BEHP 0402 T John Legard Transcript

JOHN LEGARD

John Legard, documentary editor, director, producer, script writer, recorded on 18 March 1997.

SIDE 1

Stephen Peet: When and where were you born?

John Legard: I was born in Lincolnshire at the end of 1924 because my father who was actually brought up in Lincolnshire had a job looking after an estate near Scunthorpe. He was one of a number of people I suppose who were managing this estate and prior to that he had been in the First World War as a soldier and if I'm going back just a little bit, it's quite interesting and before that he had been a coffee planter in India because he was sent out after he left university, because he went to public school and Oxford and then he got to know some people who ran a coffee plantation in Southern India and he went out there for 1909, I think it was, and he came back in 1914 on leave and he was greeted by the news that his sister had just been killed in a car crash. This is slightly peripheral but it is quite interesting, one of the very early car crashes, because they were living in Yorkshire at that time. Then of course the war started and he didn't go back to India but joined up in the Lincolshire regiment and he was all the way through the First World War and then come the end of the war he got this job working with land management in Lincolnshire.

And I was born, and my brother was born 4 and a half years earlier. And then they moved to Yorkshire, to near Scarborough, the family and we were there until 1931 when my father, like quite a number of people who went through the First World War, decided to take holy orders, and so he gave up his job and he went to the Theological College down in Somerset, Wells. And he was there for a year and a half, so I had quite an interesting time living in a small cathedral city, my first school really. And I really enjoyed that. We had a flat right opposite the West Front of Wells Cathedral, magnificent. A very small flat, and it was quite a change from the comparative comfortable life that they'd had before hand, when he had this job and so on, he really had to give up everything for the time being.

Anyway he qualified as a padre, deacon first of all. He went to a parish in Shropshire as a curate, the parish of Oswestry, Oswestry Parish Church. Oh I should say that one thing that happened that affected my life very considerably, when we were living in Yorkshire before he went into the church there was an epidemic of infantile paralysis as it was called in those days, polio now, and there were several people around this particularl part of Yorkshire, which was between Scarborough and Filey, on the coast, and I alas got it. I don't remember it of course because I was under three years old, I was two and a half or something like that, but that sort of drastically affected my life to come because I was obviously disabled from henceforth, although in fact they always said before I contracted this illness I was rather a miserable child, very gloomy and when I got back from hospital I was bouncing with life and full of the joys of spring and maybe it was the community

life or maybe it was natural instanct, you know challenge, even at that early age, I was going to cope with.

Stephen Peet: Did you have to live for a while in a wheel chair or wasn't' it as bad as that.

John Legard: I suppose I did. I suppose I must have been in a wheel chair to begin with. And one thing I do remember about the illneess was that when I first got it, when I was in hospital I remember the doctor coming along one morning and saying now we must make you sit up on your own. So he propped me up in bed and he said now sit up, stay like that, and he let go and I fell back and at that particular time I couldn't even, that area of my back had gone. But that recovered very rapidly and all it left me with was both legs and subsequently I had one or two operations to improve the condition. Of course it was all fairly basic in those days. There were a number of people in that part of Yorkshire who got it and there was somebody called Felicity Lane Fox, you may know that name because she started the polio fellowship. I remember her as a young girl when we used to go onto the sands at Filey playing with our buckets and spades and there was this beautiful young girl called Felicity Lane Fox, about 12 she was then in 1931, and a few months she went down with the wretched polio. And she was completely wheel chaired for the rest of her life. But she did a magnificent job of setting up the charity. This is all peripheral in that sense but all background, isn't it.

Stephen Peet: When you were in Wells, that was when you were in a wheelchair.

John Legard: That was after.

Stephen Peet: Were you in a kind of primary school or was it the cathedral school.

John Legard: I was in the kindergarten department of the girl's school or the pre whatever they called it, the preparatory department of the Girl's High School, and there were about six girls and six boys, we were seven or eight year olds, and we had a lot of fun in Wells, I rather enjoyed that. I rather liked the cathedral precincts and I remember I was quite keen on music, I was encouraged to be keen, I was never any good at it, I can really just play the piano but I always had a great appreciation of music and I was taught the violin for a time and there was a street called the Vicar's Close which is one of the most beautiful streets in England and I used to go there every week to learn the violin, but I didn't keep that up, but I stuck to the piano more or less.

Stephen Peet: Now you had an older brother.

John Legard: Yes, he became a professional sailor, he went to boarding school, preparatory school and then he went to Dartford Naval College.

Stephen Peet: Did you have younger brothers or sisters.

John Legard: No he is my only sibling.

So after beings in Wells Preparatory School, then we went up to Shropshire, to Oswestry, and my father had this curacy in the parish church, the main parish church in Oswestry, and I was still quite young so I went to the sort of junior department of the Oswestry grammar school as a day boy, and that was quite good and quite pleasant.

Stephen Peet: And from there did you go off to boarding school or anything.

John Legard: Yes, because after he had been a curate at Oswestry Parish Church for two years, he then was appointed vicar of a parish about six miles north of Shrewsbury which is only 18 miles from where we were before, Oswestry. Do you know that part of the world.

Stephen Peet: Yes I do.

John Legard: A place called **Clive**, incidentally Frank Bailey at BAFTA, that chap who used to be at Colour Film Services, he lives at Clive I discovered the other day, quite recently, we were comparing notes. It's a delightful village, 7 or 8 miles north of Shrewsbury. And I went to a boarding school in Shrewsbury, but I was only there as a weekly boarder, I used to come home every weekend. And by that time I'd sort of adapted to my lifestyle, I did have, I used to wear callipers and so on up to here, fortunately my thighs weren't affected so it was just the bottom part of the leg, but I obviously couldn't participate very actively in sports, although I did play as goalkeeper at football and I used to play cricket with a runner, I always had a great interest in cricket because my maternal grandfather played for Leicestershire in the 1970s and my father was quite keen on cricket and he used to take me to cricket matches whenever there was time.

Stephen Peet: Did you stay at school till you matriculated.

John Legard: Yes, I stayed at this school, it was called Millmead, it is long since defunct. It was just on the edge of Shrewsbury. I went to visit it about 15 years ago and it had been turned into a block of flats, but there were a lot of private schools at that period, weren't there, in the 1930s, lots of them, and some of them went to the wall. But that one lasted quite a time I think, until the 1950s. It wasn't a bad school. Anyway after that, whilst I was going to that school, my father got rather a better parish down in the south of England near Newbury, a parish called Burghclere, and I carried on at the school in Shrewsbury for another year or so after they left, so I was full time as opposed to a weekly boarder.

And then I went to Cheltenham College, I don't know how my parents managed to afford it, because they were working on a very basic salary in those days because the church never got much money. But anyway they did, they obviously did a great deal to see that their sons were well educated, and I really appreciated that obviously. And I was in Cheltenham 1938 and at the beginning of the war, can I go back just a little bit, because the film influence had started quite a bit earlier, because when we were up in Yorkshire,

1931, before my father became interested in going into the church, I remember they did a sort a tour of England, they went from one town to another for a sort of extended holiday and we were staying in Torquay and my father said now I'm going to take you to the cinema. And I said what's that. And he said well you're see. And I still remember this.

Stephen Peet: He said he would take you to the cinema. You'd never been before.

John Legard: I didn't know anything about it at all, no. Well in 1931, 1929 it would be, I would be about 4 or 5, say five years old.

Stephen Peet: So it wasn't something considered rather wrong in your family.

John Legard: No, they were very keen on going to the pictures as I later discovered. I think they probably talked about going to the cinema, they used to go and see grown up films and I was too young obviously. Anyway, this was my first visit to the cinema which was in 1929 and it was at the something cinema in Torquay and there was an orchestra and there were aspidistras and plants and it was a film called *Widdecombe Fair* and I was talking about this to Kevin Brownlow the other day at our AGM of the History Project and I was saying, I don't know we got onto the subject. I said what was the first film you ever saw, and he said it was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1935 and I said the first film I saw was *Widecombe Fair* and he said that was directed by Thomas Bentley. And if you remember we interviewed Abel Goodman some years ago and he had worked with Thomas Bentley, hadn't he. He told us how he set up. Anyway that's a side issue, he said what can you remember about that film. I said well I can't remember very much except that there was the horses and uncle tom cobley and all and there was a music, orchestra, a Mickey Mouse thing the music to the picture, and I was astonished by the whole experience and looking back at the projection box and this beam of light and it all being explained to me, the usual thing that we all went through in our time, and from then on I became quite hooked on going to the pictures, and I was always encouraging my mum and dad to take me. And when they got to Oswestry, there was a very good cinema there and I used to go pretty regularly with my mum on the Saturday afternoons to see films like *The Golddigers of 1933* and that sort of stuff, and *Thark*, I remember seeing *Thark* with, Ben Travers, with Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn and Robertson Hare and *Looking on the Bright Side* with Gracie Fields, supported by Charlie Chaplin and *The Curate*. It was a time when you had one sound film and you would have a silent supporting programme.

Stephen Peet: That would be about 1930.

Alan Lawson: No, *Looking on the Bright Side*, I worked on so I know.

John Legard: Did you really, tell me about it. Can you remember what year that would be roughly.

Alan Lawson: It must be 33 roughly.

John Legard: I think *Looking on the Bright Side* always lingered in my mind because I remember we came in after the beginning, sort of half way through, and then I remember being astonished when it all came round to the beginning again, seeing repeating the scene and beginning to get the hang of what a movie was all about. It is funny how those little images stick in your mind – I remember seeing the same scene twice for the first time.

And then there was a film called *Africa Speaks* which was a very early travel/wildlife film which was famous in its day. By the time I got to this small school in Shrewsbury, the film thing had become quite developed as far as the home movies were concerned and we all had our interest in Pathescope 9.5 and they used, Woolworths used to sell, I don't know if you remember, they used to sell a projector for 1sh/6d and a lens, it must have been the projector for 6d, the lens for 6d and the battery for 6d, because nothing was over 6d. And then you could buy these loops, 9.5, little cartoons, simple action, and they were 6d each, so I had a great collection of those. So then of course I gravitated upwards to Pathescope Ace, hand cranked and used to borrow films from the 9.5 library, there was a firm called the Amateur Cine Service in Bromley, I used to borrow films from them. All this time I was getting quite involved and I used to put on shows a and I used to rope people to come in and look at my movie programmes.

Stephen Peet: Was this at your house.

John Legard: This was at our house, at home. Obviously at school we were doing it bit, but during the holidays we would be doing this quite a bit.

Alan Lawson: Do you remember how much you paid to hire the films at all.

John Legard: They were, half a crown or something like that, maybe half a crown a reel, it was that sort of price, for a week, you would hire them for a week. They would package them up for you. And of course they were pretty ropey prints some of them, the popular ones. But they had quite a big library, the Pathescope library. They had silent versions of quite well known films, well and of course the silent films themselves, like *Metropolis*, and *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* and endless Chaplins and endless Laurel and Hardy and also sort of current affairs stuff of those days,

Stephen Peet: *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* is Leni Riefenstahl.

John Legard: That's right.

Stephen Peet: And was there special instructions if you broke the film that you were leave it and not try to mend it yourself and this kind of thing,

John Legard: I suppose so. I don't think so, no not with Pathescope. I don't think they bothered because the films used to get very quickly worn because if you remember the sprockets were down the middle and once the sprockets got worn, they were projected on the screen, and in the early days, the early days of 9.5 you had things called notch titles,

whereby they actually saved footage by, there was a little slot in the side of the film, so when the title came up this slot locked into a key in the projector and it went still so you had a freeze frame. But of course the projector being fairly hot, after a time if you left it too long it started curling up.

Stephen Peet: You had to start it again yourself.

John Legard: Yes and sometimes it would cease up completely.

Stephen Peet: So your interest in film and knowledge

John Legard: As far as handling films started at a very early age, yes, I suppose I was, if it was 1933, 34, I was about 9 years old.

Stephen Peet: And when you got to Cheltenham, was there a film society there

John Legard: Very much so. I was just trying to think, yes, that's right, about the time when I was first going to Cheltenham, I was about 12, 13 years old, I suppose I was showing films at home in the holidays, funnily enough I hadn't got any idea of getting hold of a camera and shooting my own stuff, I was more interested in putting on my own shows, the stuff that was there. And it never occurred to me to shoot anything. I knew that people did have cameras but that didn't interest me, I liked to see the finished product presented jolly well.

Stephen Peet: Were there other people at Cheltenham who were also interested in films who later did it professionally as well.

John Legard: Yes there was somebody called Lindsay Anderson who was a contemporary of mine at Cheltenham. I didn't know him very well and at that particular period he wasn't all that interested in cinema, his great thing was theatre and he used to put on plays and he used to play the leading roles. I remember him playing the lead in *Twelfth Night*, he played **Festey** and he did it brilliantly and he was in other plays too. But the great thing about Cheltenham was that there was a member of the college council was a chap named Lord Lee of Fareham and I have an idea he was a director of British Lion, there could be a correction on that but he had quite a lot to do with feature production and he presented the college with a 35 mm projector, just one, one projector and it was housed in a fireproof booth and a chap named Bobby Swan who was one of the masters, he was very interested in cinema and it was his responsibility to select programmes for us to see during the term time and we saw some very, very good films.

Stephen Peet: So were you a projectionist of this with the instruction about the asbestos blanket you had to throw over burning, I did this at school too, we had an asbestos blanket and all sorts of things. I remember once threading a film and made a mess of the beginning and quickly in my hurry tore off two or three feet and went on threading it and dropped that 2 or 3 feet on the floor and had to change the carbon lamp and dropped one

of them on the floor and had to use the asbestos blanket and one of the members of staff came up and said what is this dreadful smell of burning, sorry I'm getting carried away with the memory.

John Legard: Fortunately I don't remember us having any alarming moments like that, the film always seemed to go through very satisfactory. The main problem was we only had the one projector so we had a break after every 20 minutes.

Stephen Peet: Or less surely

John Legard: They were double, they were double reels,

Stephen Peet: 35 mm.`

John Legard: 35mm yes.

Stephen Peet: Not are you sure, I'm surprised.

John Legard: No they were, they were definitely 20 minute spools, double reels, the big reels. We're talking about 1938 now. Sometimes, there was a problem with the sound, the sound used to fail behind the screen, but it always carried on beside the projector, there was a little loud speaker just above the projector, so even if the sound failed behind the screen, anyway we ploughed through these films. I'm just trying to think of some of the titles. I remember we saw *Young and Innocent,* and *Cottage to Let* and *Farewell Again.* These titles ring a bell.

Stephen Peet: Yes. *Young and Innocent*, Nova Pilbeam, Hitchcock, she lives just down the road from us. She is still going strong.

John Legard: Funnily enough we were only talking about her yesterday. Somebody was saying what has happened to Nova Pilbeam.

Stephen Peet: Well, she still has the cut glass voice of the actresses of the late thirties and is in marvellous form still.

John Legard: *Destry Rides Again*, we certainly had that. And a whole string of stuff. And on occasions when there was something really special on in the town we booked the cinema for the afternoon or the morning, the whole school, several 100 of us. I remember going to see *The Great Dictator* one morning, 1941 would it be, yes 1941, maybe it was a little bit later. And we also had the Regal Cinema booked one afternoon in December and we saw, well it wasn't booked specially for us but we booked a large proportion of the cinema and we saw *Gone With The Wind* which I think was quite advanced for those days, taking people to the cinema. Perhaps it wasn't but we were lucky living in a town where there was a choice of cinemas. So all the time I was becoming more and more interested and I was putting on my shows at home, only silent home movies, I progressed

up from Pathescope Ace to a Pathescope model B, motor driven and one had had slightly better quality.

Now some people in that village where my father was the rector and their name was Louis and Mary Behrend, now they were a very wealthy couple and they were great patrons. They commissioned Stanley Spencer to do murals in a chapel that they had built in memory of Mrs Behrend's brother who was killed in the First World Service or died on active service in Macedonia and Stanley Spencer himself had been as an orderly or something, out in that part of the world, so he filled this chapel with his pictures and this must be very early Stanley Spencer, 1927 or something

Stephen Peet: It's still there.

John Legard: Yes in Burghclere

Stephen Peet: Yes I've seen it.

John Legard: They built this chapel and they had just one service a year there, onAll Soul's Day I think it was, otherwise it was a place for people to visit and from all over the world, this was pre Cuckham of course, well he was living in Cookham but his major works at Cookham hadn't been done, this was I suppose his first major work, the paintings of the scenes in Macedonia, his impressions of, and an extraordinary East End, you know the resurrection picture which was also done again differently again at Cookham, I believe. Anyway they had Stanley Spencer living in the village in a cottage for a couple of years, and then they helped Benjamin Britten in his early days, and various people.

Anyway I turned up on the scene as just the son of the rector and one day they came along to tea with my mum and dad and needless to say I said you've got to come upstairs and see some movies. So they realised I had this interest, and that's that, and a couple of years went by and I was due to leave school and what to do next, because I've got a letter somewhere here saying that in view of my disability there was no chance of me being able to go into the armed forces.

Stephen Peet: This was somewhere in the middle of the Second World War.

John Legard: We're talking about 1943, no 42, because earlier I was talking about *The Great Dictator* and that was 41, and school days in general went from 1928 to 1943, yes the beginning of 1943

Stephen Peet: At Cheltenham.

John Legard: Yes that's right, and during that time, I wasn't a great scholar but I did my usual, I went through the usual things, I got into the upper sixth, bottom of, and I remember one thing we had to do, each person in the class was invited to give a lecture on their favourite subject, so needless to say I gave a lecture on the history of motion

pictures, having got hold of a copy of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and a few other books and I sort of mugged it up and presented it.

Stephen Peet: It almost parallels what I did.In the Sixth form, in my last term, I wrote an essay on film art based largely on Pudovkins 1927 book on film technique.

