



The

Veteran

ISSUE 188
AUGUST 2026

The Magazine of
The British Cinema and
Television Veterans

Harrow's White Palace

see page 12





British Cinema and Television Veterans

An association for those who have given more than 25 years to the cinema, film or television industries

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Honorary Independent Examiner – vacant

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Enquiries concerning all matters of membership including membership cards, changes of address and notices of bereavements, and all general enquiries:

Company Secretary

Donald MacKenzie
British Cinema and Television Veterans
22 Golden Square
London W1F 9AD
Tel: 020 7287 2976
Email: office@bctv.uk
Office usually open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

Website

Webmaster: Cliff Baillie
www.bctv.uk
Members' section - login: bctvweb2025 - password: cinemecc1920

SOMETHING TO DO?

We still require an **Honorary Independent Examiner** to check our accounts. For any member with a financial background, this should take less than a day once a year.

We also seek an **Events Co-Ordinator** to develop suggestions from members. Contact our Company Secretary via the office (address above).

And we still wish to recruit a member with some **print editing or publicity experience** to work with the Editor as detailed in the last issue, page 4. Contact allen@aeyles.plus.com for further information.

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The Film & TV Charity is a separate organisation from The British Cinema and Television Veterans – for contact details, see page 31

The Veteran

Editor: Allen Eyles
13 Tennyson Court, Paddockhall Road,
Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1EZ
Tel: 01444 455 763
Email: office@bctv.uk

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BRITISH CINEMA AND TELEVISION VETERANS LIMITED

A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales under number 7393345.

**Notice is hereby given of the
Annual General Meeting of Members to be held on
THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT NOON
FTC, 22 Golden Square, London, W1F 9AD**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
 2. Notice convening the meeting
 3. To receive and approve the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 18 September 2025
 4. Matters arising not on the agenda
 5. Agreement of Any Other Business – item 10
 6. To receive the President's Report
 7. To receive the Honorary Treasurer's Report and the Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2026
 8. To approve the Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2026
 9. To note that:
 - (i) In accordance with Articles 8.3 and 8.4 of the Articles of Association, one third of the Executive Committee is required to retire at each Annual General Meeting, these being the longest serving Members. This year the retiring Members are Linda Ayton, Spencer MacDonald & Martin Sheffield. They are offering themselves for re-election and are automatically nominated. Michael Vickers is retiring from the Committee.
 - (ii) In accordance with Article 8.1.3, any other nominations for election to the Executive Committee must be proposed and seconded by two members of the Company who must deliver to the Secretary the nominee's consent in writing by no later than Wednesday 26 August 2026.
- Forms for additional nominations can be obtained from the Company Secretary.
- (iii) Article 8.1.1 specifies that no more than 6 Executive Committee Members may be elected in any one year.
To elect up to 6 Executive Committee Members
 10. To approve the following special resolution to alter the Articles of Association for Section 6. We will remove the requirement for a proposer/seconded (which is problematic with GDPR), and the need for a signature - which is impossible with our new electronic web form. Amendment for approval as follows:

6 Applications for membership

No person shall become a member of the Company unless:

- 6.1 that person has completed and submitted an application for membership of the Company in a form approved by the Executive Committee;
- 6.2 the Membership committee has approved the application.
- 6.3 in the event of any dispute about the appointment of any person to become a member of the Company the Executive Committee's decision on the matter is final and binding on all parties.

11. Any other ordinary business agreed at item 5

**By Order of the Executive Committee
Donald MacKenzie - Company Secretary**

*Members are reminded they may only vote in person
and may be asked to show their membership card to prove their eligibility.*

**Any member wishing to attend the AGM should notify the Company Secretary
no later than 4pm on Thursday 3 September 2026**

*Please email or telephone the office: office@bctv.uk or 020 7287 2976
Please include your email or telephone contact details in any message
so we can contact you if there are any changes.*

BRITISH CINEMA AND TELEVISION VETERANS LIMITED

Draft Profit and Loss Account for the period from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

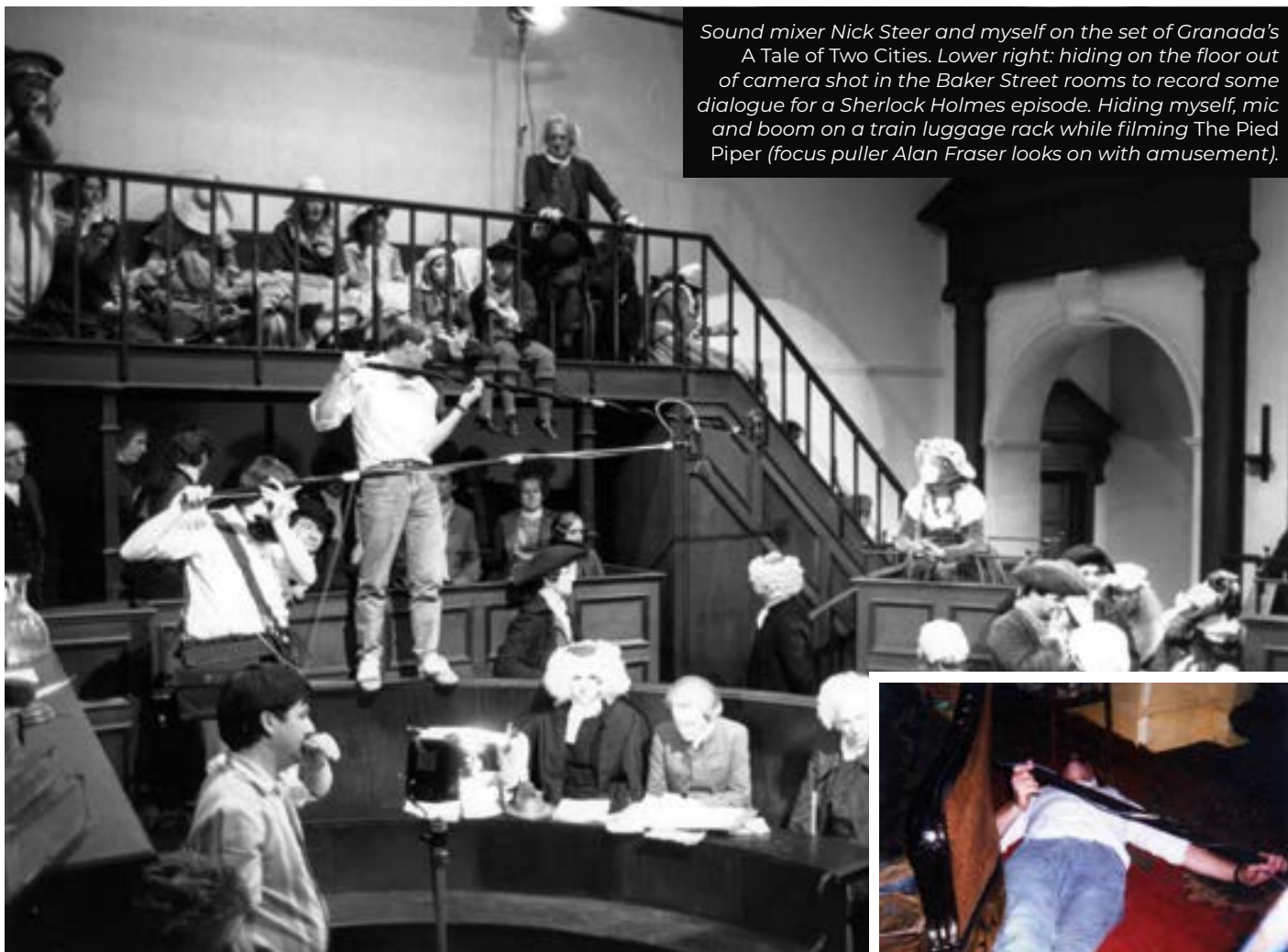
	2026 £	2025 £
Turnover		
Members Subscriptions	43,182	41,255
Members joining fees	3,450	3,030
Events for members	1,075	812
Other income	110	0
	<u>47,817</u>	<u>45,097</u>
Cost of sales		
Costs of magazine	20,961	20,741
Costs of events	894	927
	<u>21,855</u>	<u>21,668</u>
Gross Profit	25,962	23,429
Other Operating Income		
Donations	23,247	10,902
Legacies	43,462	0
	<u>66,709</u>	<u>10,902</u>
Administrative expenses		
Staff costs	24,474	27,718
Rent	8,050	6,500
Other costs	7,087	8,425
	<u>39,611</u>	<u>42,643</u>
Operating Profit / (deficit)	53,060	(8,312)
Interest receivable	1,502	788
Provision for Corporation Tax	(6,506)	0
Profit / (Deficit) on ordinary activities	48,056	(7,524)

