy. Huw Wheldon couldn't hold him. David had done a sensational job for the BBC. He had rescued BBC2, unquestionably. He made friends around the place with everybody and it was a pleasure to see him wherever David walked. And the combination of Huw and David was incredibly strong. It was a wonderful time to be on the 6th floor of the Television Centre.

David went, Huw was clearly coming closer to retirement and I

was getting bored. Huw did say to me, in passing, how would you like to become Director of Programmes, take David's job? Seeing how disenchanted David had become with this job, I thought that this was something that I didn't really fancy, and I said so to Huw, and he brought Alasdair Milne back from Controller of Scotland into the job as Director of Programmes.

Now Alasdair and I had known each other in Lime Grove. We were colleagues. We were friends, but we were cool friends, let's put it clearly. I admired Alasdair enormously. Alasdair started sitting in on office meetings and things that, in the past, really had been left to the Controller of BBC1, and I was just slightly irritated. Suddenly Alan Whicker phoned up – Alan, who had left the BBC, was working for Yorkshire Television. Alan and I had always been friends. He was still living in Regent's Park in those days, in London. Alan said, “Why don't you come over to lunch on Sunday? I want you to meet somebody.”

Over lunch on Sunday, at Alan's home, I met Ward Thomas, then the Managing Director of Yorkshire Television. And Ward said, “How would you like to come to Yorkshire Television as Director of Programmes?” I said, “You've got a Director of Programmes.” Donald Baverstock was the Director of Programmes. He said, “Well, Donald is coming to the end of his time and Donald will have to go and you take his place.”

That was an extraordinary circumstance, because seven/eight years earlier I had been in a consortium to apply for the Yorkshire franchise. Ward Thomas and his group, headed by Sir Richard Graham and the *Yorkshire Post*, won the contract, and here seven years later was Ward offering me the job to go to Yorkshire Television. Well, it took a little bit of negotiating but the financial terms were so good, and so much better than the BBC, plus the possibility of actually getting some shares in a public company, that I was deeply attracted. I was bored at the BBC and I wasn't really looking forward to working with Alasdair.

I went into Huw on a Monday or a Tuesday and said, "I'm sorry, I'm going to go." Huw was deeply upset – I mean, truly was. So Huw said, "Clear your desk, off you go." And I have to say that I left the BBC after 22 years' service without a drink... I mean, my secretary and I had a drink and I left, and that was it. Now, fortunately, arrangements were in hand that Betty and I would go on holiday, 24 hours later, to Portugal. Two weeks later, I turned up at Yorkshire Television in Leeds.

The fact of the matter was that Donald had been fired by Ward and I had taken his place, arriving at Yorkshire in fairly strange surroundings. I didn't know many people at all but found that there was a great deal of work to be done. We decided not to move homes, up to Yorkshire. Yorkshire Television offered me a house up at Menston, on the way to Ilkley, and I stayed there. The decision about moving was made, really, by what Lord Thomas said to me: "You've got to make up your mind where you want to spend your weekends." Betty and I had decided that we wanted to continue to spend our weekends at home in London, and there we stayed.

During the next fifteen years in Yorkshire Television, I spent more time on the M1 and on the train between London and Leeds than I spent in the office, because the bulk of the work – all the lobbying, all the negotiations, all the meetings, all those things – took place in London and I wanted to ensure that Yorkshire Television, a fairly new major ITV company, had a place in the sun, had to be there at the top table with the big boys.

ITV was totally dominated by meetings. The Controllers met. The Managing Directors met with the Controllers. You met with the IBA. You met for this, you met for that. The meetings were constant. And one met a large number of new people as a result of that: David Plowright, John Birt, Michael Grade, Brian Tesler, Cyril Bennett -all people I'd known vaguely before. We became colleagues, we became friends.

My very first meeting in ITV was a meeting of the five major Managing Directors and the five Programme Controllers, in Cumberland Place at Lew's place. I arrived and Lew [Grade] said, "Good morning, Paul, how lovely to see you", and opened the cigar box: "Have a cigar now and put two in your pocket for later on."

I suddenly realised what the difference was between meetings in the BBC and meetings in ITV. Meetings in the BBC always began with the immortal phrase, "Have you had coffee yet?" Meetings at ITV clearly begun, "Please have a cigar, and take one for later."

Let's be clear about it: the calibre of the people who would sit round the table in ITV outshone the talent of the people who were in the BBC. The people who were the bosses in ITV were programme makers. At ATV, Lew Grade, the master showman of all time, assisted by Bill Ward, the pioneer of television. At Granada, Sidney Bernstein was in full flow, assisted by his brother Cecil, assisted by Denis Forman, assisted by David Plowright. All of them knew what programme making was about. At LWT, John Freeman, the man who had been a master diplomat, Ambassador in Washington and High Commissioner in New Delhi, the man who made *Face to Face*, had as his Programme Controller the lovely, wonderful Cyril Bennett who had been all over in commercial television, knew what it was about.

Then there was Thames, headed by Howard Thomas with Brian Tesler as his Programme Controller. I knew Brian when he was in the BBC, one of the outstanding intellects of our time, and also a wonderful producer of entertainment. Brian ran Thames brilliantly.

And then there was this new company, Yorkshire Television, headed by Ward Thomas, who had been trained at Granada by Sidney [Bernstein] in the Sales Department – was a bit feared around the place because Ward could be cool and tough. But Ward ensured that Yorkshire Television had its place at the top table, and insisted that Yorkshire was one of the Big Five. I helped him do that and I have to say I had one hell of a good time in ITV in those days. The company was terrific. Of course, there were

hard negotiations, and when the five majors dominated the network, the network worked extremely well.

There were enough people around that table to ensure that there were good places for public affairs programmes. You look at the group of five Programme Controllers – Bill Ward, Cyril Bennett, David Plowright, Brian Tesler and I. It was a fantastic collection with old Frank Copplestone and, later on, Berkeley Smith as the Chairman. Here were people who understood television, who cared for television. Of course, we were interested in ratings – no question – but we are also interested in good programmes. While each of the majors had to have its share of programmes, and we negotiated hard for that, we also knew (a) that the schedule mattered more than anything, (b) that the audience mattered most of all, and (c) that there had to be compromises. The compromises came about because we understood each other. We may have been rivals but we were also mates, and it worked extremely well.

Yorkshire programme makers

There were three people at Yorkshire who had helped to make good programmes. One was Peter Wills, who had ensured that there was a wonderful drama tradition at Yorkshire. He'd come from Rediffusion. Here was this old war hero, former Hollywood actor who was a showman in the extreme, limping away on one leg, moaning like mad but doing wonderful drama.

Secondly, Tony Essex had gone there from the BBC and there was a strong documentary tradition at Yorkshire, quite apart from Alan Whicker. *Whicker's World* was at its best, it got ratings, and they were good programmes. When Tony died, he was succeeded by John Fairley, who had been brought in by Donald Baverstock from radio. He'd never been in television before in his life, ensured that there was a strong tradition of documentary programmes, strong local programmes.

And I brought in Duncan Wood from the BBC to head entertainment. Duncan was sensational. I'd always admired Duncan at the BBC – not only was he great as a boss of comedy, Duncan was also much underrated – a wonderful manager of people and resources. I knew how to get Duncan across to Yorkshire Television. It wasn't money. What Duncan wanted was longer holidays, to spend more time on the golf courses... and to spend time in Spain. I ensured that he'd have seven weeks holiday a year instead of the four weeks... and he came. Duncan and I got on wonderfully well and I got on with John Fairley very well, and Peter.

Duncan really helped to turn Yorkshire around, because the entertainment side had been awful, absolutely appalling. There was a fellow running entertainment – hell of a nice fellow but hopeless at light entertainment – and the very first act I took at Yorkshire Television, I yanked a comedy series off the air. It had been on for two episodes, it was Jimmy Edwards – I can't remember the title but it was the most appalling show out. I said, "No, this series will not go on the air any longer. We're killing it and that's it."

As a result of Duncan's arrival two or three weeks later, we managed to get *Rising Damp*, and he brought in Vernon Lawrence as his deputy. We suddenly set off on a great run of comedy programmes.

Programme meetings

One learnt at the BBC the only way to make better programmes was to talk about the programmes that had been on the screen, and talk in groups about programmes. And I did institute regular programme meetings at Yorkshire Television and I chaired those meetings until the day I left. Whether I was Director of Programmes, or Managing Director, I chaired them, not the Programme Controller. Programmes were discussed and debated, and the values of programmes were assessed, and that's how we came to a decent programme philosophy.

John Fairley as the Director of Programmes and I met each week and we discussed the programmes. Yorkshire Television contributed 15% of the ITV's network. It was a much smaller programme portfolio than I had at BBC1, obviously.

The other programme people had become Managing Directors at ITV, and when we met round the table, here was David Plowright, here was Brian Tesler, here was Bill Ward, and here was I. Four programme people met. It was only later when the accountants came in and the sales directors came in as Managing Directors that the discussions about programmes came to an end.

The Managing Directors, we met for lunch once a month, and



Various idents for Yorkshire Television.

regularly talked about programmes. And we were still involved in meetings with the IBA, the Network Programme Committee did talk about programmes. There was a constant flow of programmes. I was a director of ITN at that time and so I went to ITN to talk about programmes. But I have to say, administration, finance, those sort of things, did take up more and more of my time. Plus preserving the name of Yorkshire Television. Plus of course, this key thing of launching Yorkshire Television as a publicly listed company. I had a big role in that.

Progressing at Yorkshire

Yorkshire Television was owned by Trident Television and the Chairman was James Hanson – great Yorkshire figure. Before Ward could actually settle my contract, I went along to meet Hanson – this six-foot-five figure, the man had been engaged to Audrey Hepburn, this great tycoon on the way up, exceptionally handsome man and vigorous, and all that. I immediately took to James, I have to say, and he said, “Well, if all goes well, you’ll be the Managing Director of this company within three or four years.”

Sure enough, after being there perhaps five years, I became, first, Joint Managing Director with Ward and kept my Controller of Programmes job, then Ward became the Group Chief Executive and I was Managing Director and Director of Programmes at Yorkshire Television.

Looking back on it, perhaps I should have appointed a Programme Controller. What I did instead was to bring along somebody as Deputy Managing Director – an old chum and one of my oldest mates, Tony Preston. I’d first met Tony when he was my Planning Assistant when I was Controller BBC1. He then became the Head of Planning at the BBC. Bill Cotton moved him, made him Assistant Head of Variety. He then succeeded Bryan Cowgill as the Head of OB and Sport in the BBC. Then, once I’d been in ITV for a couple of years, I suggested to him that there was a vacancy as Controller of Programmes at Southern Television and Tony went there. That was his first time in ITV.

I persuaded Tony to come up to Yorkshire to join me. He was incredibly loyal, wonderfully hardworking, and terribly good for the place because he was so good with people. And he was always in Leeds whereas I spent, quite possibly, too much time in London. But I spent time in London because I had to go to these flaming meetings, with the IBA, with the Council, with other ITV companies. Meetings in London were Mondays and Fridays, and sometimes Tuesdays as well, so quite often I’d only spend two days in Yorkshire: Wednesday and Thursday.

There were advantages and disadvantages of that Yorkshire franchise. I’m not a Yorkshireman, but Yorkshire is a bit special and there was terrific pride in the company throughout Yorkshire.

Yorkshire was created out of the old Granada franchise, and Granada

were compensated by getting seven days, and Yorkshire got seven days on their own, and Yorkshire became a major company. Up till then there had been four major companies. As a result of the arrival of Yorkshire Television, there were five. Now, of course, the other four companies resented that, but by the time I had arrived in Yorkshire, four/five years later, the resentment of the fifth major had gone, and there was certainly no resentment on Granada’s part. I mean, Granada and Yorkshire were natural neighbours, and David Plowright and I often had meetings privately in Manchester, or in Leeds, or in London, to ensure that the North would stick together against the South.

The programme portfolio

The Yorkshire people took enormous pride in their own company, the fact that it was called Yorkshire Television. The local service was excellent. There was a local programme called *Calendar*, weekly news programme, which was way ahead of the BBC, because we pumped a lot of resources into the local programme, and it really did very well. The other programmes were documentary programmes created by Tony Essex, continued by John Fairley. And along came a young man called John Willis, Ted Willis’ son. I suppose ten years down the road, we started a regular monthly documentary programme called *First Tuesday*.

