

Adrian (Andy) Worker (Production Supervisor/Studio Manager) 1916 - ?

by [admin](#) — last modified Jul 27, 2008 02:52 PM

BIOGRAPHY: Adrian D. Worker was born in Bedfordshire in 1916. He worked initially as an accountant for a biscuit factory, and entered the industry in the early 1940s as studio accountant for Gainsborough films at Shepherd's Bush. He claims to have introduced the technique of cost accounting to the studio. When Gainsborough became part of Rank, Worker moved to Denham, working for Rank's Production Facilities Department, which oversaw finances for Rank's various 'Independent Producers'. Always keen to move into production, Worker went Highbury Studios in the mid 1940s, as production supervisor under John Croydon. There he oversaw various 'second features' (for example, Badger's Green), involving graduates of the Rank 'Charm School'. During the 1950s Worker became a freelance producer, working with figures such as Danny Angel & Val Guest, Bob Baker & Monty Berman, and Irving Allen & 'Cubby' Broccoli. In 1959, Andy Worker became the Studio Manager at Shepperton studios, a post he held until 1976. He then worked briefly as manager of Humphries Laboratories, but still found time to produce a film for the Children's Film Foundation. **SUMMARY:** In this interview, conducted in 1988, Andy Worker talks to Roy Fowler about his career. He discusses typical budgets for the Gainsborough melodrama cycle, and briefly touches on the difficulties of working with figures such as Gabriel Pascal and Wesley Ruggles on famous financially fraught productions such as Caesar and Cleopatra and London Town. He discusses the working practices at Highbury Studios, and talks in detail about his experiences freelancing in the 1950s with figures such as 'Cubby' Broccoli, Irving Rapper, Alan Ladd and Bette Davis (he describes a personal visit of hers to the Odeon in Skipton!). Films he touches on include Body Said No, Mister Drake's Duck, Another Man's Poison, The Red Beret, Hall Below Zero, Prize of Gold and Safari. Worker gives a fascinating insight into the commercial background to production at Shepperton, discussing the kinds of financial arrangements necessary for a relatively small studio to maintain commercial viability. He discusses the film finance situation in the 1950s and 1960s and also touches on the effects of the Trades Unions on working practices, providing several details of his relationship with figures such as Tom O'Brien of NATKE and Alan Sapper of ACT. Particularly important films he remembers at Shepperton include Oliver! and Casino Royale.

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Interviewee: Andy (Adrian) Worker

Tape 1, Side 1

Roy Fowler: An interview with Adrian, otherwise known as Andy, Worker, taking place at ACTT on the 18th I think it is?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: ...of August 1988. Andy it's very kind of you to come along. Now we usually start out by saying when and where were you born?

Andy Worker: Well I was born in Bedfordshire in 1916. I always wanted to be in the film industry and during the war I got the opportunity - I was a cost accountant, and I got a job at Shepherd's Bush. Much to my surprise I found that the method of costing films was to add up what you'd spent and see what you'd got left in the budget, and that was it! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: And hope for the best! Had your family had any connection at all with films or show business?

Andy Worker: Not before then, no.

Roy Fowler: No, right. Were they also accountants, your father for example?

Andy Worker: No, no, he was a baker.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha - oh really? That's something too that's gone with the wind really, good bread, a good bakery. Now you went to The Bush...

Andy Worker: Yeah...

Roy Fowler: Which was then occupied by whom?

Andy Worker: Gainsborough.

Roy Fowler: Right...Gainsborough...

Andy Worker: Yeah, ah hmm.

Roy Fowler: In the Ostrer...?

Andy Worker: Well that was the sort of 'Man in Grey', 'Fanny by Gaslight' days.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Right, let's um - prior to that your career had been in cost accounting, with what kind of company?

Andy Worker: Well I was with a biscuit manufacturer.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. How did you get this opportunity, was it one that you created for yourself?

Andy Worker: Advertised in the paper, applied for it, got it!

Roy Fowler: You said before that your ambition was always to work in films, what was it, do you think, that attracted you?

Andy Worker: Er - I think it was an art form that I appreciated and I wanted to be a part of it. And when I went to The Bush they said to me, "You stay until the war is over and then we'll help you get on a production," which they did.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm, good. So you were a moviegoer, presumably?

Andy Worker: Hmm, two or three times a week! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Yes. In those days what kind of comparison, as a filmgoer, did you make between the Hollywood films and the British films?

Andy Worker: Well they were all good - in fact they were all better than they are today I think. And you know, one had favourites like Garbo, Deanna Durbin. It was always my ambition to work with Garbo, which I never did, and Charlie Chaplin, which I did.

Roy Fowler: Did you? Oh we'll come to that!

Andy Worker: And it was one of those things you know, I just wanted to be part of the film industry.

Roy Fowler: It would be very useful, since this is for the archives, for history, to be as indiscreet as we can about Gainsborough in those days, under the Ostrers. What kind of skeletons can you remember?

Andy Worker: Well not a lot really. I don't think um - I don't think there were any skeletons in those days.

Roy Fowler: So it was all fairly above board, but you rather indicated it was very inefficient.

Andy Worker: It was certainly inefficient, yes.

Roy Fowler: Yes, right. Give us a run-down on the system.

Andy Worker: Well I did my first budget for a film after I'd been there about - oh, three months, six months, something like that. It was a film called 'Give Us The Moon', I remember the title, Val Guest directed it. It had Vic Oliver in it and we costed it at seventy-five thousand pounds.

Roy Fowler: Was that a typical budget for that point?

Andy Worker: Well they were going up a bit because of costume - 'Man in Grey', and things like that you know. But we came out at sixty-nine I think, so I had made my name with Gainsborough for being under budget! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Right. Were you acting as production manager?

Andy Worker: No just...

Roy Fowler: Just the accountant?

Andy Worker: Just as accountant, hmm.

Roy Fowler: Well, the studio at that point, the company was part of the Rank Organisation already?

Andy Worker: Yeah, hmm.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm, so in terms of production finance there was no problem?

Andy Worker: No problem. GFD and Gaumont used to put up half each in those days.

Roy Fowler: What kind of accountability was there? If the film went over budget was there considerable 'post-morteming'?

Andy Worker: Not that I remember.

Roy Fowler: No.

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: You would take that to be part of the general inefficiency?

Andy Worker: Yeah, hmm.

Roy Fowler: Yes. Looking forward a few years, I don't want to jump ahead too much, but was that what continued until John Davis took over?

Andy Worker: Well I don't really know that he had a great deal to do with the day-to-day running of the thing.

Roy Fowler: Mmm.

Andy Worker: Because I went off to Highbury when I left The Bush and we did nine second features in eleven months, you know in the Charm School days this was, and we got it worked out to a fairly good, fine art then.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha, well that will be interesting to hear about, we'll come to that. We're still then at The Bush, we're in nineteen what? forty-three?

Andy Worker: Forty-three I started there, yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right. Any particular memories of films or individuals worth remembering that spring to mind?

Andy Worker: Well James Mason sloshing Leslie Arliss! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: On the set of "The Man In Grey"?

Andy Worker: Yeah! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Yes. Do you remember what the incident was about?

Andy Worker: I don't really know what it was about, I think he just didn't like Leslie Arliss.

Roy Fowler: Was Leslie Arliss dislikeable?

Andy Worker: Who was the director... No, no, I found him quite nice.

Roy Fowler: Yes he'd been one of the Gainsborough writers hadn't he, along with Val Guest?

Andy Worker: Yeah, but Mason was a bit volatile, let's put it that way.

Roy Fowler: Right, and rather opinionated or self-opinionated was he not?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yes. And was he still at that point - yes of course he was, he was married to the bosses' daughter anyway wasn't he?

Andy Worker: Um...

Roy Fowler: To Pamela.

Andy Worker: Yes that's right.

Roy Fowler: Was that part of his career structure do you think? Was that how he...

Andy Worker: No I think basically he was quite a good actor and he had a very distinctive voice and um...made a meal of it!

Roy Fowler: Right. The Ostrers are an interesting family - very different kinds of people, one to another, the brothers. Could you give us a description of each of them?

Andy Worker: Well Maurice and Mark more-or-less ran the film side of it - with Ted Black of course, Ted Black was there. Isidore was the, sort of, financial genius as far as I remember. And Harry was supposed to be his story editor and he was a bit of a buffoon!

Roy Fowler: Yes, it was a sinecure for him?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: For the other two? Isidore I think is generally regarded as the genius, as you say, the financial brains?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: Did the other two make a definite contribution to the place?