Draft Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2026

	Equipment £	Furniture £	31-Mar 2026 Total £	31-Mar 2025 Total £
FIXED ASSETS				
At Cost				
Brought forward 31st March 2025	1,477	268	1,745	1,745
Additions	550			
Balance 31st March 2026	<u>2,027</u>	<u>268</u>	<u>2,295</u>	
Depreciation				
Brought forward 31st March 2025	(1,263)	(268)	(1,365)	
Charge for year	(191)	0	(95)	
Balance 31st March 2026	<u>(1,454)</u>	<u>(268)</u>	<u>(1,722)</u>	(1,531)
Net Book Value	573	0	573	214
CURRENT ASSETS				
Cash at bank			118,407	65,004
			<u>118,407</u>	<u>65,004</u>
ACCRUALS AND DEFERRED INCOME				
Deferred income in advance from Members			33,885	34,480
Accruals			8795	2494
			<u>42,680</u>	<u>36,974</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS			75,727	28,030
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			76,300	28,244
RESERVES			£	£
Profit and loss account Brought forward 1st April 2025			28,244	35,768
Profit (Deficit) for the period			48,056	(7,524)
TOTAL RESERVES AT 31ST MARCH 2026			<u>76,300</u>	<u>28,244</u>

These more detailed accounts have been prepared to give members information on the position of the Company. The accounts which will be approved at the AGM and then filed with Companies House will have less detail and will be prepared under the regulations of the Financial Reporting Standard for Micro-Entities (FRS 105) as required by EU and international law.

Sound mixer Nick Steer and myself on the set of Granada's A Tale of Two Cities. Lower right: hiding on the floor out of camera shot in the Baker Street rooms to record some dialogue for a Sherlock Holmes episode. Hiding myself, mic and boom on a train luggage rack while filming The Pied Piper (focus puller Alan Fraser looks on with amusement).



Swinging for Sherlock

When **DAVID EVE** swung the boom for Granada Television in Manchester

I joined Granada in 1980 and due to a back injury had left the film world nearly thirty years ago. So it was a pleasant surprise about a year ago to receive a telephone call from a podcast group asking for my memories of working on the Granada Sherlock Holmes series filmed between 1984 and 1994.

First, I should explain how a not particularly academic lad from remote West Cumbria obtained a job at one of the most famous of all the ITV companies.

My lifelong interest in films and cinemas was ignited by my family's connection with film exhibition. My great, great grandfather George Biddall started a Ghost Illusion show before the turn of the last century. He must have seen a Bioscope being operated by a competitor

at one of the many fairs that travelling folk attended in the Northern Counties of England. I presume by the interest being shown (and money being made) he decided to get in on the act. Apparently, the films he bought were badly worn and the projector not perfected, so the attraction was abandoned for a time but was certainly in operation again by the end of 1897.

When George died in 1909 in Cockermouth, Cumbria, the show was rested although different branches of the family operated shows in Scotland and London with live drama, films and fairground attachments. The next generation in Cockermouth decided by 1911 to open a permanent picture palace in a small mining village called Frizington.



It was here that my grandmother played the piano to accompany the pictures and it was her stories of this time that ignited my interest in the entertainment industry and an ambition to get into the film world.

I developed a keen interest in photography and managed to get a place on the film and photography course at what was then Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design. After three years of learning about film making, I thought getting into the industry wouldn't be too difficult. We had managed to get an Arri BL camera and a Nagra tape recorder in our final year of study so at least we

were beginning to get the hang of the professional equipment then used by our peers.

The ITV strike in 1979 and not being engineering material for the BBC meant a year sidelined and any thoughts of breaking into the industry had diminished with my return to West Cumbria, a long way from the centre of the any “action”. However, I had forgotten I had sent off an application the previous year to Granada TV in Manchester and a letter arrived inviting me to an interview. After another vetting, I was offered a job as a trainee boom swinger. In 1980, my salary was just over £6,500 a year! Amazingly, a fellow student from Bournemouth, Steve Oxley, was offered a job in the camera department in the same week. He had worked on my student film and would often be on the schedule for Sherlock Holmes with me. (Sadly, the film industry lifestyle took its toll on Steve, who was a first class focus puller, and he passed away too young.) We both had to apply for our ACTT ticket, of course, but our applications to join the union were approved.

Granada had the biggest in-house film unit of any of the ITV companies and would have been second only to the BBC

with thirty-six of us on the payroll when Steve and I joined in Manchester.

My student work had been on documentaries, with sound on little dramas being recorded from the edge of the frame. I had used a pair of radio mics and the art of being a boom swinger was relatively new to me.

Arriving on the outdoor set of *Coronation Street* on a cold Monday morning in my first week at Granada was thrilling. However, it was a very sharp learning curve working out who was going to speak without a script beside me and how to delicately hold a fifteen-foot boom pole to avoid handling noise.

I talked to a few boom swingers and sound recordists about the art of predicting who was going to deliver their lines, how to watch what the camera was doing with one eye, where to stand to operate on set, and keeping the mic out of shot but being as close to the camera frame line as possible.

One said just watch the actor’s lips, you will get the swing of things after a few rehearsals. Well, certainly on *Coronation Street* filming inserts, there were very few rehearsals and I decided that the only way to do the job well and become the best at

it was to learn all the scripted lines, or at least the first and last words that an actor delivered and who had the next line.

In the early 1980s recording film sound was a relatively a simple affair. Getting the best dialogue was the most important thing – you might have been halfway up a hill, so equipment then was just what was possible to get to where the scene was being filmed. At that time there was no video assist that the crew now assembles around to check their particular contribution. There weren’t headphones for the boom swinger, radio mics were relatively primitive, and the sound mixer could be out of the set with no view of what was happening in front of the camera.

Mixing was done in a relatively simple way, often the boom swingers mic fed directly into the Nagra tape recorder, with occasionally another for foreground action but no sound trolley, no pre-mixing faders, just three pots on the Nagra and the boom swinger making sure the mic covered what was happening in the frame.

Things changed, of course, and as trolleys came in so did the opportunity for the mixer to record in more channels while better radio mics gave more options.



On *Coronation Street*, filming outside the Duckworths’ house.



Showing the construction of the Baker Street set on Granada's back lot and filming a boat scene for episode "A Scandal in Bohemia" with the beautiful Gayle Hunnicutt.

However, in the early 1980s we had generally a pair of radio mics and a couple of Sennheiser mics: one to place hidden on set and one for me to attach to the boom pole and swing.

What was difficult for me to anticipate was how the scene would be blocked, so knowing the dialogue in case the whole scene was shot wide made me confident of capturing all the lines. To be as good as I could at the job, I needed to know who was going to speak in shot (and often, in complex exchanges, the lines off camera). To be confident at this, I learned most of the lines the night before, often waking up in the morning with the bed covered in pages of script.

My mic skills and the sound mixers' knowledge enabled us to capture the cleanest dialogue and effects on location or in our film studio. The skilled track layers and dubbing teams polished up the delivery of the sound, and that's what made the final sound so wonderful at Granada.

When busy in production, my life outside of Granada was pretty boring. I had little social life as I was so tired spending hours with my arms in the air,

under hot lights swinging a mic around, and then script learning in the evening.

Knowing who was speaking when allowed me to watch the camera tilts and occasional lens zooms and look out for mic shadows as well as keeping the mic out of the camera frame. One never knew when a director would cut into a shot for close ups, or keep or return to the wide shot in the editing process. I also learned never to be far from the set after a rehearsal, just in case the director of photography added another light that would screw up my operating position or create shadows. A new light, particularly behind the camera, would make it impossible for me to do my job. But the Granada camera department were excellent at helping me out – they knew we had to work as a team.

The picture was king but if it was difficult to record sound then the cost in post-production of dropping in lines was added to the budget and questions could be asked. A chopper over a light or the camera often gave me a darker space at the top of the set to swing the mic with confidence.

I always admired the skill of my fellow

crew: the DoPs for creating such wonderful atmosphere with lighting; the camera operators for beautiful framing and for spotting where my mic was in the safety area of the viewfinder, even with the camera shutter obscuring the frame at times; the focus pullers who focused the shot without being able to see through the lens during a take, and working at very low apertures with minimal depth of field; not forgetting the sound mixer, using his skills to decide if the take was OK and the plane or car noise in the background could be lost.

