



[www.historyproject.org.uk](http://www.historyproject.org.uk)

## **British Entertainment History Project Bulletin 3. November 2020**

Dear all,

Sorry this Bulletin is later coming out than we intended, but I've had some difficult personal issues to deal with over the summer. Nevertheless we have been using our time during lockdown digitising and transcribing a substantial number of the collection of interviews in our archive.

Since I wrote our last Bulletin, John Harwood, Alec Hall-Shaw and myself have uploaded more than a hundred interviews to our website at <https://historyproject.org.uk> They include: Teddy Darvas - film editor on *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *The Assassination Bureau* (1969) and *The Railway Children* (1970); Aubrey Singer - managing director of both BBC Television and Radio; Karel Reisz - director of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), *This Sporting Life* (1963) and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981); Ena Baga - pianist and theatre organist best known for improvising accompaniments to silent films; Freddie Francis, Oscar winning cinematographer - *Room at the Top* (1959), *Sons and Lovers* (1960), *The Innocents* (1961) and *Glory* (1989); Harry Fowler, actor - *The Army Game* (1959-61), *The Pickwick Papers* (1952) and *Lawrence Of Arabia* (1962); and Joan KempWelch - stage and film actress who went on to become a television director winning the Prix Italia for her TV version of Harold Pinter's *The Lover* in 1963, and in the same

year becoming the first woman to receive the Desmond Davis BAFTA for creative work in television.

In anticipation of the forthcoming Lockdown, Claire Haywood in the BECTU office is being so helpful posting more tapes out to Alec and John...enough to keep them going till Christmas!!! We have well over 50% of our interviews digitised now thanks to these guys.

## **Interview Transcriptions**

The majority of the transcribed interviews in our collection were laboriously done by hand, i.e. on a manual typewriter ( all these and those created by the University of East Anglia have all been uploaded to the database). Over the last few years voice recognition systems have become commonly used for transcription work. We've been successfully using a system called Speechmatics. It produced a reasonably accurate transcript from the audio recordings of our interviews. Unfortunately, the company decided to curtail this service at the end of September. We've now discovered a new source in the US for producing transcriptions. The system is called Otter and is being used by many companies to transcribe Zoom meetings. We've found that it can also produce transcripts of our interviews with the added bonus of tape timings too. I've just experimented with it on one of our interviews recorded twenty years ago with TV producer/director Ernest Maxin. You can find the results at: <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/ernest-maxin>

Many of the Speechmatic transcripts are useful but would be so much better if we could call on volunteers to read through them whilst listening to the digitised interview and make any corrections. Volunteer Emma Feather is working her way through the very length but absolutely fascinating interview with Phillip Donnellan. If you would like to help with this vital part of our work please contact Sue at: [sue.malden@btinternet.com](mailto:sue.malden@btinternet.com)

Nick Gilbey's MCR21 OB van restoration project was successful in winning the Shiers Trust award (supervised by the RTS) Among many other things this has enabled them to transcribe the Paul Fox and Peter Dimmock interviews held in the BEHP collection.

## **From the Archives**

### **Ernest Maxin**

Ernest Maxin (22 August 1923 – 27 September 2018) was a television producer, director, orchestra leader, singer and choreographer. Ernest joined the BBC as a trainee producer in 1952. He moved to ABC Television in 1959 but returned to the BBC in 1964 where he spent the remainder of his television career specialising in light entertainment, producing shows for such performers as Dick Emery, Charlie Drake, Jack Benny, Kathy Kirby and Dave Allen. But it was being Morecambe and Wise's producer that bought him the most joy. Maxin brought his love of Hollywood musicals to the show, choreographing some of the duos best remembered song and dance routines including Singin' 'In The Rain, There's Nothing Like a Dame and Smoke Gets in Your Eyes. He won a BAFTA for the 1977 Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show and the Golden Rose of Montreux Award for the Charlie Drake 1812 Overture in 1968.

### **Ray Harryhausen**

One of the most important video interviews in our collection is with the film special effects superstar Ray Harryhausen. It was conducted by film historian Tony Dalton in May and July 2009. Our interview runs for three and half hours and is a detailed account of the life and work of this legendary filmmaker and artist who changed the face of modern cinema. 2020 would have been Ray's 100th birthday year. In celebration of this special date the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh is mounting an exhibition, Ray Harryhausen: Titan of Cinema. The exhibits include storyboards, paintings and scripts, original models, film equipment and plaster

moulds. The exhibition will run from Saturday 24 October 2020 to Sunday 5 September 2021. The History Project interview with Ray can be found at: <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/ray-harryhausen>

David Sharp has been beavering away editing lots of important information and notes that we have found in the files of the History Project. David has added around 100 summaries so far. He has also uploaded all the transcripts of the Scottish Television collection of interviews that were recently donated. The interviews themselves will be uploaded in the near future.