Andy Worker: Oh definitely, they were there every day, it wasn't a question of coming in when they felt like it. But Ted Black was the genius in those days.

Roy Fowler: Right, Ted Black was very capable. We interviewed Val Guest and he was very high on um - he seemed to regard the Ostrers as poker players and little more than that.

Andy Worker: Well he was probably higher up the hierarchy than I was so he probably saw more of it.

Roy Fowler: Right, well he certainly saw the poker playing. Now this was the beginning - no that's not fair - I was going to say the beginning of Gainsborough's ascendancy, but actually they had turned out some very interesting pictures before that...

Andy Worker: Oh yes, they had.

Roy Fowler: But suddenly they came into prominence along with so many other companies during he war, didn't they?

Andy Worker: Yeah well they had Stewart Granger, they had Phyllis Calvert, Margaret Lockwood, Pat Roc, you know, they had 'the' stars.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Now you quoted a budget of seventy-five thousand pounds for what was essentially a smallish film I would have thought?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: What did 'Man in Grey' and 'Wicked Lady' and such - what did they cost?

Andy Worker: Well 'Man in Grey' I think was something over ninety, but 'Wicked Lady' I think came a bit later on and I think that was sort of a hundred and fifty.

Roy Fowler: Yes. Would they hope to break even at least in this country?

Andy Worker: Oh yes, hmm...

Roy Fowler: And return a profit?

Andy Worker: Oh yeah!

Roy Fowler: And they did?

Andy Worker: No question, yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right, a sizeable profit, they were both very successful films were they not?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: Right. So you're the production accountant - what problems, if any, would you experience on films such as that?

Andy Worker: Oh none really, I mean it's just a question of recording what you'd spent and making quite sure you'd got enough left to finish the picture with, you know. Which is what they hadn't done before, they'd just taken A from B and left it at that, you know.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, right. Who actually was spending money day by day? Was there any control over that?

Andy Worker: Oh production managers.

Roy Fowler: Yeah.

Andy Worker: Fred Gunn was one of them, Arthur Alcott was one of them.

Roy Fowler: But you're saying, in effect, they made no attempt to stay within their budget?

Andy Worker: I don't think they knew how to in those days. It was - when we amalgamated with Two Cities and Independent Producers, we went to Denham, and I was left to really introduce budgeting and cost control because my boss then was ill and I had six months on my own, putting this into effect. And the budget forms are still the same today, so I think I contributed something useful!

Roy Fowler: Yes, yes...[chuckling]...you were not always thanked I noted by the so-called creative people who came after! Um, any other personalities that stay in your mind from those days at The Bush, those war years? We've mentioned Leslie Arliss...

Andy Worker: Arthur Crabtree was another director, cameraman who became a director...

Roy Fowler: Yes.

Andy Worker: Bernard Knowles...

Roy Fowler: Yes.

Andy Worker: Val Guest of course, who did one of the first musicals I suppose, during the war, 'I'll Be Your Sweetheart'.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha. Marcel Varnel? Was he still there?

Andy Worker: He wasn't there no, he was working in Formby pictures for Columbia...

Roy Fowler: Ah, right. Let's see - I'm thinking, was Jack Cox there still?

Andy Worker: Jack Cox, the cameraman, yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. Someone we've interviewed at great length was Alfie Roome who I think was...

Andy Worker: Yeah he was there, hmm.

Roy Fowler: There seems to have been, what, a double thread in production - comedy on the one hand and these rather full-blown melodramas, I suppose was liked by women's audiences?

Andy Worker: I'll tell you an interesting story about Jack Cox.

Roy Fowler: Please.

Andy Worker: I'd gone in to light a Danny Angel picture called 'Mister Drake's Duck' with Douglas Fairbanks Junior...

Roy Fowler: Val Guest again.

Andy Worker: Hmm. And I got three aircraft for a particular shot, I was very fortunate, but I managed to get them. And he's going like this [indicating] you see, and panning with them, and he said, "Back a bit!" [Laughs]

Roy Fowler: Lovely, lovely! Let me just describe the movement you were making. The traditional director's or cameraman's framing with his fingers...

Andy Worker: That's right!

Roy Fowler: Yeah, yes, "Back a bit." I can imagine that! So what, shall we move on then from...

Andy Worker: Yeah, I went, as I said, to Highbury and we...

Roy Fowler: Why was that, why did you leave Shepherd's Bush?

Andy Worker: Um, I had left The Bush before, you see I'd gone to Denham and the then managing director of the new amalgamated company went sick and I was posted up to Hanover Square to stand in for him. And I went into David Henley's department - went into the casting department...

Roy Fowler: Oh well let's take these steps one by one. There is - what - a kind of centralised view of the Rank Organisation at this stage and people were moved around from component part to component part?

Andy Worker: Oh yeah, hmm, hmm.

Roy Fowler: So from Shepherd's Bush you were moved to Denham you say?

Andy Worker: To Denham first of all.

Roy Fowler: Right...was that to Two Cities?

Andy Worker: No it was an amalgamated production accountancy company called Production Facilities.

Roy Fowler: Oh.

Andy Worker: We had Two Cities, Independent Producers and Gainsborough.

Roy Fowler: Right, a Rank company servicing component parts for the production companies, I see. Who else was in that namely?

Andy Worker: Um, a man called Robinson was the chief accountant, company secretary. He died about eighteen months ago actually. Barrington Gain was the accountant appointed by the company accountants - this is before John Davis. And of course there was all the other characters, Gabby Pascal and Del Giudice and all those sort of people. David Lean, Ronnie Neame...

Roy Fowler: Well now these are, if not great, well-known names, fascinating names. Can we deal with them? Did you have direct day-to-day contact with them on productions?

Andy Worker: Not really, no not at that stage. I sort of got on to big productions a bit later on.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Well let's just run down them to see if you have any particular memories of these producing entities. Gabby?

Andy Worker: Gabby...um...

Roy Fowler: This was what, 'Major Barbara' or 'Caesar'?

Andy Worker: 'Caesar'.

Roy Fowler: Right.

Andy Worker: Gabby was mad I think! [Chuckles] Del Giudice - you never saw much of...

Roy Fowler: Well may I just stay with 'Caesar' because that's probably, financially, the most notorious picture in British film history, maybe that and 'London Town', but I would have thought 'Caesar' would have come out on top. Can you give us a rundown on that particular financial fiasco?

Andy Worker: Well there was no control over Gabby at all and 'London Town' again, there was no control over the American director. That was the first picture made at Shepperton after the war, 'London Town'.

Roy Fowler: Was it? Ah...I thought it was at Pinewood but...

Andy Worker: No it was at Shepperton, Because I remember when...

Roy Fowler: In your time?

Andy Worker: Yeah. When I opened the tank to fill it, you know, make a swimming pool out of it, the water was so rusty it wasn't true!

Roy Fowler: Oh God, how awful! Well Shepperton will be a very interesting studio to talk about when you move there. Continuing that list of names - so nothing to add about Gabby or 'Caesar' other than a total deadlock?

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: Right. The other - well Del Giudice is, again, I think a very interesting and now little known character, largely forgotten.

Andy Worker: That's true, hmm.

Roy Fowler: Tell us what you can about Filippo Del Giudice.

Andy Worker: Well not a lot really, he made things like 'Fame is The Spur' and 'Man of Two Worlds'...um...

Roy Fowler: 'Henry V', 'Hamlet'.

Andy Worker: Well Olivier made those really didn't he?

Roy Fowler: Well, true but they were Two Cities films, yeah. I mean Two Cities in name anyway was responsible I think for some marvellous pictures, but it was the people who made them rather than the management. Was John Sutro part of the company still?

Andy Worker: He was about, yes.

Roy Fowler: Was he, again, what one might call a creative producer or was he just one of the financiers? Because he came from a very rich family did he not?

Andy Worker: I think he was a financier more than a creative producer.

Roy Fowler: So 'Del' as he was called doesn't really stick in your mind in anyway?

Andy Worker: No, no.

Roy Fowler: Mickey Powell? Emeric Pressburger?

Andy Worker: Yes, they were around at the time. Mickey of course I've known for many years since then, always on the ball I think - he must be eighty-two now mustn't he?

Roy Fowler: I think, yes, mid eighties I think, yes something like that, yeah. I think in his book, he says he was born in 04 but...

Andy Worker: That makes him eighty-four.

Roy Fowler: I spoke with him last year and he was as sprightly as a youngster, yeah. Emeric Pressburger?