John Legard: It's interesting because you were studying the production side much earlier than me, because I was really interested in just looking at films and then of course I wanted to know how they started and giving this lecture I did do a bit more mugging than, a bit more study than

Alan Lawson: It wasn't part of your matric was it

John Legard: Not really, it wasn't part of the curriculum or anything like that. I suppose it was in a way. I think it was we had English lessons, we had history lessons and we had some rather enlightened teachers there. There was a chap called Guy Pocock who was a great historian, First World War historian and he was very interested in theatre and cinema and so on and he would encourage people to do different things to do with the arts in general. Some people gave lectures on music and they would play records. I didn't actually show any films, I just talked about how it all started. I might have had a few transparencies, I don't know, I can't remember. But that was probably over and above the normal curriculum, which of course one idea was to get through the school certificate as it was in those days, which I did succeed in achieving moderately. Then there was higher certificate, which I didn't go in for because a) I thought I probably wouldn't pass, because, I wasn't a dunce but I wasn't particularly bright, I was just average.

And anyway by that time I had an idea it might be interesting to get into the film industry. And this arose because these people that I talked about earlier, Mr and Mrs Behrend said one day to my father had John ever though of ever getting into the film industry, because my father was puzzled as to what sort of work I should do, I mean there was an idea I might have got a job in the civil service or something like that, perhaps Home Officer, menial sort of job. Anyway, they sent this, this is a copy of the letter they sent to my dad and it says here are John's suggestions. Now the John they refer to there was somebody called John Durst, did you ever know John Durst. He was an editor and he was at that time working in the Army Film Unit and the Behrends knew his parents very well and they asked his parents if they could, to ask John for a few addresses. So they said here are John's suggestions as to your young friend John Legard's best actions to get into the film trade. It seems he ought to stand a very good chance if he can get about at all easily for the dearth of young technicians is fantastic. Now here are the addresses that they gave. Number one: Ian Dalrymple, Crown Film Unit, Pinewood Studios, Iver, Bucks. And the second one was Donald Taylor, Strand Films, Rock Studios, Elstree. And the third one was Sidney Box, Verity Films 26 West St., Upper St Martin's Lane. And it said write at once to one, if no answer then write successively to 2 and 3.

So then I had this letter from Ian Dalrymple. Dear Sir, in reply to your letter of 14 March I will certainly see you during the holidays. And this was Pinewood Studio, Iver Heath,

15 March 1943. In view of the fact that you are apparently capable of doing landwork I suggest that you ask your school doctor his opinion of your chances before a services' medical. Also I should warn you that the end of the summer is a long way off in history and I cannot guarantee that we will be able to fix you up when the time arrived.

However that was that and a few months went by and I left school and had a slight break, just a little breather and then the August of that year I had this letter from priciple establishment officer, ministry of information, sir I'm directed by Mr Brendan Bracken to offer you an appointment on the staff of the Ministry of Information as an apprentice in the Crown Film Unit. You will receive pay at the rate of £2 a week plus the appropriate ACT war bonus with effect from the date of taking up duty. The appointment is temporary, and carries no right to permanence, etc, etc. You know the usual stuff.

Stephen Peet: The letter seems to have come out of the blue, was it a result of Dalrymple.

John Legard: I'm doing a sort of editorial thing, I'm going forward and then I'm doing the flash back. This followed a visit to Pinewood, on the strength of this letter from Ian Dalrymple in March I later rang up Dalrymple's officer, to his secretary, and by that time Dal had left, because he was in on, with Humphrey Jennings, I think Humphrey Jennings produced *Silent Village* himself because that was 1943, but Dalrymple was on *Western Approaches* and *Coastal Command* and a lot of those films of that time, but he was, he had finished his, I don't know whether it was a definate thing, but I suppose he was invited back into features, because after all Dalrymple was mainly a producer, a scriptwriter, wasn't he, a distinguished scriptwriter and he was doing his war work but he was inveigled back, I don't know if he was doing other work but he wasn't at Crown when I went to see them and the man in charge was a certain J.B Holmes, producer Crown Film Unit.

So I went to see him and I was taken round the studio and I was met, I was introduced to a lady called Adelaide Pentecost who was the librarian at Pinewood, Crown Film Unit Library and she showed me round and introduced me to the staff and I met John Durst who had given me the original contact because he was upstairs, Sergeant Durst of the Army Film Unit, he clattered down the stairs and we had a chat, and anyway I said thank you very much, I would like to if you can offer me work.

And then I had this letter from Jack Holmes. Dear Legard, Thank you for your letter of July 18th, I'm very glad to hear that you want to accept the post of library boy which I offered to you when you came to see me the other day. And it said commencing salary £2/10/9d. If you report to Miss Pentecost on the morning of Tuesday August 31st.

Now are there any gaps you think I ought to fill in.

Stephen Peet: I don't think so. It was just interesting as you said the man Durst clattered down the stairs. Did the army film unit wear army uniform, I hear him in army boots coming down a metal staircase.

John Legard: Yes he did.

Alan Lawson: Yes, we all did.

John Legard: And there was Sergeant Best there too, and there was Digger Anderson in the library, they were all in uniform.

Stephen Peet: So you were about 19.

John Legard: 18, 18 or 19. I was 18. Starting a bit late.

Stephen Peet: Here was your first job. How did your parents feel about it, you were going to have to leave home and live near the job weren't you.

John Legard: My father was always very good about it, he was a great, I wouldn't say he was a great film buff. But he was very interested in it indeed. And they thought well in view of the fact they had made me a direct offer and it would mean I wouldn't have to search round any more, let's give it a try and see how it goes for a few months, because it's only a temporary job. So they found me, we found somewhere for me to live in Iver Heath. Interesting set up. There was an old lady called Mrs Southern, and she was an actress of the Edwardian era and she was a widow and she lived in this little house called Ensbys in the road between the Stag and Hounds and The Black Horse in Iver Heath. And the reason I moved there was that she was a friend of a friend, you know there is always a link, do we know anyone in Iver Heath. It was a bit expensive because she had rather grand ideas, so they had to subsidise me for the first year or so because I was only getting £2/10/9d a week, and you know. Anyway I moved there to Ensbys, Mrs Southern and she was always talking about Korda and Denham Studios because she being a rather stately grand old lady, she used to be brought in to appear in scenes like *The Four Feathers* and *Knight without Armour* and all the bigscale movies and she was rather pleased to do them rather late in life because she had been quite, I don't think she was a well known actress on the London stage, her husband was Sam Southern, apparently he was quite a well known actor manager, probably in the early days,

Stephen Peet: And in these circumstances did you have to join the union.

John Legard: Yes that is right. So I started off on August 31st, 1943 in the library and there was Pentecost, Adelaide Pentecost and there was Bernard Gribble who had moved in the week before and there was a girl called Mary Russell Wood, she carried on as an editor, I can't remember what her married name was. But she did quite a lot of editing. I don't know if she did any features but she was in the cutting rooms for years. And there was a girl called Maureen Lawrence who married a soldier and left the business after a time. And of course the place was really humming at that time, Pinewood Studios, in 1943, because you've got the Army Film Unit, you've got the RAF Film Unit, the Crown Film Unit and you've got the Americans. They were already there, weren't they, in 1943, because the very first morning I was there this rather distinguished dark American came in to order some library material and Bernard whispered in my ear, you know who that is,

I said no, and he said it's Frank Capra. So my very first morning. The only autograph I ever collected was the autograph of Frank Capra. And the job was pretty tedious.

Stephen Peet: What did it consist of. Can you remember a day at work.

John Legard: Very much so. Pentecost would say, we'd call her Penty, she would say now I want you to synopsize this film. And there was a film, that film *The Silent Village*, so Bernard was synopsizing one reel, and Maureen was synopsising, and I was. And what we would do was run the film through in the cinema. There were two small theatres at Pinewood down on the ground floor, just next to the cutting rooms, theatre 3 and 4, and I think theatre 3 was the one which Army Film Unit projectionist was theatre 3, and RAF Film Unit projectionist in theatre 4, either of those we could use when they weren't using them for their own work and we could run our films and so we would get to know the films by running it through. And then with a synchroniser, footage counter, we would go through the film shot by shot describing each scene and writing the beginning and end edge numbers, yes that's right we did. And these were very useful, although some films more useful than others, I don't know whether *Silent Village* was particularly useful from the point of view of stock shots, because this is really what we were doing, we were giving the cross references and indexing for the stock shot library.

Stephen Peet: So it wasn't everything, it wasn't the soundtrack as well.

John Legard: No, the soundtrack, well there would be a copy of the commentary or the dialogue track to go with the shot list. But mainly it was people coming in looking for either stock shots from the uncut material which was left over, which I'll come to in a minute or using complete sequences from edited films. And there were stacks and stacks of synopses and it was a very, very boring job actually. Although I felt rather lucky, actually, the very first film I worked on was *The Silent Village* and that was at least a film I'd heard of and I'd heard of Humphrey Jennings before I joined Crown.

Stephen Peet: And the machine that you viewed on.

John Legard: Well we didn't actually view it.

Stephen Peet: You viewed it in the theatre.

John Legard: We viewed it in the theatre, then we could view it, we had a sort of library print so we could run it on the Moviola if we wanted to double check.

Stephen Peet: Otherwise it was just on a winder.

John Legard: Otherwise it was just on the winder with a light, flatbed, and with a simple basic synchroniser, it wasn't a proper synchroniser, it was just a counter, it wasn't a synchroniser no, it was just the one footage counter with the sprockets. You used to wind it through with the horse at one side, and winder at the other side. And we went on and on doing this and day after day. But the great thing was that Pinewood Studios at that

particular time, as I say was humming with activity, there was plenty to look at inbetween times and whenever you had, you had to slip out and do something, one could learn. And of course there was the library which was the big room, one of the big rooms on the ground floor, and then next to the library was the cutting room for *Western Approaches* which Jos Jackson, Jocelyn Jackson who was Pat Jackson's sister, she was working on it with Michael Gordon who was a feature editor who worked at Crown at that time – do you remember Michael Gordon

Stephen Peet: Yes.

John Legard: Well he was working on it, but I think he and Pat Jackson fell out because when Pat had finished shooting *Western Approaches* Michael came off it, I don't know if they fell out, maybe that's unfair on Michael, anyway he came off it and Pat took over the final editing, so Pat and Jos, brother and sister, and with an assistant, I think his name was Jimmy Langfield, he was always lost in the depths of depression and misery and overwork because those two, Pat and Jos were very tough taskmasters, and it was a big film, *Western Approaches*, it was the biggest film that the Crown Film Unit ever made as it turned out. And when I joined.

SIDE 2, TAPE 1

John Legard: Well you see *Western Approaches,* when I joined at the end of August 1943, it was, it had been completed the main body of the shooting but they were doing a few pick up shots in the studio. I remember going onto the set and there was a man with an aldiss lamp somewhere below a bridge of a ship, a mock up bridge, and it was being splashed with water, and I think that was probably the very first scene I ever saw being shot professionally.

Stephen Peet: Were there several cameramen on that job.

John Legard: There was Jack Cardiff, he was the cameraman. And the sound recordist was a chap called K Ash, who was a Canadian, I don't know if he made any more films in England after that. And well I dare say Denny Densham and people were involved, I'm sure there were other cameramen as well.

Alan Lawson: Pennington Richrds was on.

John Legard: Pennington Richards, yes. And it was all shot, a lot of it was shot on, well a lot of it was shot on 3 strip Technicolor, and that is why they had this cumbersome business of the boat that was rigged up, which of course we got from Pat Jackson when we interviewed him. Anyway that was near completion and another film was just starting. Humphrey Jennings was starting off on a film called *The True Story of Lili Marlene* which was about that song that was composed by the Germans, or started off by the Germans and then the British made use of it and they rewrote the lyrics and played it back to the Germans with a clever piece of propaganda writing. And Lucy Mannheim, she appeared in it and Marius Goring. It was a funny hotchpotch of a film. It was called *The True Story of Lili Marlene.* It wasn't one of Humphrey's best films, but it had some very interesting things in it.

Stephen Peet: I've never even heard of it.

John Legard: I can show it to you. I've got it on tape. And there was quite a lot of library material. There was quite a lot of stuff from the Russian front in it, quite a lot of stuff of the army going out to North Africa, the invasion of North Africa and there was quite a lot of studio shooting, the reconstructing of the business of the writing of the music, the performing of the music in a night club in Berlin or wherever the early part of the war, and then the music being captured and replayed back to the Germans with a different lyric. Not a bad little film and it went round on general release in about 1944 with, I can tell you which film it went round with because I saw it in Newbury, when we were living there, it went round with Danny Kaye in *Up in Arms.*

Stephen Peet: While we come to a little pause, just so I don't forget it. Where you persuaded to join the union by anybody there or was it an automatic thing.

John Legard: I'm just getting to that now. Then you see there was this little girl, well she was in those days, she was about 18 I supose, somebody called Jenny Hut, and she came along when I had been with Penty for a few days. Now she said, what about this, you've got to join. Well Jack Holmes had actually mentioned to me, he said you know one of the things we do here, we generally like people to join the union. I said oh really. Yes well, tell me about it. And he said ACT. I said oh fine, that's fine. And a few days later Jenny came along and said well now would you like to join, I think she probably said more than that, you must join she probably said. It's difficult to remember the actual dialogue, but I'm sure she said that. She was quite a tough little cookie, Jenny Hut. Her father was Alan Hut and was he, am I right in saying he was a journalist and he was the literary editor of the *Daily Worker* or something like that.

Alan Lawson: Something like that. Social historian

John Legard: I never met him but Jenny was sort of assistant editor and she was working with Humphrey Jennings and Stewart McAllister on different films. And later on when McAllister left Crown and Jennings made *Diary for Timothy,* Jenny was the editor. Well she was the nominal editor, she worked mainly on it most of the time and then Alan Osveston came in and just tied it up at the end, she hadn't got quite enough experience to work on such a complex film entirely on her own. But she was a very bright girl, and she was the treasurer for the cutting room, would she be the treasurer for the whole union

Alan Lawson: No

John Legard: Big unit wasn't it Crown. Anyway she was cutting room treasurer. And then the shop steward was Ken Cameron. And Jock May, he was involved.

Alan Lawson: He was a recordist.

John Legard: I can't remember who else was involved. But obviously it would be a big shop that, Crown, it was very active and we had a lot of meetings. I don't remember an awful lot of the details of the problems, I don't think there were at that particular time, it went fairly smoothly because it was war time and I don't think we had disputes or anything.

Stephen Peet: What was the system, they came round and collected

John Legard: Yes they collected, originally I was paying 6d a week, it says here £3 and under 6d. and then I started and I managed to save up a bit and I paid monthly. And there was a chap named Peter Davison and he took over from Jenny in 1944, the year after Jenny

Alan Lawson: What was he

John Legard: He was assistant editor. And that is really about it as far as the ACT at that stage, because, oh who was the organiser, Bessie Bond, would she be coming down then,

Alan Lawson: Probably.

John Legard: I think so.

Stephen Peet: Now before we get on to more work there, what were your feelings of your friends and others about you doing this job, did you meet up with any of your school friends or

John Legard: That's right, I did a bit, because quite a lot of them had gone off into the services, there was, my actual contemporary at school they had gone off, one or two had to the army, one or two had gone into the navy, and there was Tom Pocock, you remember Tom Pocock, he was the son of Guy Pocock and he became a journalist eventually, but he was quite a friend of mine at school and he went into the navy and then he had some very bad accident, damaged his hand and he was invallided out and he got in touch with me and said any chance of getting a job at Crown, and I introduced him to one or two people but in fact he really wanted to get into journalism and although he got an interview and he would have got work there, 1945, whenever it was, but I think that is by the way. No in answer to your question I kept in touch with them but I was making new friends, it was a new world. And there was Bernard who was my immediate colleague and other people in the cutting rooms, Stewart McAllister I got to know quite well because he was in the next cutting room but one. He was an interesting man, he wasn't always very fit you know.

Alan Lawson: Very mercurial.

Stephen Peet: You say in the next cutting room. Had you moved on.

John Legard: I say next cutting room, physically I was still in the library, but it was a cutting room that was used as a library.

Stephen Peet: So how long did you have to work in the library before you managed to get out of that purgatory.

John Legard: It was purgatory in the sense that it was boring, but at the same time it was part of the machine and therefore one accepted it. I was there for 18 months. Meanwhile, during that time Stewart McAllister was editing one or two films, he wasn't very fit and I remember he contracted rheumatic fever and he was out of action for quite a few months and then he came back. And then during 1944 the flying bombs started and the unit, I remember units going out to get coverage of the flying bombs and coming back in the morning looking a bit damaged and battered, and Mac, all these rushes were coming in, and I was fascinated by this, whenever I could get into the cutting room, I used to go and talk to McAllister, I think Jenny Hut was probably working with him then on the flying bomb, no wait a minute, there were two other young people came in at that time, John Trumper was one, in 1944, he came in as an assistant editor working with Jos Jackson I think. And then there was another one called Adrian de Potier, and I think Adrian de

Potier was working with McAllister on the flying bomb, doing the rushes, sorting out the rushes.

Stephen Peet: Sorry, I'm a little bit unclear.

John Legard: I'm not surprised. Here is this large number of people working, there is the Army Film Unit, Crown. Now did you share cutting rooms or were you separate groups.

John Legard: No, we had our own cutting rooms.

Stephen Peet: When you say you.

John Legard: I was Crown Film Unit. As soon as Mr Brendan Bracken employed me I was Crown Film Unit. Upstairs was the Army Film Unit and who was that, Bob **Verrill**, Bob Carrick, Digger Anderson and Dicky Best.

Alan Lawson: And one or two Ats.

John Legard: And there was Joan Hicks who was with the Naval Film Unit and Russell Lloyd was there in lieutenant RNVR, and Joan Hicks was the Wren who was his assistant, and he was working on a film that McNaughton was shooting for Crown at that time called *The Broad Fourteen* which was about motor torpedoe boats, But that was just being shot at that time in early 1944 and I suppose Russell Lloyd was doing other naval films as well. Because the main Naval Film Unit was down at Weymouth, or was it ,Portsmouth.