Now the reason for *First Tuesday* was simply this. Granada had *World in Action* every Monday at 8:30. Thames had *This Week* every Thursday. Here were these two companies with a major public affairs programme. Central, even though Charles Denton was by then the Programme Controller, were interested in public affairs programmes – they had people like John Pilger and they wanted to push those programmes in at peak time. What John Fairley and I realised was that we needed a regular monthly documentary programme on the air which was there every month and could not be moved. Could not be moved by the planners or the schedulers and had to be there. And we came up with this idea of going on Tuesday night, the first Tuesday of the month.

Now I have to say the title was pinched from an old NBC programme run by my old mate Reuben Frank, which was called *First Tuesday*. That programme was founded in 1983 and has run every first Tuesday at 10:40, occasionally at 9 o’clock, since then. John Willis was the founding editor and John made a fantastically good job of it.

John was a distinguished programme maker by that time. He’d made programmes like *Johnny Go Home*. He brought out the dangers of asbestos. He’d brought out the dangers of what happened at Sellafield with radiation. Yorkshire documentary programmes were strong campaigning programmes. But, until *First Tuesday* arrived, we did not have a regular monthly slot and that was the important thing. If the ITV schedule had a series of, say, four programmes on the first Tuesday of the month, that series had to be interrupted to take on *First Tuesday*.

Emmerdale Farm was played at lunchtime and it was okay. I suppose it was on the air for thirty weeks of the year, twice weekly. The first thing I did was to move it to tea time... it went out at 5:15 twice weekly and it did quite well. The next move was to bring it to 7 o’clock, into peak time. That was a major achievement, to get *Emmerdale Farm* into the same slot as *Coronation Street* and *Crossroads*. ITV had a very strong hand: five editions of *Crossroads*, two editions of *Coronation Street*, two editions of *Emmerdale Farm* in the evening.

Emmerdale Farm was the only one of those that still took a summer holiday, took thirteen weeks off. The next thing, then, to do was to get *Emmerdale Farm* to 52 weeks of the year, 104 editions a year. That, of course, did take a fair bit of doing, in terms of production and this, that and the other. Plus, of course, it was a programme that was set on a farm and the problem with it was *Emmerdale Farm* was always six weeks, or eight weeks, or ten weeks behind, because of the production cycle – the harvest was being brought in in flaming December, usually. Tony Preston was the key figure, plus Ted Wright, in gearing up the production process so that *Emmerdale Farm* could become twice weekly.

There were great drama series. David Cunliffe had been taught by Peter Wills to go for the best writers. And Gerald Seymour’s book *Harry’s Game* was adapted into a three-part television series with wonderful performances, a terrific script, and wonderful music. It was a hit that told more about Belfast than many a documentary actually – what was going on in Northern Ireland.

Then the comedy was very good because Duncan, again, went for the writers. We had that lovely man, Eric Chappell, who did *Rising Damp*, *Duty Free*, and *Only When I Laugh*. While we were not good at variety (although we did some variety), it was comedy that worked.

Joy Whitby did create some good children's programmes. *The Book Tower* was the first programme, really, about teaching children about the value of good books, and she did that herself. She set extraordinarily high standards. But Joy in a control room, a production gallery, she was a pain.

So the Yorkshire programme portfolio was based on *First Tuesday* and *Whicker's World*, *Emmerdale Farm* and other good plays and a strong hand of situation comedies plus strong local programmes. It was a programme portfolio that worked extremely well, that held on, and that gave Yorkshire Television a great reputation.

The ITV strike

The strike in ITV was a very, very unhappy time for the whole of the ITV network. It was particularly unhappy in Yorkshire Television. And it was particularly unhappy for me. I had some prominent role in the thing and foolishly, or bravely, or foolhardily, I became a key figure in the strike, no doubt seen by the ACTT as the unacceptable face of ITV.

I dug in very hard. I felt we were being taken to the cleaners by the unions – and particularly by the unions in Yorkshire Television, led by a man called David Dale, who was the presentation editor – hell of a nice fellow, unbelievably tough shop steward, and another guy who then left to go to Thames Television. It was a deeply unhappy time.

The strike happened during the parliamentary recess, in August – we're off the air, the transmitters were closed down. We had enough management staff in Yorkshire Television to get us back on the air – non-union people. There was Ted Wright and other people around who could get us back on the air. We had enough programmes lined up to get us back on the air. What we needed was the Yorkshire transmitter.

As far as we were concerned, it was a strike. As far as the ACTT was concerned, it was a lockout. Ward Thomas was determined that they shouldn't win and that we should get on the air and he phoned up the IBA and said, "Could the IBA get the transmitter on the air?" And the man who was there said, "I wish you hadn't asked me that question. I don't think we can."

We had a link established between Leeds and the transmitter, and we would have been on the air, and would have defied the union, and in the end that would have broken the strike. The IBA should have helped us and decided not to help us, and the strike went on. The strike, I suppose, lasted six/seven/eight weeks? It was truly appalling – no revenue... certainly we weren't paying any wages.

John Freeman and Denis Forman, and Bill Brown at Scottish, decided we've got to settle. And settle we did – on very unfavourable terms, I have to say. I remember being at Yorkshire Television when they came back... three/four hundred people lined up outside, and they didn't come back in dribs and drabs, they came back as a union, solidly, marching into the building. And there we were.

David Dale and I made peace shortly thereafter. People who'd been out, who'd been producers and senior figures like Duncan Dallas and others, came back and life returned to normal. It was never quite the same. And the reason it was never quite the same was because some of those people then got themselves involved into a consortium that bid for the Yorkshire franchise, bid for our jobs and for our livelihood. It was quite a formidable line-up against us: Donald Baverstock, Stella Richman, Austin Mitchell, Jonathan Aitken, and various people from the Yorkshire Television staff.

The story, of course, was the Yorkshire Television staff wanted to dump their owners. We still had to make programmes with these people. Some of them were, in opposition, having meetings... I stopped them having meetings on our premises. I think it was called the White Rose Consortium. There was no doubt one had to see them off, but the IBA thought: Oh, there's something splendidly romantic, here's the staff bidding for this franchise. There were other bidders in the wing.

And the one great coup that Austin Mitchell secured, they secured Harold Wilson, then retired, as Chairman of this consortium. And here was Sir Harold Wilson chairing the consortium with Jonathan Aitken, who'd brought in city finance.

There were meetings around Yorkshire "taking the people's mind", as Brian Young's wonderful phrase was. I went to the first meeting at Doncaster race course. Been widely advertised. The people of Yorkshire could speak about their television company, make the criticisms. And the people in the audience were: two old grannies holding their brown bags... two bag ladies, who'd just come out of the rain; three boy scouts on an initiative test; and two other worthy citizens of Doncaster. I promise you there were more people sitting on the platform than there were in the audience. And that was the one public meeting I went to outside Leeds.

There was then a final meeting at Leeds Town Hall when Yorkshire Television were on the platform, and some IBA authority member was sitting there in the chair – and Austin Mitchell and others, and some members of Yorkshire staff, were in the audience – those members of Yorkshire staff who were against the company and had lined with the other consortium while still being employed by us, while still having their wages paid by us. It was a bitter scene.

When we went to the IBA, here was Bridget Plowden, Brian Young, Colin Shaw [who] had joined them by that time as Deputy Director, and various other people, sitting there in that room on the 8th floor of Brompton Road. In we trooped: Sir Richard Graham and Ward Thomas as Group Chief Executive, I as the Managing Director. We'd taken Duncan Wood along, we'd taken Peter Wills along, to show that we were the programme makers, that this is really what it was about. We had a perfectly decent interview. I think we made a good impression, because we talked about programmes, and Bridget listened to all this.

The Consortium was led by H. Wilson, leading the bid again. Now Harold was a little bit gone by that time and there was Bridget Plowden facing the former Prime Minister. Harold simply didn't know how to answer the questions about television. Quite honestly, it was a hopeless quest.

But we didn't win the contract as easily as all that. Other companies got their renewals. Thames got theirs. LWT did. Granada did. ATV did, with difficulty – David Windlesham had to do a fantastic job. What the IBA were unhappy about was this group structure of Trident Television, which owned two programme companies, Tyne Tees and Yorkshire Television.

Only the IBA could think of getting us in to announce their decision on the franchises on the Sunday after Christmas. December the 27th was the date. Why December? The Stock Exchange was closed and was quiet. Christmas Day, Boxing Day were miserable because we simply did not know whether we'd renewed or not. Richard Graham, the Chairman, and I went on that Sunday into the IBA, got our letter from Lady Plowden... renewal of Yorkshire Television... yes, you've been granted... on the following conditions... And the conditions were that Trident Television was dissolved and that Tyne Tees went its way and that Yorkshire Television went its way.

And that's what happened. Not quite, because there were real difficulties about this de-merger and we had to find new owners for Yorkshire Television. Trident could no longer be the owner. We had to find new owners, that became clear. And I was sitting at home the following weekend and I got a call from a man I'd never met before called James Lee who represented Pearson's, the *Financial Times* group. James said, "Look, you and I have never met and I'm interested in getting involved in Yorkshire Television, and we would like to take a shareholding." And the next call I got was from a man called Derek Palmer, who was then the Chairman of Bass, and he said, "Look, you and I have never met, but I'm interested in Bass getting in the leisure business and we'd like to take a stake in Yorkshire Television." And suddenly, truly, overnight, out of the blue, two people had phoned me who said, "Look, we are coming along to help Yorkshire Television. We want to invest in Yorkshire Television. We believe in it..." blah, blah, blah. And we put this rescue operation into place.

Bass became the shareholders with 20%. Derek Palmer became the Chairman. Pearson's came in for 20%... with James Lee as Deputy Chairman. The *Yorkshire Post*, who'd always been a supporter, stayed and they took, whatever it was, 15%, which is all they could do. So suddenly we had 55% of the company... Trident kept a little bit and the rest went out to the public. And suddenly we had a company again.

So we had a very strong company with blue chipped shareholders, and

they invested well in the company. I was retained as Managing Director and Controller of Programmes, although within a year, I suppose, I decided that John Fairley should become Controller of Programmes.

And five years later we floated that company on the Stock Exchange. We were over subscribed, whatever it was – fifty five times. And it was an exceptionally good company.

Thatcher

Then along came Mrs. Thatcher and destroyed all of that with her Broadcasting Act. There is no question of that. One looks at the history... the ACTT strike at that particular time did underline that the labour practices in independent television were hopeless, were outdated, and the overtime situation was absolutely appalling. The Yorkshire problems were greater than others... it had nothing to do with the ACTT actually, had to do with the ETU. Yorkshire had to employ, as a result of being set up, the electricians that had been working for ABC in Manchester at Didsbury. And when ABC became Thames Television and Howard Thomas took the best people down to London, he left the unpleasant bits of ABC Television back behind in Didsbury.

Those people, who might have been out of work, had to be employed by Yorkshire Television... We inherited a group of electricians who were, quite frankly, truly appalling people. They continued to live in Didsbury. They were the most bloody-minded people you could imagine. They ran rings round us in labour terms. They were earning unbelievable fortunes. We should have got rid of them... Relationships were so awful, the time came when I rang Frank Chapple over a weekend because yet another programme had gone down because of bloody mindedness by the electricians. Frank Chapple said, "Okay, let's have lunch." I said, "Where do you suggest?" And Frank, good old trade union boss, said, "How about the Ritz?"

Frank Chapple and I had lunch at the Ritz. And I said, "Look, this can't go on, Frank. We cannot go on with these bloody electricians behaving in the way they are." I mean, there was simply no way of coping with them. We couldn't deal with them. And Frank said, "Well, I agree with you, Paul. I think they're terrible people. If I were you, I'd sack them." And I said, "I agree with you, Frank, I'd like to sack them... will you give me other electricians?" And Frank said, "Well, I can't do that, Paul."

We should have sacked them. The ACTT were ready to work provided we paid them, and they were earning big money. NATTKE were not so difficult. The ETU was our problem. All this became public property and the Conservatives around Mrs. Thatcher realised that the trade union practices in ITV were appalling. There's no doubt what Mrs. Thatcher and the people around her saw here was ITV beset by restrictive practices, and that's how the phrase came out – "the last bastion of restrictive practices, and we're gonna break that". And she did. And in doing so she ruined British broadcasting. No question.

The architect of awfulness

Margaret Thatcher insisted that rather than the new contracts being awarded by the ITC, as the IBA had become, to the applicants, they should be auctioned off. That is the only way to describe it. It was like Sotheby's. Sotheby's could have held this auction: "What am I bid for this particular franchise?" It was absolutely the same thing, and it was a ludicrous way of doing it.