I became pretty good at working out where a safe area was above the camera frame in which to work. I usually asked to look down the viewfinder myself once the scene was blocked and the camera operator was happy with the choice of lens. This gave me the knowledge to swing the mic without it appearing in picture. There was no way then of electronically removing it later. Sometimes I was reduced to lying on the floor out of shot because I could be seen or reflected in a mirror. I often had to wrap myself up in Bolton Twill, a black cloth, to hide my reflection, to everyone's amusement.

Occasionally a camera operator would



Jeremy Brett (Sherlock Holmes) and David Burke (Doctor Watson) on press day for the launch of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* series.



A candid shot when Jeremy Brett noticed my camera. He could spot a camera lens anywhere.



Sharing a joke with Sir John Mills on the set of Granada's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1989).

say he was happy to see the mic in the safe area of the frame in the viewfinder during takes as they trusted me, but I was always a little concerned. The sound mixer wanted the mic as near to the action as possible but sometimes a compromise had to be made.

Very occasionally there might be a call of mic in shot on a difficult take. I often guessed that if an operator had used up his number of takes trying to get the shot he wanted, my mic would become an excuse for a retake. I would sometimes quietly say to the production secretary, "Print that one as well as I'm sure my mic didn't creep in."

Having been accepted as a competent boom swinger, I was introduced to the Baker Street set in 1983. David Plowright,



Passing the rather unrealistic backdrop of the Baker Street set as seen from inside the rooms through the windows – my only criticism of the series.

Granada's MD at the time, and Michael Cox, Senior Drama Producer, had taken on the mighty task of filming as many as possible of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series if the results of the first series, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, were well received. Granada's dream was to do the whole episodes on 16mm film rather than the part studio/part film versions that had been screened by the BBC and others in the past.

The Granada Sherlock had its own exterior Baker Street, next to that of *Coronation Street*. Building a set for a contemporary twice-weekly programme like *Coronation Street* was relatively easy; building a set for a Victorian series in the middle of a city, however, was a huge challenge, not just for images but for sound with modern day cars, planes and noise. Little dialogue was scripted on Baker Street and adding the Victorian ambience of horses, paper sellers and even a steam engine helped in the dubbing process. The scale of the three-storey high set enabled a huge amount of action to take place as well as the use of camera cranes and dollies, as long as the sodium streetlights of Salford were kept out of shot.

Baker Street featured shop frontages – some practical like a barber's shop, bookstore and, of course, the entrance hall and stairs of 221B. This enabled action and discussion to take place outside of the Baker Street rooms, as most of the episodes featured Mrs. Hudson depositing villains or heroines into Sherlock's rooms at the start or end of the stories.

As time went on, there were only so many angles to shoot from without being repetitive. Luckily, the performances and the set designed by Michael Grimes were a joy to observe and interesting on the eye. Again, the wonderful prop buyers and prop dressers should be given credit for their contribution to the success of the series.

Filming is about five minutes of intense concentration in every hour when the clapper board goes on. My ears used to switch into overdrive for the duration, not only listening to the lines, but to noises off – a creaky floorboard, a piece of action which blotted out a word, or a line off mic which overlapped a line on mic and would prove difficult to edit.

It wasn't just me concentrating: there



The Sherlock sound and camera crew on location with Jeremy Brett. Left to right: focus puller Darren Miller, camera operator Alan Fraser, director of photography (with pipe) Ken Morgan, recordist Phil Smith (above camera), grip Mike Fisher; Jeremy; and clapper loader Steve Brookes, plus myself in striped teeshirt as boom swinger. The inscription by Jeremy reads: "Dear Dave — you look younger than ever, how do you do it? — love from Jeremy" (the master of flattery!).

was the focus puller watching the toes of an actor's shoes hitting the mark on the floor so they would be in focus; the make up artist looking at the wig line on a leading lady for the duration of the take. The electricity on set was magical until the word "cut" was delivered and everyone relaxed.

Two simpler episodes of *The Adventures* were filmed before "The Naval Treaty", the first on which I worked, to allow Jeremy Brett as Sherlock and the first Doctor Watson, David Burke, to get comfortable in their roles.

While my arrival onto the set for the first day of filming "The Naval Treaty" as a new face was quite daunting, at least I knew the lines! Jeremy had a particular skill in knowing everyone's name on set. Being introduced to him was quite a moment. His tall and handsome features were evident from his first greeting and his voice was so wonderful and memorable.

I didn't set out to be part of a sound team, but one of the magic things that I have developed is to listen to the texture and delivery of an actor's voice and almost taste the words, having to concentrate on the delivery, listening to every pause and vowel as I swung the mic around for the next line or interchange. Jeremy Brett's role as Sherlock often enabled him to deliver his lines with gusto — provided I could pull the mic away and the mixer had a steady hand on the sound mixing when he raised his voice a few decibels.

Lots of wonderful locations were used

in "The Naval Treaty", sets created and a sequence filmed in Manchester Town Hall. This magnificent Victorian building was a regular location for filming *Sherlock*. It had an inner access road. The stonework had never been cleaned from Manchester's industrial past. The black sooty appearance re-created a great Victorian London and it was pretty good for recording sound, late at night or early on a Sunday morning.

Jeremy took a shine to everyone but was always great with me. Only once after a long take did the mic clip the frame and the operator stopped the take. Tired and hot under the lights with a complex set of lines, Jeremy looked at me and quietly pointed his finger in the air, "David, just a little higher", and I got the message.

On another occasion Jeremy came to me and said, "David, I'm a little worried about you." It had been a long time since the mic appeared in shot, so I feared the worst. "I've been watching you and when you rest the boom pole on your back between takes, you could be getting round shouldered." He stood behind me, pulled a little of my hair up, and said, "I do the Alexander Technique. I'm going to make sure, every time you rest that boom pole across your shoulders, you stand in a way that takes the strain of your back." And he did.

Learning and de-learning lines of script as I've mentioned became routine. I used to grab my lunch and often return to the set and lounge on the large settee that featured in the Baker Street rooms. I could lay out the pages of my script for the next scene and then have a quiet nap.

Holding your hands in the air with a boom pole with a mic on the end was very tiring. The set got hot, the space in the Victorian bonded warehouse where we filmed the interiors was not particularly high — enough for the set and some lighting, but it used to heat up and when the lights were struck, the temperature dropped. The barn doors on the lights used to creak as they cooled down.

Jeremy suffered with the heat on set and he used to perspire with make-up and Victorian costume. He would often join me on the quiet unlit set at lunchtime — him having a nap on his bed in his bedroom which was part of the extended set, and me with my script on the settee. It was a lovely quiet time to relax for me, and for Jeremy to have time to himself.

I often wish I had asked him more about his time in the USA. He told me about his home under the famous Hollywood sign and his experience filming *My Fair Lady*. He was too proud to admit his voice was dubbed in his most famous role when singing the immortal "On the street where you live", telling me, "I think they did something with the top of my notes".

I wish I had asked him about working with Alastair Sim, one of my all-time favourite actors, but at the time I hadn't seen the TV production of *The Prodigal Daughter* in which they both appeared, not long before Alastair died in 1976. (I did get Alastair's lovely daughter Merlith to introduce two of her father's films many years later when I was involved with the Plaza Stockport, but that's another story.)

Jeremy was always line perfect, never missed a mark and only occasionally stumbled. He was generous with every other actor who appeared on set but had a wonderful technique in reaching out and gently nudging a performer an inch or so if they mistakenly crept into his key light. Jeremy was always present with other actors for his off lines out of camera. He was the true professional.

Only once do I remember a misdelivered line, when he was supposed to say "like a sportsman lying in wait" and it was delivered as "like a Scotsman lying in wait". We all fell about laughing. We had many a joke on set and if Jeremy could do something unexpected, like (when fitter) jump over the settee in shot as he raced to the corner of the set, he would do so with gusto.

Another example of his kindness. When an extra was unexpectedly given a couple of lines and in his excitement couldn't deliver them without cocking them up, Jeremy was determined that the extra was not to be embarrassed and that he should be given his chance. By around take five, the director was showing concern at the time it was taking but Jeremy was insistent that the chap should be given another go. In the end, a cut away shot and the joining of different takes got the situation sorted and no one suffered the embarrassment of failure.