Alan Lawson: Hazel Wilkinson used to come up from the Naval

John Legard: And the RAF Film Unit, there was Gerald, was it Tony Smith, he was an editor there, Noreen Ackland of course was in the Army Film Unit too, Dicky Best's wife to be.

Stephen Peet: So there was a certain amount of cross fertilization.

John Legard: Yes they did a certain amount, for example I think I'm right in saying that the joining room was common to all and there were two foot joiners, Bell and Howell, heated foot joiners and a third one which was a diagonal joiner for soundtracks, more to be said about that I suppose but I'll come to that later. And then there was a numbering machine and there was a lad there who all day long was doing these, numbering the rolls of rushes,

Stephen Peet: That was edge numbering.

John Legard: Yes, slating, there was a numbering block which printed the numbers between the sprocket holes all the way down and the first 3 numbers contained the slate number and the second batch of three numbers, they moved on foot by foot. The trouble

with these numbering blocks is that they used to get very jammed up, they used to solidify and you would have to steep them in **carbontet** to get them going again. And it was a very, very messy job, a most unenviable task, and I hasten to say that I avoided that job like the plague. I did try it once or twice, but they had a full time chap doing numbering.

Stephen Peet: Did it synchronise, have the print and negative together.

John Legard: It was only picture. And of course the sound, that is how they synched up the tracks of course, the 35mm soundtrack and the 35 mm picture were synched up by the numbering machine and that was the most important aspect, I suppose. Although a lot of the stuff we were shooting at Crown wasn't sync, it was mute material with soundtrack added afterwards. But even so it had to be properly numbered and that was another chore which I suppose I could talk about now.

After 18 months I did get a break. I had the opportunity of going into the cutting rooms because Russell Lloyd had gone and McNaughton had finished shooting *The Broad 14th* and R.Q. McNaughton if you may remember, he was an original member of the GPO Film Unit. I think he probably started in the Post Office itself as a postman or something and he became a member of the GPO Film Unit and he very quickly advanced to becoming a very fine editor and he edited *North Sea* and *Night Mail*

Alan Lawson: Who was that

John Legard: RQ McNaughton. Richard McNaughton. I interviewed him. And he directed this film, *The Broad 14th*, which was about the motor torpedo boats. It was sort of rather late in the day, some of the big Crown Film Unit productions like *Fires Were Started* and *Target for Tonight* and *Coastal Command* and *Western Approaches* had already been released and this one about the motor torpedo boats had come in rather late in the war and in fact it wasn't really finished until the war had come to an end. But it wasn't a bad little film, directed by McNaughton, and after he finished shooting he edited it. And when I joined him in the cutting room, the fine editing had been completed and he was just putting together the final tracks, laying the music and the final dialogue tracks. So I really was needed for more than anything else to do the joining, there wasn't much filing of cuts by then, on that film, I came to filing of cuts on the film after. On *The Broad 14th* I was doing these diagonal joins which were the simple method of making a good sound join without it sounding that blip, because the diagonal went across the exciter lamp beam at an angle and therefore it eliminated the blip. And it was quite a tough job for me, because I had never done it before and scraper blades used to start scratching too hard and tearing the film, and you always had to allow a certain amount of time for the join to seal, because the cement would only last a short time, you had to put new cement in every morning because it lost its potency, didn't it. And so if you took it off too quickly, and if the joiner, that was another thing, you had to switch the joiner on in good time for it to warm up.

Alan Lawson: Were you on non flam or flam.

John Legard: Oh, this was nitrate, everything was nitrate. That was another thing, yes, of course, because when you went into the cutting rooms there was a big sign up saying all smoking materials to be put into the fireproof cabinets, and people didn't seem to bother about that very much, I suppose they were probably fairly careful, you had to remember that it was very volatile stuff. Anyway *The Broad 14th*

Stephen Peet: This work in the cutting room that you had got into at last, you might consider it the beginning of your real apprenticeship.

John Legard: Yes, it was a great step forward,

Stephen Peet: Were some of the editors more helpful than others or did you work with one man who you look on as your mentor.

John Legard: I worked with McNaughton who was enormously helpful and he was explaining everything as he went along, he was a very good teacher. He was excellent. He couldn't have been more helpful. Actually I had been a bit fed up earlier on because these two other people had come in, I thought I was going to get into the cutting rooms as soon as there was a vacancy, but I suppose somebody thought I was essential to the library or something, I don't know, anyway John Trumper and Adrian de Potier got into the cutting rooms before me so I wasn't on speaking terms with them for a very long time. However we became great friends eventually as we were all the same age. Anyway we got to the end of *The Broad 14th* and I really, that was interesting because it was my first dubbing session experience. We had this four reeler with a fine music track by Benny Frankel and all dialogue, I think I was the only assistant on it actually, so there was quite a lot of stuff to heave about, it's a thing, I seemed to manage in those days heaving about enormous great piles of films and going up those stairs at theatre 2 at Pinewood, do you remember, that steep staircase carrying about 8 or 10, I managed it, I don't know how. I suppose it was enthusiasm.

Stephen Peet: So you learned then business of dubbing charts.

John Legard: Dubbing charts, yes. I don't know if I did really learn very much about dubbing charts then, I don't remember much on that particular film.

Alan Lawson: It was very new in those days.

John Legard: I think a lot of people just took the films along and said here are the tracks, you play them through, and the dubbing mixer used to make notes as he went along didn't he

Alan Lawson: Yes.

John Legard: I seem to remember. Anyway, I wasn't on *The Broad 14th* for very long because it was really the last month or two at the most.

And then, the next film was, it was getting near the end of the war and they had an idea that they would make a compilation film based on some of the best moments of Churchill's speeches, so they got about six or seven extracts of some of Churchill's speaches and we listened to those very carefully, made lots of notes and then we said now we can see what we can find to illustrate these. So in a way I was the right person to do that job because I'd been in the library for a year and a half so it was a matter of ploughing through not only the British wartime films but also a lot of the German wartime films that were being used quite a bit, because we had access to all the German newsreels which had been fed through via Portugal, being a neutral country. That's another thing I should talk about I suppose, really, because the German newsreels were very much sort after by people who were in different parts of the industry making documentaries, for putting across the war effort in its many different aspects, in other words, all the films that had been sponsored by the Ministry of Information, a great many of those needed library material from German sources and of course they always came to us because we had all of them, I suppose nearly all them, there were hundreds of them. And we had to synopsise those too, endless films about the Russian front and endless films about the Dieppe raid, the German newsreel on the Dieppe raid and the invasion of France,

Stephen Peet: There must have been some interpreters there synopsising

John Legard: I suppose we had copies of the commentaries, I suppose we did, I don't remember that, we must have had translation copies, printed. But of course it was mainly pictorial, they were looking for the right shots, provided you know where the source was, what the actual subject was, it didn't need too much detail from the commentary, but that was

Alan Lawson: What was the film called of Churchill compilations

John Legard: It was eventually called, the working title was *Onwards to Victory* and the final title which I thought was rather tedious was *The Unrelenting Struggle*. I don't think it was ever shown in this country, it was shown in America

Stephen Peet: This was about 1945.

John Legard: Yes, and we had to wait, that's right, because we got it all dubbed and I suppose neg cut, all but the final speech, because we had to wait for Churchill's victory speech, so we were on standby on May 8, 1945, to get this speech onto optical track, and then we had plenty of library material at the ready so I think we probably overnight, yes, not literally overnight, but long hours for two or three days we got it out. And the editor of this incidentally was Pat Jackson's sister, Jocelyn Jackson.

Alan Lawson: You say they changed the name.

John Legard: They changed the name to *The Unrelenting Struggle* from *Onwards to Victory*, well of course victory had been achieved by then when the film came out so it was called *The Unrelenting Struggle.* I don't know whether there is still a copy in existence. It is quite interesting because you've got all these famous utterings by Churchill illustrated, and the music we used was the music that had been composed for a film called *Malta GC* and I think it was, would it be Arnold Bax, I think it was Arnold Bax, fine music, very good music.

Stephen Peet: Was it just Churchill's words.

John Legard: Churchill's words and

Stephen Peet: Did he not appear, weren't there sync shots of him making the speeches.

John Legard: No, except at the end, the last speech we had him sync. So we started off with advance Britannia, the speech that ended up advance Britannia, long live the cause of freedom, god save the queen. That was on him, that was the end of the film, and then you started off with him, his final speech, that was obviously from the newsreels, Pathe or whatever, we'd had a lavender made.

Stephen Peet: Some of the famous speeches were radio speeches.

John Legard: Yes they were and they weren't very good quality actually, they were from disks, they were pretty ropey quality.

Stephen Peet: In those days the Beeb put their archival stuff on disk.

John Legard: The business of ordering material was quite a problem because in those days you had to order a fine grain from the original negative, all this business of papering up negatives, I suppose we've all been through this. Papering up prints first of all and then going to the negative and papering that up and then getting a fine grain print from the original negative, or lavender print from the original negative and then a dup neg from the fine grain or the lavender, and then another print from the dup for the customer to work on. And being 35 the quality was brilliant wasn't it, because those fine grains were marvellous.

Alan Lawson: Which labs were you using.

John Legard: We were using Denlabs and we had a chap, a full time man called Billy Crisp who was, who one time ran the labs at Beaconsfield Studios, the British Lion, and he was our sort of wartime lab man, lab liaison, I don't know, I suppose he was employed by us, that's right, because his job every day was to go across to Denham every morning, collect the rushes and bring them back for us all to sync up, and then after, then he would have lunch with us, and then we would go back with him probably with a whole lot of stuff, we're talking about library days now, obviously, a whole lot of stuff that had been papered up to go through the labs and you know we were always working on very tight

schedules there because people always wanted the stuff the following day but with printing in those days, it was very, very fast wasn't it, black and white, you'd get stuff over night. You could order stuff in the morning and it would come through in the afternoon, reprinting and dups and so on.

Alan Lawson: I've a feeling that Crisp was employed by Den Labs.

John Legard: He might have been, he could have been.

Alan Lawson: They placed a great importance on the contact men.

John Legard: I suppose he must have been employed, you're quite right, there is no reason why, except that he was exclusive to Crown Film Unit.

Alan Lawson: That's what I mean, when I was working at Ealing there was somebody always responsible for Ealing.

John Legard: I suppose we had our own neg cutters too at Den Labs

Alan Lawson: I'm not sure.

John Legard: There was somebody called Gwen Bailey, but she was a bit later on, anyway I don't remember that quite, but Billy Crisp was the crucial.

Stephen Peet: We're now at the end of the war,

John Legard: We're still at Pinewood, very much so, and the Army Film Unit, they're there, just.

Stephen Peet: Did things change at the end of the war with people coming back from the war and wanting their old jobs back.

John Legard: Yes

Stephen Peet: Did this affect you in any way.

John Legard: It didn't affect me.

Alan Lawson: Well you were a wartime event.

John Legard: I was only an assistant in those days anyway, I wasn't doing any graded high duty work as you might call it, I was just an assistant and getting, I suppose it had gone up to £3/10 a week by then. But there was quite a time before people were demobbed, and 1945 I suppose the army people were beginning to disappear because their films had been completed, and oh yes, the RAF were just completing a very good film at the end of 1944, early 1945 called *Journey Together* which was directed by John

Boulting, and it was starring Dicky Attenborough and Edward G. Robinson, and a well know, a whole lot of well-known names, really it was a feature film but being an RAF Film Unit production it didn't have any credits at the beginning and the end except for the composer probably and that took up a lot of space in the cutting rooms obviously and I remember my sister in law nearly got a job on that because my brother, they'd just got married, early 1945 and they were busy shooting on the set on *Journey Together*, there was a pub scene they were doing and they came over to see me about two days after they got married, the week after they got married, because I was at their wedding, and I said you must come to the studio and look around, so I took them onto the set, my rather glamorous sister in law, she looked rather like Moira Shearer in those days, she was rather beautiful, and I was summoned over by Richard Warren who was the assistant director and he said Mr Boulting wants to see you. And Mr Boulting said who is that beautiful girl with you and I said that's my sister in law, well would she like to be in the film, because in those days it was all sort of ad hoc, I suppose you could do that, and alas they only had 48 hours leave so I've always teased her ever since that she missed her chance of fame.

So that was being completed, *Journey Together,* and also the Army Film Unit were making a film called *The True Glory* which was about the invasion of Normandy and the last stages of the war and they had various distinguished folk working on that. There was Carol Reed and there was Garson Kanin, the Hollywood scriptwriter, and they had a team of American editors, including somebody called Dick Farrell who I think was an editor for Paramount in peacetime

Alan Lawson: Wasn't Meryl White.

John Legard: Meryl White was probably there. And anyway, Carol Reed used to use my cutting room to make his private telephone calls, terribly sorry, do you mind, because he was working upstairs. Oh then and Peter Ustinov was working on that film too, scripting it. Do you remember *The True Glory*, it was a very fine film, it was one of the best of the wartime documentaries

Alan Lawson: I worked for both Carol and Ustinov on that

John Legard: You were on that film, you were shooting, you've done your story, I'd like to hear it sometime. Meanwhile we'd finished *The Unrelenting Struggle,* May 1945, and then there was the liberation of the Channel Islands took place just about then, at the end of the war and Crown Film Unit was sent out, they sent out a unit consisting of Jerry Bryant and Genna Jones and Eddy Tilling to the Channel Islands to cover the liberation and all that period and also to reconstruct some of the experiences they went through. It wasn't a very complicated film but at least it was able to show the Channel Islands and get them to tell us a bit about what had gone on. We didn't have a sync unit but nevertheless it worked out quite nicely, it was called *The Channel Island* and it was directed by Jerry Bryant, it was edited by Jos Jackson and I was the assistant and we completed it fairly quickly and it went out as one of the Ministry of Information monthly releases later that year.

Alan Lawson: How many reels was that.

John Legard: 2, 20 minutes. No, it may have been more than a monthly release, because the monthly release were generally one reel like the V1 film which I was talking about earlier when they all came back rather battered after getting some of this stuff, that was a 1 reeler, and in fact they made two versions of the V1, they did a slightly longer version called *The 80 Days* and that had some sort of limited release and I think it was shown possibly in France that year. And the V1 was 9 minutes or 10 minutes at the most. I remember going to the dubbing session, that was the first time I went to a dubbing session which I wasn't involved in, the V1 film, I remember it was on a Sunday and I remember Jack Holmes coming in his tennis clothes, because they lived in Iver Heath, and Humphrey Jennings was there and McAllister, and the unit manager who was Nora Dawson. It seemed to be all rather relaxed.

Alan Lawson: Was Ken Cameron there.

John Legard: Yes Ken dubbing it, Ken Cameron. Yes, indeed.

So *The Channel Islands* was finished the end of 1945 and I suppose by that time Pinewood Studios was beginning to take on a more sort of peacetime look and perhaps the Rank Organisation was beginning to come back in. But I'll tell you another thing about Pinewood at that time was that there were the other activities there not to do with film, because Lloyds of London were occupying the old house, the main office block the other side of the car park and the Royal Mint was I understand making threepenny bits, but maybe that was canard or whatever, but I know they were there. And there was also a Home Guard, quite a number of people, because the Crown people were in the Home Guard, I remember Jack Lee and Ken Cameron and Pat Jackson, they all had their one day a week Home Guard duty, and we did firewatching there too, I did firewatching, not that it really needed much firewatching, there weren't any air raids at that time really. The only thing we got was one or two flying bombs, and there was an AK AK battery at the top of Chandler's Hill which every now and then went off.

Stephen Peet: Was that just practice or testing

John Legard: Oh no, it was genuine, yes it was. There were a few occasions. That's right because I remember, when I was living with this old lady, it is going back a bit, but it is all part of the same area, Mrs Southern, the other lodger with me was Pauline Baer who was Walter Bird's assistant in the stills department and Pauline, her parents, her home was down in Sutton, and she had quite a lot of scares, obviously had been in air raids and so on and quite rightly was rather nervous, and I remember we were having supper one evening in this house, near The Stag and Hounds, and suddenly the anti aircraft guns went off at the top of Chandler's Hill and Pauline immediately dived under the table, which was a very sensible thing to do. But Mrs Southern being a stately old lady, she said Pauline pull yourself together, an absolute disgrace. She was furious with her. Nothing to do with films but all part of the life of those days.

Stephen Peet: Did the ak ak guns ever interfere with recordings sessions.

John Legard: That I couldn't tell you. They generally went off at night.

Alan Lawson: Yes they generally went off at night unless it was a flying bomb

John Legard: Yes, I remember seeing a flying bomb

Alan Lawson: So do I.

John Legard: I was on the roof at Pinewood or somewhere.

Alan Lawson: I was cyling from Uxbridge to Pinewood and there was a flying bomb going parallel with me for about half a mile in fact.

John Legard: So you leapt off your bike

Alan Lawson: It was going parallel with me so I was all right.

John Legard: We had a V2. There was a V2 sight which obviously focussed on this particular area around Pinewood and Uxbridge and so on and one morning I was carrying a can of film across the cutting room, when suddenly there was terrific explosion and all the glass blew in and the flying bomb landed just beyond the old house, the field down towards The Five Points, about 200 yards away. But we had a very quiet war really from that point of view.