Now she'd been prompted in this by the real haters of ITV in her cabinet: Nigel Lawson... David Young... Norman Tebbit. Those were the three. And the Broadcasting Act was then written.

Thatcher, Lawson, Tebbit and David Young were determined, first to sort out the broadcaster, that was the thing. First, we'll have a go at the BBC. Appointed the Peacock Committee to do something about the licence fee. And by and large, the Peacock Committee were charged... why don't we have commercials on the BBC? That was Alan's task, no question. And that will solve the licence fee problem. BBC will take commercials, that's it.

Now I have to say, the BBC fought a very clever campaign, but the

advertisers also made... and the agencies made it clear... it was out of the question to have commercials on the BBC because that would ruin the market. The whole business would come to an end. Alan Peacock, having been charged to say, "Look, instead of the licence fee, we'll have commercials on the BBC", came up and said, "Sorry, the licence fee must stay but it will be replaced eventually" - by some piece of rubbish that Alan came up with. But it ensured that the licence fee continued.

So Mrs. Thatcher said, "Right, we'll leave the BBC for a little while. We'll sort them out when the charter runs out. We'll now sort out ITV. And instead of the franchises being awarded, we'll have an auction."

She came to Yorkshire Television and I gave her breakfast. To be fair to her, she did listen to our arguments. She clearly didn't take any notice of our arguments but at least she gave us the courtesy of listening to them.

And the Broadcasting Act was done. I think it was abhorrent to Douglas Hurd, who was a decent Home Secretary. David Mellor by that time had become the Minister of State at the Home Office, and it was David Mellor's job to get the new broadcasting bill through the House of Commons.

Now David takes enormous credit for changing the Act. I think he takes too much credit, quite frankly. There were some changes made but the appalling nature of the auction remained. Mellor eased it a little bit. Mellor eased a little of it because he was star struck. He was lobbied very hard by a group that included Simon Albury from Granada... Simon Albury, John Cleese, Rowan Atkinson and people. And David Mellor, never having sat in the same room as Rowan Atkinson and John Cleese and other talented people, was undoubtedly overcome by these wonderful people and produced a little bit of softening in the Act. But he's claiming far, far too much credit for changing the Broadcasting Act in favour of the ITV company. The basic thing remained: it was an auction. And it remained an auction. And that was an appalling thing.

Some companies bid too much, as it turned out, like Yorkshire Television, and some companies paid far too little, like Central Television and Scottish Television. Central had frightened off all the opposition by a brilliantly fought black propaganda campaign and paid £2,000 for their franchise. And Scottish Television paid £2,000. Yorkshire Television, for a franchise worth far less than the Central one, paid £35 million or more. The thing was ludicrous in the extreme. Exceptionally good companies went down the drain, like Thames Television, outbid by Carlton determined to get it.

I speak as a director of Thames Television... but they were outbid. Thames felt they could not bid more without ruining the company, and I was in at the board meeting... they decided on a figure we could bid... and that was the only figure that was possible. We were outbid by Carlton, and that was the end of the matter. No question of programme quality came in... exceptional circumstances should have been brought in, and Carlton should have been thrown out and Thames should have given the franchise on exceptional circumstances.

Granada kept their franchise at a reasonable price. So did LWT. And Central got it at this knockdown price of £2,000 with no opposition. Why on earth, if you're gonna have an auction, why not put a reserve price on the franchise? With a reserve price, neither Central nor Scotland would have got away with £2,000.

So there we are in ITV. The enemy is Sky Television, without a doubt. Here's Mr. Rupert Murdoch, having been given, despite the fact that he owns four national newspapers, the chance to own more than 50% of a satellite station. No other newspaper group in this country is permitted to hold more than 20% of a terrestrial channel. The rules for Mr. Murdoch have changed – again, entirely due to Mrs. Thatcher.

After fifteen years at Yorkshire Television, Paul Fox became Managing Director of Network Television for three years until he retired from television in 1991. A keen racegoer, he became Chairman of the Racecourses Association from 1991 to 1997 and at the same time wrote a weekly column for The Daily Telegraph on sport on television. A widower, he lives in retirement in Hertfordshire.

BRITISH ENTERTAINMENT HISTORY PROJECT

(Formerly BECTU History Project)

WWW.HISTORYPROJECT.ORG.UK

The History Project members are currently reaching the end of the long journey digitising our archive. It contains 800 interviews with the working men and women from the UK film, television, radio and theatre industries to ensure that their lives, their skills and their memories are preserved for future generations. It's taken us the best part of four years to reach this important milestone. We've digitised the contents of thousands of cassette tapes, 1/4 inch tapes, videotapes and camera cards in our archive. Many of these interviews can run to 20-30 sides of tape involving many hours of digitising in real time. However, we believe that all our recordings – short or long – are of equal importance. They contain the voices of our industry and our country from the past one hundred years.

Syd Wilson – Lab Technician

I have been researching our History Project interview with Syd Wilson which was recorded in 1991-92. Born in 1920, Syd was an incredibly significant figure in the development of colour film in the UK. He was employed in the Technicolor laboratories in Hayes from 1946 to 1971. He worked on matrix printing and on the travelling mattes for *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1948). The UK lab was given the responsibility for making prints for more or less the entire world outside the USA. Syd was constantly suggesting ways of improving the efficiency of the plant. In 1949 he was invited to join the Technical Development Committee, an internal group responsible for discussing and developing new methods and ideas. He developed a new auto optical printing system and the first major feature film to use it was *El Cid* in 1961. In 1962 he won an Oscar

for his contribution to scientific & technical developments in film. Syd left Technicolor in 1971 and joined Studio film labs as General Manager. He finally retired in 1987.

Syd joined the BECTU History Project and took part in many important interviews with key practitioners in the film industry in the 1990s.

Originally, only two sides of Syd's interview were on our website but I have located another twelve sides which have now been digitised. Syd gives a vivid and detailed interview on the historical origins of film, the technical processes and the working practices in the laboratories. You can find this valuable interview at:

<https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/syd-wilson>

I am keen to add to our knowledge of Syd Wilson. So if any readers of THE VETERAN have any information, memories or photographs of Syd, please get in touch with me at mikedick@blueyonder.co.uk

Recently digitised interviews

Mike Turk

Mike Turk was a Swan Marker and the Queen's Waterman who ran a family firm, Turk Launches, on the River Thames. He built traditional boats for use in films including *A Man For All Seasons* and *Swallows and Amazons*. He was boat master on *Octopussy*, *Troy*, *Moonraker* and *A Bridge Too Far*.

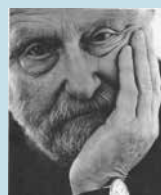
<https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/mike-turk>

Flash Gordon

This year is the 40th anniversary of the UK cinema release of *Flash Gordon* which was primarily filmed in England, including on several soundstages at Elstree and Shepperton studios. We have recently digitised interviews with two important crew members –

director **Mike Hodges** (right) and storyboard artist **Bill Stallion**. You

can find these interviews on our website at: <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/mike-hodges> <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/bill-stallion>



Transcripts

Now that we've virtually finished digitising our 800 recordings, we can concentrate our attention on the job of transcribing our collection. The majority of the interviews have been painstakingly transcribed over the last thirty years by the volunteers of the History Project listening to the original tapes. It's been a real labour of love. But their efforts have allowed people from all over the world to find our recordings by searching the internet for key words. We are now experimenting with a sophisticated new transcription system called Otter which allows us to produce transcripts in a far shorter time than any other method we've used.

The added bonus for the Project is that it provides us with embedded timecodes and name tags as well as a multi-user capability. This enables several volunteers to work on a transcript at the same time. We're delighted with the results so far. A recent example is a recording we have with **William MacQuitty** who was the producer of *A Night To Remember* in 1958 and the founding Managing Director of Ulster Television in 1959. It took four minutes for Otter to create a transcript from the audio recording and a short time to format the result. I can now discuss the interview with William's daughter and demonstrate the content prior to her hopefully giving her permission for us to

upload her late father's interview for general viewing.

Eastmancolor

We have now completed the uploading of the collection of twelve interviews we received from the University of East Anglia research project The Eastmancolor Revolution (see the article by Senior Researcher Paul Frith in the Winter 2019 edition of THE VETERAN.)

They include an interview with cinematographer **Peter Suschitzky**.

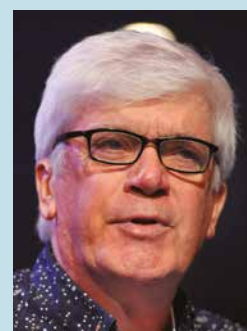
Peter's early work includes *It Happened Here* (1965) and Peter Watkins' BBC drama *The War Game* (1966). He was the director of photography on such notable films as *Charlie Bubbles* (1968), *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), George Lucas's *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks!* (1996) and the later films of David Cronenberg including *Naked Lunch* (1991) and *Crash* (1996). He has also collaborated with directors John Boorman, Ken Russell and Bernard Rose.

You can find the interview at: <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/peter-suschitzky>



Mike Dick

History Project Chair



"A country station... well off the beaten track" with washing line attached to the signal.



"Next Train's Gone!"

Allen Eyles is on the track of Buggleskelly

There was a station, "a country station... well off the beaten track", part of the network of the Southern Railway of Northern Ireland, where knocking on the booking hall window produced the response "Next train's gone!" before any request for information could be uttered. Called Buggleskelly, this was, of course, the rundown station featured in the Will Hay comedy masterpiece, *Oh, Mr. Porter!*, released in 1937.

In *Good Morning Boys: Will Hay, Master of Comedy* (1978), authors Ray Seaton and Roy Martin declared: "In popular and critical esteem, this has always been the favourite among Hay's films, and the one for which he is most widely remembered. One can hardly quarrel with this estimate, for it survives repeated viewings and in addition to its qualities as a comedy it has now acquired

an extraordinary period charm as a railway classic, a precious memento of the age of steam travel and the days of leisurely travel before British Rail streamlining. It does not, however, depend merely on nostalgia for its watchability: a remarkably witty and inventive script gives Hay a role which fits him like a glove, and also definitive parts for [Graham] Moffatt and [Moore] Marriott as the shifty and self-serving staff of Buggleskelly.

"The station itself, with its chocolate machine disgorging bars with a judicious kick, the signal-box stuffed with tomato plants, and the booking office with its mantelpiece groaning under the weight of the presentation clocks of deceased station masters ("like a row of tombstones", observes Hay gloomily) has become a part of English mythology."

The film's art director, the renowned

Vetchinsky, has recalled: "I needed a disused line near to our studios in London, but sufficiently rural to pass for Northern Ireland. The Basingstoke to Alton line [which had just closed] was ideal and one of the first things I did was to make the signal box at Cliddesden look comical. I had a problem with the tunnel as one did not exist on the line, but eventually I made a tunnel mouth out of wire and plaster in a cutting and then promptly had to repair it when Graham Moffatt put his foot through it during the chase scene when he is on top of the carriage.

One of the film's leading characters is an ancient steam locomotive called Gladstone. The brave engine, that blew its guts racing to Belfast at the end of the film, was portrayed (as I learn from Wikipedia) by No. 2 Northiam 2-4-0T, built by Hawthorn Leslie in 1899 and loaned by the Kent and East Sussex Railway.

According to Vetchinsky: "We asked the Southern Railway for an old tank engine that we could cut about and alter but they were obviously not keen. In retrospect, I think that they were afraid of their image as a modern company being spoilt and so I was put in touch with the Kent & East Sussex Railway who, I was assured, would be able to supply me with any amount of antique locomotives! Mr. Austen duly obliged and No. 2 was recorded running light to Basingstoke, where the cab was cut away so that the actors were more visible and a stove pipe chimney was added. We wanted to buy Northiam from the Kent & East Sussex Railway because we wanted to blow it up at the end of the film, but although we offered a good price they would not sell. We solved the problem in the final scene by running the train into the buffers at Basingstoke, cutting the film, backing the engine away and then blowing up a pile of metal. We then added some pieces, including the stove pipe chimney, and the result was quite realistic." (Quoted from *The Tenterden Terrier*, No. 14, Winter 1977.) Northiam was returned to the company after completion of the film and remained in service until 1941 when it was sold for scrap.

So what might one find today, if anything, at Cliddesden to recall the glorious time in June-July 1937 when it was a film location?