I must mention David Burke (who



Recording sound effects with my mentor and great friend, sound mixer Nick Steer, in Paris.

just recently passed away) and Edward Hardwicke who both played Doctor Watson to Jeremy's Sherlock. They were wonderful actors and gave Jeremy huge support both on set and later when his health was failing. There's a lot been written about which was the best in the role. To me working alongside them, they both brought new and interesting aspects to the role of Doctor Watson, a character which had been portrayed in the 1930s as a bit of a silly sidekick to the sharp and dynamic Holmes.

I attended the memorial service for Jeremy held in the Actors Church in Covent Garden and was humbled to be recognised by David Burke so many years after filming the first episodes.

I worked with Martin Kay as sound mixer on "The Naval Treaty" and later on other Granada shows. He was very quiet but a good teacher, having been the sound mixer on *The Jewel in the Crown*. I was told I was supposed to be the trainee on that great epic but in the end another mixer went as boom swinger and a back up mixer in case of illness. As it was a huge production taking place many miles from Manchester, it was a good idea to have cover in case of sickness.

In total I was boom swinger on twenty out of the forty-one of the Sherlock Holmes episodes that Granada made. I was lucky to work with many fine actors who appeared in the series, including Robert Hardy, Josh Ackland, Anthony Valentine and famous names from my childhood in cameo roles like Eric Sykes and Roy Hudd.

It was fascinating to see the directors' ability to bring something new and visual to each episode. David Carson directed "The Blue Carbuncle" and "The Six Napoleons", two of my favourite episodes. John Madden, who directed at least two episodes, went on to direct features. And

everyone remembers Peter Hammond for his use of mirrors, coloured glass and extraordinary style. Followers of the series either love or hate his contribution to the series. Like Hitchcock, he would carry his book of sketches with him for each scene. If we got behind, I've seen him tear out a few pages, throw them to the floor and say to the production manager, "Back on schedule now." His use of the colour red was everywhere in shot – glass, carpets, costumes and blood! He never missed a chance to entertain his crew on set. He had been an actor, was a talented painter and directed memorable television shows.

Peter gave me my first screen credit. I

sat next to him and watched the first long 35mm-filmed *Sherlock* at a preview in London. "Like that," he said as my name came up. "You'll get used to it." In my early career it wasn't ITV's policy to credit boom swingers and focus pullers. It was only latterly, when Granada marketed us out, that they thought it was good to advertise our talents.

One of my most memorable *Sherlocks* was "Wisteria Lodge", a Peter Hammond production which included Freddie Jones in the cast. Freddie was always eating mint balls in his scenes. I'm not sure if this was scripted or something Freddie decided upon to steal the scenes. One of my favourite Granada film unit colleagues, David Odd, was DoP on "Wisteria Lodge". It was a great episode in my view, and pure joy to work on.

I only did one episode from the last batch of *Sherlock* episodes, "The Dying Detective" – a good story with Jeremy doing his best to give the performance he demanded of himself when he was terribly ill. I had never been a collector of autographs from those I had worked with – it just felt strange for me to ask someone I was working beside to sign something. But, sensing this might be the last time I worked with Jeremy, I took my *Strand*-bound copy of the Conan Doyle stories to work and both Jeremy and Edward signed it. Jeremy wrote: "To David who worked with me on many of our cases." A treasured memento.

Often, I had been absent from Baker Street for periods when I was scheduled or asked to work on other films. I did get my chance to be sound mixer on a couple of *World in Action* and local programmes, but it was as a boom swinger that I seemed to be in demand.

I had never been abroad until I joined



Sound crew on location for August (1996), directed by and starring Anthony Hopkins. Left to right: Hopkins; trainee sound assistant Mari Hughes; actor Gawn Grainger; myself; sound mixer Rudi Buckle.



David Gwillim and Alison Skilbeck as the leads in the Sherlock Holmes episode "The Naval Treaty" (1984), directed by Alan Grist. This year they appeared at a BrettCon event built around the episode.

Granada and my first visit overseas was a six-week trip to Malaya and Singapore. In those days crews were regularly flown around the world and not picked up locally. Hence a wonderful opportunity to do things and visit places. You were well paid, had amazing opportunities to travel and to meet wonderful people. In return you gave up part of your life to be flexible and were expected to be loyal to the company you worked for. I never heard anyone ever say they didn't enjoy their time working for Granada. We were one huge family and everyone was looked after. Eventually the accountants got involved and the golden age ended.

I must mention Phil Smith who was senior sound mixer in the film unit. Phil and I did many long-haul films and he was sound mixer on *Brideshead Revisited*. We were a great team, and Phil always offered me great advice.

My other great mentor was Nick Steer, I took his place in the film unit when he became a sound mixer so he was landed with me as a rookie – I didn't know how to hold a boom pole, never mind swing it. Nick and I have remained great friends and I regard much of my success at the time to his ability to pass on his knowledge and let me find my own way of using the mic and the boom pole.

Nick and I worked on a version of *A Tale of Two Cities*, a French co-production. It was beautifully shot with a great cast including Sir John Mills. Unfortunately, the budget ran low, so the storming of the Bastille was achieved by the same fifty extras running around in a circle with the odd costume change en route.

Michael Cox, who had done so much of the planning and work to bring Sherlock to the screen, had many projects in development. One of these was a version of *The Pied Piper* by Neville Shute, made for the US in 1989. I spent many weeks in France, delighted to be working on a film starring Peter O'Toole.

Another project of Michael's was a 1960s period drama, *After The War*, set in France, Kenya and of course Manchester which stood in for London. I did this with Nick as mixer but this expensively made series to my knowledge has not been screened since on ITV.

June Wyndham-Davies, who had so carefully picked up the reins of producing *Sherlock* when Mike Cox was off doing other projects, secured me to do a one-off 35mm film which she was producing in 1994. *August* was directed by and starred Anthony Hopkins and we spent a few glorious weeks in north Wales. June booked me before the sound mixer was contracted, which was a little unusual, but in the end we got on well and a great soundtrack was recorded and mixed.

Anthony Hopkins was such a pleasure to work with. His ability to hold the crew with his own performance in a scene and then switch to direct other actors in the next scene showed a streak of genius. There always seemed to be laughter on set and Tony (as he liked to be called on set) entertained us by playing the piano so sensitively during a costume change or lighting a rig.

Anthony Hopkins has so many talents, and it was a joy to place a mic near him to capture his voice. The other great voice apart from Tony's and Jeremy Brett's that I had the privilege of recording was that of James Mason. Granada managed to do a short interview with him at the Dorchester Hotel in London, not long before he died.

I seemed to be in demand and I looked at going freelance, but a back injury obtained by banging into a metal gate while boom swinging began to haunt me. The pain at the time was excruciating and I fell to the floor, boom mic and all. I managed to continue with physio and painkillers. Sciatica became an issue and during filming with Helen Mirren on *Prime Suspect* I began to have to lie down between takes, the pain being so strong.

Granada were very good to me. I was moved to office duties, one aspect of which was to collate film unit members' hours. Retirements and leaving had reduced the unit to half what it was when I joined. I realised that the industry was changing and, perhaps in a year if not a month or two, everyone would be made redundant or have to go freelance. With my back issues there was no chance of that for me. In 1998 I retired from Granada. I joked that I had only been reduced to tears twice at Granada, once when I hurt my back and the other time was when I realised I had left it too long to sue them!

Retiring to Poole with my partner, I have come full circle from my days at film school in Bournemouth. I'm still a Northerner at heart but the slightly milder climate on the South Coast helps with the back pain. It now seems a very long time since the boom pole was swung, but it has found many uses since, from chopping off loose garden greenery to the painting of a high ceiling.

It was a pleasant surprise to receive that telephone call from BrettCon, the podcast group, asking about my involvement with the Granada Sherlock Holmes series. This kicked off one reunion when "The Naval Treaty" was shown at the Riverside Hammersmith with surviving cast and crew members, including episode leads David Gwillim and Alison Skilbeck. Another event is taking place in Manchester in September. We will unite some cast and crew for an event at The Dance House Theatre in September with a day-long celebration and a location tour around Manchester city centre plus an event in South Lakeland in the location where we filmed "The Dancing Men". [v](#)

For further details of the Manchester event on 18-20 September, see Noticeboard in our last issue, page 28, or go to <http://sherlockpodcast.com>



Dominion Harrow in 1936. (Editor's collection.)