But to go back, after *The Channel Islands*, I'd been working with Jos Jackson on that one and *The Unrelenting Struggle* and then Terry Trench was an editor there too and I was asked to go and work with him because he was about to make, again I suppose I got these compilation films because I'd had the library experience and he was making a film called *The Way from Germany*, it was about displaced persons and there was a whole lot of library material shot in Europe on the people trekking back, it was very horrifying stuff, not as horifying as Belsen but all these thousands and thousands of people trying to find their way home from different parts of Europe. And we had a chap, the music was composed by Elizabeth Lutchens and it was an MOI monthly release, it came out early in 1946 and I can't remember the name at the moment of the writer, anyway he was a well-known journalist, he wrote the commentary and it was spoken by Derek Guyler and the main problem was gathering together all this library material, you had prints but did you know you had negatives, my job was, Terry was using these shots and I was feverishly trying to find out whether we'd got the negatives to match up when the crucial moment came. And we got somebody called Bob Baker, Robert Baker who became the manager of Pention Films later on, Robert S. Baker, and he was a sergeant in the Army Film Unit, and Terry needed some fill in shots to get the film completed, small scale stuff, and Bob Baker got instructions from Terry and he went back to somewhere in France and shot the scenes that we needed and we got that to bed fairly quickly.

Stephen Peet: If in this case there was a very good shot and you couldn't find the negative anywhere did you make a dup.

John Legard: Good point, I think rather than do that we would try and find an alternative. I don't remember whether there were any dups made from the cutting copy. I know there was another film where we had to make dups from the cutting copy which was one that had been shot for Crown and it had got lost in the labs, and a role of negative got lost in the labs and we really did have to dup the cutting copy including what they called build up in those days, because you didn't have buck joins, so where you lost a frame you had to put in black frames

Stephen Peet: 2, no sorry that's

John Legard: It could be 3

Stephen Peet: Depending where the cut came.

John Legard: That was quite a problem. That film was a problem, Terry Trench was a very nice man but he did love working late, what he liked to do was go down to the pub, to The Five Points, to The Crooked Billet was it, and have a drink and a meal and come back to work about half past 8 and then work all through the night, because we did have a lot of tight schedules. I didn't really care for doing that very much. I preferred to work on as far as I could until about , work till 8 and then go home, or 9.

But Jos Jackson was the opposite. She tended to work very , very fast, she was very disorganised, she would not hang up the cuts, she would would throw the cuts all over the floor and leave me in an absolute state of mess. And then she would say to me Johnny, I was always known as Johnny in those days, Johnny, leave all that stuff, go home you can do it in the morning. I'd say I can't possibly do that, I wouldn't be able to sleep if I hadn't sorted this stuff out before I went home. Anyway that is the way she worked.

Terry was the more easy going but he liked to take his time. Then who else did I work with. Well I went on working with Terry on another film, we were making films for the Ministry of Education, they made a film called *Home and School* which was for parents teachers association, it was about the problems of after the war of people coming back from home, from the services and getting back to normal home life and dealing with families and of course there was a new education act about that time 1944, The Butler Education, we made two films on that subject, one called *The Children's Charter* and one called *The New School*. I wasn't involved in either of those film, but I think Terry Trench was. I can't really talk to you much about them because it was such a long time ago. I know they did very well.

Stephen Peet: This is still at the end of the war.

John Legard: Yes it's still at the end of the war, it's sort of 45/46, because we were still at Pinewood.

Stephen Peet: When did the MOI become the COI, didn't that change roundabout then.

JOHN LEGARD SIDE 3

John Legard: The Ministry of Information, come the end of the war in 1945, shortly after, I couldn't tell you exactly when, several months no doubt, it ceased to be a ministry and it became just a central office and therefore our status was somewhat diminished and I suppose that for the first time Crown Film Unit, the films took on a different flavour because they all had to be very tightly budgeted and they were only made on the orders of different departments and different ministries and different sections of government and civil service.

Whereas before they had carte blanche, films like *Western Approaches* and *Diary for Timothy* and *Fires Were Started*, they said go ahead and make them. I would have thought they weren't budgeted, I'm sure that's the case, I'm sure I'm right in saying that that, the money was there within reason obviously. But we got back to normal come the end of the war so some of the projects that were planned obviously had to be put on the back burner or forgotten. But nevertheless, Crown , although its status was dimished and of course by that time our original Jack Holmes had left some time before and Basil Wright had been producer for some time, Basil Wright took over, he was there during the war too, he was there 1944 when *Diary for Timothy* was being made Basil was the producer. And he was there for at least a year as producer having come from Realist. And by the time the war in 1945, then he left and Alexander Shaw took over. He was the next producer and I remember him being the producer on this educational film I just vaguely mentioned called *Home and School* a film made for parent teachers associations which Terry edited and Jerry Bryant directed. And I remember he Alex Shaw was actively producing that and I suppose the first time I got to know working with a producer a bit, I never worked with Basil although I got to know him a bit, I never actually worked with him. But Alex Shaw was a good man. A nice good producer to work with and had a very distinguished career later working with UNESCO and the World Film Bank and so on. But no doubt people have talked about Alex Shaw.

Alan Lawson: Not a lot.

John Legard: Because I didn't know him all that well. I just worked with him on that one film as an assistant editor again I wasn't the editor. And then he was with us until the end of Pinewood Studios, he was there 45-46 and we actually left Pinewood studios at the end of 1946 and moved to Beaconsfield. But during that year 1946, the Rank Organisation was coming back fully and such films as *Black Narcissus* and *Captain Boycott* and *Wanted for Murder* were all being made. Again you see from my point of view it was very good, because although I wasn't working on features I was getting a flavour of the organisation of the feature world and keeping one's eyes and ears open, learning, a learning process.

Stephen Peet: Did the feature people look upon you as sort of poor brothers of the industry.

John Legard: I imagined they looked upon us as kindly, a slightly patronising air perhaps, I should think because we weren't occupying much space by then. We had one of those office blocks and a few cutting rooms, that's all. Upstairs, the feature cutting rooms, the army and RAF had long since gone. So we were gradually being edged out and obviously we were going to move as soon as we possibly could. I was just thinking, Beaconsfield Studios was the place we finally went to but it was only in the process of being derequistioned by the Ministry of Works and it had been a sort of storage depot and possibly Rotax, the aircraft people were using it during the war, either for storage or manufacturing, probably a bit of both, so it really was a sort of factory and a lot of what was left over from British Lion before the war had been removed or put on one side.

Anyway we were hustled out of Pinewood by the end of 1946 and we ostensibly moved to Beaconsfield, but the problem being that there was nowhere, there were no cutting room, not theatre, no projection. There were offices, so there was a curious period when for several weeks we in the cutting rooms were told to stay at home and ring in every day to find out what was going on and if we were needed. We always went in on Fridays to collect our pay.

I should say that during this time, the sort of last few months of Pinewood Studios I was working on a film called, for the Ministry of Agriculture, *Breeding for Milk* and I got my first credit on that as cutter. I think probably Jos Jackson was the supervising editor or maybe, no Terry Trench would be the supervising editor, and it was a simple film with lovely Friesian cattle and diagrams and how to get the best out of your cattle and it was presumably shown on 16 mm very widely throughout the country, made for the Ag and Fish.

Stephen Peet: Which brings us to the business of you saying it was shown on 16. I imagine for years and years you only actually worked on and edited on 35

John Legard: Everything was 35, yes. Am I right in saying that, yes I think I am. I think everything we were working on at that time was 35 until we get to Beaconsfield and then we were starting on 16mm. So *Breeding for Milk* was then. And there were a number of, was the Coal Board coming in, when did that come in, 1947, because we made the first 6 *Mining Reviews*, the Crown Film Unit, but maybe we'd just moved to Beaconsfield. But in addition to *Breeding for Milk*, I was also involved in one or two road safety films, helping out. And if you remember they did a lot of little one minute films, on it might be save electricity, it was the period of rationing, and save water, and drive carefully in the blackout. And a whole string of little one minuters that were being directed by people like Jack Lee and Jerry Briant and so on. And maybe the regular editors were busy on their main films and the assistants seemed to get occasional breaks, and I edited one or two of those little – I remember doing one that Terry Thomas appeared in about saving electricity. And I remember getting into trouble because there was on of these road safety films that I was vaguely involved in and I was promised I was going to be editing it and the first lot of rushes came in and they were sync and I synched them up and of course I got some of them out of sync. We all fell into that trap. And I remember I really felt like the HM Bateman cartoon, because I remember as we went out the theatre I heard the

director saying to somebody, he is supposed to be editing this and he can't even sync up the rushes. That puts you in your place.

Stephen Peet: At this point when you're getting your first chance to edit as a kind of a junior, did you then begin to establish various working relationships with various directors and this goes through the next few years and did different director behave in different ways on documentaries, did some come and say here's all the rushes, go ahead and make a first cut and I'll come and see it and others sit in the whole time and being a kind of collaboration. How did you deal with all this, I 'm going ahead a bit but it must have started about there, learning how to be an editor, not just the technical side but the relationship with the other people and presumably an assistant of your own.

John Legard: Yes. That's right. Directors varied enormously, sometimes directors would say to you, well here's all the stuff you've, seen it now, I don't know how you're going to put it together, good lucky, I'm going off on holiday. Others would say right now, we'll go through all the stuff, and it may be a day's rushes, and next day we'd go into the office and we'd go through shot by shot director telling you exactly where he envisages, how he envisages this is going together. He said that's how I see it, you're the editor, it's up to you if you find a better way of doing it, it's up to you. But not all directors did that. I remember Jack Holmes because I worked with him later as a director at British Transport Films and he was marvellous because he knew exactly how everything went, had to go, and it was a very pleasant collaboration. But at Crown, things like *Breeding for Milk,* it's fairly straightforward stuff, it's not creative directing, it's not creative editing in the real sense, in the aesthetic sense of the world, it's just sort of craftmanship. It's just putting it all together, stitching it altogether and using your common sense and getting it done generally as quickly as possibly because there always seemed to be a hurry at the Crown Film Unit, there was always a hurry, particularly when a certain John Taylor became producer. He was always promising films, quite rightly I suppose, they needed to be finished the following week. Whereas other producers, maybe the situation was slightly different with other producers, maybe there weren't quite the same target dates.

But I remember the *Mining Reviews* were needed in a great hurry because they had guaranteed distribution, theatrical distribution in the cinemas in a few weeks time.

Stephen Peet: Was that Frances Guyson.

John Legard: This was long before Francis Guyson, this was the first 6 mining reviews were made by the Crown Film Unit before they were handed over to Donald Alexander, would it be, the Coal Board.

Alan Lawson: I think it was.

John Legard: Yes, I think it was Donald Alexander. And those *Mining Reviews* were generally 3 items per reel, and they were fairly straightforward. I say that I edited these, I think I must have edited some sequences of *Mining Review*, I think the supervising editor was Jos Jackson. And because we had just left Pinewood and hadn't got any cutting

rooms going at Beaconsfield, ironically we had to rehire a cutting room at Pinewood, so I was back at Pinewood in 1947 for several weeks while we were editing these *Mining Reviews* that were directed by various people. I think Graham Wallace directed a number of items, and Max Anderson came in. That's when he joined Crown and he directed quite a few items. And I think probably Graham Wallace directed the majority of them. They were sort of OK, they weren't anything very startling, they were hard work and it was a very, very cold winter if you remember and it was very difficult getting around, getting stuff shot.

There was a film being made at the same time that I was slightly involved I, it was a sequel to a film that had been made earlier by Crown, there was a film called *Instruments of the Orchestra* which was directed by Muir Matheson and photographed by Fred Gamage and Malcolm Sargent, *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra.* And then they made a sequel to that which had been shot just when we were moving from Pinewood to Beaconsfield, and it was called *Steps of the Ballet* and that again was directed by Muir Mathieson. And they shot the ballet scenes in Hackney Empire during the day time and they had to strike the set about 5 o'clock to be ready for the Hackney Empire music hall in the evening. And I remember being quite involved in the dealing of the rushes of that film. The next morning we always had to go along to the Crown Theatre in Wardour St to look at the rushes very early with Muir Mathieson and the cameraman who was Alan Jeakins, and Jos Jackson was the editor. And then I don't know where we edited it finally. Maybe it was edited in Wardour St. I remember that was quite interesting syncing up the rushes of the ballet because there was playback, and having to match the picture to the playback and the problems that cropped up because you couldn't have proper clapper boards all the time, or visible clapper boards. And Muir Mathieson was a good man actually, because he was as we all know a musician, a composer conductor and he became a very, very competent film director and he directed both those films so skilfully.

Stephen Peet: I imagine your own interest in music helped you.

John Legard: Oh yes.

Stephen Peet: Because you have been interested in music all your life and music for films. At what point did you begin to have a say in what music was used in documentaries.

John Legard: I should think probably when I got to British Transport Films with Edgar, I remember there were one or two films that I did at Crown. Yes there were one or two films at Crown which did require quite interesting use of music. For example we made a film in 1950 called *Caribbean* which was made for, I think it was made for the Foreign Office actually, and anyway Graham Wallace went out to the West Indies and shot an enormous amount of material and was there for several months and whilst he was there he was very sensible, he recorded a whole lot, it was before tape, he recorded a whole lot of local music, the calypsos, and the music of the differenet regions. He was filming in British Guyana, and British Honduras and Jamaica and Granada and Barbados and

Trinidad. And he came back with all this mass of material, good coverage of many subjects about life in the West Indies, the Colonies, it was a film about the Colonies but it wasn't a colonial type film, it was rather an enlighted film really. It had a lot of fascinating glimpses, but the trouble was, you experience this so often, rushes that look marvellous don't cut together and rushes that look dull turn out to be something marvellous. And the rushes of this film for some reason they didn't gell because they were rather disparate material shot over a long period.

Stephen Peet: Can I interject. Was anything shot sync

John Legard: It was all shot mute.

Stephen Peet: So on what did he record the music.

John Legard: He recorded it on, what's that wire,

Stephen Peet: He recorded it on wire and then it was transferred to optical.

John Legard: It was equipment they found out there in Jamaica

Alan Lawson: There was a wire recorder which was American but there was also the The Blattner

John Legard: The Blattnerphone. I never actually saw the wire. When I received the material it had already been transferred to optical track and was grateful for that. But the quality was quite good, there was a bit of slight background noise, a bit of background hum on one or two of them, but quite a good range. And anyway all this stuff came back and we looked at it and by this time a certain Dr. John Grierson had become the producer of Crown Film Unit – I'm going a bit forward here – it doesn't really matter does it. Because John Taylor had had an argument with Grierson and he left, because Grierson came in and wanted to move the goalposts, the way the place was administered.

Anyway Grierson took over and I was given, Grierson sacked the director so I am reliably informed, he sacked the director – I know he did—Graham Wallace was sent home and all this material was handed to me because the other like Jos Jackson and Terry Trench they were all busy on stuff so I was rather lucky to be given all this material but they didn't think so because they didn't think I would make anything of it. However I had all this lovely calypso material and so I did a lot of editing to music on certain sequences, just giving it a bit of life every now and then, bringing it out because there were scenes like swimming pools or seaside or people playing cricket and so therefore one could make use of the music, and scenes in the sugar cane plantations, so I edited some of that to music. It's all sort of basic stuff that we've done over and over again in our life but for me it was absolutely new. And Grierson was very, very surprised when he saw the material edited to music and brought down from several hours to 50 minutes. And he said Jesus, god, this is great, I must get Flaherty to see this. And he said I sacked the wrong

director, I sacked the director, get him back. So I was the blue eyed boy for a few weeks. I'd been very lucky, I'd been given this material.

Alan Lawson: What was the film called

John Legard: *Caribbean*. And eventually it went onto completion and we got proper calypso singer xxxxxxxxxx to do some recording for us and we used quite a lot of the original wire recording and we got a chap named Quintin Dobson who was a scriptwriter, he wrote the commentary. And we had Leary Constantine come in as a technical adviser. Well we had a cricket sequence at the beginning which he was able to help us with a bit, advise us on. And he was the general overall adviser on the film. He advised who to get to speak the commentary and finalise it, interesting to meet him.

Stephen Peet: According to this list it was 1951

John Legard: 51 it was completed, it was actually being edited in 1950 because by the time 1951 I was virtually away from Crown by then.

Alan Lawson: What was the length of it.

John Legard: It was just under half an hour. And it went on to the Venice Film Festival and it won the first prize, documentary – travel and folklore, or something like that. And it got shown on the Rank circuit, supporting a film called *A Pool of London*. I know that because I went to see it. And it was shown at our local cinema in Newbury, I remember.

Alan Lawson: I hope you had a screen credit.

John Legard: They just had, very typical Grierson, he just gave names. He did it on *Night Mail*. The film was made by Graham Wallace, the cameraman was Bill Cheston, William Cheston, John Legard, Eddy Tilling and the commentary spoken by Ernie, EV Eytle, he was a well known journalist and cricket enthusiast from the West Indies.

And at the same time Terry Trench was making a film called *Eldorado* which was about British Guyana which had actually been shot by Reg Hughes. And that again, the same part of the world but a different sort of treatment entirely, Terry gave it a sort of lyrical, lush treatment and he had Elizabeth Lutyens write an original score. And James Cameron wrote the commentary, spoken by James McKechnie and the funny thing is that those two films is very good but *Eldorado*, da da da. Great rivalry went on and they're both films that did rather well and they were both made for, well ours was made for the Foreign Office, I don't know, *Eldorado* I don't quite know who that was made for, I think Reg Hughes came along with all this material. He had shot it out there and it had been made for some organisation but it hadn't got a home and we just did the final work on it. But maybe somebody else can illuminate on that sometime.

Stephen Peet: There is a film made around this time that you were editor on or just before this where the cameraman was Tom Stobart

John Legard: Yes called *White Continent.*

Stephen Peet: Did you ever do any other films with Tom Stobart

John Legard: No I'm sorry I didn't

Stephen Peet: Because he's the man who went up Everest

John Legard: Yes and then he made a whole lot of films about cookery, he was a great cookery expert and he did a whole lot of films for television, but that was much later on. But on this particular film *The White Continent*, it was an expedition to Queen Maud Land aboard a ship called The *Norsle*. I suppose it was a geological expedition, combined British and Norwegian and Tom was commissioned to cover it on 16mm Kodachrome and this was 1950 I suppose and he was out there I suppose for many months and he came back the following spring, he went out in the autumn and came back the following spring, probably 1950 with a great stack of Kodachrome, none of which had been processed of course. And it was very, very good stuff and we had the whole lot, what did we do, that's right we edited it on 16mm, ordinary 16 mm

Alan Lawson: Black and white.