An online search revealed this helpful answer from someone at Brevity Marketing, supported by a video clip and photographs:

"My hunt for Buggleskelly started back in 2016 when my 92-year-old grandfather, Kenneth Albert George Sole, told me a story about the time, as a child, he walked from Basingstoke to Cliddesden Station to watch the filming of the 1937 classic *Oh, Mr. Porter!* starring Will Hay.

"Intrigued by the fact that I didn't even know there had been a railway station at Cliddesden, or a line that connected Basingstoke with Alton, I set about conducting some market research to see what I could find out about the forgotten track.

"Although the station and its building have long since been demolished, there are quite a few indicators of the existence of the Basingstoke and Alton Light Railway. Market research both online and field revealed:

- Row of railway cottages still existing in Station Road, Cliddesden
- Remains of the old railway bridge connecting Cliddesden with Basingstoke along B3046 (Farleigh Road).
- Using Google Maps, it is still possible to see the location of the track, some of which has been turned into a public bridleway from near Cliddesden to Winslade.
- At Winslade, the railway bridge has survived. Although it is now classed as a conservation area, you can walk the route of the old track.
- Last remaining track, located in the middle of Viables roundabout, Basingstoke.

"I even found 'behind the scenes footage' from the 1937 shoot (I wonder if my Grandad was one of those spectators). In its heyday, the single-track railway line ran from Basingstoke railway station, past Thorneycrofts (site of



Stationmaster William Porter (Will Hay, centre) discusses a shunting problem with his staff, Harbottle (Moore Marriott, right) and Albert (Graham Moffatt) as an express train approaches.



The preserved stretch of track in the middle of a roundabout at Viables. (Photographs by David Trevor-Jones.)

Morrison's supermarket) and Viables Farm (Viables Craft Centre) heading out towards Cliddesden. There was even a track that went via Park Prewett. So if you've wondered why there is a piece of track in the middle of one of Basingstoke's many roundabouts – that's why!

"In 2018 a commemorative bench was constructed in Cliddesden village – I'll leave you to find its location."

The Will Hay Appreciation Society, founded in 2009 to preserve the legacy of Will Hay, Moore Marriott and Graham Moffatt and to bring their work to a new generation of fans, unveiled this memorial bench in October 2018 in the presence of the granddaughters of Will Hay and Moore Marriott and the children of Graham Moffatt. The £2,000 cost was raised entirely by donations. The *Basingstoke Gazette* (19 October 2018) reported that the Sunday event was attended by around 180 members of the society and inhabitants of Cliddesden.

To find this bench, while adhering to the restrictions on movement imposed last summer, I recruited a non-Veteran, David Trevor-Jones, the affable chairman of the Cinema Theatre Association who fortuitously lives in the area:

"Last night I cycled to Buggleskelly... I saw parts of Basingstoke that I have never seen before, despite first living here in 1963! I also

found what seemed to be a village conspiracy in Cliddesden.

"I didn't know where the bench was but I do know where the site of Cliddesden Station and the row of railway cottages are. So I started my search, having checked the obvious place in the village centre by the pond, by cycling up to the station.

"No sign there, but a woman was working in the front garden of the end cottage so I called out a cheery greeting and asked, 'Can you tell me where the *Oh, Mr Porter!* bench is?' She stood up from her labours and rather tersely replied in a most unfriendly tone - no corresponding greeting or remark on the glorious weather - 'It's normally outside the village hall BUT IT'S BEEN PUT AWAY BECAUSE OF THE VIRUS. YOU CAN'T SEE IT.' She resumed her weeding.

"I thanked her and pedalled back towards the village centre. (The station is way out – part of the evidence, I think, that the LSWR didn't intend the line to be useful or successful but was actually a spoiler to stop the GWR from getting its own route to Portsmouth.) I had no idea where the village hall was, so stopped on the road to ask a friendly-looking chap walking his dog. 'I don't know' he replied. 'I've only recently moved here.'



Find it if you can. The commemorative bench in all its glory with various plaques providing information. (Photographs by David Trevor-Jones.)



The plaque in memory of Moore Marriott.



Not forgetting Gladstone - "Rest in pieces".

"Cliddesden has a population of, maybe, five hundred – apart from the station, you can walk from end to end in about five minutes. I guessed that it might be behind the church, so cycled towards there. Another dog-walker was helpful and friendly enough to guide me – the hall is out of the village up the hill towards the station but then up its own driveway off the road, so not obvious to the visitor.

"So there I headed. As I reached the entrance, barred to vehicles but perfectly walkable-round, an elderly lady of the village busy-body kind shouted out 'IT'S CLOSED.' I ignored her, skirted the barrier and after a bit of searching round the car park, because it's not

exactly obvious, found the bench.

"I gained the impression that the good people of Cliddesden, fearing an invasion of unruly, drunken Will Hay fans enough to make Bournemouth beach look like a side show, had conspired to deter all visitors and film buffs! After all, they have a major visitor attraction in their midst! There could be disorder.

"I expect news of my visit has reached the Parish Council and the bench is probably now defended behind rolls of barbed wire festooned with 'Townies and Film Buffs Go Home' and 'Cliddesden is CLOSED' signs!"

The bench as photographed is well decorated by the local bird population. Regular

cleaning does not seem to be in operation (it reminds me of the state of the Diana Dors statue I photographed for the front cover of issue 152 - despite her being 'The Pride of Swindon'). Alongside the bench is a reminder of Gladstone.

The best memorial of all is, of course, the film itself – not seen too often these days but revived not long ago as part of a railway evening on BBC 4. Classics like that do not go away – they run forever. [v](#)

See also the recollections of assistant art director Maurice Carter on working on Oh, Mr. Porter! in issue 162, Spring 2019, page 10.

Transmitting Television

G. C. Platts recalls the early years of establishing a UK-wide service

The first public demonstration of television in the UK took place on 26 August 1936 at the Radio Olympia Exhibition in London with the reception of BBC experimental transmissions from Alexandra Palace, north London.

Separate antennas, supplied by the Marconi Co. for radiating the vision and associated sound transmissions had been erected on a self supporting tower at one end of the Alexandra Palace building; television cameras and studio equipment had been supplied by EMI and Baird.

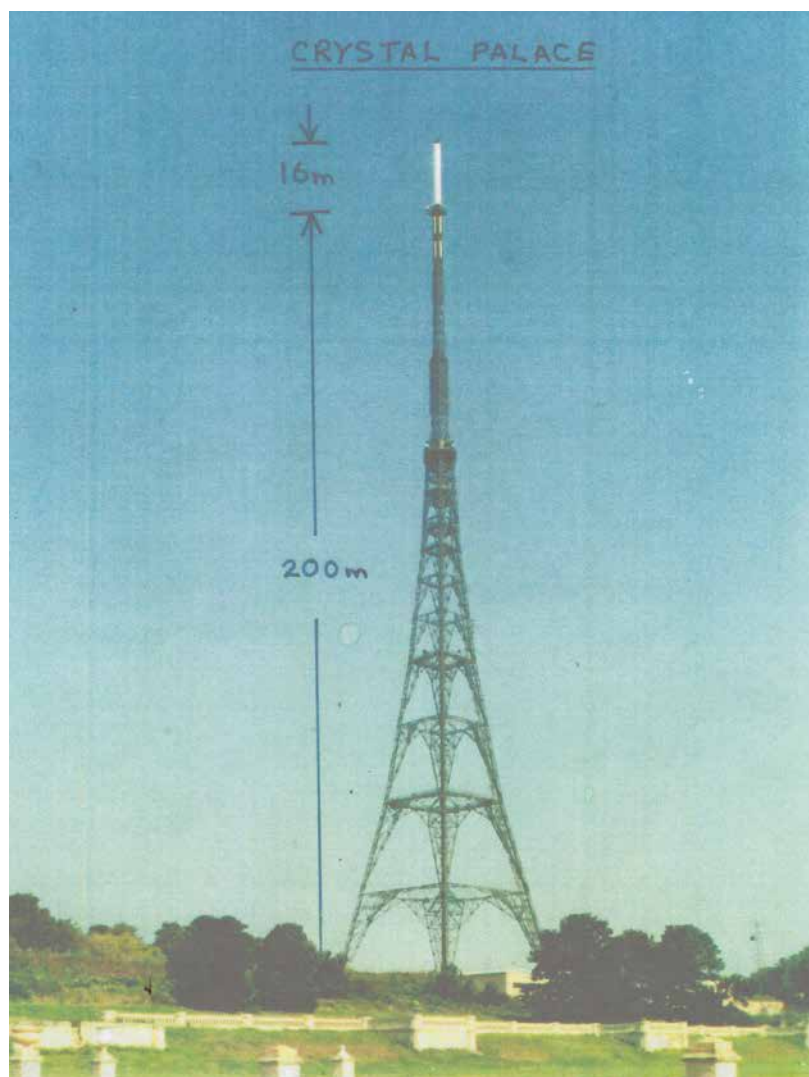
Two rival systems were demonstrated on alternate days: the Marconi-EMI 405 line system, with interlaced scanning, to minimise flicker with 377 lines forming the picture and the remainder for control purposes; and the Baird non-interlaced 240 line system.

As early as 1934, engineers had been writing of the superiority of the 405 line system, and in February 1937 the Postmaster General announced the cessation of transmissions using the Baird system.

The service subsequently provided exceeded all expectation and by August 1939 some 23,000 receivers were in use and the service was thought to be available to 25% of the UK population. However, with the onset of WW2 transmissions ceased at mid-day on 1 September 1939, although the transmitters were later used to jam German communications, particularly to German bomber crews.

As early as September 1943, when an Allied victory was confidently anticipated, the Hankey Committee was set up to make recommendations about the future of TV Broadcasting in the UK. This committee foresaw the development of higher definition systems and even colour television, but concluded in its report, issued in December 1944, that Britain would prefer the re-opening of the Alexandra Palace transmitter and expansion of the 405 line service prior to other developments. The service from Alexandra Palace, using the original equipment, re-opened on 7 June 1946.

An international conference held in Atlantic City, USA, confirmed the use of the frequency band 41MHz–61 MHz for TV in Europe. It accepted the continuing use of the double



side-band transmission standard for Alexandra Palace and confirmed the acceptability of a later vestigial side-band standard for future transmitters. By so doing, the Alexandra Palace service and four other UK channels could be accommodated within the agreed frequency band.

The vision transmitter at Alexandra Palace had a power of 17kW (peak white) and an associated sound transmitter, but the radiation

pattern of the antenna doubled the power radiated towards the horizon, thus increasing the service area, whilst still providing a first class service for viewers living closer to Alexandra Palace. However, there weren't any reserve transmitters, hence in the event of a fault the service was interrupted and sometimes had to be abandoned for the rest of the evening.

After WW2, the BBC Engineering Research

Department produced a 1/10 scale (10X frequency) working model to confirm the theoretical radiation pattern of antennas proposed for the initial expansion of the television service to the densely populated parts of the UK. Also specified was that the antennas should be mounted at the tops of 750ft. (229m) lattice masts, including a 6.5ft. (2m) diameter cylindrical section for future planned VHF/FM radio services and to accommodate a vision/sound combining unit just below the TV antenna, although why this position for the combiner was thought to be necessary is unclear – possibly uncertainty about the ability of a single feeder to carry the combined power of the vision and sound transmitters. But, whatever the reason, such a unit was only installed at Sutton Coldfield and subsequently replaced by a similar unit at ground level.

Years later, with the coming of the new 625 line television standard, this freed space resulted in major financial saving as it was then possible to use the existing masts at Sutton Coldfield in the Midlands and Wenvoe in South Wales, through a number of stages, to carry antennas for the new BBC 2 625 line service, and later duplicate the BBC 1 and IBA 405 line services using the new 625 standard, and still later the introduction of the Channel 4 625 line service. To do this, 4-Channel combining units were necessary and these were developed by close co-operation between the BBC and Marconi engineers.

The service from Sutton Coldfield, serving the Midlands, began on 17 December 1949 with a 35kW vision transmitter, later up-rated to 50kW. A fault occurred, which was only cleared just in time for the official opening and resulted in the decision to equip high power transmitting stations of this type with 5kW reserve transmitters. While the introduction of reserve transmitters was a step forward, there was still a break in time while they were ‘warmed up’ and brought into service – so much so that, for certain broadcasts, for example H.M. The Queen’s Christmas Day address, the reserve transmitters were ‘warmed up’ to minimise the duration of any loss of service. Subsequently, similar power transmitters were installed at Holm Moss in Yorkshire to serve the North of England, from 12 October 1951; at Kirk o’Shotts, midway between Glasgow and Edinburgh, from 14 March 1952 and at Wenvoe, near Cardiff in South Wales, from 15 August 1952 – together providing a service to about 80% of the UK population.