Harrow's White Palace

Allen Eyles notes the return of an architectural extravaganza

The new British cinemas of the 1930s showed two approaches where design was concerned. Some promoters sought to blend in with their surroundings and others sought to stand out with a brash, modern look. Some were prepared to be influenced by the ideas and imagination of their architects. Harrow and the surrounding area of north London were fortunate in having two forward-looking architectural practices and entrepreneurs who were willing to

back their vision of what a modern cinema should look like.

One was A. P. Starkey who established much of the now celebrated Odeon style in his design for the Odeon South Harrow – a style his practice continued in the area by Odeons at Kingsbury and Colindale as well as others further afield at Sudbury, North Finchley and Sidcup. None have survived as cinemas but Colindale stands as a snooker hall.

The other architect was F. E. Bromige

whose cinemas tended to be bigger and in more central sites. His exterior trademarks were the use of large areas of glazing with horizontal bars and curved ends combined with large areas of white rendering capped by jutting fins with illuminated signage in an utterly idiosyncratic style. Whereas Starkey's interiors were generally unexceptional, Bromige scored internally, especially with his auditoriums, their ribbed ceilings curving down dramatically towards the screen.



Dominions at Southall (left) in 1946 and Acton in 1937. (Editor's collection.)



Grosvenor Rayners Lane with restored vertical sign (photograph by Bruce Peter) and full exterior in 2006 with new signage as Zoroastrian Centre (photograph by Allen Eyles). Auditorium in 1982 (photograph by John Edwards for Museum of London).

Bromige developed this style at the Dominion Southall, opened in 1935, and followed three months later by the Dominion Harrow with just over 2,000 seats. Two more Dominions followed at Acton and Barnet, although the latter (later renamed Essoldo) was the completion of another architect's work. Bromige also entirely reconstructed an old cinema at Dalston in 1937 for the Classic repertory circuit which is still operating as the Rio.

Whereas Starkey's contribution to cinema design has been shamefully overlooked, three of Bromige's buildings have been given some degree of protection by listing as Grade II buildings. The Rio Dalston is one. Another is the Dominion

Acton (which quickly became a Granada, enjoyed a long life as a cinema, then bingo hall, and only recently closed as an indoor climbing arena). The third opened as the Grosvenor Rayners Lane, soon went to Odeon, closed in 1983 and is currently a church. This had the most eye-catching of Bromige's exteriors with a concave glazed frontage and a curved feature likened to a question mark or an elephant's trunk, holding a revolving vertical sign with the name attached on three sides in chunky letters. This Grosvenor sign was carefully reinstated in later nightclub use but has been replaced in current church use.

The Dominion Harrow had Bromige's other most spectacular frontage. As the architectural historian Bruce Peter

has written: "This was bravura modern movement cinema architecture as its self-confident best and one of the most remarkable cinema buildings ever to be erected in Britain." ("F. E. Bromige – Cinema Architect", *Picture House*, no. 25, Autumn 2000.) It was large, with 2,014 seats and a café. The expanses of glazing, illuminated from inside, would have created a blaze of light to greet the evening audience. The overall outline was reinforced by neon tubes before the war.

It was renamed ABC in 1962. To avoid the heavy costs of maintenance and to hide what by the Sixties was temporarily deemed old-fashioned, ABC attached sheets of blue metal across the frontage, allowing only the fins to peak over the top. (The circuit did a similar cover-up at other cinemas, including ones at Golders Green and Edgware.)

The ABC Harrow then closed for three months in 1972 to subdivide the auditorium into a bingo club in the stalls and a 612-seat cinema in the balcony. The former café became a second screen in 1981. When Cannon took over the ABC circuit, it imposed its name in place of



Bromige's total reconstruction of an old cinema in Dalston, relaunched as a new Classic repertory cinema in 1937, now with much simplified exterior as the Rio. (Rio Dalston archive.)



Dominion Harrow. Auditorium circa 1960, simplified by ABC. Exterior in cladding (CTA Archive, photograph by Martyn Capewell).



Two impressions of the redevelopment scheme showing reinstatement of the Dominion sign. (Day from sales brochure. Night courtesy of Tiyas Gemooy.)



Dominion Harrow exterior today. (Author's photographs.) See also front cover.



ABC. Cannon then leased the cinemas to a Bollywood operator who renamed them Safari and ran them until the Covid pandemic in 2020 (the Safari name survives on the side of the bus shelter outside the building).

A scheme to restore the frontage while building a 11-storey block of 78 flats behind surfaced in August 2009 and is essentially what has been carried out. The metal cladding was removed in 2021 and the foyer, café and auditorium demolished. The flats – named The Dominion Apartments with retro deco features – opened. Then cinema returned late last year on the front ground floor with the name Metro emblazoned on

a recreation of the original curving canopy. It has three small screens and plays predominantly Bollywood films but also some of the bigger new mainstream offerings.

Though otherwise good, the frontage looks a little bland without its original use of neon and programme advertising – and its old Dominion name sign at top centre. The concept drawings that were submitted as part of the planning process clearly show Bromige's unique and eye-catching signage reinstated top centre. The developers need to get on with mounting it in the slight recess to complete the job. ■

Interested in Cinema News and History?

The CTA BULLETIN appears quarterly for members of the Cinema Theatre Association with a Newsreel section of developments at cinemas past and present, plus various short articles, all well illustrated – the only fully detailed record of happenings in UK film exhibition. Plus details of the society's visits, talks and other activities for members. Usually 32 pages A4 size.



The CTA's magazine **PICTURE HOUSE** focuses in depth on aspects of exhibition history and its latest issue (no. 50, 88 pages A4 size) features a 42-page selection of notes, quotes and illustrations of the original Plaza Lower Regent Street from its opening 100 years ago as the second of London West End's big movie palaces to its closing for subdivision in 1976, plus the story of the Paramount Picture Theatres circuit of north Wales and the later fate of its Coliseum Portmadoc plus expanded versions of two articles from The Veteran: Gordon Sweeney on his career as an Odeon manager and Rob Younger on his career and passion for film actually at his Barnsley cinema.

Founded in 1967 and a registered charity, the Cinema Theatre Association welcomes new members (£35 per year including above publications by post). Go to our website www.cta-uk.org or write to CTA Membership, 66 Woodside Road, High Wycombe HP 13 7JB. Issue 50 of PICTURE HOUSE can also be purchased separately at the BFI Southbank bookshop, from the CTA website or by post (£12 including p&p) from CTA Sales, 34 Pelham Road, Wood Green, London N22 6LN.



Ribbon of Dreams



Ruth Stratton, Heritage & Museums Officer, Hertsmere Borough Council, with the Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom interactive model.

Bob Redman (Elstree Screen Heritage) and **Simon Gee** (Elstree & Borehamwood Museum) highlight A Centenary of Film and Television at Elstree Studios

“**R**ibbon of Dreams”, a phrase often attributed to Orson Welles when describing the magic of cinema, has been adopted by a new exhibition prepared as a tribute to Elstree Film Studios by the volunteers of Elstree & Borehamwood Museum.

The exhibition traces a century of film-making (and more recently, television) at what today we know as Elstree Film Studios. From its start of production in 1926 as British National, it was first home to silent films, quickly followed by the UK's first 'talking picture', and much later to such blockbusters as *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*.

Changing ownership and names several times over the past century, the studios have survived a major fire and even the threat of closure and redevelopment. More recently they have hosted *The Crown*, *Big Brother* and *Strictly Come Dancing*.

The exhibition tells this story through display boards with props, costumes,

models and memorabilia, plus film extracts from the Museum's own archives. There is even an interactive working model of the mine chase scene from *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Will Indiana Jones escape? Indiana Jones ALWAYS escapes!

How it all started

In 1925, British National Pictures Ltd. purchased 42 acres of land on the south side of Shenley Road, the High Street of Borehamwood in Hertfordshire. Two large film stages were completed in 1926 and its first film made in 1927. What followed was a film-making facility once nicknamed 'The Porridge Factory', partly due to the role of Scottish cinema owner John Maxwell and partly due to the sheer number of films that it churned out.

And then sound arrived

Maxwell renamed the Studios British International Pictures and immediately

signed up young director Alfred Hitchcock. What followed was momentous in UK film production, adding the first synchronised sound to accompany Hitchcock's silent film *Blackmail* in 1929. Hitchcock and his sound editor even had to puzzle out how to redub the lines of the lead actress, an accomplished Czech actress defeated by the need to adopt a Cockney accent.

And film after film...