John Legard: Yes, black and white I suppose,

Stephen Peet: Would it be.

John Legard: No it would have been reversal, colour

Stephen Peet: So you had a dup from it.

John Legard: That's right, you had the original Kodachrome and then you had a reversal print made from it

Stephen Peet: And then you used the original to neg cut

John Legard: Yes you used the original, that's right. This is the first time I'd handled this business of cutting on 16mm and then having the film blown up to 35mm and we

Stephen Peet: Is that for theatrical release

John Legard: Yes that's right. We did the rough cut on 16mm and I suppose what we did was to get a black and white print made on a rough cut stage, probably a black and white print from the 16mm and so we were able to dub it on 35, in black and white. And then we had to go back to the master and what you did was that you would cut the master about 4 or 5 frames longer each side than the fine cut, the cutting copy.

Alan Lawson: Wasn't this doing A and B roll.

John Legard: They weren't doing A and B rolls at that time, no. And so you had this long cut that was sent of to Technicolor and you waited and waited until the 35mm appeared, the colour print and then you just trimmed that down to your original fine cut cutting copy and then you got the print made. But that particular film was quite an interesting one to work on.

Alan Lawson: It was called

John Legard: *The White Continent.* And it went out on the circuit again because it was 35, and we had a very interesting music track on that. A man called Peter Racine Fricker, Peter Fricker wrote the music for it. He was in the top echelons of composers at that particular period. He eventually went out to America and taught music at Santa Barbara. The commentary was written and spoken by our old friend Duncan Carse. He was a great one for polar exploration, he was the man who later went down to South Georgia and lived on his own, he was a bit of a maverick character and very experienced explorer and he decided that he'd try living on his own and writing a book about his experiences in South Georgia and also shooting 16mm. Anyway that's later on.

Stephen Peet: There was a whole long period, maybe the early 60s when to make documentaries that were shot mute and had narration and music added was a perfectly acceptable style until light weight sync shooting

John Legard: Yes that's quite right, because I said to Edgar Anstey once, wouldn't it be better if we shot more sync stuff because we might be able to get a bit more. He said John I'm surprised to hear you saying that, I would have though what we're doing, I don't know what the term he used was, he reckoned it was a sort of discipline and you could do stuff economically and well. And I suppose the sort of films we were doing at the time, in the early days of British Transport there were a lot of travel films which really didn't need a lot of, nowadays any travel film you have, there's always somebody coming along and putting his face in front and you can't see the background, I get very irritated by them. I think those travel films that we made which were very pure because they had slightly poetic commentaries and perhaps sometimes a bit pretentious

Alan Lawson: But also at that particular time to tape sound on location you had this blooming great sound truck

John Legard: That's right. I think I was probably, I think I probably brought this subject up with Edgar when it was becoming more compact, in the days when 16mm was coming in and he still wanted to stick to, we did change quite a bit in the fullness of time, in the same way we changed from optical to magnetic, in the fullness of time in spite of McAllister resisting it.

Stephen Peet: And also audiences accepted the style.

John Legard: They did

Stephen Peet: Until there was a change

John Legard: It was a film thing, and television wasn't, cinemas weren't used to talking heads very much, were they, it is quite a different thing and that was television

Stephen Peet: It was an accepted style and as Alan was saying it was so much more expensive to shoot sync

John Legard: Because you had the bigger crew and cumbersome equipment. That was probably it, and the other thing is that we didn't really have a sound department at , British Transport Films didn't have a sound department at all and we had just the camera crews and the directors and editors and any sound, and this is one of the reasons why we went in for a lot of music on our public relations films at British Transport Films in the early days was that getting sound was difficult, we would have to bring in extra people, different people to do the sound and if it didn't need effects we would do music whenever possible, and music in those days was relatively cheap, you could buy it buy the yard, obviously from **Paxtons** and **Chappels** and so on, but even having composed music wasn't all that expensive really. And Muir Mathieson was our honorary director of music and he was such a good filmmaker himself he was able to be very constructive which is why I think some of those music tracks did do a very good job. You could argue nowadays it seemed old fashioned because realism was in, we did spend quite a lot of time on sound effects and we used to go out, we'd hire the people from Anvil to go out and effects sessions as much as anybody, recording effects for different sequences.

Alan Lawson: You never used *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the music library. De Wolfe's

John Legard: We used De Wolfe's, yes. Sorry, I'd forgotten that, we used De Wolfe's a bit.

Stephen Peet: You went on working at Crown for quite a while editing various other things like *Ocean Terminal*

John Legard: No that was British Transport Films.

Stephen Peet: So round about 52, was it a straight move.

John Legard: I'll tell you what happened. *The White Continent* with Duncan Carse, I got as far as that and then I was working also, I'll tell you what happened in a minute, we also did a film with Margaret Thomson called *A Family Affair* which was made for the Home Office and it was to do with the problem of homeless orphan children and the need for foster parents and we did two versions, one 16 minutes and one 10 minutes and the 10 minute version went out on theatrical release and this was a very warm, as you can imagine Margaret got on so wonderful with children and she got some very good

Stephen Peet: And she was directing.

John Legard: She was directing, and she shot a lot of it down at a foster home, home for orphan children down in Hampshire and she took 3 or 4 case histories and filmed them, and there was a big problem, again it was all shot mute, there was no sync at all, no effects. The problem was next thing who to write the commentary and we were in the theatre one day and we looked at material and we'd got a sort of rough guide commentary, and then the producer was probably by then Donald Taylor perhaps, yes it was Donald Taylor I think, and what about the commentary, Ken Cameron said I don't know if you know it but I've got a brother called James, he might be able to help. And they said oh what a good idea and so two days later, James came into the cutting room, and I've got a picture in my mind, I wish I had taken a photograph, I had the two brothers Cameron standing side by side in my cutting room. Anyway James produced a superb commentary and Temple **Abady** wrote the music and the film came out in 1950/51 and it was called *A Family Affair* and it was shown on the COI, on the monthly release and did a lot of good I think.

Stephen Peet: Did James also speak the commentary or wasn't that commonly done in those days.

John Legard: It's a very good question, I don't think he did actually.

Alan Lawson: I don't think he would have been experienced enough

John Legard: Not at that time, I don't think he did, it could have been Derek Guyler or somebody like that but I would have to look that up. But anyway it doesn't really matter, the film was a success and the first time I'd worked with Margaret and I worked with her on one or two other films, several actually. There was one she made called *Industrial Dermatitis* which featured Harry **Lock** suffering from dermatitis. This was another film made for, what would it be, Ministry of Health I suppose.

Stephen Peet: I imagine she was not one of the people who came in and said here are the rushes, make the best of it, that she was all there all the time.

John Legard: No she wouldn't be in the cutting room, but then we would work very closely, we would discuss what we were going to do. Not shot by shot detail but generally. That's right. Well *Industrial Dermatitis* was the reedit, it had been made earlier and we added some sequences. And then there was *The Family Affair* and then there was another film I made for Richard Warren, sorry Richard Warren directed and I edited it, it was called *Houses in the Town*, it was about the plans for the future housing developments and the bombsites and that was alright, it was OK, it was a good straightforward expository film about plans for the future, directed by Rich Warren and produced by Helen de Moulpied who was Denis Forman's wife, she died.

Stephen Peet: You're still at Crown.

John Legard: That's right, I'm still very much at Crown and this is 1950-51. And there was a call one day for me from Stewart McAllister who had long since, he had left Crown years and years before, in fact he left Crown before the end of the war, he had been out in Africa shooting a lot of stuff with somebody called Kingston Davis and he came back to England and had a slightly fallow period and then of course Edgar Anstey was setting up the British Transport Commission's Film Unit in 1949, they were originally, they had offices in Petit France to begin with. And then when Rank's *This Modern Age* came to an end, they relinquished their premises in 25 Saville Row and British Transport Films took over 25 Savile Row in 1950 I suppose. Time went by, I had heard vaguely of British Transport Films, I'd seen one very boring film that I thought called *England Waterways* which was about 45 minutes of going along canals in a sort of, rather beautiful to look at but very, very slow and Baxter directed it and then they made a short version called *There Go the Boats* which became a sort of classic. That was my introduction to British Transport Films. I knew that Edgar Anstey was running it but I thought no more about it until one day I had this call from Stewart McAllister and he said would you like to come and meet me at a pub or something. So I said yes, and it was a pub near, the Burlington I think, just behind Savile Row and he said right, after having a drink, come up and look at the set up. And he showed me round and eventually he said would you like to become an editor here. I thought that's a very nice idea. He said I would like you meet Edgar Anstey, I think he will be in in a minute. I met him and they just sat back and said what would you like to ask us about the place, which was very nice, I felt very flattered. And it all seemed rather pleasant.

So I went back to Crown and said to the then producer who was Ralph May who was in charge of production by then, he was the brother of **Nunne** May, the one who was a Russian defector, he defected to the Russians and became famous, a spy in other words, Ralph Nunne May was his brother and Ralph Nunne May was a top banana in the Ministry of Information during the war and he carried on with the COI and after Grierson left Ralph became the manager of Crown Film Unit. Of course Crown by then had rather diminished in its effectiveness, it was fairly minor but it did need a producer in charge. It was sad, it was a sad decline.It always happens doesn't it. Although they were still making some quite good films, interesting films.

Anyway I said to Ralph May I've been offered this job by Edgar. He said oh you shouldn't go there, if you go there it will be all Edgar Anstey, a very dominant character, you won't get any freedom there. And he immediately gave me a rise in pay. I loved this. The only time in my life I've ever been fought over. Never happened again. Anyway I thought about it and said no, of course I must go to this new unit and I did.

So I joined McAllister, and of course I had got to know McAllister fairly well in the days of Crown because although I never actually worked with him I did make a point of getting to know him, getting to know what was going on and we got on quite well. So he gave me this film *Ocean Terminal* which was being shot by Jack Holmes down at Southampton. And the script was written by Montagu Slater and the music was composed

by Clifton Parker and there was a chap named, a very good commentary by somebody called Michael Goodliffe who was a well known character actor and he did a lot of films.

And it was a nice set up at British Transport Films in those days because they never pressurised you. It was a remarkable change of atmosphere after Crown where everything was a bit feverish. And of course it was a nice ACT shop which was run, at that time Kitty Marshall was the steward when I first joined, Kitty **Hudgie**. And she left fairly soon and I think the next shop steward was Jimmy Garrett who was at that time a rather poverty stricken assistant director who joined British Transport Films almost the same time as me. We're now talking about April 1951, end of April 1951. And Len Girdlestone also joined us, he was the brother of Bill Girdlestone, the man who used to be at Denham Labs. And Len was production manager, again starting the same time as me. So Edgar was just building up his unit. The founder members were Ian Ferguson who was associate producer and Ron Craigen who was a cameraman, and Edgar, there was just those three. They were Petit France. And then they brought in Jimmy Ritchie and Ron Bicker was there, probably as a freelance. And they made a film called *Berth 24* which was the first big film they made about Hull docks. And it was a sort of, this was the great white hope, it was the baby of a certain Jack Brebner who was the public relations officer of the British Transport Commission, he was a Canadian and I think possibly he had been in high powered jobs in public relations, maybe he was at the Ministry of Information during the war, he could have been, but his one idea was that once the British Transport Commission had been formed, to get the film unit doing. And of course we were three years behind the Coal Board because they had already been going a couple of years by then, 2 or 3 years. So anyway I came in as the editor. Because McAllister said I think I've done enough editing full time, I think I'd like somebody else to do it. So he became a sort of associate producer on this *Ocean Terminal* Did you know McAllister at all? He was a quirky character. He used to, he liked to stir things, he liked to put people on their metal. I can remember hearing him saying, arriving in the morning and now saying who can I have a row with today.

SIDE 4, TAPE 2

John Legard: Stewart McAllister when I joined was ostensibly supervising editor, as I say he wanted to concentrate on, well we called him Mac, and anyway he was there and the other associate producer, Ian Ferguson was beginning to do a certain amount of producing, but mainly McAllister, so he got the credit on *Ocean Terminal* as associate producer and I was the editor and Jimmy Ritchie was the cameraman and there was a certain WD Williams was the assistant cameraman, Billy Williams, and there was some marvellous stuff, because Jack was a very good director and Jimmy was a wonderful cameraman and they got some magnificent stuff of the Queens coming and going, and that really is historic, the arrival of the, the departure of the Queen Elizabeth in the first reel, no it was the arrival, anyway the wonderful sequence of the coming alongside, and then the passengers loading up and the telescopic gangway, it is all sort of lavish and glossy. That was the equivalent of London Airport, the best aspect of flying or the best aspect of the Channel Tunnel and Southampton Docks in those days was the best aspect of sea going and that beautiful concourse and the telescopic gangway and the passengers setting off. And then you had a wonderful sequence of the tugs towing out the Queen Elizabeth and turning around and sending down Southampton Water, with music by Clifton Parker who wrote the music for *Western Approaches,* he was getting a reputation for doing good sea music. And that was the best thing in the film, the first reel. Then it became sort of more complex because it was more direct and it was dealing with getting the supplies from the freight up to the vegetable market at Covent Garden and the distribution of the freight wagons and linking the arrivals and the departures of the different ships and there was a chap called Biddle, RP Biddle who was the docks manager who was a rather famous man in his day, he was a city father and he was the chairman of Hampshire cricket club and he got, we did shoot sync on that. It was a rather complex film because Monty Slater shot the, wrote his narrative using the words of Beaudelaire, *Le Voyage*, and you had this young man at night school reciting *Le Voyage* and translating it into English and he did it rather badly and you were matching this with the ships coming and going. And to my mind it was rather pretentious because it was a fairly direct straightforward sort of film. And that was the second time I was an HM Bateman cartoon, because I said at one point do you think it would be a good idea if we left out all the Beaudelaire, and there was a deathly hush, and I'm sure it would have been a better film if we had left out the Beaudelaire because you had such magnificent poetry in the visuals and in the music and any attempt at being poetic in the commentary was ruined because this chap spoke it so badly. Anyway I was only a junior editor, and I wonder Edgar hearing what I'm saying, from above, what he would think. Anyway we got over it and the film came out and did quite well. And it went out on the Odeon circuit again, black and white, 35mm black and white, all processed by Humphries. They were our labs all the time.

Stephen Peet: You had a lot of music with this. Did you have different ways of dealing with music in films and did sometimes you have to cut picture to music that had already been recorded.

John Legard: Yes.

Stephen Peet: That must have been a difficulty

John Legard: Well, it was always the old process if you remember of giving the composer the music length. When we finally agreed on which sequences were going to have music, if it fitted you had to give them a detailed shot list in those days because there was no way, nowadays you just simply give them a VHS and they take it home and compose the music to the picture. Then you had to, and when the film was finally recorded you had the music ticker coming up on the screen, the seconds going by. I suppose that carries on today, I don't know. I haven't been to a music session for several years, but yes, when it was composed music under properly organised conditions and you have time and the composer gets the final length and it's absolutely set and sealed then there is no problem is there. But it's when you have music that is composed in a hurry and the film is still being edited and therefore there are alterations going on all the time, that is where you have your nightmares. And certain composer adapt to this very happily, they don't mind it at all, but somebody like Liz Lutyens she would just go, not quite bezerk, but you know what I mean if you told her that you had altered a sequence. She would say, you know this is no good because I've done this and so on. And having compained bitterly and then she says now what is it you've done. OK leave it to me. And she would be alright in the end but she would always make a song and dance of it. Whereas some composers didn't mind in the slightest, because they'd say this is our job, we're providing you music by the yard, we hope it's going to be good but this is the way it's done. And Muir of course was the great one for dealing with music situations, he would alter music at the session, during the music session, very, very quickly.

Alan Lawson: You never recorded in fact while the conductor was conducting the music and seeing the picture did you. With him making sure he was in time

John Legard: Of course it didn't really matter because we'd had several goes at it. He would through once, he would go through once for picture, he would go through once two or three times, the music, get that right first. And then he would go for picture. And if there was dialogue he would go for that as well. And then there would be the perfect take and then somebody would say, or I would say, it was a pity about so and so, it worked perfectly except for that one shot. And he would say we'll go again on that section. We would go again on that section, do it for you. It depended on how much time there was. But Muir being such a professional, he was always able to fit it in. It was quite extraordinary.

Stephen Peet: Or you would change the length of the shot.

John Legard: You could do, I'd rather not do that. If desperate, you would say we will change the shot and sometimes you'd make a virtue of that, sometimes you discover something better, don't you.

Stephen Peet: But each composer was different. Did they come to the music recordings.

John Legard: The composer always did.

Stephen Peet: There were tales of good friend Ed Williams often being a little bit behindhand with the music and taxis would arrive with the final piece of the music for the recording even while the recording session was going on.

John Legard: Yes, Edward was always very last minutish. And his copiest would always come with him and the copiest would go up in to Ken Cameron's office feverishly copying the later sections and there would be the awful moment when they'd recorded all the music that was available and they were waiting for the chap upstairs to come down. That was very much Edwared's style. But he always produced good results.

Stephen Peet: He just worked best under pressure.

John Legard: Yes, he did work best under pressure. He was slightly disorganised in that sense wasn't he from the practical side, but he always got the results in the end. Muir Mathieson didn't work with him very much, it was generally Marcus Dodds. And John Hollingsworth was another conductor that we used quite a bit. He was I suppose, at one time he was Muir's sidekick and he did a lot of scores, some of the earlier ones. And alas he died rather young, John, I think I was there at his last music session. He got this terrible emphysema and I remember he was, it was a film we made called *The Dream of Norway* and we were using some music by Grieg which they specially recorded for us, this was about 1958 or something, and at the end of the session he was absolutely speechless, John, and he just said I'll see you at the pub. And a quarter of an hour later we went round to the pub and he was sitting at the bar and he was just panting like that and he gradually got back to normal, it's an awful scourge that emphysema, but was an excellent musician I thought. And Muir was the greatest. I think Muir was exceptional because he was not only a very fine musician but he was a very fine filmmaker and he understood the business completely and there are occasions when we would show him a film and say what about music for this and he would say well quite honestly I don't think you need music. Well that's sensible thinking.