National restriction on capital expenditure then delayed the next phase of the expansion



The Crystal Palace transmitter viewed from Crystal Palace Park in recent years (Flickr/photograph by Phil Beard).

of the television service, but the forthcoming Coronation of H.M. The Queen, scheduled for 2 June 1953, was the incentive for the provision of temporary low cost, low power transmitters to serve the heavily populated areas of Newcastle, Belfast and Brighton. BBC engineers modified commercially available RCA communication transmitters and these remained in service for some four years, until replaced by the originally planned higher power transmitters when financial restrictions were lifted.

While the television service was being extended by commissioning newly developed higher power transmitters to cover the most densely populated parts of the UK, it became apparent that a transmitter sited on high ground to the south of London, together with an antenna of the latest design, would serve not only the area covered by the Alexandra Palace transmitter but also large areas to the south of London, and do this with a lower demand on the public electricity supply.

Additionally, technical advances indicated higher frequency services in the future. Accordingly, the BBC acquired the derelict site of the old Crystal Palace, placed contracts to accommodate transmitters, and ordered a 640ft. (195m) tower, tapered to 440ft. to carry an 8-tier antenna above this level with provision for future developments. However, unexpected ground conditions delayed the start of construction of the tower and the government of the day subsequently ordered the BBC to share the tower with the newly constituted Independent Television Authority (later the IBA).

This necessitated a re-design of the upper part of the tower and strengthening of the

lower part, delaying transfer of the BBC service from Alexandra Palace until September 1956. To virtually eliminate any complete loss of service from the Crystal Palace transmitter, there were duplicate power supplies from different parts of the National Electricity Grid and programme feeds from the Television Studio Centre, with each half and the antenna fed by a 15kW vision and associated sound transmitter working in parallel, with switches provided to enable all the transmitters to feed either half of the antenna or one set of transmitters to feed the complete antenna – for example, if a significant period of maintenance was necessary.

However, in spite of these changes, the IBA started their 405 line Band III service from a site some distance away and did not share the Crystal Palace tower until the advent of 625 line television, in accordance with the requirements of an international conference, held in Stockholm in 1961, to minimise the risk of mutual interference between transmitters in Europe necessarily operating on the same channel. From this time, relations between the BBC and IBA improved so that, at the lower power 625 line relay stations, their equipment was housed adjacent to each other and both parties held keys to the accommodation.

When the Crystal Palace transmitter first opened, the service it provided lived up to expectations, except at a few locations relatively close to Crystal Palace. Initially this was attributed to faulty receivers producing pictures reminiscent of negatives of black and white photographs, but visits to these locations confirmed such reports. Investigation revealed that, at these locations, the contributions from the two halves of the antenna were, as expected, almost out of phase, but being marginally different resulted in the observed distorted pictures. This was overcome by first combining the outputs from the pairs of vision and sound transmitters and then dividing the combined signals to feed the two halves of the antenna, although this was inconsistent with the desired arrangement! However, the combining and splitting equipment was ‘passive’ and most unlikely to fail and has been used with success at all the subsequent high power 625 line transmitters.

Construction and commissioning of medium, low power and relay stations continued, at locations determined by the BBC Engineering Research Department so that virtually the whole of the UK and Northern Ireland, from the Shetland Isles to the Channel Isles, was provided with the 405 line television service. ■

THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Presented at the AGM at BFI Southbank on 28 October 2020

This year has certainly been very different for us, and has affected so many people, especially in our industry. After last year's AGM in July we still had two special events planned. The first was "They'll Tell You Exactly" when Sir Sydney Samuelson interviewed world renowned composer and conductor Debbie Wiseman OBE, followed by a Q&A and refreshments at the Amadeus Centre in Little Venice. The next, in August, was a special tour of the Kent Museum of the Moving Image in Deal, followed by refreshments, courtesy of Curators David Francis OBE and Dr. Joss Marsh. I would also like to thank Margaret Williams, our Events Director, for her hard work in making these events run so smoothly.

In October, we had the second round of the 2019 John Brabourne Awards, which the BCTV support with the Film and Television Charity. Our chosen candidate this time was Jesse Lawrence, a writer/director who needed help to fund his writing and further research his film *Sargasso Dreams*.

During December, we were coming to the end of our temporary office accommodation in Cork Street (thanks to the Film and Television Charity) and were getting ready for the move back to Golden Square. Unfortunately, the building work was over running, and the charity had to get further temporary office space in Warwick Street, where space was limited. So, on top of starting to pack up our office, we also had to prepare for our up and coming busy membership renewal period.

Fortunately, we were able to get all the renewals ready to post before the move, and due to this at the start of the year they were all posted out to members. With the delay of our move back to Golden Square we also had some mail re-direction problems. On top of this, our Company Secretary Kathy had to work from home. Thanks to help from our committee member volunteers, two thirds of the renewals were processed and new membership cards sent out before the lockdown, which also resulted in a further delay with the building work at Golden Square. The Membership Committee, also working from home, managed to clear a large number of membership applications.

Due to the lockdown in April, we had to cancel our previously published screening of *Casablanca* at the Warner Bros. Preview Theatre, also a proposed visit to the Royal Mail Postal Museum, but we hope to be looking into resuming events in Spring next year.

In June we had the delayed first round of 2020 John Brabourne Awards, by Zoom this time, again the BCTV supporting someone we would like to help with their career. Our chosen candidate was Jack Gill, a writer/director from the North West, who would like help in further developing his film *Lambing Season*.

This brings us to July, when on the 22nd we should have held our BCTV Annual General Meeting, but due to the circumstances at the time, this was not possible. Fortunately, we have the time allowed in our Articles of

Association which gives us the period from June to October to hold our AGM, which has been possible today.

During this time, we were dealing with the arrangements for our eventual move back into our new office at 22 Golden Square. The Executive Committee had to agree the details of the new lease with the Film and Television Charity, which was completed and signed before our official move back from 1st October.

Also in October, we had the second and final round of the 2020 John Brabourne Awards, again by Zoom. The BCTV chosen candidate from the final twelve was Elizabeth Penman, a documentary self-shooting director from Scotland, whom we are helping with her course fees at the University of Salford in Wildlife Documentary Studies. Our contribution of £2,500 makes up half the £5,000 which our candidate receives.

As usual, in my Annual Report I have a lot of people to thank.

Firstly, our Honorary Treasurer Bob Stanesby for all he does in managing our finances throughout the year, which at present are strong, but the future may be challenging for us. Also, I would like to welcome our Honorary Independent Examiner Peter Samengo-Turner, and thank him for auditing our accounts for the period. Peter kindly offered his services after Diana Mead had to stand down last year due to work commitments. Our VETERAN magazine editor Allen Eyles, who has done a great job putting our last two magazines together under very difficult circumstances due the pandemic situation, also our designer Angela Lyons. Jim Whittell, for keeping members up to date with our website, unfortunately with not very many events at the present time. Jacky Simons, for administering the "Over Eighty" birthday cards which are very much appreciated, especially in these difficult times. Our BCTV Executive Committee members for their support in all we do, and not forgetting our very important President's Council. Finally, our excellent Company Secretary Kathy Darby, whom I would like to thank for her support and hard work on our behalf during the lockdown period, working from home (with IT support from husband Tim), dealing with everything so efficiently. A "Very big thank you, Kathy" from all of us.

Thank you for coming today. Take care and stay safe. I would just like to thank Tony Williams for the AGM arrangements, and the BFI for the use of their facilities today.

Nigel Wolland MBE
President



Lively times at the AGM in NFT 2 at BFI Southbank. President Nigel Wolland seen with Kathy Darby (middle), Bob Stanesby (above and middle) and Peter Samengo-Turner (top).



Back in the Days...

The following feature will be best enjoyed in a rocking chair (a recliner will do) with a mug of hot cocoa, some digestive biscuits and a hot water bottle.

Forwarded to the Editor by a neighbour, Paul. This is attributed to various authors on various appearances on the Internet. The response is by "Anon". Highlights added by the Editor.



Saturday morning pictures at the Odeon Kemp Town. (Editor's collection.)

Back in the days of tanners and bobs,
When Mothers had patience and Fathers had jobs.
When football team families wore hand me down shoes,
And TV gave only two channels to choose.
Back in the days of threepenny bits,
when schools employed nurses to search for your nits.
When snowballs were harmless; ice slides were permitted
and all of your jumpers were warm and hand knitted.
Back in the days of hot ginger beers,
when children remained so for more than six years.
When children respected what older folks said,
and pot was a thing you kept under your bed.
Back in the days of Listen with Mother,
when neighbours were friendly and talked to each other.
When cars were so rare you could play in the street.
When Doctors made house calls; Police walked the beat.
Back in the days of Milligan's Goons,
when butter was butter and songs all had tunes.
It was dumplings for dinner and trifle for tea,
and your annual break was a day by the sea.
Back in the days of Dixon's Dock Green,
Crackerjack pens and Lyons ice cream.
When children could freely wear National Health glasses,
and teachers all stood at the FRONT of their classes
Back in the days of rocking and reeling,
when mobiles were things that you hung from the ceiling.
When woodwork and pottery got taught in schools,
and everyone dreamed of a win on the pools.
Back in the days when I was a lad,
I can't help but smile for the fun that I had.
Hopscotch and roller skates; snowballs to lob.
Back in the days of tanners and bobs.

And a response:

My oh my, every word rings a bell, not only 'jumpers for goalposts' but other things as well.

Throwing sticks into trees, those conkers WILL fall, bikes with no brakes, a fixed wheel was all, 'cowhorn' handlebars, no mudguards at all.

Throwing stones at each other, health and safety unknown, no hard hat playing cricket, plastic 'box' for your manhood but no case for your phone.

Phones were in boxes that stood on the street, bright red, firmly they'd stand, no phone in your pocket, that was just for your hand.

No TV at home, that was a luxury for the others, **Saturday morning pictures with a shilling from our Mother's.**

Sixpence to get in, sixpence to spend, hours in the sweet shop, the choices? No end.

Blackjacks, fruit salad, sherbet fountain, gob stopper, maybe a jubbly? Or maybe a 'whoppa'?

A teatime, a bedtime, no 'raking the streets', food that was 'good for you' with very few treats.

School uniform, short trousers, cap, satchel, a tie.

Darned holes in your socks, leaky pens, that awful blue dye.

Blackboard dusters, ammunition for 'Sir', it came your way if his wrath you'd incur.

The cane, the slipper, or the flat of his hand, no redress for violence, parents didn't understand. "You must have deserved it, they don't punish you for nought" "You're not there to have fun, you're there to be taught"

Well, taught I was, and taught well, may I say.

It gave me the values I hold to this day.

Respect for those wiser, consideration of others, role models to emulate, love for our Mothers.

At the time there were no grudges, it was just part of life, we had FUN without telly, or computers, no strife.

Modern kids miss out on the lessons we learned, they expect all to be given, nothing is earned.



BACK COVER STORY

The Cinema Badge Collector

By Bob Mandry

I have had an interest in the cinema since my grammar school days when I ran the Film & Photographic Society. I contacted the manager of the local Odeon in Southend, Arthur Levenson, and we arranged trips round the Odeon for several school parties. I then asked Arthur for a job and worked at both the Odeon and Ritz for seven years. Being part-time, I did virtually every job from ushering to projection, even gallivanting up Southend High Street in a Blue Meanie costume to publicise *Yellow Submarine*. I regularly spent time visiting projection boxes in London and the South East. I always wanted my own Kalee 21 projector but my father was adamant the family car was not going to be on the driveway while I converted the garage into a cinema! I went on to train as a teacher, also running the College film society, but teaching formed the path of most of my working life.

I always retained my interest in the cinema and on retirement my thoughts returned to obtaining a 35mm projector. Again, it was not feasible to have such an item in our house – I did not relish the prospect of a divorce after forty years of marriage! Thus, I came to a compromise and now have a Kalee 21 mech with top spool box and soundhead on display in my “man cave”. I have supplemented this with various “supporting features”, one of which is a collection of cinema badges.