Andy Worker: Well he didn't put in very much of an appearance. He was Mickey's co-writer but didn't really figure in production.

Roy Fowler: Right, so what - seldom at the studio?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: He was, I think, by nature a quiet and self-effacing man anyway.

Andy Worker: I believe so, yes, hmm.

Roy Fowler: And Cineguild was also part of that.

Andy Worker: That was David Lean and...

Roy Fowler: Ronnie [Neame] and David Lean, yeah. What about them, what do you remember about them?

Andy Worker: Well David I always found to be an absolutely first-class director - wants his own way and gets it. Ronnie Neame has done very well of course, from a being a cameraman, but um - you see, my experience really with production came later on with people like Terence Young directing, Alan Ladd starring, Victor Mature, Cornel Wilde, people like that. Bette Davis, who I made a picture with.

Roy Fowler: OK well, shall we talk about those names now or when they come in your career sequence?

Andy Worker: Well Bette Davis is the first big artist that I worked with I suppose.

Roy Fowler: Hmm, but this was not at Denham, this came later?

Andy Worker: No, this was at Walton-on-Thames actually.

Roy Fowler: Right, let's take it then in sequence - you spent how long at Denham?

Andy Worker: Oh I was there about eighteen months.

Roy Fowler: In what, middle?

Andy Worker: '45, '46.

Roy Fowler: So the studio was still thriving then at that stage and Pinewood was still requisitioned presumably?

Andy Worker: Well Pinewood was opening up.

Roy Fowler: Right, hmm. What then happened? You were part of the central accounting office for that length of time?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: And then what happened to you?

Andy Worker: Well I went, as I said, to Highbury, where we made all these second features.

Roy Fowler: Right, now may I just interrupt to ask you - was Highbury solely the 'charm school' or was it...

Andy Worker: Not entirely, no.

Roy Fowler: No, so these pictures were not necessarily showcase...

Andy Worker: No, but we had people like Jim Edwards in his first picture, Sam Coster, Bill Owen, quite a lot of people - like Christopher Lee.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, as fairly young people?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. What is your role in all this?

Andy Worker: I was production supervisor then.

Roy Fowler: Yes, fine, so now you've got your ambition of really having an input into the films.

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Who ran the studio?

Andy Worker: John Croydon.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha, what do you have to say about him?

Andy Worker: A thoroughly nice man.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha. He had a very long career, did he not?

Andy Worker: Oh yes, yeah.

Roy Fowler: And didn't he end up at Film Finances?

Andy Worker: That's right.

Roy Fowler: Well, since Highbury now has gone for good and all, what you could remember of the place would be most useful I think to record.

Andy Worker: Well, one reasonable stage and another very small one upstairs, funnily enough.

Roy Fowler: Yes, rather like Islington then?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Was it purpose-built or an adaptation?

Andy Worker: I think originally it must have been purpose-built.

Roy Fowler: Really?

Andy Worker: Hmm. But, you know, we turned out some good stuff from there I think.

Roy Fowler: Within the corporate plan, assuming there was one, of the Rank organisation, what role did Highbury's films play?

Andy Worker: Well they were the second features to go out with the main first features, but we were the first one to suffer when Rank started to close things down.

Roy Fowler: Yes. Now historically would this be then part of that time when the ad valorem tax was on American movies and they boycotted the British market, so Rank, in effect, went for broke?

Andy Worker: I think that was a bit later on wasn't it?

Roy Fowler: Was it? '48 or so - so we haven't reached then?

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: Ah, I thought maybe that's why the studio was so busy, and you obviously were busy turning them out there. So John Croydon was executive producer or...

Andy Worker: That's right yes.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. Who were the line producers?

Andy Worker: Well a fellow called Edwin Passmore[?] did one or two pictures. Ralph Nunn-May did a picture, I became an associate producer. I did 'Badgers Green' the remake of 'Badgers Green'.

Roy Fowler: Oh yes, R.C. Sherriff, yeah.

Andy Worker: Um, then Sydney Box put me under contract back at Shepherd's Bush and that folded! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Well then before we move on to Sydney, your films, the films that you made at Highbury - what did it feel like now suddenly to have all this power as a producer?

Andy Worker: Well to me it felt as though you were doing something useful.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. How did you start um - did you initiate a project or were you handed a subject to develop?

Andy Worker: John Croydon made the decisions on what was made.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Who was acquiring material then, was that centralised and farmed out to each of the units?

Andy Worker: Not really no.

Roy Fowler: No, so Croydon's responsibility was...

Andy Worker: He did what he felt like doing.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, and whom would he clear it with?

Andy Worker: I don't think anybody.

Roy Fowler: He didn't answer to anyone at all?

Andy Worker: I don't think so.

Roy Fowler: Right. He had to come up with a certain number of pictures to a budget presumably?

Andy Worker: Yes, ah hmm.

Roy Fowler: Right. And what were your budgets?

Andy Worker: Oh, thirty thousand, thirty-five thousand.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm - and these were, it sounds, proving grounds - testing grounds for talent?

Andy Worker: Oh yes, hmm.

Roy Fowler: In front of the camera or behind the camera?

Andy Worker: Well Terry Fisher was one of our directors, his first job as a director, he did three pictures. John Irwin who's now dead was another director that we had twice...um, Charlie Sanders[?] was another one.

Roy Fowler: Oh yeah. Thirty thousand pounds and how long?

Andy Worker: Sixty minutes, roughly.

Roy Fowler: Right. And how long to shoot?

Andy Worker: Four weeks.

Roy Fowler: Four weeks. Oh well that was pushing it some I suppose. It sounds then as if they were made more-or-less back-to-back?

Andy Worker: Oh we'd finish shooting on a Friday and start again the following Monday!
[Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Right. Did you ever have two in work at the same time - two in production at the same time?

Andy Worker: Well it wouldn't be quite true to say that but I did one day have to have shots for five pictures...

Roy Fowler: Yeah?

Andy Worker: [chuckles]

Roy Fowler: These were, what, pick-up shots and such?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Really? Well it's a way of life I suppose that's gone, that kind of factory assembly line. Is there any one film, or one director, or one personality who sticks in your memory from that time?

Andy Worker: Well Jimmy Edwards mainly because, you know, he was quite new. Energetic. Said he didn't know anything about anything, and went ahead and did the job you know. 'Badger's Green' of course which was, I thought, a very nice little film. Um...Barbara Murray was in that.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha. Was that early days for her?

Andy Worker: I should think it was about the first part she played.

Roy Fowler: She was 'charm school', wasn't she a 'charm school' graduate?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. But you had freedom of casting - you weren't necessarily required to take the contract players?

Andy Worker: Oh no, no.

Roy Fowler: Right. Who went on from there to fame and fortune, besides those you've mentioned?

Andy Worker: Um, Bill Fairchild the writer.

Roy Fowler: Yes, and a producer, yes.

Andy Worker: Um, and you know, many of the artists. Elizabeth Gray who's now married to Brian Rix, she was in one picture there.

Roy Fowler: It was a worthwhile experiment then for Rank in terms of producing talent?

Andy Worker: I think so, hmm.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. And that was one of the casualties of the cutback wasn't it?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right. Was that when you left or had you left before?

Andy Worker: Um no, then, as I say, I went to Sydney Box on contract.

Roy Fowler: Had you known Sydney before this?

Andy Worker: Not really but - then The Bush was closed.

Roy Fowler: Right, excuse me, we'll talk about what happened. You went to Sydney as associate producer?

Andy Worker: Associate producer, yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, which, in effect, was line producer?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: Right. What were the films that you worked on?

Andy Worker: I didn't work on any.

Roy Fowler: Oh you didn't have the chance?

Andy Worker: [Chuckling] No!

Roy Fowler: Ah I see!

Andy Worker: We never got that far!

Roy Fowler: What happened? Do you know the details?

Andy Worker: Well Sydney moved to Pinewood, Shepherd's Bush was sold to the BBC. Um, I was sent to Islington to close it down, and after about a year of that, Ken Maybank [?] said, "You should go on freelance production," which I did.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Well it's a shame you didn't work with Sydney because he was a rather colourful character. So is there much that you can tell us about him and the Boxes generally?

Andy Worker: Well...

Roy Fowler: Of last days at The Bush - it would be interesting to record the end of the studio as a film studio.

Andy Worker: Well see I got shifted over to Islington so I don't really know what happened at The Bush. And um, I was going to work with Peter Rogers on a picture. Peter was going to write it. We got as far as casting almost and then - finish.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm, was it ever made?

