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BEHP BULLETIN June 2020

Dear all,

Welcome to the latest bulletin of the British Entertainment History Project. The outbreak of the pandemic has had quite an impact on our regular activities. As you will be aware, we have had to suspend our regular monthly meetings at BECTU HQ which is still closed until further notice. We have also had to cancel our plans to shoot new interviews until it becomes safe again. As soon as it becomes safe to start our activities again, you will be the first to know.

We would like to thank you all for the support you have given us over the past three months in the form of phone calls and emails. Please continue to stay in touch during these times.

A special thanks goes out to those of you who very kindly donate on a regular monthly basis in order support the work of the History Project. It is very much appreciated. If you would like to make a donation please email our secretary Sue Malden for our bank details. She can be contacted at sue.malden@btinternet.com

New Collection of BBC Pebble Mill Interviews

We have recently received a major collection of interviews from Vanessa Jackson at Birmingham City University. It consists of thirteen interviews with BBC Pebble Mill staff. The list includes David Rose who many of you will know or at least will be familiar with his work. Throughout the 1960s and 70s he was a leading figure in British television at the BBC, where he produced 176 episodes of Z Cars before moving on to the spin off series Softly, Softly. He was Head of English Regions Drama at BBC Pebble Mill for ten years. He moved to Channel 4 as Senior Commissioning Editor for Fiction from 1981-90 and was responsible not only for the new channel's drama output, but also for 'Film on Four'.

David is credited by many as being a significant figure in the regeneration of British cinema and particularly remembered for films such as *My Beautiful Launderette*, *Wish You Were Here*, *Dance With A Stranger*, *Mona Lisa* and *Letter to Brezhnev*.

Tara Prem, Script Editor, Producer, English Regions Drama.

Tara was one of the first Asians to work in mainstream British television.

Her first job was as a trainee script editor at the BBC in London on *Play of the Month*, a strand of programmes based on theatre classics.

She knew Barry Hanson, who had just gone to work for the BBC in Birmingham with David Rose, and they both wanted to do 'modern, new, regional work' so she left her job in London and joined Rose and Hanson. That is how the story of multicultural TV drama began.

Based in Birmingham in the early seventies Tara said she became aware that there was a substantial immigrant population and felt that if TV should reflect what was going on outside the studios.

She wrote the first drama on British television to have an entirely Asian cast in 1973, 'A Touch of Eastern Promise.'

It was to prove an important chapter in the story of multicultural TV drama

The Pebble Mill Collection also includes interviews with

David Waine, Head of Broadcasting, Pebble Mill

Peter Anson, Script Editor, Producer, English Regions Drama

Barry Hanson, Producer English Regions Drama, and later Head of Drama, Pebble Mill

Philip Saville, Director of *Boys from the Blackstuff*, *Gangsters*.

Roger Castles, Exec Producer *The Clothes Show*, director on Pebble Mill at One.

Jim Dumighan, Editor Pebble Mill at One, Series Producer *Pot Black*

Roger Gregory, script editor and producer English Regions Drama Dept

Pete Simpkin, producer, and presenter Radio Birmingham/Radio WM

John Smith, multicamera director Pebble Mill at One, *Live Aid* etc

Louise Willcox, Senior Sound Supervisor

Michael Wearing, Producer English Regions Drama, and later Head of Drama, Pebble Mill

You can find the Pebble Mill Collection interviews by typing in "Pebble Mill" on our search engine at:

<https://historyproject.org.uk>

The Archive Audit

The work continues to audit the complete collection of close to 800 interviews in the History Project archive. We are checking where the master copies are currently located. We are trying to find out if any of the original interview tapes are missing from our collection and how we can fill in the gaps. We now know which interviews are still to be digitised and uploaded to our website. As soon as we can gain access again to the archive tapes held in BECTU HQ in Clapham we will digitise these interviews.

Prospero Article

As we reported in the May issue of the History Project Bulletin, Prospero the BBC magazine for retired members of staff was planning to feature an article about the work of the BEHP in a future edition. We have just received the June edition of Prospero and it contains the promised article. You can access the magazine at:

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mypension/en/prospero_june_2020.pdf

The BEHP article appears on page 9.

We have already received correspondence from a wide range of Prospero readers in response to the article suggesting potential interviewees for future recording sessions. We plan to follow these suggestions up as soon as the current restrictions are lifted, and we can start to work safely recording our interviews again.

Coincidentally the same issue of Prospero contained a letter from Graham Peet the son of Stephen Peet. He is currently working an illustrated book about his father.

Stephen worked at the BBC and from 1969 through to 1981 he produced a series of important oral history programmes called "Yesterday's Witness" He was one of the pioneer members of the History Project in 1987 and conducted some of the early interviews including the ones with Ralph and Bessie Bond, Philip Leacock, Sir Denis Forman and Alan Izod. In the 1990s he interviewed several key members of staff at the BBC including Bill Cotton,

Jimmy Gilbert, and Norman Swallow. His final interviews in 2000 were with Mike Fentiman and Colin Thomas from the BBC Community Programme Unit.

All these interviews and many more conducted by Stephen can be found on our website.