I do not collect film badges but cinema





circuit generated badges, equipment badges, CEA and CMA badges and film festivals. The whole collection amounts to over four hundred badges, some of which are illustrated here. I am particularly pleased with the two 20th Century Fox badges which display the early logo before the now familiar “wall” version was instituted. My favourites tend to be the earlier, vintage, enamel badges such as equipment badges, the long service items and the organisation badges. Tin button badges are, obviously, not so attractive but they’re all part of the story and one cannot ignore the huge amount produced by the ABC circuit.

Incidentally, the early Veteran’s pierced badge [see back cover] stands high in my favourites as, apart from it being a quality produced item, my family is related to William Friese Greene. My nan, Mary Barnes, attended the premiere of the 1951 film *The Magic Box*. I also like the pierced design as it clearly displays the Maltese cross, the heart of the cinema projector.

I have assembled this collection over the past four years and it is fascinating to see what previously unknown items keep turning up. I have little knowledge of the CEA and CMA annual conferences and if anyone can help with the periods of these it would enable me to establish the full scope of my collection. [v](#)

[See also back cover]



**A CTA lockdown detective
story told by Tony Williams**

Empress In Name Only

Talk about cinema to a young-ish person today and it is highly unlikely that they will have any comprehension of what cinemagoing might have been like seventy or more years ago. Even those of us who, like myself, have been cinemagoers since our childhood still probably have little comprehension of how basic a cinema could be.

These thoughts were prompted for me after I had joined some other members of the Cinema Theatre Association (CTA) when we were confronted with a poorer quality version of the picture above of an Empress Cinema – a misnomer if there ever was one! The hope was that someone would be able to identify its location so it could be correctly identified in the CTA Archive.

The name Empress was quite popular at one time but how many looked like this? It is so awful that it untypically prompted a lot of research to find out something about it and where it was. The name Empress - presumably inspired by Queen Victoria's title as Empress of India - was not a great help

as most Empress Cinemas were in towns with 600 or more seats.

According to his on-line biography, a watercolour artist called George Allen returned from the Second World War and his first choice was to return to his career as a textile designer. Unfortunately, there was a slump in the textile industry post war and he first opened a cinema in Billinge. The biography claims that the cinema was called the Empress, known locally as The Trock. This story is unconvincing as the cinema in the picture is clearly much older than one built just after the war. One report said the Empress was a conversion of an old corrugated WW1 aircraft hanger. It was claimed that film buffs packed in there to watch the best post war films. A picture was found that could be an aircraft hanger of that vintage, which supposedly had 700 seats. Again, this is unconvincing when compared to the picture of an actual cinema.

There was much searching of old *Kine Year Books* and guesses as to which part of the country it might have been in. We found that KYB entries



*Children queuing outside the Empress.
(Courtesy of the Billinge Historical Society.)*



*The building that was for a time believed to
be the Empress. (George Allen website.)*

were not always correct. There were a few clues and early speculation centred some research on Lancashire, which eventually proved to be the correct part of the country. The cinema was obviously not in a town, with a village being the most likely location, probably an industrial or mining one. This led to a guess that the village was Billinge in Lancashire.

Billinge was originally an agricultural village but it was in the middle of what became the West Lancashire Coalfield and eventually had six collieries. It is located between Wigan and St. Helens. A picture of an Empress was located in a Science Museum picture library and this led to the quality picture, which named the location as Billinge.

There is no entry for Billinge in either the 1927 or 1929 KYBs but the Billinge History Society lists the Empress in 1929 as a local business in Main Street, with the owner's name as Associated Theatres and describes it as a corrugated iron building. So the cinema was in business in the silent film era.

The 1931 KYB has an Empress Billinge listed under Wigan but with no details at all. Another source says that by 1935 the cinema was closed and ownership had changed from a Ryland to a Wilkinson. In the 1935 KYB, an Empress Billinge is again listed under Wigan, with 700 seats, a Morrison sound system and the Proprietor being G. R. Allen. Mr. Allen is still listed as the owner in the 1943 KYB with the cinema having 650 seats. By the 1947 edition, the owners were Messrs. A. Sagar, W. L. Sagar & T. Wane. There was no entry in the 1954 KYB.

Other reports had the Billinge Empress taken over in 1931 by the Wilkinson family who had cinemas in Liverpool, who acquired it from the Ryland Brothers who had cinemas in St. Helens. However, by the time of the 1935 KYB the proprietor of the Empress was G. R. Allen. Perhaps Mr. Allen was always the owner and the other names were just short-term

lessees? He reportedly sold the cinema in 1953 but who on earth would want to buy it in that condition and when television was arriving? Indeed, in 1953 when the exterior picture was taken, the building was clearly derelict. Maybe the cinema was sold as a potential building site? The two films advertised as a double bill, *Black Hills* which was released in 1947 and *The Glass Mountain*, released in 1949, may have been the last ones ever shown. As many small cinemas had to wait for anything up to two years before they were able to show a new film this suggests that they were probably screened in 1951. If there was still any doubt about the location of the Empress Cinema the high quality image confirms where it was. A largely hidden poster has the words Empress Billinge on it.

We are still tantalised by the thought of what the Empress was like inside. Could it really have had 650 or 700 seats? With wooden walls inside, what were the acoustics like? For most of its life it must have shown nitrate prints but what is presumably the projection room built on columns over the entrance doesn't seem to have space for storing as well as showing the potentially dangerous film prints. The building looks to me like a purpose-built cinema, not a converted hanger, and its location in Main Street in the centre of Billinge would support this view. The Empress must have been popular and profitable most of its relatively short life to attract such interest. There is a picture on the Billinge History Society web site of children queuing up outside the cinema, most likely the same children who would amuse themselves by running sticks along the outside walls creating a dreadful noise for those inside.

One last piece of local history: Owen Farrell, the international rugby player, comes from Billinge.

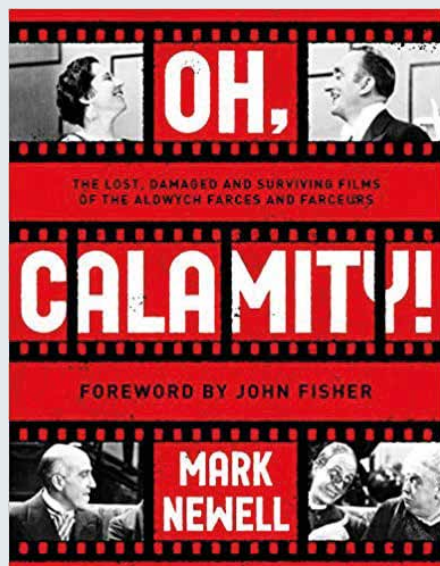
A question for everybody reading this article: Do you have any early cinema experiences of visiting a cinema like the Empress? [v](#)



OH, CALAMITY!

The Lost, Damaged and Surviving Films of the Aldwych Farces and Farceurs

By Mark Newell



The Book Guild. ISBN 978-1-913551-18-6
Large softback (246x189mm). 338 pages,
illustrated (b&w/colour). £14.99.

Reviewed by Michael Pointon

Mark Newell's book goes far beyond its subtitle – it is a celebration of a golden age of British comedy rarely mentioned today and a long overdue tribute to a unique team of personalities who were major figures on stage and screen between the wars. Gaumont-British film publicity in 1930 reflected this: 'There is a young man named Tom Walls whose comedy tickles the stalls. The circle and pit simply roar at his wit, so we hope he makes many more calls. The next on this list is Ralph Lynn. Just to look at him causes a grin. Then very soon after you're shrieking with laughter, and you cannot stop once you begin'.

To quote the book's cover blurb, it is 'The first ever complete study of the Aldwych farce films (1924-1954) and the plays they were based on. The thirteen Aldwych farces were phenomenally successful in the West End between 1922 and 1933. The stars – Ralph Lynn, Tom Walls and Robertson Hare – transferred their work to the screen in the early 1930s. With humour that relied more on characterisation and clever wordplay than slapstick, they became top stars of the new sound films, "talkies". Also covered in the book are the screen originals written for the team by Ben Travers, the 1930s solo vehicles for both Lynn and Walls, and the later plays and films in which Hare appeared with Alfred Drayton'.

Mark Newell's introduction declares: 'Oh, Calamity! is an attempt to bring some forgotten comedians back into cinema history. There's more to British film comedy than Ealing classics and Carry Ons'. He informs us that, although the Aldwych team are 'an acknowledged part of theatrical history, their screen achievements, however, rate barely a mention in current movie books... the reasons for this neglect are partly the unavailability of key titles but also critical prejudice against early sound play adaptations in the cinema, especially if they're British. Walls and Lynn were in fact among the most popular stars appearing on our screens in the early 1930s... Their work helped popularise sound films and revive the native industry which had previously struggled against Hollywood domination. I hope the Aldwych team's work can now be rediscovered and the process of restoration speeded up'.

John Montgomery's *Comedy Films (1894-1954)* claims: 'Of all the [British] comedy films made between 1929 and 1939, only ten stand out as being above average in treatment, direction, and general appeal' and lists fifth the 1932 Herbert Wilcox production of Ben Travers' *Thark*, directed by Tom Walls with Ralph Lynn, Robertson Hare and Mary Brough, behind such music hall box office favourites as Will Hay, Gracie Fields and George Formby but ahead of Korda's major success *The Private Life Of Henry VIII* with Charles Laughton. Montgomery reminds us of the 'hilarious bedroom sequence with Walls and Lynn in the haunted house and how memorable Mary Brough was as the harridan 'Mrs. Frush of Fark'. Sadly, of the surviving key Aldwych films including *Rookery Nook* and *A Cuckoo In The Nest*, *Thark*, first produced on stage in 1927 and arguably the finest, is notably absent from the BFI National Archive and it seems that no effort has been made to acquire it although Newell assures us that private collectors have 16mm copies.

Newell is dedicated in his mission to make these neglected gems more accessible to modern day audiences: 'As well as being preserved, the Aldwych team's films should be restored and celebrated. This is the start of a campaign to find the missing titles, copy those presently unavailable, and show them – along with existing prints – on the big screen where they belong'.

In his section 'The Aldwych Films: Their Reputation and Survival' he writes: 'as far as the screen versions are concerned they are not well known despite DVD issues and some visibility on YouTube. Abused by 1930s critics as canned theatre, although those who complained the most often laughed loudest at press shows, the Aldwych films now attract censure for the attitudes of the leading characters towards servants, women – especially the ugly and mothers-in-law –

and foreigners ... and Walls' stage-bound direction is condemned by cineastes. Such defects, however, are a small price to pay for the privilege of witnessing master classes in comedy acting and writing'.

For many, the monocled Ralph Lynn was the undisputed Aldwych star with his quicksilver gift for mime and effortlessly subtle comic business. Lynn acted as a charming foil to Tom Walls's more forceful, often overbearing protagonists. Robertson Hare virtually invented the archetypal long-suffering put-upon character in true deadpan style inevitably victimised by the two leading men in countless convoluted situations. And his desperate catchphrase, "Oh, Calamity!", gained immortality.

This comprehensive overview features all the original thirteen Aldwych Theatre stage farces, their revivals and the fourteen filmed versions. Full plot synopses, contemporary reviews and production stills are included. There are also ninety meticulously researched biographies of actors, actresses (as we used to call them!), authors, producers and directors involved with these productions plus many rare photos and reproductions of programmes and trade ads, mostly from Newell's archive.

Playwright Ben Travers was, of course, the author of most of the stage and screen versions of these classics as well as the creator of the five film originals for Walls and Lynn. I had the privilege of meeting him when he appeared as a panellist on *Funny You Should Ask*, a quiz on comedy I compiled for BBC radio in 1980. He'd recently had renewed success in his nineties with his new play *The Bed Before Yesterday*. Although our panel included such skilled farceurs as Ray Cooney and Leslie Phillips, the veteran master was more adept than anyone at supplying the correct answers about comedy extracts played, along with wonderful anecdotes.

John Fisher, author of *Funny Way To Be A Hero*, the definitive book on British comedy, gives his assessment in his foreword:

'This book is unusual in that it chronicles what began as a stage phenomenon from a primarily but not exclusively cinematic standpoint... it represents more than five years of passionate and detailed research by its author, a dedicated cineaste who first laughed at the team in a revival of what may have been the film of *Turkey Time* long years ago in childhood... Hopefully the testament paid by *Oh, Calamity!* to the perfection and individuality that Walls, Lynn and co. brought to the genre will encourage even more creative endeavours in the future and, as the author stresses with almost evangelical zeal throughout these pages, the bonus discovery of those lost masterpieces on celluloid that evaded his masterful research'. ■



DEMENTIA (1953)

BFI. BFI1395. 56 mins (+ extras). J.J. Parker Productions. Produced, directed and written by John Parker.