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: And this was the '48 cutback?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right, OK. And John Davis in effect had taken over the Rank Organisation?

Andy Worker: Yeah, hmm.

Roy Fowler: Is now the time to talk about him or does he figure later?

Andy Worker: Well I didn't really come across him a great deal, frankly.

Roy Fowler: No, not even by reputation and memos?

Andy Worker: Well his reputation wasn't all that good was it?

Roy Fowler: No, no, he's not the most universally liked of people! [Chuckling]

Andy Worker: I never found him - the little I had to do with him I never found him difficult.

Roy Fowler: That's interesting to hear. Would that be one accounting man talking to another do you think?

Andy Worker: Not really I don't think. By that time I was established on production.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, yeah. Well you obviously had a mind for efficiency, which not all producers did or do. Right so um - then what? Did you also close Islington, I can't remember?

Andy Worker: Oh yeah.

Roy Fowler: That also closed down at that time?

Andy Worker: Yes that's right, yeah.

Roy Fowler: Was that the end of it as a studio?

Andy Worker: Hmm, hmm.

Roy Fowler: No more - that was '48 was it?

Andy Worker: Hmm. And I went to Danny Angel, made a film with him - or made three films with him.

Roy Fowler: Now he was operating quite independently was he?

Andy Worker: Hmm, hmm.

Roy Fowler: As a producer and also as a distributor?

Andy Worker: As a producer.

Roy Fowler: Just a producer?

Andy Worker: Hmm. Eros were the distributors.

Roy Fowler: Right, and he had no part of Eros?

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: Right, OK. What were the films that you remember?

Andy Worker: 'Body Said No!' with Yolande Donlan and Michael Rennie. 'Mister Drake's Duck' with Douglas Fairbanks Junior.

Roy Fowler: And Yolande Donlan I think.

Andy Worker: And Yolande Donlan again. And then 'Another Man's Poison' with Bette Davis and Gary Merrill.

Roy Fowler: OK. I imagine you'd like to talk about some of these people now.

Andy Worker: Well I've always said this about Bette Davis and I'll still say it - she's the most professional person I've ever come across. I mean she'd do the same shot forty times and blink her eyelids at the same time and you know, everything was perfect with the way she worked. But she was awkward. We went up to Yorkshire on location and 'All About Eve' was running in Skipton. So the management of the Odeon said, "Could I get her to make an appearance?" First of all she would then she wouldn't, then she would, then she wouldn't. In the end I said, "Well I've got to be there." Her Rolls Royce passed us on the way and as soon as I got there she said, "There was nobody here to meet me!" I said, "That serves you bloody well right then doesn't it?" [Chuckles] And from then on it was just a fine relationship.

Roy Fowler: Yes. The awkwardness stemmed from what? Was it partly professionalism as an actress but also was there this dimension of being a star?

Andy Worker: I think she was - it's strange to say - I think she was very uncertain of herself.

Roy Fowler: Yes. Did she expect the Hollywood, Warner Brothers-type treatment?

Andy Worker: I wouldn't think so.

Roy Fowler: She didn't?

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: So what, you found her reasonably unassuming?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, oh that's interesting. Was that Irving Rapper, the director?

Andy Worker: Irving Rapper was director of 'Another Man's Poison', yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, what do you recall about Irving?

Andy Worker: A strange man.

Roy Fowler: In what way?

Andy Worker: Well - strange. But he's been in touch with me several times since we worked together so, you know. I don't think he was a very good director but she chose him because I suppose he did what she wanted.

Roy Fowler: Yes, yes. He'd made I think some of her Warner Brothers films hadn't he?

Andy Worker: Yeah that's right.

Roy Fowler: He was the contract director there. Right. And Gary Merrill, the husband?

Andy Worker: He was all right.

Roy Fowler: Hmm, he was a lush wasn't he? Was he drinking heavily then?

Andy Worker: Yeah, reasonably. So was she.

Roy Fowler: Really?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: Did that cause problems on the production?

Andy Worker: No. The only problem that I had was that you couldn't get Scotch in those days, and she loved Scotch. But I found a source of Drambuie [laughs] which seemed to please her!

Roy Fowler: So the production was fuelled by Drambuie was it?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Oh God. How did that picture do?

Andy Worker: I would think it made a profit. Danny went on to make other pictures anyway, so I would think it came out all right.

Roy Fowler: I don't know much about him - was that the start of his career more-or-less or...?

Andy Worker: Well the first thing he did was 'Murder At The Windmill'.

Roy Fowler: Yeah.

Andy Worker: Because he was married to Vivian Van Damm's daughter, so he got the 'in' there. Val Guest again directed it, but after that he made 'The Sea Shall Not Have Them' and a Kenny Moore picture about Bader...

Roy Fowler: Oh...yeah I know the one you mean, I don't remember the title. [NB 'Reach for the Sky'] What's your memory of Val Guest as a director?

Andy Worker: Very efficient. He had his little board up with his drawings of the set. All the arrows pointing to each shot you know - no problem.

Roy Fowler: I should explain for our invisible audience that Edward Dryhurst just joined us and may from time to time contribute a question.

Andy Worker: He knows a damn sight more about the history of the film industry than I do! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: We've already interviewed Eddie on - I don't know - seven, or eight, nine, ten sides.

Eddie Dryhurst: Pardon?

Roy Fowler: I'm saying we've already interviewed you on a considerable number of sides.

Eddie Dryhurst: I was interviewed briefly on Wednesday at the BBC.

Roy Fowler: Yes well tell us about that later, we'll push on with Andy now. Right so we were talking about Val Guest, an efficient director who obviously did his homework.

Andy Worker: Did his homework yes.

Roy Fowler: Right, well that's not always true is it? The pictures presumably were profitable in their day?

Andy Worker: Oh yes I think so.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, when people used to go to the cinema. Right - where were they made?

Andy Worker: We made all three of those pictures at Walton-on-Thames.

Roy Fowler: At Walton-on-Thames. Tell us about the Walton studio, which also is a lost studio.

Andy Worker: Well it wasn't bad, it was quite efficient.

Roy Fowler: How many stages were there?

Andy Worker: Two.

Roy Fowler: Just two - medium?

Andy Worker: One medium and one small.

Roy Fowler: Was it a fully equipped studio?

Andy Worker: Well not by my standards...I had Philip Martell directing the music for one of the pictures, I forget which one now, and he said, "I want four microphones." I found out there were only positions for three so I put a fourth one up, it was a dummy - he never did know!
[Laughs]

Roy Fowler: So they also used it for music recording did they?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: Who owned the studio? Was it owned by anyone?

Andy Worker: Nettlefold.

Roy Fowler: Nettlefold, right. They also owned - did they own another one or not - Guest Keene and Nettlefold?

Andy Worker: I don't think so.

Roy Fowler: No? It was just that one, right. OK. Then in terms of your career what followed?

Andy Worker: Well then I made two pictures with Bob Baker and Monty Berman.

Roy Fowler: Did you set them up yourself with them or...

Andy Worker: No, they costed them, then they called me in.

Roy Fowler: They called you in.

Andy Worker: I made three at Merton Park. One was Donald Peers of all people...

Roy Fowler: Hmm...

Andy Worker: ...and met Terence Young one day for lunch in the local pub, The Leather Bottle, and he said, "I'm going to make a picture called 'The Red Beret'...will you come and work on it?" Which I did! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Right. What were you on 'Red Beret'?

Andy Worker: Production supervisor.

Roy Fowler: That was, what Broccoli and...

Andy Worker: Irving Allen

Roy Fowler: Yeah, right. Well you must have had fairly close dealings with the two of them?

Andy Worker: I did.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, I'm interested to know about Cubby at that stage of his career.

Andy Worker: Well Cubby, I think, probably appeared to be the minor partner; Irving certainly was the go-ahead one.

Roy Fowler: The flamboyant one...

Andy Worker: Cubby was always a nice man, you know, he never got flustered or anything, ever. No he had a tragic life really, his wife was killed in an air-crash and...

Roy Fowler: Sorry I missed that - Cubby's wife was?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Oh I didn't know that.

Andy Worker: Yeah, his first wife.

Roy Fowler: What over here or back in The States?

Andy Worker: Back in the States.

Roy Fowler: Was that - I've often wondered what brought him here, he wasn't part of the McCarthy era was he? I don't think he had a political problem.

Andy Worker: No, no.

Roy Fowler: And I'm sure Irving Allen didn't, so um...

Andy Worker: Well at that time the American distributors wanted British pictures, so the natural thing was to come here and make 'em.