The list of films created at Elstree Studios includes many 'classics', some of which are featured in the exhibition.

The Dam Busters was made in 1955, the story of the 1943 raid on the Ruhr Dams in Germany. Led by Wing Commander Guy Gibson (portrayed by Richard Todd in the film), nineteen bomber planes left from RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire. Eleven made it back.

Moby Dick, starring Gregory Peck, was a global success in 1956. A huge water tank was constructed for some scenes in the



Welcome to "Ribbon of Dreams".



Ruth Stratton with Dave Armitage, Manager of Elstree & Borehamwood Museum.



film. Peck returned in 1961 for *The Guns of Navarone*, a major production

Ice Cold in Alex, produced in 1958 and starring John Mills, Sylvia Syms, Anthony Quayle and Harry Andrews, told the tale of their trek across the Western Desert in Egypt during WWII. John Mills never drank whilst filming but, after multiple takes downing a pint of lager in the cause of reality, he famously had to be helped back to his trailer.

On a lighter note, *Summer Holiday* was a 'girl meets boy' feel-good film in 1963 and a vehicle for Cliff Richard (the exhibition includes his T-shirt.)

The unlikely *One Million Years BC* with a fur-bikini clad Raquel Welch arrived in 1966 followed by the heartwarming and perennial favourite *The Railway Children* in 1970.

The following year Stanley Kubrick, who lived locally, directed the rather disturbing film *A Clockwork Orange*, shooting on location at The Manor House (previously the Edgwarebury House) in Elstree and Canterbury House in Borehamwood.

Then came a blockbuster: *Star Wars* (later titled *Star Wars Episode IV – A New Hope*) was released in 1977. Many people involved in the film thought it would be a huge flop; surely the day of 'sci-films' had passed. It turned out to be one of the highest grossing films of all time and was followed by *The Empire Strikes Back* in 1980 and *Return of the Jedi* in 1983.

1978 saw the filming of *Superman IV – The Quest For Peace* and, as promised by the poster, 'You will believe a man can fly!' In 1980 the psychological horror film *The Shining* frightened us all with "Here's Johnny...."

Next out of Elstree was *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, starring Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones and directed by Steven Spielberg. It arrived on our screens in 1981 and was followed by *The Temple of Doom* and *The Last Crusade*. More recently, *Who Framed*

Roger Rabbit, *The King's Speech*, *The Crown*, *Paddington ...the list goes on and on.*

But it might have been so different

By 1986, the studios, then owned by Thorn EMI, was on the verge of closure. Thorn EMI relinquished control to Cannon as part of the sale of its entire Screen Entertainment Division. By 1987 Cannon's overstretched finances finally caused Elstree to stop production and the land was put on the property market.

A local campaign started at once. The late Paul Welsh MBE, local film historian and Entertainments Officer at Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council, took up the reins together with *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* production supervisor, Pat Carr. There followed a hard fought SOS (Save Our Studios) campaign, also described in the exhibition. Twenty-five thousand signatures were collected on a petition.

In June 1988 Brent Walker paid £32.5 million for the site, with plans to sell 12 acres to Tesco for £19 million. Hertsmere Borough Council agreed to the Tesco development but with the proviso that Brent Walker would restrict the remaining 15 acres to film and television production for 25 years.

However, by 1990 Brent Walker itself was in financial difficulties and offered the Studios to the Council at a knock-down price of £2 million which was accepted.

Paul Welsh was recruited to the working party to relaunch Elstree Studios. Two giant new stages were commissioned and buildings refurbished. A phoenix rising from the ashes, Elstree Studios was back in business!

Time to share this story and celebrate

The first hundred years of Elstree Film Studios has been a remarkable story, full of ups and downs, and not for the faint-hearted. But this is also a story of perseverance and of the achievements of film-makers, many of them members of local 'film families'.

The exhibition, which runs until January 2027, is a loving tribute by local volunteers who recognise that the Studios have been and remain at the heart of the active and growing film-making community of studios based in Elstree & Borehamwood.

Other tributes are planned by the Studios themselves but the Museum's exhibition is waiting to welcome you now. [v](#)

www.elstree-museum.org.uk

Elstree & Borehamwood Museum,
96 Shenley Road, Borehamwood,
Herts WD6 1EB.

Tel: 01442 454888.

Admission: Free. Opening times:
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 12pm – 6pm;
Saturday 10am – 3pm.

NEWS FROM BRITISH ENTERTAINMENT HISTORY PROJECT

(Formerly BECTU History Project)

WWW.HISTORYPROJECT.ORG.UK



The Voices of Twickenham Film Studios

Over the past few months, the members of the History Project have been involved in an exciting new upgrade to our website. One of the key improvements will be the facility for users to search deeper into our archive. For example, for this article, I searched for interviewees who have worked at Twickenham Film Studios since they started making films in 1913. Thanks to our new search tool I discovered for the first time that we have interviews with around 100 men and women who worked at the studios on classic British films *A Hard Day's Night*, *Alfie*, *Repulsion*, *The Italian Job* and many other productions.

Twickenham is one of the world's oldest continually running film studios. It was founded in 1913 by Dr. Ralph Jupp, who purchased a former roller-skating rink at St Margaret's, Twickenham on the outskirts of London, and converted it into a premier film studio. Jupp was the UK's leading film exhibitor, being the managing director of the leading cinema circuit Provincial Cinematograph Theatres. Together with film director Percy Nash and actor John Marlborough East, he formed the London Film Company in order to make British films for his cinema chain.

I discovered this in an interview in our archive with John M. East's grandson: "Grandfather had a job helping with the casting, and he played parts in these early films. The first film my grandfather acted in at Twickenham Studios was *The House of Temperley* which was a very big film made in 1913. It centred around the world of prize-fighting in the Regency era. According to my grandfather's diary, they thought it was a good idea to have "real men", as opposed to actors. If you wanted a pugilist, you'd hire a pugilist. If you wanted a dustman, get a real dustman and a stevedore hire a real stevedore. And it really was the beginning, I think, of type casting."

Cinematographer Paul Wilson recalls how he got the job working with Dick Lester at Twickenham on the Beatles films: "I was sitting at home and the phone goes, and it's Derek Brown, who's working with Gil Taylor, with Dick Lester on the first Beatles film *A Hard Day's Night*. And he said, 'Look, we got to have another couple of camera crews. We've found these Beatles can't do the same thing twice, so the continuity is out the window. The only way to do it is to



Sir Seymour Hicks in *Scrooge* (1935).

is to have two and three cameras working all the time.' So myself and Freddie Cooper, my focus puller, went down to the Scala Theatre where they were shooting. We got the brief from Dick Lester. He said, "You've literally got to grab what you can because I don't know what they're going to do half the time. We must have made a good job of it, because the work just carried on. We filmed the scenes at Marylebone Station and on the train. And Dick Lester took a shine to us and I did the other Beatles film with him, *Help*. And so, another relationship started."

John Trumper (1923-2004) was a film editor best known for *The Italian Job* (1969). "As well as being commercially successful, *The Italian Job* was also the most complicated film that I worked on. It not only had a dubbing editor, it had a dialogue editor and an effects editor. There were three dubbing editors. The vast bulk of *The Italian Job* was shot on location in Turin and then back up at Twickenham Studios. It was quite a complicated film, because the business of the big traffic jam in Turin had to be made up from lots of different bits. They closed one street at a time to create the impression of a city completely jammed up.

"We had a problem in the cutting rooms with trains. At Twickenham they more or less backed onto the railway line. You couldn't hear yourself think while the trains were going past!"

"Quincy Jones was the composer. And there's a cross-cut sequence towards the end of Noël Coward coming down the prison stairs. This is cross cut with the Minis coming along and being taken on to the coach. Quincy had to write a score that would fit in with the clapping in the prison sequences. So he had to measure the other sequences

terribly exactly and work out how many bars, how many beats he could get in between in the same rhythm.

"He had to have a very complicated click track on his headphones... I thought it was a very good score altogether. It caught the mood of the film beautifully.

"However, they decided to change the ending. Originally it was going to end with them getting all the money to a bank in Bologna and the manager turns out to be Raf Vallone, who played the chief villain. I think it was a pity they made that change. It would have been much neater. Instead, they used a sort of cliff-edge ending with the coach on the cliff edge, and then nothing really... a very funny old ending, I thought."