Reviewed by David McGillivray

The adventurous film fan who has not experienced *Dementia* is unlikely to be disappointed by the BFI's Blu-ray/DVD package, which includes a recent restoration of John Parker's long-banned 1953 psychodrama, shot silent, and a much-maligned 1957 version with narration called *Daughter of Horror*. No other film crossed the exploitation/art house divide with quite the flair of *Dementia*. Although the project brought together people whose other work includes *The Blob*, *The Brain Eaters*, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* and *Secrets of Sex*, Parker's direction has been compared to that of Welles, Buñuel, Polanski, Maya Deren and more besides. This assumes, however, that *Dementia* actually was directed by John Parker.

The mystique of the film has been considerably enhanced by its shady provenance. All that is known about John J. Parker III is that he was the son of the owner of a chain of cinemas in Oregon. IMDb erroneously claims that he was married to Warhol superstar Brigid Polk. (She was married to a window dresser of the same name). After *Dementia* became a cult, one of its stars, Corman regular Bruno VeSota, claimed he directed most of the film. In an extract from the series *Trailers from Hell*, included here, director Joe Dante states that some commentators have noted stylistic similarities between *Dementia* and *The Brain Eaters*, directed by VeSota in 1958.

Anecdotal evidence has it that *Dementia* was inspired by a nightmare recounted by Parker's secretary Adrienne Barrett and that Parker insisted Barrett must play herself in his film. She is indeed a strangely disconcerting presence in this oneiric fantasy, apparently drifting between dreams, memories and dementia. She appears to wake from a dream and explore a threatening night-town before stabbing a pick-up (VeSota) and then sawing off his hand because it clutches her necklace. She may still be dreaming but her true state of mind is implied by the title.

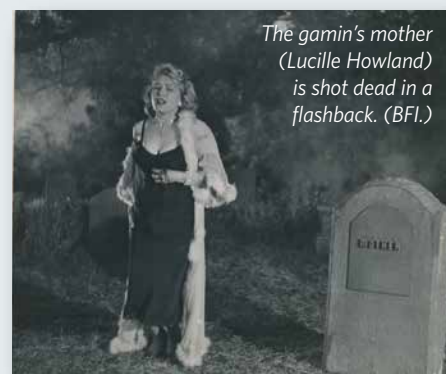
Much has been made of the look of the film, crisply restored in this version by the Cohen Film Collection in 2015. The chiaroscuro lighting and looming shadows are undeniably impressive. At first it seems inconceivable that this really is the work of William C. Thompson, a Poverty Row hack responsible for much of the output of Edward D. Wood Jr.,

famously the world's worst director. But a sequence in a graveyard, in which Barrett seems to recall killing her abusive father, is irresistibly reminiscent of *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1957), shot by Thompson. Another enigma. The pervasive score by classical composer George Antheil features wailing by none other than Marni Nixon.

I first became aware of *Dementia* in 1971, when I was working for the British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*. At the time the BBFC had passed the film uncut with an "X" certificate. It was distributed by industry maverick Antony Balch, who previously had directed a soft porn film *Secrets of Sex* (1969). Our reviewer, Nigel Andrews, thought that the film was "not highly distinctive in style". Other British critics were similarly unimpressed. Probably *Dementia* had a limited release in the UK.

But Andrews picked up on the film's possible progenitors. He felt that the hallucinatory sequences evoked Welles and that the gluttony of the character played by VeSota was Buñuelian. Repeated viewings of *Dementia* (I first saw it on the Internet Archive in 2010 as *Daughter of Horror*) have persuaded me of other influences. The dream imagery seems to recall Maya Deren's *Mesches of the Afternoon* (1943). The long final sequence in a jazz club, in which everyone turns accusingly against the mad woman, does seem very like the end of the ventriloquist story in *Dead of Night* (1945). Possibly Bruno VeSota, a stage and TV director from the 1940s, would have been more aware of these offbeat films than the son of an exhibitor in Oregon. But almost certainly we will never know for sure. VeSota died in 1976. An unconfirmed report has Parker (who was never credited for directing another film) dying in 1980.

The films that followed *Dementia* are another matter. There is *Eraserhead* (1977), "clearly influenced" according to critic Ralph McLean by *Dementia* although director David Lynch does not seem to have verified this. BFI publicity states that *Dementia* foreshadowed *Repulsion*



The gamin's mother (Lucille Howland) is shot dead in a flashback. (BFI.)

(1964). Could Polanski have seen or at least heard about *Dementia*? How many other film-makers have been inspired? McLean goes so far as to claim that "any arty film aiming at capturing mental breakdown and madness on screen owes a considerable debt to *Dementia*."

Until relatively recently *Dementia* was never an easy film to locate. Its unavailability may have increased its allure. Parker spent years battling censors. In 1955 a version without the dismemberment scene opened at New York's 55th Street Playhouse in a double bill with Luciano Emmer's documentary *Picasso* (1954). "A unique program of psychology and art" promised the marquee. Joe Dante says there were no further screenings.

In 1957 *Dementia* was bought by producer Jack H. Harris. He changed the title to *Daughter of Horror* and added a narration that now sounds crass: "But behind you a policeman with the face of your father, the face of your first victim! ... Guilty, guilty, guilty, mad with guilt! ... Was it only a dream?" Presumably this was intended to help the film play in Peoria. The campaign is unlikely to have succeeded. But part of *Dementia* did reach a wide audience. It's playing at the cinema invaded by extra-terrestrial jelly in Harris's production *The Blob* (1958). The young audience jeers Adrienne Barrett. Harris made a fortune. Parker, on the other hand, removed his name from the credits of *Daughter of Horror*.

By 1983 *Dementia* warranted a favourable, half-page review in Michael Weldon's *Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*. There is every indication that the reputation of this unforgettable avant garde horror experiment will continue to grow.

The BFI package also features a complementary British short, *Alone with the Monsters* (1958), possibly the only film made by spiritually-inclined British poet Nazli Nour. I have reviewed this for IMDb. [\[V\]](#)



The gamin (Adrienne Barrett) meets a pimp (Richard Barron). (BFI.)



Letters can be sent by post to Editor –
The Veteran, 13 Tennyson Court, Paddockhall
Road, Haywards Heath RH16 1EZ or by email to
bctv.veterans@btopenworld.com

ME AND SOPHIA

The Sophia article [*last issue*] resulted in quite a number of warm telephone conversations with old friends and Veterans across the globe.

On the Contents page, it is Tony Unger who got the credit. It's a confusion that goes back at least forty years when there were two unrelated Unger families in the same industry. There was a standing joke that the Oliver Unger branch (with sons Anthony and Steven) used to receive the cheques destined for the Kurt Unger branch and we on the other hand were the recipients of the bills.

With all the lovely photos adorning the article, how come there was no photo of me, Danny, with La Sophia... Well, here is one and that broad, proud smile on my face has not yet been extinguished...

Finally, a credit to stills photographer Bob Penn (1925-2002) should have been included for the images in the article.

DANIEL UNGER
By email



COLD RECEPTION

I really enjoyed reading David Edwards' article [*last issue*] about the time he spent working in Soho for twenty-five years and, particularly, Wardour Street. I was a student at the then London College of Printing at the end of the 1960s studying photography, film and video and would often be up in the West End and around "Film Land" to attend various film screenings.

David particularly talks about his time at Paramount House, and even mentions a security member of staff Len who kept a bottle of whisky under the reception counter. In my ventures into Wardour Street way back



then, the lobby area of Paramount House always struck me as being a bit stylish and modern if somewhat "cold". On one occasion I photographed it. I wonder if that is the aforementioned Len in the picture.

MARK TROMPETELER
By email

David Edwards responds: *That is not Len in the photograph. Len was certainly retired by the time this photo was taken. When Len worked there for Paramount the reception counter was a bit longer and the name Paramount was not on the rear wall. This alteration came about when Starbucks moved into Central Casting's offices and the front lobby was changed to what we see in the photograph.*

GOLD IN THEM THAR LOCK-UPS

Many Veterans are former cinema staff and, like me, may have collected bits and pieces of memorabilia. Around 1960-62, while still in school, I worked in the evenings in a small local cinema in South Wales. We used to receive weekly from the distributor the quad posters for the films we would be showing. I believe we paid 3s. 9d. for them – about 17 pence today. One day the manager was throwing some of them out and gave me about twenty-five to keep.

Sixty years on, I found them in my lock-up and at the suggestion of a friend decided to have them valued. The valuation came back roughly between £80-100 for each. One of the highest valuations was £250 for a double crown poster for the 1956 John Wayne classic *The Searchers*.



I decided to put these posters into a Vintage Posters Sale which took place on Friday 30th October. *The Searchers* poster sold for £2,200. (If it had been a full-size quad it would have been worth about £5,000.)

Another of mine, for *Jason and the Argonauts*, went for £240. It's amazing what posters even some twenty years old can fetch. I would like to thank Nigel Wolland and Victor Gallucci of the Veterans for their assistance.

GEOFF GILL
Eastbourne
By email

CLOSE SHAVE

I was sorry to learn of the passing of Derek Hill. I had the pleasure of interviewing him in 2013.

Derek told me he was a member of South London Film Society at a very young age and recalled seeing *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. He went to a British Federation of Film Societies weekend and decided "This is the life". In 1953 he became office boy at *Amateur Cine World*, then a freelance film critic in the second half of the 1950s. He wrote for *Tribune*, *Sight and Sound* and *Picturegoer* amongst others. He fell foul of John Davis at Rank following a critical piece about the Rank Organisation in the small magazine *Definition*. Davis spread the word not to employ him.

He was on the jury of the Short Film Festival at Tours and set up his own company Short Film Service in 1963. This took over his life, along with the New Cinema Club (1967-1973) which aimed to screen films which met one of three obstacles – neglect by distributors, reluctance from exhibitors, opposition from censors. He went to many short film festivals as well as Tours, Oberhausen, Leipzig, Mannheim and Zagreb. At the Oberhausen Festival one year the hotel ran out of rooms and he had to share a bed with Martin Scorsese whose short film *The Big Shave*, featuring a man shaving himself to death with lots of blood, was showing. Martin rose from the bed in striped pyjamas and asked if it was OK. Derek said, "Yes – so long as I'm first in the bathroom in the morning."

MARGARET O'BRIEN
By email

The printer of *Definition* was warned by Rank's solicitors not to publish anything more that was critical of the company. When I wrote such a piece, an editorial for another small magazine that used the same printer, he showed me the letter and apologetically declined to print my words – so I had to substitute something else and was indirectly censored by Derek Hill.

Derek is also well remembered for his vitriolic review of Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) in *Tribune*: "The only really satisfactory way to dispose of *Peeping Tom* would be to shovel it up and flush it swiftly down the nearest sewer. Even then the stench would remain." – Editor.

ABSOLUTE GENTLEMAN

I learnt recently that Mick Mason had passed away [*In Memoriam*, Issue 167]. I'm sure many in the camera department also knew him from his work with Ron Ford.

I first met Mick when I was an extremely green clapper loader and had just gone

freelance. Mick was the central loader at ABPC Elstree studios, which was great if you were shooting in the studio. In addition, Mick was often called onto one of the productions to put the board in, load or pull focus if there was a flap on.

I got a call to report to the camera department for a job. When I arrived, we had to get the gear loaded up for a location. Having only ever worked with a Mitchell S-35, it came as a big shock to find out we were going to use an Arri. Mick gave me a crash course in how to load a magazine and, while he was at it, how to write legible camera sheets – for which I was ever grateful.

I have to say, as a young clapper loader, Mick was really helpful to me in getting my foot on the ladder, and he was just such a nice guy. I was always reminded of Hank B. Marvin (guitarist with the Shadows) whenever I saw Mick! Over the years our paths crossed many times and he was always an absolute gentleman.

JERRY SANDLER
By email

STIRRED BUT NOT SHAKEN

Enjoyed reading the piece on that wonderful man Ray Harryhausen in the History Project page [*last issue, page 13*]. Whilst at Sony Pictures I had to organise a Sony flat screen TV to be delivered to his house in Paddington (one of my staff installed it) for his help on the special features DVD of *Jason* and *The Argonauts*.

The magazine always stirs memories!