Roy Fowler: Right, now that was, what, because of blocked sterling, blocked currency?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: This was not to share in the Eady money?

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: No, ah ha. So they were sent over by Columbia?

Andy Worker: Well they came over on their own.

Roy Fowler: They took advantage of the situation?

Andy Worker: Yeah. In view of the fact they had a deal with RKO for the first - for 'Red Beret' which fell through and they had to go back and re-do the deal with Columbia. But you see Cubby had worked with Alan Ladd when they were both electricians on the rail so he'd got an 'in' there with Ladd.

Roy Fowler: Well that would be interesting. We're going to interview Cubby sometime, he's agreed to do it but he's always making movies. Um, it would be interesting to have your memories and what you knew at that time, because we're now talking of what, over forty years ago?

Andy Worker: Fifty-two, yeah, 1952. Um, well Cubby was the one that had the dirty end, if you like. You know, when we went out to Africa on a later picture, Cubby's the one who had to come out there, not Irving. Irving wouldn't move outside a hotel if he could help it!

Roy Fowler: What were the troubles on the picture that Cubby had to sort out?

Andy Worker: They weren't really, I mean this was the one that I was the producer on 'Safari' with Victor Mature. I couldn't get Mature on a plane without him being drunk first, but you know, it's one of those things - terrified of flying. In fact I suspended him because he didn't turn up!

Roy Fowler: Well it wasn't necessarily a safe thing to do that much in those days...it was accepted but... Anything more about Warwick that you can remember?

Andy Worker: Well I did five pictures with them...

Roy Fowler: As a freelance or were you on staff?

Andy Worker: Well I was on non-stop, I was technically a freelance but I kept with them for, what, three and a half years.

Roy Fowler: Really?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: So that's what, 'Red Beret'?

Andy Worker: 'Red Beret', 'Hell Below Zero', 'The Prize of Gold', 'Black Knight' er... 'Safari'.

Roy Fowler: Yeah - was 'Black Knight' an Alan Ladd film?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: What about Mrs Ladd?

Andy Worker: Well she was his agent wasn't she?

Roy Fowler: Yes.

Andy Worker: [chuckles]

Roy Fowler: A tough lady, I gather?

Andy Worker: Oh tough, hmm.

Roy Fowler: Right. Any particular anecdotes you have of dealings with her?

Andy Worker: No not really.

Roy Fowler: No. She was the keeper of the flame I believe - the preserver of the Ladd image, yes?

Andy Worker: Yeah well I didn't get involved with the politics ever. As far as I was concerned artists came to work to do a job and that was it.

Roy Fowler: Right, as a producer what was your interest at that stage? Was it the neatness and the tidiness and the efficiency of the production?

Andy Worker: Er, well on 'Safari' for instance, Irving went into Moorfields Hospital for an eye operation, so he couldn't read the script even, and when it was delivered to me, I just threw up my hands in horror because it wasn't the story that we'd bought, and er...

Roy Fowler: What had gone wrong, the writer?

Andy Worker: The writer yes - had gone completely wrong. Anyway I had to sit down - oh, four nights I think it was, just to get it right so that we could shoot, because three of the artists that we'd got wouldn't shoot until we put it right. And my favourite girl was on that one, Janet Leigh.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha.

Andy Worker: She was an absolute gem to work with.

Roy Fowler: Really? Yeah. You obviously fell for her?

Andy Worker: Well I couldn't, she was married to Tony Curtis at the time! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: I see. Well then what are the other Warwick pictures we've accounted for? Is it three of them or did we do all five?

Andy Worker: All five.

Roy Fowler: Oh we did? OK. So moving on then, you're now a recognised producer, obviously.

Andy Worker: That's right, I made another picture in Africa with Cornel Wilde and Donna Reed.

Roy Fowler: What was that?

Andy Worker: 'Beyond Mombassa'. Leo Genn.

Roy Fowler: American money or British money?

Andy Worker: American money.

Roy Fowler: So after the collapse of Rank in '48, it's mostly American money that is keeping the British industry going is it?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: What would one do? One would take the package or a script or - how would one interest an American distributor?

Andy Worker: There are various ways, various ways. I mean the fact with the Cornel Wilde pictures, they came over with Cornel Wilde. It was a terrible script! George Marshall was the director, one of the oldest directors that I think ever lived! And I suppose it made money, I don't know.

Roy Fowler: Hmm, so you were just hired really for that?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right. You're freelancing, then what came along?

Andy Worker: Then Ben Henry and I formed a company and we made three pictures there with 20th Century Fox, so again, American money mainly but some National Film Finance Corporation money.

Roy Fowler: Yes. Were these for primarily domestic release or were they aimed at a more international market?

Andy Worker: Well the first one we did, we had Juliette Greco and Richard Todd. Richard Todd was under contract to Fox, so that was aimed at America.

Roy Fowler: Yes. Was Zanuck involved at all?

Andy Worker: Yeah - not involved in actually making the picture but he did come out and see us while we were in Kampala.

Roy Fowler: I assume that he had a hand in the casting, with Juliette Greco?

Andy Worker: Greco. Hmm - we presumed! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Was that not a very troublesome shoot, troublesome location?

Andy Worker: No, no.

Roy Fowler: Ah, I seem to remember stories that one of the Grecos...

[break in recording]

Roy Fowler: I remember stories that one of the Greco/Zanuck films in Africa was but, maybe...

Andy Worker: That wasn't a problem, no. No we finished on schedule and on budget.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Yes. So really the industry is ticking over quite well from what you say?

Andy Worker: It was in those days, yeah. Then I did a film called 'Danger Within' with Colin Lesslie.

Roy Fowler: Side Two. If we can just go back on that - the picture you were talking about...

Andy Worker: 'Danger Within' with Colin Lesslie. Don Chaffey directed. The first film in Shepperton after they re-did the roofs - you know, they had to completely refurbish the roofs.

Roy Fowler: Well I imagine Shepperton is a place that's very close to your heart and that you will have a lot to tell us about that?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: So is it now the time to start talking about Shepperton? Is this your first picture there?

Andy Worker: No I did 'Red Beret' we did out of Shepperton...

Roy Fowler: Right.

Andy Worker: And after 'Danger Within' I did 'I'm All Right Jack' with the Boultings.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm - your role on that was?

Andy Worker: Associate producer.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. That's a classic.

Andy Worker: Before we'd even started it they'd asked me to take over the studio because they'd just bought it and um, as soon as I'd finished 'I'm All Right Jack' I started on the studio.

Roy Fowler: Well we must talk about the Boultings and 'All Right Jack'. Let me ask this question - has Korda ceased to have any connection with the studios?

Andy Worker: Hmm, yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right. That was another typical British financial debacle, yes?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right. Tell us the story then of - well tell us about the Boultings and 'I'm All Right Jack' first.

Andy Worker: Well we came out under budget, under schedule and it was a classic picture, in my opinion. I've never seen a film go from the screenplay to the actual screen as well as that one did, it...

Roy Fowler: Word for word?

Andy Worker: Word for word, it was all there - in fact it was a real pleasure to be part of that picture.

Roy Fowler: Yes. What was it like working with John and Roy?

Andy Worker: I found I had no trouble with them at all.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm, right. And Mr Sellers, who was then at a relatively early stage of his stardom?

Andy Worker: He wasn't a problem.

Roy Fowler: He hadn't really achieved enormous fame had he?

Andy Worker: No he'd done 'Carlton Brown of the F.O.' before that, and I think one or two others. But it was a real star part for him, there's no question about that.

Roy Fowler: Yes, right - lovely performance.

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: And trouble-free?

Andy Worker: Trouble-free yeah.

Roy Fowler: It's always interesting to hear about pictures that there's so little to say about them because they're trouble free.

Andy Worker: Well I think that Sellers based his character on our shop steward at the time, who was rather like that.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. Now in the course of your many years at Shepperton, did you find out a lot about the history of the studio, going back to its origin?

Andy Worker: I did a bit of research, yes. Yes, I did.

Roy Fowler: Is now the time to talk about that or shall we take it from the point someone's offered you a job there to take over?

Andy Worker: Well I can't really remember a great deal about the origins of Shepperton, except that it was a man called Norman Loudon.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm.

Andy Worker: He made 'flicker' films, you know, you pressed the cards and they'd do a continuous action. Um...

Roy Fowler: If I can just interject - I did read, I think it's in Rachel Low's book, that he bought the entire estate, the original estate for [chuckles] fifteen thousand pounds!