Where have we got to. We're at the early days of British Transport Films and at the same time as *Ocean Terminal* we were making a film that John Taylor was directing called *The Heart is Highland* which was being made for the Scottish region of British Rail. We did a lot of regional travel films at that time because in those days you could get them shown in the cinemas and as Edgar said we were creating an appetitie for travel and there was always 40% of the population, or maybe nearer 50% in the 1950s that didn't own cars and would go by train and so these were really soft sell travel promotion films because you hardly referred to transport, you might have one shot of the train, or you might say in the commentary the traveller this, otherwise it was just a straightforward documentary, it could have been made by anybody privately. And they actually paid us to, we got paid for showing these films, the distribution, the films were released by New Realm, EJ Fancey Productions, and the Fancey Brothers ran this distribution company called New Realm and Charles Potter had a tie up with them over the years and they got remarkably good distribution on our films and I suppose they worked it on a 60% 40%, something like

that. One or two of our films actually did make money even though they were being made to promote travel. Probably very little money but the main thing was to get them on the screen.

And this *The Heart is Highland* was John Taylor and Reg Hughes I think was the camerman, and possibly Bob Paynter. And it all had to be shot, it had to be shot in sunshine. Well you know what the highlands are like and you had to wait ages for sun. So I think they shot a batch in the summer of 1950 and then the rain came down and they said scrub it, we'll forget that and then they went back the following year, 1951, they shot the rest. And all the stuff was shot on monopack, and so it could only be processed in Los Angeles, so you had to wait an awful long time for the rushes. I think probably what they did, yes that's right, you did have to wait an awful long time for the rushes, because we got black and white prints eventually and the neg was sent back, developed and black and white prints, just one or two prints are in colour just to give you a guide, and they had colour synex, they didn't call them synex, that was black and white, coloured strips. And then the film was finally completed, I joined British Tranport in the spring of 1951 and I suppose we finished *Ocean Terminal* by the end of that year. And then the rushes were coming in on the second lot of shooting on *Heart is Highland* and that was put together and completed in the spring of 1952.

Stephen Peet: That must have given you a headache a bit working that way, in black and white. Did you sometimes on the final print of the film being edited that way have a bit of a shock when there was cut with a colour change from shot to shot that you weren't expecting.

John Legard: That's right.

Stephen Peet: How did you deal with that, send it and get the offending shot graded in a different way, or you just had to put up with it.

John Legard: You had quite a lattitude there for grading, but the colour prints, if you cut in separate colour prints, adjacent is what you're saying, before the film was finished, you could get some extraordinary clashes obviously, because it's the way things go. But of course they were pretty good at Technicolor, they were marvellous in those days Technicolor, those dye transfer prints.

Stephen Peet: They would make a print and then make a correction before they sent it to you.

John Legard: That's right.

Stephen Peet: What was John Taylor like to have in the cutting room. Is he fairly free and easy.

John Legard: He never was in the cutting room, actually, I don't remember ever seeing John in the cutting room, except in the early days when he was at Crown, in charge of

production at Crown, and then he would be in the cutting rooms because we were working so very fast and we might be having to get films finished in a couple of days and he would come in in the evening to help, assisting putting the cuts, working on the trims, and all that. He was fine. In fact John Taylor is another story as far as I'm concerned. At Crown he was very dynamic and tough and demanding and I was rather frightened of John at Crown because being a junior and he was expecting you to get the results. And there was always this rush. Whereas later days, when he was directing films at British Transport as opposed to producing films at Crown, he was very easy going because he wasn't in charge, Edgar was the boss, very much so, and he would work to Edgar and we would obviously discuss in great detail when we saw the rushes and then I would cut it together and then John would come in, but he might by that time be on something else. Because after all he was at British Transport Films purely freelance

Alan Lawson: Was he freelance

John Legard: That's right. And so he would be off on other work. I don't know whether he'd started Pilot Films by then, had he, because he had his own company for many years. What about Realist, would he have been at Realist, I'm not sure. Anyway he was freelance with us, so he came in on *The Heart is Highland* and then we finished that and I didn't see him again for some time because we made a film at the same time as *The Heart Is Highland* with Michael Orrom called *Dodging the Column* which is about one of these fractenating columns that was being taken from the factory up to the oil refinery up in Scotland and it was being taken by road, it was one of these heavy awkward shape loads, and it was rather a nice little film for British Road Services, and that is the only time I worked with Michael Orrom and I think Paul Le Saux wrote the script. He used the multivoiced commentary. Paul Le Saux was a very good writer, he was a Channel Islander, and he was a very talented writer whom Edgar brought in 1951, just a short time after I arrived I suppose, and he scripted many films, travelogues and public relation films and he was a great word spinner.

Stephen Peet: I guess the next thing you did with John Taylor directing was *England of Elizabeth* or is that going too

John Legard: No, you see then, I had got through having made this *Caribbean* film which Graham Wallace directed and Grierson produced, I was still sort of, I was in Grierson's good books, and then in 1951, Group 3 started about 1950-51 and then in 1952 there was a film scripted called *Child's Play*, it was a sort of political satire really and it was about a gang of children who unexpectedly came across some volcanic rock which had remakable atomic energy overtones and they started manufacturing their own atomic energy.

Anway Grierson was the producer and Margaret Thomson was the director and I suppose, I don't know whether she thought of the original idea, Don Sharp wrote the story and there was an old boy called Herbert Mason who came in as producer. Anyway Grierson, I was invited by John Baxter and Grierson to edit it and they very kindly, happy days because I asked Edgar if I could, I suppose he must have had a chat with Grierson behind

the scenes, after all they were old chums weren't they, Edgar was one of Grierson's proteges and so anyway Edgar said if you go and do this Group 3 film we will give you whatever it was unpaid leave, 3 months I suppose.

So in that year 1952, the summer I suppose shot off to that delightful filmmaking mecca, Southall Studios which consisted of that one stage and an office block and funny little canteen very drafty. And well I suppose it had all the requirements. They built some new cutting rooms actually, when I arrived they were building some new cutting rooms. Not a very happy place to work really, because they had the great gasometer just alongside, it was rather gloomy. Anyway it didn't really matter because we got all this stuff and we were working on a very tight schedule and they were shooting on the stage there and as I say it was about this gang of children, they were mostly amateurs. Mona Washbourne was in it and Peter Martin who was a good actor who died rather young and the child star was somebody called Christopher Beeny who later became quite well known because he was the little flunkey in *Upstairs Downstairs*, he was a footman in *Upstairs Downstairs*. And he was the star, he told the story of this remarkable atomic energy which they had been able to create and they manufactured their own sweets with this atomic energy. And then of course it's the usual thing, Churchill got to hear of it and then it became an international crisis. It was a sort of mild political satire. It was very typical Group 3, they did a whole string of rather modest low budget comedies, none of them really came off, they were all quite pleasant, they were B films.

Acutally *Child's Play* did get quite good reviews, but for Margaret I think it was an absolute nightmare and if you talk to her about it she says well I'd rather forget it because they worked to a very, very tight schedule. They shot five weeks and it was a budget of about £15,000, whatever that would be nowadays, £15 or £20,000 I should think, I got paid £23 a week which was big money in 1952. I was getting a third as much again as I was getting at British Transport Films so I felt was rich as Croesus. And I had Connie Mason as my first assistant and I had Peter Musgrave as my second assistant and it was jolly hard work and it was a very good experience for me and I really enjoyed it. The only thing was you were always living in slight fear because Herbert Mason was an old time feature producer from pre war days, he directed and he worked with Jessie Matthews films, and he was like the father figure, he didn't really have much time for these ex documentary types, they didn't really know their stuff. But we got it finished OK.

And then Grierson was there in the background, not doing very much I may say. In fact when I was interviewed for that job it was Grierson, because they ran it between them, John Baxter and John Grierson ran Group 3 between them. And on the board of directors ironically was a certain Michael Balcon which was rather ludicrous really because we could be rivals and you could be in competition with him just down the road. But I remember having this interview and there was John Baxter sitting at the desk and asking me what I'd done and this, that and the other. And behind him at the drinks cupboard, opening up the drinks and winking at me over John Baxter's shoulder. Quite hilarious.

Stephen Peet: How did they decide to take you on, did you have to show any of the work you'd done.

John Legard: Fortunately you see, in John Grierson's case I had done this film about the West Indies which he produced at Crown and that was the only reason why I got the job. And the 3 months came up and I thought well this is all very nice and maybe there might be other work. But I think I was really, obviously, I was expected to go back to Edgar and I wanted to go back to Edgar because I had had an interesting year there, year or so, at British Transport Films. And it seemed to be right to go back although I did go out again once or twice. I did one film for Ken Cameron at Anvill, I did a short story film based on a play by WW Jacobs called *The Bosun's Mate* and I worked with them on that for a time.

Stephen Peet: What happened at Group 3.

John Legard: Group 3 carried on for about 2 or 3 years. They started at the end of 1950 and I think they carried on until about 1954 perhaps. They made probably up to about 18 films. There was one very good film they made called *The Brave Don't Cry* which was directed by Phil Leacock about the **Noc** Mine disaster. That again was all shot in the studio at Southall and a cast of well know Scottish actors and Jean Anderson was in it. And who photographed it, Pennington Richards perhaps, but it might have been Martin Curtis. And John Trumper edited it, and that was one of the best. And then *The Conquest of Everest*, the one John Taylor did for Tom Stobart, that was actually a Group 3 Film. It was marketed as a Group 3 Film, it came under their banner although it was made by Countryman which was John Taylor and Leon Clore and Graham **xxxx**. That is the answer to your question, Group 3, well there were 3 groups weren't there, there was the group 1 and 2 and it was all supposed to be government funded.

Alan Lawson: Yes, wasn't it the Film Finance Corporation

John Legard: Film Finance Corporation, Jimmy **Laurie**. Anyway I was there till the December of 1952 at Southall Studios and we actually dubbed it at Denham. We did the track laying at Denham and then I came back to British Transport Films where I was confronted with, well the travelogues being made that year were *West Country Journey* and *London's Country* were both being shot around that time and they were shot on 16 Kodachrome.

We did a lot of colour travelogues from 1953 onwards, shot on Kodachrome. It was before Eastmancolor had really come in as a single strip. And this was the only way you could do it and the demand was there for these so there was that, there was *West Country Journey, London's Country* and *East Anglian Holiday* and *Any Man's Kingdom* and *Yorkshire Sands* -- they were all shot on 16mm. And we were very lucky because we did it rather lavishly.

What we did was, having got the rushes, they then took a black and white slash dup neg off the 16 mm rushes and a print from the slash dup. So we had everything on 35 albeit

rather course image black and white. And so we worked on that right until the end until then we did what I was talking about earlier on *The White Continent,* we transferred it all. We got hold of the original master Kodachrome and matched it to the 35mm and we had a thing called a 35mm 16mm synchroniser so we could match them shot by shot.

Stephen Peet: Did you blow it up to 35 to edit it because all your equipment was 35

John Legard: That's right.

Stephen Peet: I imagine that was a slightly false economy.

John Legard: I would have thought looking back on it, it seems quite extraordinary

Stephen Peet: It happened in television a lot I know

John Legard: Because we could have got a Steenbeck, were there Steenbeck's on the go in 1950, 52, 53.

Stephen Peet: You could have edited it on 16mm machine

John Legard: A 16 Steenbeck I mean.

Alan Lawson: No. They hadn't come in by then, I don't think so.

Stephen Peet: Ordinary little viewers.

Alan Lawson: It would be very dicey running your stuff through that. I see the reason.

John Legard: But we could have had an ordinary colour reversal taken from the master as we did on *The White Continent* several years earlier.

Alan Lawson: Again I think in those days cutting rooms weren't particularly keen on 16.

John Legard: No, they weren't, we certainly weren't, a lot of people weren't.

Stephen Peet: It was, I've been in two or places where the change over, it was objected to because it meant changing all the equipment, at Redifussion in 1964, tremendous argument over switching over to 16.

Alan Lawson: I mean what do you do with the 35 mm equipment you've got in your cutting room. Where do you put it because you'll need it back anyway.

John Legard: It seemed the logical thing to do. I would imagine this was Stewart McAllister's thinking and of course at that time we weren't very financially straightened because they reckoned the cost of British Transport Films in those days was worth the cost of one diesel locomotive per year and I remember we had this curious situation at the

end of the year where we had to get all the money spent so we could put in for the next, and we were crazily finishing off films, spending money like water, ordering up reprints and getting things dubbed and so on.

Alan Lawson: But all organisations did that, I know when I was at the Beeb they would come and say we've got all this money, you've got to use it otherwise we'll lose it and we probably won't get so much next year.

John Legard: You're right.

Stephen Peet: We're talking about the early days at British Transport Films,

John Legard: British Transport Films, yes. The film department of the British Transport Commission and they kept their name after the Transport Commission disappeared.

Stephen Peet: I suppose they had as their policy anything which would help publicize British Rail, and British transport

John Legard: Very much so

Stephen Peet: In all sorts of ways. Did they lay down regulations or make requests or was Edgar Anstey given more or less a free hand.

John Legard: He was given a very free hand because I remember he was able to in those early days, he chose, he recommended subjects that were to be filmed, and obviously there were subjects that he was asked to film, particularly afterall you see this was only one aspect of our work what I've talked about so far, the travel films. But there was also a big department that was totally involved in training film for people working on the railway, on the line, there were driver training films and there was somebody called Ken Fairbairn who directed a number of those films for us in the early days and track maintenance and how to operate level crossing gates and when the steam trains came to an end training people, conversion courses for steam train drivers to tackle diesel locomotion and all those films were considered of very great importance and incidentally they were all still shot on 35mm even though they were instructional. And they were obviously screened on 16mm eventually but they had this wonderful quality because they were beautifully shot, and some of those training films are curiously enough are now available in the film buff's transport catalogues, you can buy these films. But in answer to your question, Edgar did have a very big say, in fact he invited us all to suggest subjects to be shot but the travel films, the regional travel films sort of came to an end around 1955, 1956

And then there were the subject headings. There was the history of England, there was *Tudor England* which was the working title of *England of Elizabeth,* and there were two more planned but never made. They were going to make a film about the English village and they were going to make a film about cathedral cities, neither of those were actually

made. But *England of Elizabeth* did get off the ground and did have some degree of success.

And John Taylor directed it but it was one of these rather loosely constructed films, it was the story of the reign of Elizabeth 1 as seen in 1956, what are the visible remains of Elizabethan England. And so it was just a matter of subject headings, houses, churches, schools, old building and relics, artefacts, and it was all shot and it was Ian worked on the original narrative, Ian Ferguson, he was the associate producer with Edgar right from the early days, 1950, he had been at Realist I think before he joined, I think he was at Realist for a time before he joined us in 1950 and he was very good on the business side, he was good at handling the money side and practical side of shooting and he was good at handling several productions at once. He was given the handling of most of the travel films, several which were being film simultaneously during the 1950s and was good at that.

And then he went on to this *England of Elizabeth* which I suppose was his tour de force. He always thought of it as his favourite film because he was interested in history anyway. He got people in, he got AL Rouse to come along as a technical adviser you would say in film terms, historical adviser. And he got an author, a well know west of England novelist called John Moore to write the commentary. John had actually done one other film for us before that called *Heart of England* which was his part of the world. And so there was Ian Ferguson, John Moore, AL Rouse, and Edgar holding a watching brief as executive producer. Jimmy Ritchie photgraphed it.

I didn't really enjoy working on it terribly. I don't know why but it was one of those diffuse films which grew gradually, there was no definite script to edit to. And right in the middle we suddenly had the opportunity of getting Vaughan Williams to write the music, because Vaughan Williams had a slight pause in his output and Edgar, actually Edgar Anstey had really wanted Benjamin Britten to do a score for him but he couldn't get him. I think Benjamin Britten rather slowed up, he didn't do many film scores anyway. But Muir Mathieson came in one day and said that Vaughan Williams was available, did we want to make use of him. So we said, Ian Ferguson said rather. So we brought him in and we showed him the material, we showed him the very basic rough cut and he said how long is the film going to be. We said we guess it will be about half an hour, he said OK I'll write you half an hour of music. So that's what happened. And when we finally recorded it, we couldn't record it to picture because we hadn't got it all edited, nevertheless it was very rich as you can imagine, wonderful stuff.

Stephen Peet: Did he in effect write a whole piece half an hour long and you fitted the picture

John Legard: We have him the subject headings, we showed him the sequences and he'd say how long that's going to be, and we'd say 3 minutes. But almost invariably if you say that it's going to be less in the end. There was a slightly embarrassing occasion because he came in one day with his pianist and he said I've got the piano sketch, could we try it out against the picture. So we feverishly cobbled together some stuff and we showed the

sequences and the chap was playing away, and Vaughan Williams with his deaf aid saying we seem to be on something quite different now, and I had to say that's all right, this is just the stuff, which will obviously edited to your music at the end, don't worry.

And finally we got to the recording session a few weeks after that and we decided to work to a stop watch rather than to picture which is the safest thing to do. It's ironic because Muir Mathieson had taken enormous amount of trouble to get Vaughan Williams set up to do this work and the day before the session Muir went down with flu, so John Hollingsworth was brought in literally overnight to conduct and Vaughan William's manuscript was very notoriously indecipherable, I remember Hollingsworth afterwards saying all I could do was follow the contours. I can show you the film some time. It's quite good, the music, the thing is we had John Moore writing this very richful prose and we had this wonderful music going on as well and we had these strong visuals and I would describe that film as a rich Christmas cake, you can't take too much of it. But I think from the historian's point of view it's a delight. And AL Rouse coming in to see the finished result and he was absolutely in tears at the end, he said I'm sorry about that, this is my first love, Elizabethan England and you've put it across.