BRIAN ROBERTSON
By email

MORE ON KUBRICK

Further to David Beasley's letter in issue 164, with regard to David joining me as my assistant on Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* and the removal of the negative from Humphries:

My first meeting with Stanley Kubrick at Shepperton studios was quite frosty as I was employed by the studios to run a worn-out 16mm army projector for him, which kept breaking down. I was, however, engaged in 1963 on *Dr. Strangelove* by Victor Lyndon of Hawk films as assistant special effects editor to Geoff Fry. Filming at Shepperton, Stanley Kubrick was shooting the war room on A stage with three cameras and Roy Benson, who was Stanley's editing assistant, was snowed under with film takes of 1000ft and invariably end clapper boards. Roy needed all the editing crews to help get the rushes synced for viewing at 8am prior to Kubrick commencing on set.

In 1965 I worked again for Stanley Kubrick, this time at MGM Borehamwood on *2001: A Space Odyssey* as assembly editor. The film took three years to reach completion and in 1968 I was fortunate to travel with Stanley Kubrick and his family on board the Queen Elizabeth to New York leaving from Southampton with a fully equipped cutting room on A deck, to enable the editing of the theatrical trailers of *2001* en route to New York. However, the electricity onboard was DC (direct current) and the cutting room equipment was AC, causing a slight problem, On reaching New York we all stayed at the

Plaza. From there, Kubrick and his family took the train from New York to Los Angeles, – and I flew with Roger Carras to LA, for the first ever 70mm screening of *2001* at MGM Studios Culver City for the then heads of MGM: Robert O'Brien, Maurice – "Red" Silverstein, Mel Chamberlain, plus their executive film editor, the venerable Margaret Booth, Ray Lovejoy and myself.

I further worked for Stanley Kubrick in 1970 when I began as assembly editor on *A Clockwork Orange*, prior to Ray Lovejoy who was at the time Stanley Kubrick's personal assistant and who was to join the film at the end of shooting as editor, as he had done previously on *2001*.

The week prior to shooting *A Clockwork Orange*, Stanley rang me at home, asking me to meet with him the following morning. On my arrival at his home, Abbotsmead, Stanley called out from the top of the stairs that the start date was delayed by a week, as he had contracted the mumps from his young daughter. Would I set up a cutting room at the bottom of Bullshead Road, Elstree, where the art department of John Barry had based their office. The negative was to be developed at Humphries film laboratory at Whitfield Street, London, as he was impressed with their grading on a particular Hazeltine film – all this with him calling from the top of the stairs in his nightshirt!

The film locations were shot in London and the Korova milk bar was shot at Bullshead Road, Elstree. My job was to sync the rushes with David as my assistant, then travel out to the location for Stanley to view on a Steenbeck installed in a caravan which travelled to the location each day.

On the completion of a difficult shoot, the negatives were to be moved from Humphries labs to the Rank labs at Denham for neg cutting and release printing. Stanley decided to drive himself in a hired estate car, and follow me in my VW up to Humphries labs in London, where we would load up the neg into the two vehicles and deliver it personally to the Rank

film Laboratory Denham, on the return journey from London. Stanley was following right behind me as I signalled to turn right into Moor Park, and to my horror he carried straight on. I hurriedly turned around and chased after him, as he hadn't a clue where he was. We eventually arrived at Denham, to my great relief, and delivered the valuable negative. He then followed me back home to Abbotsmead.

Ray Lovejoy had to pull out of editing *A Clockwork Orange* for personal reasons and I was able to recommend Bill Butler, whom I had worked with on the Jerry Lewis-directed feature *One More Time*, also at MGM Borehamwood. *A Clockwork Orange* was duly handed over to Bill. I left the film at that point to set up my own editing facility at Trevor Pike Sound, Film House, 142 Wardour Street, Soho.

DAVID DE WILDE
By email

INCOMPLETE

Research on my project about the films of Richard Burton has some holes around the production of two features that Burton began but didn't finish: *Laughter in the Dark* and *Jackpot*.

Burton began filming *Laughter in the Dark* for director Tony Richardson in the summer of 1968. However, after two-and-a-half weeks he left the production and was replaced by Nicol Williamson. The film was begun anew and completed with its alternative leading man.

Jackpot began filming in Nice in November 1975. Burton co-starred with Charlotte Rampling and James Coburn, with direction by Terence Young. However, financial troubles brought a halt to shooting and even though an estimated forty minutes of film was in the can, the movie could not be completed.

If any Veterans worked on either film in any capacity, I would be delighted to hear from them. I can be reached via antony_earnshaw@sky.com or 07979 231438.

TONY EARNshaw
By email



Richard Burton filming at Sotheby's for *Laughter in the Dark*.

New Members



These are the latest members to have been approved by the Executive Committee of the British Cinema and Television Veterans to join our ranks and they are warmly welcomed. The following short profiles have been compiled from details on application forms and supplementary research where necessary.

WILLIAM BIRNIE, Salford Quays

After working as a spool boy and projectionist at the Kings Cinema Brechin (1979-83), he came an usher/cashier at Odeon Glasgow (1986-89), a manager at UCI Clydebank (1989-92), then an IT Site Support Analyst, Call Centre Manager, District Manager and National Call Centre Manager at UCI's Manchester Support Office (1992-2005), Head of Contact Centre at Odeon Stoke-on-Trent (2005-11), then at Odeon's Manchester Support Office as Operations & Retail Support Manager and (currently) Service Desk Manager.

BOB EDE, Hayling Island

A 1978 graduate of the National Film School, he worked as a freelance cameraman on music promos, TV documentaries and cinema shorts including *Out of Order* (1981), then as an editor at Thames cutting docs and drama, freelancing from 1992. From 2002 he was a freelance director/cameraman/editor on corporate and promotional videos. Editing credits include *The Bill* (1988/9, three episodes), *The Happy Prince* (1996), *Meet the Ancestors* (1998, series), *Nova* (2001/2, three episodes), *Accidents in Space* (2002) and *Horizon* (2000/3, four episodes). He started digital signage advertising and content creation for Wightlink TV and then formed his own company Madfrog with daughter Claire Ede.

LOUIS ELMAN, Amersham

He joined De Lane Lea in 1958 as a trainee and became Studio Manager in 1962 and a company director circa 1963, handling English versions of foreign films. For the BBC, he produced and directed series *Belle and Sebastian* followed by *Heidi* (1978) and *Silas*. He produced the English version of *Playtime* (1967) followed by *Z* (1969) and *Das Boot* (1981). He has been responsible for ADR voice casting on over 200 productions including three series of *Game of Thrones* as well as *The Fox and the Hound* (1981), *The Crying Game* (1992), *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (2002), *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), *The Duchess* (2008), *Les Misérables* (2012) and *Dunkirk* (2017).

CHRISTIAN JOYCE, Cleeve

A sound assistant on *We Are Seven* and *The Jazz Detective* in 1990, he worked as a boom operator on *Two Deaths* (1995), *Grafters* (1999), *Happiness* (2001), etc. As a sound recordist, his credits include *Daniel Deronda* (2002), *The Brief* (2005) and *The Five(ish) Doctors Reboot* (2013). As a sound

mixer, his titles include *Ripley Under Ground* (2005), *Access All Areas* (2017), *Close* (2019) and *Gun Shy* (2017) as well as second unit work on numerous productions, most recently *Avengers: Endgame* and *Men In Black: International* (both 2019) plus *The Eternals* (2021).

STEFFAN LAUGHARNE, Gamlingay

After assisting with the running of Saturday morning shows at the ABC Newport and as a relief projectionist at the Theatre Clwyd Mold, he studied for a B.Sc degree at Imperial College, London, where he equipped a disused concert hall with 35mm film equipment and ran shows. Graduating in 1995, he was appointed a Technical Assistant at the Odeon Marble Arch, then Chief Technician at the Odeon Camden Town with relief duties at Odeons in the West End. He joined Bell Theatre Services as a Sound and Projection Engineer in 1999 and is currently a Design and Project Manager involved in the construction of new cinemas.

BIN PADIA

This Senior Finance Assistant started at the Dewe Rogerson Agency (1979-89), moving to TBWA Advertising (1989-91), then joining Panavision on 11 June 1991, being made redundant by the company on 31 October 2020.

KENITH TRODD, London W5

His career as a television producer includes 19 episodes of ITV *Sunday Night Theatre* (1969-71), 31 episodes of *Play For Today* (1973-82) and 12 episodes of *Screen Two* (1984-93). He is particularly associated with the writer Dennis Potter, having produced *Pennies from Heaven* (1978), *Blue Remembered Hills* (1979), *The Singing Detective* (1986), *Christabel* (1988), *Karaoke* (1996) and *Cold Lazarus* (1996). He worked with Stephen Poliakoff on *Caught on a Train* (1980) and *She's Been Away* (1989). His films include *Dreamchild* (1985), *A Month in the Country* (1987) and *Circle of Friends* (1995).

In Memoriam

JOHN ALDRED, Goring by Sea

6 August 1921 - 20 December 2020

ERNEST BAILEY, Enfield

2 August 1925 - 26 November 2020

KEITH BARBER, Bromley

3 April 1925 - 2020

JOY SWINSON BENSON, Leominster

- 26 December 2020

ANTHONY BRAY, London

28 April 1936 - 5 October 2020

GORDON CLAMPITT, London

27 February 1957- 7 April 2020

DEREK HILL, London

4 October 1930 - 28 September 2020

PAMELA MANN FRANCIS, Ashford

26 March 1927 - 23 August 2020

ALAN HERBERT, Ashford

18 February 1944 - 5 October 2020

JASON KRASUCKI, London

14 July 1959 - 12 January 2021

DAVID LONDON, Twickenham

28 January 1934 - 16 November 2020

ROGER MARSHALL, Richmond

15 March 1934 - 1 April 2020

PETER PICKERING, Malton

23 January 1924 - 20 November 2020

Newsletter

Spring 2021

CONTINUING INDUSTRY SUPPORT

Last year, the industry came to a standstill as production shut down due to the outbreak of Covid-19. It's been a hard year for many especially as such a large number of workers in the industry are freelancers. The Film and TV Charity has been there to support those hit the hardest during Covid times and will continue to be there for those people that need us as the world opens back up post lockdown.

Over 9,000 people helped

In 2020 we responded to over 6,000 calls and messages from over 4,000 people via the Support Line. We had our busiest month ever in October, more than 1,200 people got in touch through our Support Line, five times the average number during the two years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. We're now on a journey to radically increase the reach and impact of our services and help even more people. In the last couple of years, we've started new fundraising initiatives and we're on a path to radically improve mental health in the industry. Hundreds of people have started using our new online mental health platform - Togetherall, helping them to stay in touch and manage their wellbeing.

In their own words

Thanks to our supporters we've been able to help huge numbers of people in our industry over the last year.



These are just some of the people who've been directly involved:

"The grant from the Film and TV Charity I've received has been amazing, enabling me to purchase a Segway wheelchair that has opened so many new doors for me as a filmmaker. It now means that I can operate a camera hands-free and venture off road, getting on to more sets and locations than I could before."

Chris Lynch, Filmmaker

"My grant from Film and TV Charity paid for a community project called Cinemamas during lockdown - it literally changed my life because as a working parent I had lost all my income and the project gave me a sense of purpose each day."

Valeria Bullo, Industry Freelancer

"I really can't thank everyone at the Film and TV Charity enough for this incredible support, as I've had it confirmed from the grants officer that my grant application has been approved. This will be such a huge help to me financially, and is a real positive at this difficult time."

Support Grant Recipient

"It's been a pleasure working with Film and TV Charity this year and our heartfelt thanks on behalf of everyone here for the phenomenal effort you've put into supporting the industry through an incredibly difficult time."

Ben King, Director of Policy at Netflix

"At Christmas time we usually send gifts to Commissioners and others in the industry as a goodwill gesture of the support they have shown us during the year. This year we've decided

to do something different. The money we would have spent we are donating instead to the invaluable work the Film and TV Charity have been doing for mental health and the other critical support provided for friends and colleagues in the industry particularly during the ongoing and challenging pandemic. We all admire the dedication and commitment of your team in providing this service to Freelancers who are the lifeblood of our Industry."

Fatima Salaria, MD Naked TV

You can keep up with our latest work on
facebook.com/FilmTVCharity,
Twitter [@FilmTVCharity](https://twitter.com/FilmTVCharity) or
Instagram at
instagram.com/filmtvcharity/



THE BADGE COLLECTOR: BOB MANDRY

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