Andy Worker: That's probably true!

Roy Fowler: Yeah, in the early thirties.

Andy Worker: Because it's sixty acres. And I think they were always running out of money in those days...

Roy Fowler: Sound City?

Andy Worker: Hmm. And Tony Kimmins told me once that Norman Loudon went to him and said, "Look, I've got to have a script by Monday morning" - this was Friday afternoon! And Tony Kimmins actually wrote the scripts over the weekend so that they could shoot on Monday morning! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Right, yeah, that was in the thirties?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Was it the Boultings as individuals? They were part of a consortium British Lion that...?

Andy Worker: The Boultings, Sidney Gilliat and Frank Launder.

Roy Fowler: Hmm, was it theoretically British Lion?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yes it was, yeah. British Lion has had so many existences that...

Andy Worker: [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: [Chuckling] ...that it's difficult to keep track! Can you tell us about that, Andy? Because it became a very important - well it had been a very important studio, with Korda, and now was to become for the British productions generally...

Andy Worker: I was fortunate, I think, when I went there - took it over - we were a hundred and eighty thousand in the red because of the re-roofing - nothing to do with previous management.

Roy Fowler: What did you re-roof? The stages?

Andy Worker: The stages, yeah. Four main stages had to be re-done. I was told that I couldn't mix commercials with feature films, because we'd got 'Guns of Navarone' in there and a Sam Spiegel picture - but I still took commercials.

Roy Fowler: What was the Sam Spiegel film? 'Suddenly, Last Summer'?

Andy Worker: 'Suddenly, Last Summer' that's right. I still took commercials and I made eight thousand pounds profit the first year, and that was entirely the rental from commercials!
[Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Really? So you wouldn't have broken even without them. What year was that?

Andy Worker: That was 1959.

Roy Fowler: Right, OK. I don't quite know what to ask you about the studio - I'd much rather you gave me your memories of the place and the people. How many stages when you first went there?

Andy Worker: Well there were four...five...six...seven.

Roy Fowler: All in reasonable nick or not?

Andy Worker: No, I mean the old silent stage was never in any good shape at all.

Roy Fowler: Do you know how the - that's the big stage, 'E' stage wasn't it?

Andy Worker: Yeah, hmm.

Roy Fowler: Why had that been built originally? Was it built for a particular production?

Andy Worker: Yes, 'The Shape of Things to Come'.

Roy Fowler: Was it?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: What, a special effects stage?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha, really?

Andy Worker: Back in, what, '36 that was built.

Roy Fowler: Something like that, yeah.

Andy Worker: Um, what did I find out about Shepperton? Well I loved the job, of course, you know, I loved meeting all the people and the sort of pictures that came in over the years. Hal Wallis came in there with 'Anne of the Thousand Days' and 'Mary, Queen of Scots'. Fortunately we attracted some big people, Carl Foreman, Sam Spiegel, you know. I had good staff, I was told when I went there that I was going to sack everybody, but I only had to get rid of one head of department who was pretty useless.

Roy Fowler: What department was that?

Andy Worker: He was the chief carpenter.

Roy Fowler: Right, and just no good at his job or had been and lost it?

Andy Worker: He - I think he was a good carpenter but he was no organiser.

Roy Fowler: Right.

Andy Worker: So then of course the great masterpiece, 'Oliver', which we invented new equipment for, made new equipment ourselves, and you know, it shows on screen I think what a marvellous picture it was.

Roy Fowler: Yes, I saw some of that being shot because I used to come down on commercials. You were in competition, presumably, with other studios to get a picture like 'Oliver' were you?

Andy Worker: Oh yeah, hmm.

Roy Fowler: They didn't just come to you?

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: How would one construct a deal for them?

Andy Worker: Well you had a basic rate per stage, um, you couldn't do a great deal about that because if you did it for one person, somebody else would want the same sort of deal and you would erode your profits. But I think we got a reputation for being picture makers, really making pictures, I think producers liked that.

Roy Fowler: Right. What would come with the stage, if you rented a stage?

Andy Worker: Camera, sound equipment, lights...

Roy Fowler: Basic complement or a very elaborate complement?

Andy Worker: A basic complement. I mean you only had so many 'brutes' and if they wanted more 'brutes' than you'd got you had to charge for them, that sort of thing.

Roy Fowler: Right. I was thinking of bodies as much as equipment.

Andy Worker: Well we only had standby staff. I mean all the ACT staff came in with the producer.

Roy Fowler: Right, so...

Andy Worker: Except perhaps the sound staff.

Roy Fowler: It's a little under - it's something less than fully crewed but a little more than four walls?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Somewhere between the two, yeah.

Andy Worker: I used to say to my staff down there, "Look, if a producer wants him, it doesn't matter whether he's next in turn or not, the producer has him." Because there had been a strict rota before that.

Roy Fowler: Andy, were unions a pain in the arse in the fifties and the sixties? They had been rather earlier hadn't they, in the forties, I think they achieved their maximum...

Andy Worker: I don't think we had any great problem with them.

Roy Fowler: Demarcation disputes?

Andy Worker: No not really.

Roy Fowler: There was a lot of - what - if not jurisdictional rivalry, there was a great deal of compartmentalisation then, more so than now I think, yes?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: But that didn't lead to trouble?

Andy Worker: No, well the sort of thing that used to happen, I mean, if people wanted to do something outside of the agreement I used to say, "No, if you want a new agreement go and negotiate it."

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm.

Andy Worker: "But that's the agreement and that's what we pay or that's what we do. As I say, if you want a new agreement, negotiate."

Roy Fowler: But looking back, would you say the agreements were reasonable? Because the unions...

Andy Worker: I think we had too many people.

Roy Fowler: Yes.

Andy Worker: I had twelve hundred on the staff at one time and I worked it out that I could probably manage with eight hundred.

Roy Fowler: Really? Well that's considerable featherbedding isn't it?

Andy Worker: Yeah, but that's what it was like in those days.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. And er what did - so it sounds to me a bit like 'I'm All Right Jack', were they sitting around behind the boxes, at the back of the stages playing Gin Rummy?

Andy Worker: No not really! [chuckles] What you had to do in those days - we had one electrician that didn't lift a finger, he just stood and watched. And it was pouring with rain one day and Charlie Hillier[?] who was then my chief electrician says, "I've got rid of him!" I said, "How did you do that?" He said, "I sent him out on the lot to pick up some cables, he wasn't going out in the rain!" [Laughs]

Roy Fowler: How marvellous. How long had he been there?

Andy Worker: Oh not long, not long.

Roy Fowler: Ah, and he successfully resisted doing any work at all did he?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: What I'm sort of fishing for - I don't want to put words in your mouth, but the unions have been so often accused of destroying the film industry. Is that, do you think, a fair stricture, a fair comment?

Andy Worker: Well, let's take your bloke upstairs...

Roy Fowler: What our leader?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right, Alan [NB Alan Sapper]

Andy Worker: The Americans were making a television series at Shepperton and they wanted American directors, because it was a peculiar American style of comedy, and no British directors have got that touch. And Vernon Burns came up and saw Alan. "No way! British directors, that's it!" So I came up and saw Alan, I said, "Alan, you can't do this, they'll just go away." And I must say, Alan agreed and we got our permits for the Americans to come in. You know, Tom O'Brien also was quite a character in his way...

Roy Fowler: Would you say that NATKE was more difficult than ACT?

Andy Worker: No, no.

Roy Fowler: They were very co-operative?

Andy Worker: Ah hmm, Frank Chappell[?] was co-operative.

Roy Fowler: Yeah.

Andy Worker: I couldn't possibly say that the unions contributed anything towards failure of the film industry.

Roy Fowler: I'm sure we're glad to hear that!

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: I think that's a true judgement myself.

Andy Worker: Well you had to get tough with them occasionally you know - read the riot act, tell them where they stood.

Roy Fowler: Are there specific incidents that you can remember on pictures when they were carrying on a bit?

Andy Worker: Yeah, I had - this department, the riggers, wanted a pound a day for working on the lot in February, and the agreement said in those days, four bob a day, and I said, "Four bob and that's it." Anyway, they decided that they would down tools, so I fired the lot, the whole department.

Roy Fowler: Riggers came under who, ETU?

Andy Worker: No NATKE.

Roy Fowler: NATKE.