Studios are often remembered for the films they produced. Twickenham gave us one of the earliest British talkies, *To What Red Hell* (1929), a crime drama starring Sybil Thorndike, and *Scrooge* (1935), the first feature-length sound adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* with Sir Seymour Hicks in the title role. Later notable titles include *The Stars Look Down* (1940), *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (1960), *The Mirror Crack'd* (1980) and *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988).

Yet the history of the studio is found not only on the screen but in the memories of the men and women who worked behind the camera. For more than a century they arrived through the studio gates as camera assistants, editors, electricians, carpenters, laboratory technicians, production designers, and hair and makeup artists. Their voices are preserved in the British Entertainment History Project online archive.

By the time you read this article our new website should be available for you to view at www.historyproject.org.uk

If you want to find out more about our work, you can contact me at mikedick@blueyonder.co.uk

Mike Dick
Chair

mikedick@blueyonder.co.uk





Strongroom (1962)

Reviewed by Allen Eyles

Back in 1952, Andrew L. Stone made an American thriller called *The Steel Trap* with Joseph Cotten as a bank manager who steals from the vault over a holiday weekend and then tries to return the money before he can be found out – ingeniously written and vividly filmed all on location.

However, the vault of a bank has shown most potential in suspense dramas as a death trap, for locking up people with limited oxygen to breathe. (Caves, mines and submarines offer the same potential.) American suspense specialist Arthur Hailey (*Airplane*) wrote a 1956 drama for an American TV series called *Time Lock* about a small boy accidentally shut up in a bank vault with a timer so that it can't be opened for three days and the frantic efforts to free him: British producer Peter Rogers wrote a big screen adaptation, keeping the title and the Canadian setting, released in 1957, directed by Gerald Thomas before *Carry On* came along, with Robert Beatty starring – it plays on Talking Pictures TV from time to time.

Strongroom was filmed at Twickenham Studios in November 1961, seemingly on a two-week schedule. It was a B feature with no stars and a low budget – though it ran 79 or 80 minutes, rather long for a support. It turned out so well that it was shown to the London critics when it opened as the lower half of a double bill at the Leicester Square Theatre in late May 1962, in support of a British romantic comedy, *Two and Two Make Six*, starring George Chakiris and Janette Scott.

The *Kine Weekly* trade paper (3 May 1962) had already bestowed some half-hearted praise: "The acting is competent and the staging displays ingenious economy, but the direction takes the edge off penultimate suspense. The overall is, nevertheless, a cut above average 'support.' Reliable, though overlong, British 'second.'" However, the anonymous critic of *The Times* (25 May 1962) dismissed *Two and Two Make Six* as "such a second-rate production" and went on to call *Strongroom* "the better of the two" and, after describing the plot, ended: "the script and Mr. Vernon Sewell's direction work sympathetically and effectively together." The unidentified reviewer of the BFI's *Monthly Film Bulletin* (June 1962) referred to "this sharp, brisk thriller" and concluded: "the three threads of the drama are neatly developed and the last shot has a shock impact which is positively masterly."

The screenplay is by Max Marquis and Richard Harris, from the latter's story. Both were prolific writers for TV series (Harris also wrote a very successful play, *Stepping Out*, as well as the screenplay for an Americanised film version with Liza Minnelli and Julie Walters). *Strongroom* concerns three men robbing a bank and locking up the manager and one of his staff in the vault. There are a series of unexpected complications such as the cleaners turning up at the bank early while the robbery is in progress. The



Colin Gordon and Ann Lynn as the bank staff trapped in the vault over a long weekend.

film follows three threads: the couple in the vault trying to save themselves; the robbers realising they face the death penalty if they don't let air into the vault in time; and a persistent police sergeant working out what is going on from a single clue miles away..

The characters are nicely detailed and director Vernon Sewell and a well chosen cast seemed to have realised what superior material they had, adding little bits of business to enrich the roles. As the bank manager, Colin Gordon gets one of the best (and most physically demanding) parts of his screen career while Derren Nesbitt (looking a bit like the young Burt Reynolds at times) makes a sensitive lead robber. The lighting by the under appreciated DP Basil Emmott subtly adds to the atmosphere as does the simple score by Johnny Gregory. The last shot is indeed memorably delivered but I did find it an unnecessarily cruel touch.

In one scene, a boss of a lock manufacturing company is about to leave home with his wife for an evening at the cinema when he receives a phone call asking him to go to the

works. His wife objects: "When I go to the pictures, I like to see the whole programme." The man checks the local paper: "What's the hurry? The main picture won't start till a quarter to nine." A reminder that it was widely regarded as OK to miss all or part of the supporting feature, even if it might – occasionally – be as gripping as *Strongroom*.

However, *Strongroom* was condemned to be little seen by the box-office failure of *Two and Two Make Six* – the pair were abruptly removed from the Leicester Square Theatre after two weeks on Wednesday 6 June in favour of a new Hammer double bill. They started off coupled on general release through the Odeon circuit but Josh Billings in the *Kine Weekly* (5 July 1962) noted that *Two and Two Make Six* had "failed to stay the course and as a last resource [sic] *A Taste of Honey* was issued with *Strongroom* still playing second."

Released on BFI Blu-ray (with numerous extras) and streaming on BFI Player.



Derren Nesbitt and Keith Faulkner as the bank robbers survey the loot.

50 YEARS AGO - AUGUST 1976

A summer of drought from June reduces cinema attendances by 5 to 15%. Producer Albert Broccoli worries about filling a new indoor tank built at Pinewood for submarine scenes in *The Spy Who Loved Me*, the first James Bond film after a three-year gap, with a £6 million budget.

New top draws in London West End cinemas are *The Outlaw Josey Wales* and (both on single screens) *Taxi Driver* and *Murder by Death*, plus *Family Plot* at the end of the month. Holdovers doing well are *The Message*, *Bugsy Malone*, *All the President's Men* and *Emmanuelle*.

British Lion and EMI complete their merger.

Jim Daly is appointed head of Rank Film Labs and Ray Dutfield head of Rank Leisure Services.

BBC TV wins an auction to show the eight-year-old *Oliver!* three times on Christmas Days by paying a record sum of £250,000.

BBC TV shows new low budget British production *Violent Summer* just months after its first screening at the National Film Theatre.

The Greater London Council views two extremely violent films banned by the BBFC; it grants a London X certificate to *The Texas*

Chain Saw Massacre but refuses one for *The Last House on the Left*. The BBFC has banned *Salò: 120 Days of Sodom* after distributor United Artists refuses to make any cuts.

Sefton Council Licensing Committee asks to see *Black Emmanuelle* three days into its week's run at the Astra Maghull.

The BBC has invested in seven unnamed films.

ABC Kilmarnock and Classic Crosby open second and third screens.

ABC Hull has closed for conversion to five screens.

The former Classic (ex-Essoldo) Whitley Bay, taken over by the local authority for live shows and films, shows its first picture, *Paint Your Wagon*.

The recently re-opened Royal Opera House at Scarborough starts showing family films on Sundays and weekday afternoons.

250 American cinema organ enthusiasts descend on Llandudno to hear Robinson Cleaver plays the Astra's Christie organ, a make never installed in the United States.



Helen Hayes and Jodie Foster in *Candlefoot*.

Two of the West End's oldest cinemas, the Berkeley (with second screen) and La Continentale in Tottenham Court Road, close for an EMI redevelopment scheme to include three new cinemas.

Films in production include *Candlefoot* (at Pinewood, plus TV series *The New Avengers* and *Space 1999 Series 2*); *Queen Kong* and *Jabberwocky* (at Shepperton); *Watership Down* (animation); plus on location *Frankly Fiona* (later *Fiona*), *Fear at Layton Cross*, *The Prince and the Pauper* (Hungary), *Man in the Iron Mask* (France), *A Bridge Too Far* (Holland), *The Devil's Advocate* (Germany), *Valentino* (Spain), *Gore Vidal's Caligula* (Italy),

Passing on: performers Alastair Sim, Ethel Coleridge, Phyllis Konstam and William Mervyn; Pinewood studio head Kip Herren.

25 YEARS AGO - AUGUST 2001

Cinema attendances of 18.1 million are a third higher than the same month a year before. The big box office draw is *Cats and Dogs*, taking £18.7 million followed by *Rush Hour 2* with £9.6 million. *Planet of the Apes 2* becomes the new champ from the very end of the month and takes £12.9 million.

Jurassic Park 3, *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, *The Parole Officer* and *Shrek* are also performing strongly.

New British films opening at the Edinburgh Film Festival are *Crush*, *The Deep End*, *Enigma* and *Wit*.