Stephen Peet: Well he was satisfied, but it is an extraordinary way of making a film.

John Legard: Inexcusable I would say, it always worried me.

Stephen Peet: Did you find this happened quite a bit, where you got some very good music and some very good words and one or the other had to go and presumably the words couldn't go so the music used to get smothered.

John Legard: The words couldn't go, no, because it was, if we'd had a straightforward journalist, journalists are expert at writing short sentences, that's their job isn't it, to be edited so you could switch the stuff around. But with a chap like John Moore who was such a good writer you couldn't edit him, and if you missed something out well then you knew there was a gap

Alan Lawson: The whole point had gone.

John Legard: That's right. But it did well. It was a successful film and apparently it went down very well in America.

Stephen Peet: So it must have gone on theatrical release.

John Legard: It did go on theatarical release. It got a west end showing and it got shown on the Odeon Circuit and I think they even did a slightly shortened version too which I'm not always very much in favour of, but of course it was a bit overlength, I mean most cinemas liked to have 2 reels, when it goes over 3 reels in those days it became a bit long.

Stephen Peet: What did John Taylor feel about it after all this.

John Legard: Do you know I'm quite honestly not sure because he obviously enjoyed working on it and he worked very hard but he didn't come in on the editing stages at all. He was off on other stuff. He shot it and it was Ian Ferguson and it was Edgar and me and John Moore and these other people like Eric Linklater came in on it and AL Rouse. What was Linklater doing on it. He came to see it anyway, I know why, it was because they were all members of the Saville Club. There was this little group and they'd have a big lunch and then Ian Ferguson would say well now you must come back to Saville Row and see what we've just put together. Happy days.

Alan Lawson: Extraordinary the role of John Taylor, really he was just a journeyman.

John Legard: That's not fair on John, the think about John is that he always shot the stuff so beautifully, he had this magic. He and Jimmy Ritchie got on very well together.

Stephen Peet: But John Taylor was a director and cameraman.

John Legard: No, Jimmy was the cameraman.

Stephen Peet: No, I meant not on this but he was by inclination a cameraman and I guess he wouldn't go away and leave other people

John Legard: Well if we can just go on a bit here, there is another film called *An Artist Looks at Churches* which is probably a year or so after *England of Elizabeth*. Now John directed that and photographed that, that was entirely his baby.

Stephen Peet: I guess he wouldn't walk away from that would he and leave it to somebody else to edit.

John Legard: No, partly these films were not closely scripted, they were subject headings and it was really matter of the editor, the editor did have quite a big say in those days because we didn't have shooting script as such. It was a matter of assembling the stuff however it seemed best with the material available and John always shot the stuff beautifully, so you couldn't go wrong as far as he was concerned, he may disagree with you as to the order of shots, but the stuff was there anyway. And of course on *The Artist Looks at Churches* he was working with John Piper who was a great authority on the history of church architecture through him being what he was, a fine artist and in fact John Piper wrote the script, the final commentary based on the original treatment to which John Taylor went out and shot. John Taylor got into his dormobile with his crew and set off round the country and went to one church after another as agreed with John Piper and presumably in consultation with Edgar Anstey and whoever. But that's how those films were constructed. The same with all those travelogues too, *West Country Journey*, there were no shooting scripts as such, there were just a series of sequences, and I remember when we came to editing very often we used to write down the sequences, I'm sure you've done this, you write down the sequences on bits of paper and little strips of paper and then you shuffle them around.

JOHN LEGARD SIDE 5

John Legard: And so, it was almost trial and error because you would shuffle these little bits of paper around first, then you would try the sequences according to your shuffling and then you could see where it was working and it wasn't working, and then of course the commentary writer would be coming in and suggesting other ideas and these films grew. They had a sort of natural growth, particularly if you had somebody like John Taylor shooting the original material, or directing the original material or Tony Thompson, he was another very, very good director, who alas died young. Tony Thompson was a natural talent. And he worked, he might have worked with the Crown Film Unit, he certainly worked with the Coal Board and he came to Edgar in about 1953 or 4 and he stayed with us for the rest of his life I think. He was only about 40 when he died.

Stephen Peet: But you didn't have to work to a tight schedule like

John Legard: No, this is the thing, we would do the treatment and go out shooting on these travel films in the summer. Perhaps do several and then they would come back to the cutting rooms, there would be myself cutting and Margot Fleischner who became Jimmy Garrett's wife and there would be Bert Egelton and there would there be, there were occasional editors who came in from time to time. Alf Chapman was with us for a time.

Stephen Peet: I would imagine that one editor did the whole thing, they didn't hand over to another editor.

John Legard: No, that's right, but they would have their group of films. I would probably have four or five films going at a time, you know in different stages. There would be one at rushes and another one would be rough cut and another would be getting to the commentary writing stage and another one towards dubbing. You obviously didn't work on them all at once. You concentrated on one and worked on it for several weeks and then you would say now let's look in the cabinet and see what other films we've got. Oh yes that one, I haven't seen that one lately, better take it down and dust it down and have a look at it. You see because they weren't topical subjects, they were a long term output, there were topical subjects of course and the training films had to be turned out to a particular requirement by a particular time for a training course.

And of course in addition to the films they were also doing film strips. There was a whole department at British Transport Films that was devoted to film scripts and later became ordinary film and video programmes. But in those days they were done on carousels, they went out shooting and both training and also basic travel, local travel programmes. But the films we're talking about were shot in the summer, edited in the winter and spring and completed in the early spring ready for putting out in the cinemas to promote for the following season.

Stephen Peet: Did you have a maximum length that these films should run.

John Legard: Not absolute timing but generally speaking they were two full reels, they were 20 minutes. They could be 21 and half minutes.

Stephen Peet: That would be a maximum.

John Legard: Yes

Stephen Peet: So you at least you had that

John Legard: The travel films were that length, I don't know if it was deliberate or just that they came out at that length because they found there natural length. But a film like *Ocean Terminal* which was more about a definite subject would be, that was half an hour. The *England of Elizabeth* because that was a period of history you couldn't pack that, you couldn't contain that idea in two reels so that was half an hour. And they were all within the half an hour, they were all within the short film length. If they had gone over whatever it was 33 minutes they would be qualifying for feature rates, wouldn't they, there was the feature rate thing.

Stephen Peet: So that was a factor.

John Legard: Yes, a factor, they kept them below 33 minutes. Even *Wild Wings* which was one of the later subject matter films that we made for Peter Scott, the Wildfowl Trust, that was partly paid for by British Rail and partly paid for by Peter Scott himself. And that went to the absolute maximum of short film length which was 33 and a half. In fact there was a slightly longer version which he used in his own, at Slimbridge for private showings. And that was good, that worked out very well, because as it qualified for short film we were able to put it in for the Oscar and it won, got an Oscar, I think it was the only film Edgar ever got an Oscar for. I think *Terminus* did quite well, I think that got a few, that was John Schlesinger's film. That must have got a BAFTA award. But those are besides the point, as far as Edgar was concerned British Transport Films was films in the service of industry in its widest sense.

Stephen Peet: In the list of dozens of films that you were editor, every now and again pops up a different kind of credit, associate producer on one or two things and a little bit later producer or scriptwriter, so that you branched out, was that your choice

John Legard: It was sort of more convenient. I suppose that after Ian Ferguson left, because he set up on his own and Edgar was a bit short of producers and I was, he said perhaps you could do some as opposed to entirely post production could you be involved in the setting up of some of these productions at the early stage and then take over the editing afterwards.

And some of John Taylors, the films we made, a series of films we made for British Railways called *Report on Modernisation* and *Rail Report* and those were really working closely with John Taylor and getting subjects from British Rail, sort of subject headings

and working closely with John who came in and I had to liaise with him and the different departments of British Rail to whom he was going to visit and shoot sequences. So I was therefore producer because I was involved in that early stage. And then when the stuff was shot and John had gone off on something else I then carried on as editor. Rather like they did at Shell, at Shell the directors edited the stuff whereas in this case I didn't direct but I did do the preliminary setting up and all that.It wasn't producing in the real sense of the word, I suppose, of filmmaking. I wasn't involved in the financial aspect, I was involved in the practical. Would I be called a line producer or something like that.

Alan Lawson: Location manager, production manager

John Legard: It wasn't quite production manager because there was somebody who did that. I liaised with the different departments and then it was the production manager who had to set up the actual unit and do the scheduling.

Stephen Peet: Going on a long way, on the list of all your various credits, I see you continued to be editor for a long time, is that because

John Legard: I went back to editing.

Stephen Peet: Is that because that is where your heart was.

John Legard: I went back to editing towards the end of the time when I suppose after Edgar retired and we had a different set up because John Shepherd took over as executive producer. He succeeded Edgar. He wasn't so much a filmmaker as Edgar and so he was there, he was the head of the department and answerable to the board, he didn't come in so much on individual productions. And we had by then both Jimmy Ritchie as a producer and Lionel Cole as a producer. And so I don't think I was needed really, they didn't need and extra producer so I was able to concentrate on editing which was really my first love. Lionel tried to persuade me at one time to do a bit of directing. I think I may have done a bit but quite honestly, I really rather, perhaps it was laziness, I preferred to stay in the cutting room.

Stephen Peet: I don't agree there. There are two or three editors who are excellent at that without going into names who have gone directing and they're fallen, not fallen but they haven't been very good and they've gone back to editing and that's the thing they're good at. And they should stick at it. Not everybody is suited for everything.

John Legard: No, I think in my case it was because I had been so interested in handling film right from going back to the early days, it seemed natural to me to continue handling film. And going back to the very early days again, one thing about working in the film library at the Crown Film Unit, was how quickly I became adept at taking film by the scruff of the neck physically and handling these great reels, like people do in the labs, you see them, and I could do that just as well as anybody. And you see people who start off in editing who haven't had that background and the actual physical business it takes

you quite a long time to get used to. I suppose now it's differnet because people don't handle film any more, because they sit in front of a screen and press buttons.

Alan Lawson: You never dropped a centre out.

John Legard: Yes that's right we all had to go through that. Dropping the centre out.

Stephen Peet: You know that phrase dropping the centre out that we're laughing about, in 50 years time if anybody's listening to this tape, they won't know what we mean.

John Legard: They won't know what we're talking about. Well what happens, the thing is particularly a film that had been projected and had gone to the waxing so the reel would be rather sticky wouldn't it and sometimes the stickiness would come unstuck in the middle, half way down the reel and it would just drop out in a lump, so the middle would drop out away from the outside.

Alan Lawson: But the thing you've missed. You normally pick a reel of film up, by its edges and slide it across

John Legard: That's alright if the film is nice and dry, if it's fairly flexible the roll, but with these hardened old prints, and it is a nightmare to get it back, absolute nightmare.

Stephen Peet: And we're talking about 1000 ft of film, and 500 ft of film has fallen out of the middle in a coil on the floor, it's hours of work getting it back again, so dropping the centre out is much more than just a couple of minutes of trouble.

Can we get to one or two of the people you've worked with at this period who are sadly no longer with us, people like Max Anderson, Did he direct anything you edited.

John Legard: No, only very short sequences of the *Mining Reviews*. I worked with him on those briefly and he always seemed to be a delightful person to work with and I knew him of course because he stayed on at Crown Film Unit and I used to meet him from time to time. He did several films at Crown, he worked with, I think he worked with Phil Leacock on stuff and there was a film he made at Crown called *Four Men in Prison* which was considered a very controvertial film in its day. I don't know why. There was some politics to do with the Home Office. And I don't know how widely it got shown in the end. I thought it was a very good film. And otherwise I didn't really know him that well other than I used to drink a pint of beer with him every now and again.

Stephen Peet: The *Mining Review*, did it go out monthly

John Legard: It went out monthly I think.

Stephen Peet: I worked on it once for two editions of it, about middle 1950s

John Legard: I think in the early days I think it must have been distributed by the COI, those early ones

Stephen Peet: They were shown in the mining areas, 70 towns I think which were mining areas, and they were 10 minuters.

John Legard: Whether they came out every month or every two months I can't remember. They may have been every two months But there were six editions and then they were handed over to the Data

Stephen Peet: Frances Guyson.

JLAnd then of course he carried on with them right until their demise which wasn't all that long ago. They carried on until the seventies or early eighties and of course he had a distribution arrangement, there was a chap named, I can't remember what his name was, he was a distributor, a Wardour Street distributor who handled the distribution of those pictures in the 70 towns presumably and they were all processed by Kays, West End, Kays Laboratories, not Kays West End because they'd disappeared, And that was really perhaps the main worko f the Coal Board Film Unit, that must have kept them going very much in the later days.

We did get involved a bit at British Transport Films in railway, in magazine films, monthly magazines and we found them very draining on the resources.

Stephen Peet: Did they have a particular name, the transport ones.

John Legard: Yes, I can't think of the name at the moment. They came out sort of monthly or two monthly and they had different editions for the different regions. And in the days when our 16mm distribution set up was really quite elaborate, these weren't shown in the cinemas, they were shown at railway centres in different parts of the country and we had a mobile projection units sent all round, obviously based at British Transport Films, we had our distribution department and they supervised the whole thing but they had these people in different parts of the country

Alan Lawson: Potter

John Legard: That's right Charles Potter, we probably talked about it that day. He was the distribution manager for quite a time, well he became more than that. He became Edgar Anstey's right hand man, administrative head, and then Gerald Sayles took over the distribution manager side. But that went on for many years, right until the end of the 60s I suppose. And finally they decided that, I suppose the climate had changed a bit and economies were coming in and they decided to give up the *Railway Gazette*, I think it was called *Railway Gazette*, or something like that.

Stephen Peet: Did your job ever cause you to have to edit on location or was you always editing in a cutting room.

John Legard: We edited in different cutting rooms around London sometimes because we overflowed. I don't think I ever went out on a film, the only time I was involved in a location was for a few days in Paris when we made a film for the Union Internale de Chemin de Fer, it was a film called *Cybernetica* which was all about railways in Europe, made for the UIC and we had to do, we did our own version in London, completed it. And then the French requested, they wanted a different commentary and a different dub for their version so we went over to Paris and spent a day or two there organising it, which was one of the most chaotic times I can remember. Because unlike in England, where every body is rather deferential and they leave it to the producer, and the director or editor possibly; but in France everybody joins in including the projectionist, so we were rewriting the commentary. But that is about the only time I can remember.

Certainly we went down to, the Slimbridge film we spent a few days down there because, and this is called *Wild Wings*, because Peter Scott was based down there and we wanted to get him to record, complete writing and record the commentary and we recorded it, we showed him the film at BBC Bristol, and went through it in great detail and worked on the script and then we went back, we went to Slimbridge to record the commentary because he had various commitments and we recorded it actually in his main sitting room, a great big room with picture window, and all the birds outside. And the other main reason we recorded the commentary down there was because we also had him, it was one of the first times we had a talking head, I suppose, we had Peter Scott actually addressing the camera and telling us about Slimbridge and that was the opening sequence of the film. And we had all the way through the commentary, if you listen to the commentary by itself you can hear the ducks quacking away.

Stephen Peet: That must have been a bit difficult.

John Legard: And it was interesting because he wrote the commentary, and he handed a page to his typist, and that was typed, he went through the film page by page by page, another page to type. And by the time he had gone through the film, the final pages were being typed, so then that was finished, so back and then we recorded it straight through. It was very efficient, but then he was a television man wasn't he, Peter Scott. It was a joy working with him.

Stephen Peet: This is 1960s.

John Legard: *Wild Wings* was 1966, we're dodging about dates but it actually doesn't matter very much, we're actually getting the general picture.

Stephen Peet: They're all about the same period. And the fact that he was there doing his piece to camera is the influence of television and a new style, were you still shooting in 35.

John Legard: Yes shooting 35, Paddy Carey photographed it and absolutely, all those films were. Because we did four natural history films, wildlife films. That was the last of

the bunch I think. The first one was called *Journey into Spring* which again was a subject film, as opposed to a travelogue, therefore it could go over the two reels, it went to half an hour and it was directed by Ralph Keene, and photographed by Paddy Carey, and edited by Ralph Sheldon. And it was about the Gilbert White's Selbourne, Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selbourne*, based on that, his book but it was a very rich and delightful subject matter film of a travel nature. And it did very well.

The next one we did was called *Between the Tides* which was about the wildlife of the coast and the coast they chose was South Wales, South West Wales, Pembrokeshire coast. That again was directed by Ralph Keene and photographed by Ron Craigen, and there was a chap named James Fisher who was a great wildlife expert, he was our technical adviser. He was another very good, nice man to work with, excellent.

Alan Lawson: He was television.

John Legard: He was television, was he.

Stephen Peet: You edited that one.

John Legard: Yes I did, I did that one, I edited *Between the Tides*, and then there was another one called *Wild Highlands*, now that was two reels, *Between the Tides* was two reels, *Wild Highlands* was two reels, that was about the Ardenmurchan Peninsular on the West Coast of Argyle and it was shot by Ron Craigen and a chap named John Buxton who had specialised in wildlife photography, he came in as a freelance. And we had a remarkable commentary writer at those times called Harry Green who was the night editor of the *Western Mail* I think, and he was a brilliant journalist, a very austere man and a strange sort of slightly quirky character. And he produced this rich full prose, although, it was journalism but it had the full prose of a much more creative writer than the average journalist. Perhaps it's being unfair to journalists. But it was nearer to John Moore who did the commentary of *England of Elizabeth* than he was to say an average journalist. But he was exceptional. I don't know how many films he did apart from with us, Harry Green. He did a film called *Any Man's Kingdom* about Northumberland.

Stephen Peet: And round about this time you did your first associate producer work. That was *Off the Beaten Track*, 1960. According to this list, and *North to the Dales*, 1963. Did you go out on location.