Andy Worker: Called for a meeting with Tom O'Brien who was then an MP so we didn't start until ten o'clock. And with Tom you always had to give him half-an-hour for a diatribe before you could get down to business. So you got that out of the way and then he turned to his chief

shop steward and said, "Gordon, I wondered, are they right or are they wrong?" And Gordon said, "They're wrong!" He said, "All right then, they're fired!" [Laughs]

Roy Fowler: What was O'Brien's diatribe? Workers against management or...?

Andy Worker: Oh, no. Always on about...something, you know...

Roy Fowler: Yeah - oh, it varied?

Andy Worker: Yeah, yeah. About Robert Clarke and, you know, about John Davis and this, that and the other.

Roy Fowler: Hmm. Well the reverse side of the coin of course, to accusations that the unions did for the business is the [chuckles] accusation that management did for the business, and I think that's...

Andy Worker: I think that's probably true!

Roy Fowler: Hmm, yeah. You never were a member of ACT?

Andy Worker: I was!

Roy Fowler: Were you now?

Andy Worker: Yeah, I was a member of NATKE and ACT at one time! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Yes, why was that?

Andy Worker: Well when I was an accountant I was NATKE you see, and on production it's ACT.

Roy Fowler: Oh of course, yes. I was thinking as a producer you weren't required to be, but you were production supervisor, yeah.

Andy Worker: I think that management has a lot to answer for, frankly.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Yes, I think there was a lot of both inefficiency and people who didn't know their jobs and a great deal of ripping off that went on.

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: And in that context I don't think the unions can be blamed all that much...but anyway we're not here to justify the unions. We're still in the sixties I suppose?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Would 'Oliver' be the biggest production that Shepperton serviced?

Andy Worker: Well 'Casino Royale' was probably the biggest! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Ah, right!

Andy Worker: At the shareholder's meeting, one of our shareholders said, "What do you want to make this sort of rubbish for?" I said, "I'm just getting paid for the stage rent, that's all." And you know, they probably contributed more than any other picture!

Roy Fowler: Yes. I don't mean this in any accusatory fashion, but you've been associated with some extraordinary bagels! You knew about 'London Town' right?

Andy Worker: Yeah!

Roy Fowler: And 'Caesar' and 'Casino Royale'...

Andy Worker: Yeah!

Roy Fowler: What you can you remember about 'Casino Royale'?

Andy Worker: Well it was quite mad, I mean they re-wrote it every day and introduced new characters every day and new directors every day!

Roy Fowler: Who had gone berserk on that? Was it Feldman?

Andy Worker: Yeah, Charlie Feldman.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, terrible picture - terrible.

Andy Worker: Yeah, it was a shocking picture! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Awful! So it was just madness, just total chaos?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: No particular recollections of it other than...

Andy Worker: Well, Peter Sellers and Orson Welles wouldn't go on the stage together and they were playing a scene opposite each other! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Do you know the origin of that feud?

Andy Worker: It must have been - I should think it must have been Sellers.

Roy Fowler: Probably trying to upstage each other.

Andy Worker: But then you'd get all sorts of funny things in a picture like that. Um, when - who is it? - Joanna Lumley [NB Joanna Pettet?] called a taxi in London, she says, "Berlin!" [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Why did she do that?

Andy Worker: Well that's where she wanted to go.

Roy Fowler: Oh you mean it's the scene of the picture?

Andy Worker: Yeah! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Oh I thought she was charging it to the production!

Andy Worker: No, no!

Roy Fowler: Ah right, yes, yes. But I think it was meant to be a light-hearted burlesque-come-parody, wasn't it?

Andy Worker: Well...

Roy Fowler: The sad thing was, it had no sense of fun at all.

Andy Worker: You see the other Bond pictures had started to take off and that was the one that was free and Feldman got it. He had no idea really of doing a Bond picture.

Roy Fowler: Was it a spoiling operation do you think?

Andy Worker: No I don't think - I don't think he knew what was going on.

Roy Fowler: Hmm. He was not an unintelligent man, he was a very good agent.

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: We'll never know I guess. 'Oliver' by contrast, I think, was a very happy picture wasn't it?

Andy Worker: Oh yes very efficient.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. What were your dealings with Carol Read?

Andy Worker: Not a lot - more with John Woolf than with Carol.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Well, would you like to tell us about - was it just John Woolf or both of them, John and Jimmy?

Andy Worker: Er, Jimmy had gone by then hadn't he?

Roy Fowler: Had he? Oh I didn't realise he had.

Andy Worker: Hmm, yeah.

Roy Fowler: Is it that long ago?

Andy Worker: Hmm. No, John, very straight, very fair. Knew what he wanted. Um...perhaps didn't know as much as he ought to about making films, but you know, he got all the right people at the right time.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Well I suppose if you had, say, Carol Reed and if you had Ozzy Morris [NB Oswald Morris] you didn't need a great deal more really and...

Andy Worker: Well it was going to be Lewis Gilbert you know, originally.

Roy Fowler: Was it?

Andy Worker: He did the tests and I don't know what went wrong but suddenly Carol turned up.

Roy Fowler: Beautiful sets. Both in design and construction - very handsome.

Andy Worker: Well John Box did a marvellous job on that.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, right. Shepperton was very well known, certainly at that stage, for its sound department was it not?

Andy Worker: Oh yeah.

Roy Fowler: How did that come about? Was that because of one man?

Andy Worker: One man, yeah, John Cox.

Roy Fowler: John Cox, ah hmm.

Andy Worker: He ruled it with a rod of iron, he had his own standards and they were first-class.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. Did the studio give him what he wanted in terms of facilities?

Andy Worker: I - yeah, I gave him quite a lot in the way of facilities. In fact, John was away at the time and I'd already authorised a twenty-four channel mixing table, and I went to John's engineer and said, "Does it have to be twenty-four, can we have twenty-five?" And he said, "Yeah, that's easy." And we had, you know, twenty-five channels.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm, and that was state-of-the-art?

Andy Worker: Yeah. Nine heads on a cutting machine, on a movieola. Um, did away with all those old rod things that you had to measure the film with, got a little steel gadget that did it for you.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm.

Andy Worker: No, I think Shepperton ought to be proud of what it did for 'Oliver'.

Roy Fowler: Right. They did all the original music recording, did they, on it?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. What are some of the other pictures from, what, the sixties and the seventies? You spent the rest of your career there, did you, until retirement?

Andy Worker: Well no, I went to Humphries after that - made a children's film down in Devon.

Roy Fowler: When did you leave Shepperton?

Andy Worker: I think it was about 1976.

Roy Fowler: So you were there altogether, what? Sixteen, seventeen years?

Andy Worker: Seventeen, eighteen years, ah hmm.

Roy Fowler: Well you must have seen a hell of a lot of pictures in that time. What are those that stick in your mind?

Andy Worker: Well, 'Mary, Queen of Scots', 'Anne of the Thousand Days'...er...

Roy Fowler: Big pictures!

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: You did mention 'Suddenly, Last Summer'.

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Is that anything that is worth recalling?

Andy Worker: It was a troublesome picture I think. Not that we got involved in it, but I think Katharine Hepburn didn't particularly like Liz Taylor and um, you know, Monty Clift was a sick man so it wasn't an easy picture.

Roy Fowler: Hmm. It's the one picture I think that they all of them regret making, including Spiegel.

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: But nothing specific that you can remember about it?

Andy Worker: No, I can only remember that they were going way over schedule and I had to take one of their sets down because I'd let the space to somebody else. And I said to Sam, "Look, it'll be up in time for you, you're a fortnight behind or whatever, it'll be up somewhere else in time for you," and it was! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: What was Spiegel like to work with or for?

Andy Worker: He was all right.

Roy Fowler: Yeah. Did you find him as devious as he's supposed to...

Andy Worker: No!

Roy Fowler: No?

Andy Worker: No.

Roy Fowler: Because there used to be, in Hollywood, a verb to 'Spiegelise' which meant to get shafted.

Andy Worker: No I don't think so. I can't really say that I found any of the producers that difficult.

Roy Fowler: Oh that's a shame because you're destroying illusions there.

Andy Worker: [laughs]

Roy Fowler: Coming then to these historical epics that were made, did you not have 'Man for All Seasons'?

Andy Worker: Yeah, ah hmm.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, that I think started the fashion did it not, the success of that?

Andy Worker: No that was - when was it?

Roy Fowler: Came later?

Andy Worker: I think it was later on.

Roy Fowler: Right, I'm mis-remembering then.

Andy Worker: But Fred Zinnemann of course, a marvellous man, no problem, a really good director, really knew what he was doing.

Roy Fowler: No problem either in terms of personality?

Andy Worker: No, no.