### **Book News**

We regularly receive requests from authors who wish to include excerpts from our interviews in the books they are writing on the film and television industry. Two recently published books in particular may be of interest. Their common theme is the UK film and television industry in the 1960s. “Ready Steady Go! The Weekend Starts Here - The Definitive Story of the Show That Changed Pop TV” is by Andy Neill. Featured in this lavishly illustrated and definitive history of the show are hundreds of colour and black and white images of the show and interviews with the production team who made the show which ran from 1963 to 1967, including head of Rediffusion TV Elkan Allan, producer Vicky Wickham, director Daphne Shadwell( we have an interview with Daphne) and presenters Cathy McGowan and Keith Fordyce.

The second book is “Shepperton Studios - A Personal View”, written by Derek Threadgall, a member of the History Project. Derek worked in management at the studio from 1960 to 1965. He presents an insider view of film production at the UK’s major independent studio from its formation in 1932 to 1972 when Derek returned to run the successful sixteen-month public campaign to prevent the studio being demolished by City ‘asset strippers’. Derek has self-published

the book. For details of how to order a copy contact him at [dthreadgall1165@gmail.com](mailto:dthreadgall1165@gmail.com)

You can find our interview with Derek which was conducted by Roy Fowler in June 1995 at:

<https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/derek-threadgall-0>

### **Eastmancolor**

We recently received a major collection of interviews from the University of East Anglia research project The Eastmancolor Revolution and British Cinema, 1955-85. Senior researcher Paul Frith wrote an article about this work in the Winter 2019 edition of THE VETERAN. He provided us with a hard drive containing twelve video interviews and transcripts. The interviews explore the story of the colour process by contrasting and comparing the experiences of film practitioners in three areas of industry work affected by Eastmancolor film stock: cinematographers, laboratory staff and archivists. I've just uploaded the interview with cinematographer Chris Menges. The rest of the Eastmancolor collection will follow very soon.

### **A request**

History Project member Sam Denham has sent us the following request for information.

“ I have a couple of picture enquiries, which I hoped someone on the History Project might be able to help with. The first picture includes what I think is a very young Powell and Pressburger - far left. Would I be right ?



The second photo is what I think is a picture of Mary Field, later head of the Children's Film Foundation (CFF) visiting the APFilms Supermarionation studio in 1960. I believe there might have been a documentary about the CFF recently. Does anyone have any contacts that might be able to confirm ?



## Projectionists

Another request we have received is from Matthew Rosenberg of the Oral History of London's Projectionists project . He runs an educational charity called digital:works and for ten years has been running oral history projects exploring the history of work in London. They work closely with museums, archivists, unions and historians and bring together schools, universities, volunteers and workers to explore and record the history of various aspects of London's working history. To date these have resulted in recording hundreds of interviews with people about their working lives - the full interviews go to the TUC archives and London archives as well as relevant museums. They also make documentary films and podcasts which share this history widely. You can get an idea of the work here. <http://www.digital-works.co.uk>

They are now developing a new project with the British Film Institute to explore the working lives of film projectionists. For this project we

are making contact with working and retired projectionists who would be happy to talk about their working lives and have these recorded.

It's a complicated time to be developing this project (or any project!) and we are putting in place systems in the face of Covid 19 and these arrangements might change so at this point we are simply compiling a list of people who would be willing to participate.

### **Living Memories Online: Using archive films to help reduce the isolation of older people.**

History Project member Brian Norris has launched a new online service that uses archive films and newsreels to trigger memories which encourage discussion and reminiscence .It aims to bring the past to life for older people, the people who care for them and anyone interested in UK social and industrial history. It is now available for watching at home, in care homes, hospitals, public libraries and community groups.

Brian hopes to work with the BEHP interviews in this project.

You can find out more details at :

<https://livingmemories.imagencloud.com>

### **American interviews**

If anyone wants to explore some American interviews - they do include a handful of UK born people, in their 900 plus collection, - the Television Academy Foundation is an interesting website located at <https://interviews.televisionacademy.com/interviewson>.

Mike Dick History Project Chair and Sue Malden, Secretary