Warner Village's cinemas are now selling 7% of all tickets in advance on line through



Imelda Staunton, Andie MacDowell and Anna Chancellor in *Crush* (Film 4).

the chain's website, climbing to 15% for blockbusters.

The former two-screen ABC Shaftesbury Avenue re-opens as the four-screen Odeon Covent Garden.

UCI replaces Cinemark as the operator of a ten-screen multiplex under construction at Sol Central in the centre of Northampton. Cinemark is seeking to sell a seven-screen multiplex being built at Scunthorpe.

The Globe Stockton-on-Tees, a former ABC cinema now on bingo, becomes a Grade II listed building.

The Grade II listing of the Odeon Newcastle is removed, clearing the way for its demolition.

The Hippodrome March re-opens as a luxury 96-seat cinema in the balcony with the screen on the original stage, films being projected over bingo continuing in the stalls.

The former Palladium Llandudno re-opens as a Wetherspoons pub.

Following the appointment of Lee Tamahori as director, pre-production has started on the next Bond picture with an eye on a January 2002 start.

Filming of *Lily and the Secret of Planting* is suspended following the illness of Winona Ryder. *The Hours* completes shooting after a break of several months.

Films in production include: *Anita and Me* (in Nottingham); *The Baby Juice Express*; *Benjamin Franklin's House* (later *Benjamin Franklin*); *Don't Look Back!*; *Magdalene* (later *The Magdalene Sisters*); *Mike Leigh Untitled* (later *All or Nothing*); *The One and Only*; *Ppuff*; *Silent Soul* (short); *Three Guesses* (later *Collusion*); *The Ticking Man*; and (from the end of the month) *Bollywood Queen*.

A knowledgeable volunteer is needed to supply British television items. Contact the editor.

Passing on: performers Dorothy Tutin and Binkie Stuart; musician Larry Adler.

17 June: Brighton invaded

Some thirty Veterans and guests poured into Brighton on a sunny day for our visit to the UK's oldest continuously operating cinema, the Duke of York's, at Preston Circus. Allen Eyles related the history of the building before we viewed a special screening of the classic comedy *Genevieve* on the big screen in the single auditorium (shown by kind permission of Park Circus/StudioCanal in an excellent print sourced by our Secretary). Our grateful thanks to Picturehouse and its manager Sophie Stores, Alex and the team, for making us feel so welcome.

We then moved to a nearby restaurant, Bardsley's of Baker Street with its display of Max Miller material, for a very satisfactory fish and chips, after which there was time left to visit some of the seaside resort's other attractions. *Photographs by Veteran member Ramon Modiano.* 



Letters

Send to office@bctv.uk or editor's address on inside front cover 

The most exciting sentence in April's issue of *THE VETERAN* came from Mike Dick, chairman of the British Entertainment History Project: "I've just completed the digitisation of the final tape in our vast collection of 820 interviews." Yippee! I cannot now precisely remember when I first dipped into this precious resource, begun as the ACTT History Project in 1987, but I certainly remember the hoops you had to jump through to access the material in the olden days. Approval by the Project's executives had to be sought; once granted, you sat in the BFI Library listening to the audio tapes on a lumbering cassette player easily the size of three bricks.

And what wonders you could listen to from the interviews with industry veterans: the fruity voice of Dallas Bower recalling his battles with new sound equipment at BIP in the talkie summer of 1929; Sidney Gilliat, an interviewee's dream with his instant and labyrinthine recall of the industry's crises and follies over fifty years; Tilly Day, legendary continuity girl, who started in films in 1917. Now with digitisation complete, all you need for access is a computer, the correct website, a click on the appropriate

name, and there you are; often a written transcript too. Aladdin's cave is all yours.

Naturally, one may wish that some of the initial interviewees had been caught when their memories of particular events were a little clearer. But that's life. And numerous other subjects stagger you with the clarity and detail of their recollections, and all give precious witness in their own way to the travails and lure of the British industry across many decades. As a historian of British cinema, I have long been in the British Entertainment History Project's debt, and I know I am not alone.

GEOFF BROWN

A recent recruit to Veteran membership, Geoff Brown is the author of the book Silent to Sound: British Cinema in Transition, where BEHP interviews were one of his resources. – Editor.

SMALL ERRORS

I enjoyed reading the Mike Hodges interview in issue 187 and it pains me to point out two small errors.

Michael Klinger did manage the Nell Gwynne strip club at the Gargoyle Club, but it was not the

UK's first cinema club. This was the Compton cinema, which Klinger (and Tony Tenser) opened in 1960.

Mike's agent was Barry Krost not Cross. He's still a busy executive producer.

DAVID MCGILLIVRAY

OFF CHANCE

I'm reaching out from Curzon Mayfair on the off chance you might be able to help us.

We are developing a documentary about the cinema's history and are looking to connect with anyone who worked here at any point in any capacity, from projectionist to front of house. We'd love to hear their stories.

NICK PAN
nick.pan@curzon.com



New Members



NIGEL ARTHUR, Worthing
Former BFI head of stills collection

SIMON ASHEN, Lewes
First assistant director

SYLVIE BANKS, London
Festival and event co-ordinator

DAVE BARRETT, Upminster
BBFC Deputy CEO

MICHELE BAYLIS, London
Make-up and hair designer

GILLIAN BERRIE, Glasgow
Producer/writer/casting director

OZGUR BILIR, Abbots Langley
Customer assistant

JENNIFER BINSTED, London
Make-up and designer

ADAM BROWNE, Twickenham
TV and film production

GRACE BROWNING, Richmond Upon Thames
Casting director

CASPAR CAMPBELL, London
Assistant director

SUE CLAYBYN Stoke Poges
Production Buyer & Set Decorator

GEOFF COWARD, Berkhamsted
Director

CATHERINE CREED, London
TV and film editor

TIM DEAN, Sunbury on Thames
Head and crane technician

THEO DELANEY, London
Director

ROBERT DIBBLE, London
Camera technician

MARK EVANS, Windsor
Film lighting

LUDOVIC FEALY, London
Creative director/visual EFX supervisor

WILLIAM FINCH, London
Gaffer

JOHN FURSE, London
Director/writer/producer

ANTHONY GARRICK, London
BBC Production Manager (Drama)

SCOTT GRIFFIN, Chew Magna
Visual Effects Producer & Founding Partner of 1920 VFX

SIMONE PEREIRA HIND, Edinburgh
Casting director

NIALL JOHNSON, Clevedon
Film and TV director

PETER KNIGHT, Torfaen
Projectionist/Cinema technologist

MARK KOZLOWSKI, Isleworth
Digital Imaging Technician/Director

SARAH LEWIS, London
Autocue prompt op/costumier assistant

JANE LLOYD, West Molesey
Producer

DAVE LOWRY, Waterlooville
Customer success manager

IAIN MACKAY, London
Camera operator

BEN MAGAHY, London
Director of photography

ADAM MAKIN, Hatfield
Supervising art director

JEROME McCANN, Pyrtton
Sound engineer

ALEXANDER MELMAN, London
Director of photography

MARK NICE, Ashford
Senior engineer and project manager

CHRISTINE OVERS, Taplow
Film sculptor/prop maker

DAVID PALMER, Penn
Clapper/loader & Digital Imaging Technician

LEE PARFITT, London
Gaffer

RICKY PATTENDEN, Horsham
Lighting technician and electrical

ANDREW PURDY, West Molesey
Lighting technician

REBECCA RICH, Great Missenden
Costume designer

JANET SMYTH, London
Head of production and producer

SAM SOUTHWICK, London
Sound and music editor

RYAN TAGGART, Emmer Green
First assistant camera technician

MARK TANNER, London
Production designer

ROSALIND TAYLOR, Sevenoaks
Production executive

TOM TAYLOR, Staines
First assistant cameraman

FRAN THOMPSON, London
MD/executive producer/producer

MELANIE VINER-CUNEO, London
Editor

ANNA WHELAN, Enfield
Publicist

PETER WILKE, St. Albans
Cinematographer

In Memoriam

CAROLYN BARTLETT, Exeter
2 September 1941 - 1 September 2025

PETER FRENCH, Carshalton
26 June 1937 - 16 June 2026

EMMA PORTEOUS, Epsom
20 June 1936 - 21 May 2026

BARRIE STEAD
22 July 1942 - 1 July 2026



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Answers to the Horror Film Quiz
(See page 19)



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