Roy Fowler: Hal Wallis?

Andy Worker: Hal was no problem.

Roy Fowler: He was there for that - 'Anne of the Thousand Days'?

Andy Worker: Yes.

Roy Fowler: He didn't delegate it?

Andy Worker: No, he was there every day, not all day but every day. Even on the last picture he made, he said to me before he even started shooting, "I want to dub on such-and-such a date," which was four days after he was due to finish shooting, and he was ready.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha! He knew his stuff obviously, yeah. Are there other films that you're proud of?

Andy Worker: Well, mostly 'I'm All Right Jack', 'Oliver', because we made a lot of second features as well as the main pictures. A man called Jack Parsons kept coming in with twenty-five thousand pounders.

Roy Fowler: And you could cope with twenty-five thousand pounders?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: I mean, that was his total budget?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: What would the studio get out of that?

Andy Worker: We were lucky if we got five hundred quid! [Laughs]

Roy Fowler: [Laughing] Oh! Did you do all-in deals?

Andy Worker: Sometimes yes, but you see what it did was, it kept the people busy, even though you were only making five hundred quid, you got thirty people no longer on idle time.

Roy Fowler: So it was carrying part of the overhead if not all the overhead?

Andy Worker: Hmm, ah hmm. [affirmative noises]

Roy Fowler: Were you competitive for commercials? Because certainly in those days there were lots and lots of tiny little holes in the walls where commercials got made, I think...

Andy Worker: No, I think that we were competitive, yes.

Roy Fowler: People were very wary I think of going to the big studios because they thought they would be so expensive.

Andy Worker: No we did - well we did rather a lot.

Roy Fowler: Ah hmm. I think you were probably the only one of the big studios that took commercials then weren't you? I'm not sure that Pinewood had any or Elstree?

Andy Worker: They didn't have them on the same scale that we did.

Roy Fowler: No. Whereas now...

Andy Worker: That's all they've got! [Laughs]

Roy Fowler: Yeah, Pinewood and Callan certainly, Elstree relied on them. Was there a change of ownership during your time there at the studio?

Andy Worker: Yeah, hmm.

Roy Fowler: What happened?

Andy Worker: Well Mr John Bentley came in and bought the company out. They hadn't done their homework, they found they hadn't got as much land as they thought. Because there was a covenant with the council that thirty yards either side of the river would go back to the council.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha! Nobody had read the deeds?

Andy Worker: No. And then of course John Bentley sold to what was then Vavasour[?] and Michael Deeley and Barry Spikings came in and that was it.

Roy Fowler: So asset stripping is nothing new in the studio scene? [Slight pause] Did this take place towards the end of your time there or - you suffered through it?

Andy Worker: I suffered part of it. I was going to produce the 'Conduct Unbecoming' for them but that didn't happen, so I went to Humphries.

Roy Fowler: Right, to manage Humphries?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: How long did you spend there? Did you close...?

Andy Worker: A couple of years.

Roy Fowler: You didn't close it? No. And then you say you made Children's Film Foundation...?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, that must have been quite a test, again, of efficiency, because the budgets were quite tight, were they not?

Andy Worker: Well yeah. The one I remember mostly was, we had to shoot in two parts, we had to shoot it in April and then in October, because we had a baby deer and we had to wait for it to grow up! And that was a problem but we didn't lose money.

Roy Fowler: But the kids in the cast also presumably were growing up at the same time?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: Yeah, right. And you retired from active work when?

Andy Worker: Oh must be ten years ago.

Roy Fowler: Really? Regretfully or you thought you'd had enough?

Andy Worker: Well I thought I'd had enough, frankly.

Roy Fowler: It was a different business?

Andy Worker: I took a job with Mr Preminger and I couldn't find out where the money was.

Roy Fowler: Which film was this?

Andy Worker: 'The Human Factor'.

Roy Fowler: Ah ha, oh yes!

Andy Worker: And I said to him one day, "Look, if you don't tell me where the money is I'm not taking on any staff because it's against my principles." So we agreed to part company and I believe that quite a lot of people have never been paid.

Roy Fowler: I think that's true, yes, yes. And that was your last hurrah was it?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: Right. Well there we are, we've come quite a long way during that time. What now is there to add to that - anything at all that you can think of?

Andy Worker: Well I can see the sea from my garden! [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Yeah, there's a lot to be said for that too!

Andy Worker: Er, no nothing to add really. I've got one subject I would like to do something about sometime, but whether I will or not I don't know.

Roy Fowler: As a film you mean?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Roy Fowler: Right. How far have you taken it? Do you have a script?

Andy Worker: Um, story line, not in script form yet, but um, no, we'll see.

Roy Fowler: Oh well, we certainly wish you well with that. I'll stop the tape here and we'll talk to Eddie.

[break in recording]

Andy Worker: ...as a conglomerate of...

Roy Fowler: Well, excuse me, just to say while we stop that - the name Humphries, you were at Humphries as MD?

Andy Worker: Yeah.

Roy Fowler: And the question is about Humphries. Tell us about that.

Andy Worker: Well as I say, as a conglomerate, BT tried to apply the same rules to all their businesses, but the film business doesn't fit into scaffolding or running buses! And I had a character, ACT member Joe West who was sixty-four something like that, and his wife was really a vegetable, so I never knew whether he was coming in or not. And so one day I just went to the board and said, "Look we ought to retire this man, buy out - so that he gets his full pension now and then I can get somebody else that I can rely on." And they said, "Well if he wants to go let him resign." Now that sort of attitude, to me - nasty. He'd been with them twenty odd years...

Roy Fowler: Heartless!

Andy Worker: ...and it's only going to cost 'em eight hundred quid! So, you know that's all I've got to say about Humphries. [Chuckles]

Roy Fowler: Hmm, well they went the way of all flesh. Sad, because so many component parts of the British film industry have gone, good, bad and indifferent. Edward, are there any questions or reminiscences you'd like to share with Andy?

Eddie Dryhurst: You were associated with Ernie Gartside for a while weren't you?

Andy Worker: Yeah, hmm.

Eddie Dryhurst: Did you make any pictures at the old studios in Elstree - I've forgotten the name.

Andy Worker: What, with the Danzigers?

Eddie Dryhurst: Yeah, Danzigers?

Andy Worker: Ernie made one there.

Eddie Dryhurst: Thanks - what?

Andy Worker: Ernie made one there.

Eddie Dryhurst: Oh yes I remember he did, Nigel Patrick in it wasn't it?

Andy Worker: Yes that's right, 'Count Five and Die'.

Eddie Dryhurst: Well I seem to remember you being in an office with Ernest Garside up the street here?

Andy Worker: Yeah that's right.

Eddie Dryhurst: The company's name began with a Z...

Andy Worker: Zonic.

Eddie Dryhurst: Zonich.

Andy Worker: Ben Henry...

Eddie Dryhurst: Yeah, that's right!

Andy Worker: ...who died a fortnight ago.

Eddie Dryhurst: Ben Henry did? A fortnight ago?

Andy Worker: Yeah, hmm.

Eddie Dryhurst: As recently as that?

Andy Worker: Hmm.

Eddie Dryhurst: I knew him very well at one time - he was producer of the Formby films that I scripted during the war.

Andy Worker: That's right, yeah.

Eddie Dryhurst: Oh well I'm sorry to hear he's dead, but not surprised, he was getting on wasn't he?

Andy Worker: Well he'd been sick for sometime, his son-in-law told me his last four years were a misery.

Eddie Dryhurst: Yes, so he's better off dead I suppose.

Andy Worker: Well he had, what do they call - Bell's Palsy - a sort of a stroke.

Eddie Dryhurst: Oh sorry to hear that. Well dear old Ernie died some years ago now didn't he?

Andy Worker: Oh yes, yes, yes...

Eddie Dryhurst: He was a great character wasn't he?

Roy Fowler: What did you do with Ernie Gartside, Andy?

Andy Worker: Well three of us were in partnership, we made three films for Fox.

Roy Fowler: Which films were they? I'm sorry, I may have missed that...

Andy Worker: Juliette Greco was one, then Ernie made 'Count Five and Die' and I made 'Intent to Kill' with Richard Todd and...

Roy Fowler: You mentioned that too, OK. Anything else?

Eddie Dryhurst: I don't think so, no.

Roy Fowler: OK, well it remains then to thank you very much Andy for your time, thanks a lot.

Eddie Dryhurst: [Clearly suggesting a drink] You're thirsty, aren't you?

Andy Worker: [Laughs]

[Tape Ends]