

The British Entertainment History Project Bulletin number 5



www.historyproject.org.uk

February 2021

Dear all,

Much had been achieved during the Covid times. The Board of Management has been meeting regularly via zoom to keep track on developments. The Clapham building was now closed until at least late March 2021. We will investigate any possibility of entering the building to return tapes and collect anything required.

Mike has confirmed that issues with Companies House had been resolved. By November 2021 we should be able to decide whether to retain our status; the chief benefit was that Companies House would provide protection and support were the History Project ever to be sued.

The BEHP Board wish to record their thanks for the exemplary support given by The Veteran magazine to the Project, regularly drawing upon our material and supporting us throughout these difficult times. Also, BECTU have continued their very generous support of an annual donation. Powerhouse have told Sue that they are keen to continue making use of the collection on a regular basis. And a new Film about Karel Reisz has drawn heavily on our interview with him.

Digitisation

We have just about completed the digitisation of all our interviews!! Thanks to the efforts of John Harwood, Alec Hall-Shaw and Mike. There may be a few that have slipped thru the net, so as soon as it is possible, we will check for the missing interviews in the Archive room at BECTU, Clapham.

Missing or damaged interviews

Sue has identified “missing” interviews, some of which were never recorded in the first place. From this we have realised how misleading it is to enter information into the database of potential interviews before they are recorded. So we will revise our “acquisition” procedure and also remove the database entry for non-existent interviews.

Nevertheless, there are several interview tapes which have disappeared and a few incomplete or damaged interviews. Namely:

- 37 Francis Searle - not uploaded, poss on HD1/ HD7, cassettes missing.
- 115 George Elvin- uploaded, cassettes missing
- 118 Ivor Montagu - uploaded on HD3 cassette missing
- 252 Tina Peters – 2 audio cassettes Not uploaded or on a harddrive
- 318 Edward Williams 3 audio cassettes, uploaded poss on HD12, cassettes missing
- 322 John Schlesinger – on HD3 uploaded
- 326 John Krish – uploaded poss on HD12, 3 cassettes missing
- 387 Stephen Cavalier – not uploaded, cassettes missing
- 452 Paul Watson – uploaded, poss on HD12, tapes missing
- 462 Ian Rakoff – not uploaded, tapes missing
- 488 Betsy Blair – uploaded apart from side 1 of tape 2
- 496 John Heron Pt 1 – uploaded tapes missing
- 497 Mark Anstiss – not uploaded, no cassettes
- 515 John Wiles – not uploaded, cassettes missing
- 539 Ben Martin – not uploaded, no recordings
- 565 Brian Murphy – uploaded, tapes missing
- 581 Alan Douglas – uploaded, mini DV missing
- 599 Muriel Pavlow – not uploaded, no recording
- 623 David Stevens – uploaded, on HD8 no tapes
- 658 Graham Hartstone – not uploaded, no tapes
- 693 Christine Bellamy – not uploaded, no recording

Any light anyone can shed on any of these interviews will be invaluable – please let Sue know sue.malden@btinternet.com

When Clapham and everywhere has been checked, the BFI will be asked if they held any of the interviews which seemed to be missing or incomplete. These should appear on the BFI database. A list of missing intvs identified so far had been sent to BFI via their donor application online form, but there are likely to be more.

We have a few interviews done for the Read My Lips event some years ago on large size HDCam cassettes – **can anyone help with this format?**

The Archive Store

The archive of interviews is stored on hard drives. We do not feel that cloud storage is suitable for archive storage. We need to review all the hard drives we hold – to date 15- one unique copy of each interview (there is some accidental duplication) on them; create a central log of their content; with consistent file numbering; input the information to the database and create at least one backup hard drive for additional security. Ideally the archive should be stored on a master hard drive with 2 back up hard drives stored in different locations. Access is via the website, but this is *not* the Archive.

Restricted Interviews

Sue had been working hard on these interviews and had made good progress contacting the relevant people. The list is now down to:

302 Kevin Francis - not uploaded - damaged tape. **Action:** in contact do we want to re-interview?

414 Jill Balcon – not uploaded - retained copyright. **Action:** No response from Tamasin

452 Paul Watson -uploaded - no consent form. **Action:** Emailed to him Feb 2021

612 Nigel Ostrer - not uploaded **Action:** needs editing

573 John Hough - has been uploaded. **Action:** Martin to send consent form to his home.

596 Tony Palmer – uploaded – no consent form. **Action:** no response from LinkedIn.

627 Terry Nunn – uploaded - no paperwork. **Action** Cannot contact either. Is Will Fowler at bfi?

631 Jamie Scott by Will Fowler – uploaded - no paperwork. **Action** Cannot contact either. Is Will Fowler at bfi?

Transcripts

We are now checking through all the transcripts we have in our collection. David has done a brilliant job transferring some of the documents that had been put in TRANSCRIPTS, erroneously as they were only notes, to TRANSCRIPT NOTES, so we have an accurate record in the database. We have 180 transcripts identified as PDFs which need to be converted to WORD documents so that they can be searched – some have already been done. 24 transcripts have been put through the Speechmatics software. Most of these still need to be proofread. **VOLUNTEERS please!!!** There are over 400 interviews still needing to be transcribed to make them discoverable. Mike has been trialling OTTER, which has sophisticated embedded timecodes in the transcripts as well as a multi-user capability. Again, we will **need VOLUNTEERS to proofread these transcripts**. A good example of an interview that has been put thru OTTER is William McQuitty (within a great career, he established Ulster TV) which is being discussed with his daughter as to how it should be displayed. Another example is the Penny Wolcott interview that took 4 mins to create the transcript and a little time after that to format, so now volunteer Ros Cranston is collaborating with Mike proofreading and correcting the transcript. Elaine who is working on the David Francis interview transcript endorsed this praise of Otter. We hope that this might lead to US recording industry contacts.

We also need to check the viability of the Speechmatics transcripts as they are sometimes difficult to understand. Carol Owens who has checked and corrected the Speechmatics transcript of her interview is providing useful feedback.

Finance

Treasurer, Martin Sheffield reported that we had £17086.45 includes the BECTU donation, Powerhouse latest contribution and individual monthly donations of £98. All are greatly appreciated

There would be a new cost of £140 pa for Zoom use.

Methods of Shooting Interviews

Nick Gilbey has raised several points which will help to set standards for filming and the follow-up, that would be adopted. Nick has discussed these points with the camera operators and will write up key points that would set standards for interview filming. Recording would be on a camera card in parallel with a 'monitor'. The cards should come to the archive to be stored on hard drive before any processing or uploading to the website so that the

source material is future proofed/archived. Costs of this need to be confirmed, although we already incur some costs in purchasing camera cards.

Sue will then incorporate this vital information together with minimum information for uploading to database requirements in new Interview instructions

Sadly, it is still not appropriate for any face-to-face interviewing to take place until further notice.

Website upgrade

This is still in the pipeline with new Drupal 8 release on hold possibly until 2022. It could cost between £5,000 and £10,000. Discussions outlining our requirements are due to take place shortly with Alison Bancroft website designer.

Use of the Collection

Mike has been researching an interview with Syd Wilson, an incredibly significant figure in the development of colour film. He found a BFI publication which contained a list of articles on “Colour Films in Britain: The Negotiation of Innovation 1900-1955 (BFI TV Classics)” by [Sarah Street](#) . This seems to have used some of the relevant interviews from the HP collection such as the Syd Wilson interview. Only 2 sides of this interview were on the website, Mike has located another 12 sides which will be digitised and transcribed. As a result of finding this work MD proposed that we should add a bibliography of works that had drawn on the HP interviews on the website as well as references alongside each interview. **We will need your help to identify such publications!**

News from Members

Swale Media Centre. Board member Ken Rowles is heavily involved in the plans for the Swale Media Centre working with local universities due to open as soon as possible after Covid has been made safe. Ken intends that the History Project will be an integral part of this centre through activities such as Workshops led by academics on the work of specific Film/TV Directors, producers, editors, cameramen etc, or specific aspects of film making. This could lead to some useful awareness raising of the History Project among academics and students as well as some financial donations. Mike had offered to talk with attendees and students about the History Project.

Living Memories. <https://livingmemories.imagencloud.com/> is developing together with Abbeyfield Care homes a service to help memory and address isolation of older people. The project uses archive film to help jog memories and to generate pleasant memories from the past. A lot of the film they are using is from the Green Park Production archive which includes film shot for BP. Brian Norris would like to look at any interviews we might have in the BEHP with people who worked for the BP Film Unit. Please let Sue or Brian brian.norris@outlook.com know if you worked in the Unit or know of anyone who did. A question from Sue – “we do have interviews with people who had worked for Shell – would this have included BP?”

Future meeting dates

The next BoM 14.00 will be on 24 Feb and another Bulletin will be produced after that. We would like to try to hold a zoom meeting of the full Project Group at 14.00 on 24 March 2021.

What do members think?

And finally.....

This year is the 40th anniversary of “Flash Gordon” primarily filmed in England, including on several soundstages at [Elstree](#) and [Shepperton Studios](#). As well people talking about these studios, we have many links that could be used to celebrate the anniversary such as Mike Hodges, director; Bill Stallion, storyboard

And closer to home

GOSTA GREEN – BBC BIRMINGHAM.¹ When BBC Birmingham outgrew its first base on Broad Street, television production moved to the old Delicia Cinema on Gosta Green. So In 1959 the BBC acquired the Victorian era ex-boxing booth/cinema/theatre at Gosta Green and this was completely internally altered to become a fully equipped TV Studio and TV film unit with canteens, offices, green room and editing suite.

Network television was based at [Gosta Green](#) just north of the city centre. Regional television and some radio production were in Broad Street. Other radio studios were located at Broadcasting House in Carpenter Road, Edgbaston, and at the Walker Hall in Ampton Road, Edgbaston. The Carpenter Road site also housed the administrative offices.

Sue is hoping that academics Lez Cooke and Vanessa Jackson will be able to help to gather recollections of those who had worked at or knew BBC Gosta Green