Graham is keen to get in touch with anyone who knew or worked with his Stephen and whom would be interested in sharing any stories, photos, or anecdotes to include in the book. He can be contacted at gpeet@mac.com

He has kindly donated the transcript of the History Project interview with Stephen recorded in November 1990 You can find the interview at:

<https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/stephen-peet>

Recently Digitised Interviews

Mike, Alec and John are currently working their way through the list of interviews still to be digitised produced as a result of the audit of our archive conducted by Sue and Elaine.

Some of the most recent digitised interviews include:

Jean Kent 549

<https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/jean-kent>

Jean Kent was one of the great stars of the golden age of British cinema. She was born in Brixton, London in 1921 as Joan Summerfield, the daughter of two musical hall performers. She first set foot on stage at the age of three, singing at a children's matinee before becoming a child dancer at the age of six.

Her first regular work was as a member of the chorus at the legendary Windmill Theatre.

Her film breakthrough came as a result of stage work, in particular her appearance in the revue *Apple Sauce*, which played at the London Palladium in 1941, and where film producers spotted her and offered her a long-term contraction 1943 with Gainsborough Pictures.

She found fame in fiery, bad girl roles in the studio's enormously popular costume melodramas of the 1940s, such as *Fanny By Gaslight* in 1944, *The Wicked Lady* 1945 opposite James Mason, and *Caravan* in 1946 in which she played gypsy dancer Rosal opposite Stewart Granger and Dennis Price.

She went on to play in Terence Rattigan's great box office success - The Browning Version in 1951 co-starring Michael Redgrave. In later years, Jean found television and theatre more attractive than work in the cinema. She played Queen Elizabeth I in the long-running Sixties series Sir Francis Drake (1961) and Daphne Goodlace, potential seductress of both Albert and Harold, in the BBC's Steptoe and Son (1962) while also playing in The Deep Blue Sea by Terence Rattigan on stage.

Peter Cotes 134

<https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/peter-cotes>

Peter was an English director, producer, actor, writer and production manager. He was born as Sydney Boulting in Maidenhead, Berkshire. His twin brothers John and Roy Boulting became noted film makers. He began as an actor, before concentrating on theatre production. He was the original director of the world's longest-running production The Mousetrap, still playing at the St Martins Theatre, London. He wrote several books, including an acclaimed biography of Charlie Chaplin in 1951

Kenneth Griffiths 144

<https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/kenneth-griffith>

Kenneth Griffith was a popular character actor and writer, historian and documentary film-maker.

Born in Tenby in Wales in October 1921, he was educated locally and had a flair for the English language that led to him becoming an actor at the Festival Theatre in Cambridge in 1937.

Griffith served with the RAF during World War Two and afterwards joined the Old Vic. His first major film role came in 1946 with The Shop At Sly Corner, which he quickly followed up with Forbidden (1948), south Wales mining drama Blue Scar (1949) and Waterfront (1950) alongside a young Richard Burton.

He appeared in the 1956 adaptation of George Orwell's novel Nineteen Eighty-Four, comedy Lucky Jim in 1957 and a year later in the notable role of wireless operator John 'Jack' Phillips in A Night To Remember (1958), a film on the sinking of the Titanic adapted from the novel by Walter Lord. Griffith also starred as Adolf Hitler in The Two-Headed Spy (1958) and in the horror film Circus Of Horrors (1960).

Towards the late 1960s Griffith began to combine his acting work with his interest in history - particularly the Boer War - and started to make often

controversial historical film documentaries. His first, *Soldiers Of The Widow*, was broadcast by the BBC in 1967 and was followed five years later by the four-part *Sons Of The Blood: The Great Boer War, 1899-1902*.

Further work that gained Griffith both acclaim and notoriety include *A Touch Of Churchill*, *A Touch Of Hitler* (1971) on Cecil Rhodes; *Black As Hell And Thick As Grass* (1979) on the 1879 British-Zulu War; *Zola Budd: The Girl Who Didn't Run* (1989) and, to mark the anniversary of the conflict, in 1999 he produced a two-part documentary for the BBC, *The Boer War*.

According to the BFI's Screenonline website, "perhaps his most famous, and contentious, work" was *Hang Out Your Brightest Colours: The Life And Death Of Michael Collins* (1972). This documentary, about the Irish soldier and IRA leader who was assassinated in 1922, was banned due to the then-ongoing trouble in Northern Ireland, and eventually broadcast over 20 years later in 1993 by BBC Wales.

Griffith's film work had tailed off in the 1960s as he took on more television roles and concentrated on documentary-making, though later films of note include *The Wild Geese* (1978) and *The Sea Wolves* (1980). He had a cameo in hit British film *Four Weddings And A Funeral* (1994) and also starred in *The Englishman Who Went Up A Hill But Came Down A Mountain* (1995) and *Very Annie Mary* (2001).

His prolific television career included appearances with Patrick McGoohan in *Danger Man* (1966 and 1967) and *The Prisoner* (1968), which was set in the picturesque Welsh village of Portmeirion.

Other noteworthy screen appearances include *Fabian Of The Yard* (1955); *Martin Kane, Private Investigator* (1957); *Paris 1900* (1964); *Clochemerle* (1972) and *The Perils Of Pendragon* (1974). He also made brief appearances in *Colditz*, *Minder*, *Lovejoy* and, towards the end of his career, *Holby City*.

The next Bulletin will be with you in July.

Best wishes

Mike Dick & Sue Malden