John Legard: I shouldn't think so. I did with *Off the Beaten Track* because that was a film about youth hostels that was made for, Gloria Sachs was the editor and I guess they were short of associate producers at the time and so I got a bit involved in the work of setting it up or being in touch with the locations and so on. Again I wasn't involved in what you would normally called the producer work, it was dealing with the film in the production stage really

Alan Lawson: A fixer up.

John Legard: A fixer uper, that's right. I didn't get involved in the editing of that at all. And maybe I wasn't very busy editing. The great thing about having a permanent film unit, nothing's permanent but a sort of ongoing film department, so there were people there all the time, every now and again you had a lull, and if you're going to keep going you have to do what ever's available, it's sensible isn't it really. I wouldn't be doing anything technical like photography because I'm not a cameraman, but to be involved in a production. And also it helps you with your own experience, because after all a lot of people in the cutting rooms, you do get a bit stuck at times, it does them good to get out a bit.

Stephen Peet: There is another title around about that time, called *All That Mighty Heart.* I imagine it's about London.

John Legard: That's right. Now that's a film that was directed by Rod Baxter and that was made for London Transport, that was another aspect of our work, because you see we had a number of films which were made specifically for London Transport. They were outside films, outside of British Transport Commission and I suppose they would be what we called repayment films, because they paid us to make them as a separate item, and we did a whole series of *Cine Gazettes* for them, because they had their internal distribution, and I suppose some of them got shown in the cinemas. A film like *An Elephant Will never Forget*, for example which was quite a famous film directed by John Krish, about the last of the London trams, was made for London Transport obviously. And it went out on the cinemas, very widely shown because it had the last of the London trams, very nostaligc and all that and they had a wonderful music track which was knocked up by Edward Williams, out of sort of folk song, *Going for a Ride on a Car* which was a famous folk song which he used as his basis for his score. So he had a Derby and Jones club singing this in chorus and the rest of the score was strung around this melody.

Stephen Peet: It was more or less a music hall song wasn't it.

John Legard: Yes. There wasn't a lot of commentary, what there was deeply nostalgic and sad and melancholy. And poor old trams, the sadness of the end of the trams. Because John Krish was very good at doing gloomy subjects, putting across the gloomy side of things and he did it very well, that was the write piece of casting, getting him to direct that film. Actually it took a long time to make and I know there was a lot of discussion about it, because I don't think Edgar to begin with really thought of it as a very important subject. It was sort of looking back and our job was to be deeply involved in the present industry and the present railway, transport industry and too much looking back is negative. However, when it was finally shot and put together, everybody realised there was something good here. So it was completed. And I'll tell you who edited it, the little man who used to go to sleep at lunch time with a news paper over his head, lying on the cutting room bench. Can you guess who that was. Do you know Jack **Ellitt**. That is the only film he did for us. Perhaps he was friend of John Krish's. I don't know.

Stephen Peet: Did John Krish do other things for British Transport.

John Legard: Yes he did.

Stephen Peet: Because he's a name that hasn't come up today.

John Legard: He did quite a few films in the early days. There was a film called, a film about a shoe factory going off on a day out to London by train. And he directed that and he had a journalist to go with them who didn't, the journalist didn't speak to camera or anything but you saw him all the time. A chap named Colin Wells, an Australian journalist and I can't remember the title at the moment. Anyway he did that and then he did a film that I edited called, they had an idea, which was also made for London Transport about individuals within the industry thinking up bright ideas as to how to improve the service. There were a number of sequences. It was like a magazine film, he directed that. I can't say very much about it because it's a long time ago and I can't remember the details. Then he did *An Elephant Will Never Forget.* And he came back later to do a film about children straying on the track, a sort of warning, an educational film. Of course he worked for the Crown Film Unit as well. I remember working with him at Crown on one or two bits and pieces. But of course John was a very good director wasn't he. He did several features, do you ever hear of him these days. I don't know what he's doing, I haven't seen him for ages.

Alan Lawson: He's been recorded.

John Legard: I would be interested to hear what he has to say about *An Elephant Will Never Forget* because I know he had quite a battle getting that. And he was finally vindicated.

Stephen Peet: Can I ask you a general question. I think often the film editor is looked upon as the anonymous person on a production and the better he does his job the less he noticed. Would you say that this is a feeling you got, in other words, if an editor does a wonderful job, the director gets the credit and the camera gets the credit, and other people, and if the editing is flawless it's not noticed.

John Legard: The thing about editing surely is that unless there is something glaringly wrong you don't notice it.

Stephen Peet: This is what I meant.

John Legard: Not only the lay public, the layman certainly doesn't notice, but the filmmaker doesn't notice it either. And unless you know what the original material was like it's very difficult to judge whether a film is, you can say a film is beautifully edited. It may be beautifully edited because it's beautifully directed and a good straightforward practical editor couldn't fail to make it look good, am I right in saying that.

Alan Lawson: Yes,

John Legard: What would Anthony say.

Alan Lawson: I think the thing is if it stands up as a whole, it is the unit that has made the film.

John Legard: Yes of course. But there are certainly editors who have a certain stylistic character. And certainly Terry Trench, you could generally tell a Terry Trench film because he used to make a sudden cut when you least expected it, slightly off the beat. And Humphrey Jennings was always very critical of him, he said that Trench man he always uses his cuttings like cutting with an axe. Because it's a very subjective thing, because some people like that.

Alan Lawson: It stands or falls by the whole.

John Legard: They say editors can break or marr a film. I don't think they would be allow to marr it, really. If it's going badly they get another editor. Whereas if you're a camaeraman, you know.

Alan Lawson: I suppose you can say that a bad film can be improved by an editor.

John Legard: Yes, this is right, that is why I always rather liked working on films that hadn't got any definite script because you felt it was a challenge to edit, you should be able to make something out of it however indifferently it may be shot, there should be a best way of doing that material. But it's a puzzle, as far as the layman is concerned it is very difficult for them to judge. If you're a cameraman you can always judge good photography and you can judge good sound, because it is something, but editing.

Stephen Peet: Another general question, do you remember the switch to magnetic sound from optical sound, did it in any way affect your editing, or did you just take it in your stride.

John Legard: I was quite worried to begin with when the visual, being able to read your sound track disappeared,

Stephen Peet: This was about the middle 50s.

John Legard: That's right. Because the thing is, going back to Stewart McAllister again. He was always, was he a luddite, he was very reluctant to try this new system, he said optical has always been perfectly satisfactory and we don't need, OK , alright we can record the commentaries on magnetic. So we had the ridiculous situation of a magnetic commentary and the effects tracks would all be on optical, because we were taking them probably from the effects library. And even if they were specially recorded, if the new recording was going in among existing optical effects you would have to transfer it to optical before you could lay it. And I suppose perhaps the music tracks would have been recorded on tape, the fully coated 35 mm in about 1955, 56, is it. So just for a period

there was this stage. But then of course as soon as we got the new equipment and we got the mag heads on the moviola there was no problem I don't think. Did it worry you.

Stephen Peet: It didn't worry me, you switched to writing on the magnetic rather than reading it off the track.

John Legard: Yes and if you went over to magnetic on the thing, you were running an optical track and you had the exciter lamp on and then you switched that off and you did the little magnetic head came up on the Moviola or the Steenbeck or whatever it was so there was no problem there as far as I was concerned, I very quickly adapted to it. And also the great thing was that no longer did we have this curse of all track laying, cutting the sound and then having to bloop it.

Alan Lawson: Again explain about blooping.

John Legard: Yes, blooping, the sound was on optical track and therefore unless your join was absolutely beautifully done there would be a slight mark on the soundtrack which would register as a click. So in order to eliminate that you had a special ink called blooping black ink that you painted onto the join and you had to paint it very carefully, either as a semi circle or a diagonal and it would be almost noiseless. You could become quite expert, you could practice how to get the least sound out of a join when you blooped by practicing it. And of course the trouble with that was that the blooping ink had to dry before you wound on to the next join. And if it was slightly ancient ink it wouldn't dry very quickly. Fresh ink would be alright, it would dry in a few seconds. But then of course they also introduced the little tape loops that you just stuck on, they were an improvement.

Alan Lawson: But then you were handling a sound neg, you had a punch.

John Legard: Yes, and you see that is another thing about track laying in those days because before you could dub your film, mix your final tracks, you had to get a clean dialogue track made, because your optical dialogue track would be full of joins and you might have had time to bloop some of them, but they would be scratched anyway. So you sent the dialogue track or the commentary track or both to the neg cutters and they actually neg cut, they cut the negatives of those tracks and had punched blooped and prints taken off. And then they had to check that when the prints had been made, they had to run the prints in the theatre, the soundtrack in the theatre, to make sure there weren't any clicks before the labs delivered them, and there was a man called Mr Luscombe at Den Labs whose job was sitting in the theatre listening to soundtracks all day and whenever there was a click he would press a button and the projectionist would put a piece of paper in. And then he would get the tracks back and he would wind through to the piece of paper, make a little bloop on what was obviously a hole in the track, in the printing.

Stephen Peet: Could you run negative soundtrack and get the same kind of sound.

John Legard: No you would get distortion. Well I don't know, with Western Electric you might have been able to, because that was a density track wasn't it. But with RCA which was a variable area so there was a lot of clear area, it would be very crackly. Well that is the trouble with a variable area track any way, there was a lot of crackle. But then of course they did develop, before magnetic came in they did improve the soundtrack, dubbing soundtracks quite a bit by introducing a system called push pull where you had, the system there was, it was printed at an angle so it was rather like the principle of a diagonal join, so it went through at an angle, one side of the sound, well I can't explain it because I'm not in the sound department, anyway it was a way of eliminating some of the noise from the joins by printing it in a different way. And then of course that was all rendered obsolete by the arrival of magnetic.

Stephen Peet: And later everything was made much simpler by rock and roll.

John Legard: Well rock and roll was coming in at that time.

Stephen Peet: Was it, already.

John Legard: Yes, you see that is another thing, when you didn't have rock and roll, you had your picture and your dialogue and your commentaries and your effects tracks and they were all laced up, you might have as many as 5 or 6 anyway, but if you had more than that you generally did a premix, you would premix your effects and perhaps your music, well you would premix your effects tracks, so the most you would have going through would be as far as I was concerned 6 or 7 tracks. And they were all in those days, they were joined, they were cement joined so they relied on the adhesive qualities of the film cement, because they were overlap joins, one piece of film sticking onto another and there was always a risk that something might break. You only had to have one bit of film to break, and you didn't have rock and roll so you had to go back to the top every time

Stephen Peet: And you were dealing with a ten minute roll.

John Legard: You needed to have an extra hour or two in the dubbing theatre just to allow for these sort of breaks. Apart from anything else it was quite impossible to get a film dubbed properly and creatively if you endlessly having to stop and go back to the start. So really rock and roll was absolutely essential.

Alan Lawson: So were the tape joins.

John Legard: And the tape joins, well the tape joins came in at the same time really, yes the but joins, the Italian joiners as they were called originally, when they were Italian joiners. But it was quite a hazardous business. But I think that was probably about the only element in film editing that gave me sleepless nights, the time before dubbing, because you used to think of all the things that could go wrong, and you had to check your joins and you also had to hope that the final dubbing tracks would be ready in time, you know from the printers, from the labs, there were so many elements.

And also we laid final tracks on effects too, of course this applies to, I'm not talking about documentary, this is filmmaking in general, this is features in particular, and we had to have the room where you were laying your tracks it had to be dust free and cleaned up and you would put tissue paper over everything at night when you went home in the evening to make sure that the dust didn't settle. It was a rare old business. I think there were special people, from the neg cutters department, used to come over from Denham to help us with our final tracks. And then we would rehearse, you see, we would rehearse the dubbing on the original tracks and then when the recordists, the dubbing mixers were happy with what we'd got and they said ok, let's put on the finals, and they would go for a take on the final track straightaway some times hoping there wouldn't be any inaccuracy in the final dubbing track which could occassionally creep in. It was a nightmare, it was. Great fun too. Provided you had the time. When it succeeded there was nothing like it, you really felt you'd achieved something.

Stephen Peet: So where are all these films now, does British Transport Films have a complete archive of all its films.

John Legard: There is a complete archive and up to about 2 months ago it was managed by a guy called Barry Coward who runs a company called FAME, which is Film Archive Management and Entertainment or something like that. And he on behalf of British Rail he managed the whole of the British Transport Films archive, And he had copies of 16 and 35 mm prints of all the completed films, and he had a big stock shot library and he had video tapes and a lot of them. In fact he marketted a lot of them, he cassetted bunches of 3 films, programmes of 3 films at a time, a lot of these travel films we were talking about, and some of the training films, some of the railway training films, they've been put onto cassette and they have been marketed with various degrees of success. Now, alas and alack because British Rail are coming to an end, they've said we're no longer interested in you Barry Coward managing our archives, thank you very much indeed, your contract is coming to an end, and it did come to an end and it si now being handled by a man called James Patterson at the National Film Archive. I suppose the films are still available but I guess that the stock shot library won't be so readily available as it's being done through them, the British Film Institute and archive aren't really geared for running a business of that sort.

SIDE 6, TAPE 3

Stephen Peet: The kind of titles, taking at random, around the middle of the sixties, titles like this, *Down to Sussex*, you were editor, *Fifth Report on Modernisation, Ships to the Islands, Good Way to Travel*, oh on that you were producer, then *Dock Briefing, Seventh Rail Report: Speed the Payload.* It's such an extraordinary mixture of titles, did you find some things were rather a chore and some things you really got involved in because they were exciting.

John Legard: No they were all very interesting actually, the ones you've just mentioned because although they had these funny titles like *New Tradition and Top Levels of Transport*, were in fact the subtitles for the *Rail Report* series of which we made 13 altogether. And the *Seventh Rail Report* for example, number 30 on that list and in brackets *Speed the Payload,* that was John Taylor, I would say probably the last one, I don't know how many he did altogether. He certainly did several of the early *Rail Reports* and they always took the same form. They had about 3 or 4 different subjects within the 15 or 20 minutes and they were shot on 35 mm and they were shown widely throughout the railway circuit, the 16mm distribution, the mobile projections and sometimes they were shown in the cinemas if they were of sufficient interest to the distributors. And *The Eight Rail Report (New Tradition),* that was actually *The Ninth Rail Report* and they were all to do with the stage at which the railways were at at that particular time and the new developments and the new technology as it was coming in, signalling, rolling stock, freight, the docks came into it too. And they were sort of popular reporting.

Stephen Peet: It's interesting to see John Taylor back at work as a director. He was one of the few people who went on up the ladder quite fast, became a producer and then went back to his true love which was making films.

John Legard: I would think the Crown Film Unit was the top of his career as a producer because he ran that huge organisation, it was a big studio

Stephen Peet: And Realist at Beaconsfield

John Legard: And Realist, that was smaller, he was the key person at Realist, with Basil, Basil started it but John kept it going and I suppose John went back to Realist after he left the Crown Film Unit and then he went more and more freelance because he was certainly as I was saying earlier, all the while he was with us over the years at British Transport Films, he came in as a freelance from time to time and it was always such a pleasure to see him, we'll get John in on this one, great. And then after that he did more and more of the natural history films, he did a lot of natural history films with Paddy Carey, a whole string of them

Stephen Peet: And then he went back to shooting as well.

John Legard: Yes, then he went back to shooting. He did turn full circle in that sense.

Stephen Peet: But there is an enormous range of things made by the Transport unit, has it been tapped by television people, the history of transport in Britain. Because they could make dozens of films out of the material.

John Legard: I would imagine they have, but you would have to talk to Barry Coward about that because he has been handling all that in recent years, and he has always said to me that there is a big demand for material, not necessarily a particular series of programmes but from different sources, to meet different requirements from all over. But it is a very rich source and hundreds of films from 1949 to, well the unit was finally wound up in 1982, as a complete unit. They did keep going a little bit, they had a film department, but they no longer made films on an internal basis, they brought in people on an ad hoc basis from time to time for another three or four years I suppose. But it is a remarkable 30 years or more story, and alas it came to an end. I suppose it found its natural wind up point, nothing goes on forever.

Alan Lawson: Was it political

John Legard: Politics. It was also, the railways were running down a bit and they were under pressure, not necessarily, well that was political too indirectly, the trouble with the railways is they were never sufficiently subsidised. You had this wonderfully nationalised railway system which seemed to be the ultimate, solve all our problems, but it was never properly subsidised compared with railways in other countries in Europe.

Alan Lawson: Compared with roads.

John Legard: I was thinking of railways in other countries. Germany and Italy and France, they always had a higher subsidy, a higher percentage of the railway ticket was covered by subsidy and British Rail, it was very low, about 40% or something like that, the subsidy. But our department was a very precious thing because not only were, the people in production mainly, but not only were they filmmakers and some of them very experienced filmmakers, but they were also railwaymen, they understood the railways. And they understood and they talked the language, so when the films were made they knew what they were about. And since its all been fragmented, people come in from time to time to make films and they have to start from scratch all the time because they don't know the procedure. Well it's the same with the Coal Board isn't it, and Shell of course was slightly different, but they were wonderful in their own way, but I think particularly British Rail because it had such a vast area of subject matter. Now of course, it would have finished by now anyway, because since in two weeks time British Rail comes to an end so I'm told. I'm just trying to think of some of the other films here. You see we continued making travel films, but of course as time went on and as the technology improved really we were able to go over more and more over to 16mm and I didn't mind doing that because we had a wonderful thing called the magna sync which is a sort of 16mm Steenbeck, made in Hollywood, and we edited on that, a flat bed, and also the business of CRI printing was marvellous

Stephen Peet: Could you explain that

John Legard: Colour reversal internegative, and so you shot on 16mm neg, and you did your cutting on a print from that and then you made another neg from the orginal neg. You didn't have to go through that second stage of the fine grain or the equivalent of, and so that was a vast improvement.

The only trouble with 16mm is it's always very fragile and it could very easily get irredeemiably blemished, and not much good therefore I never thought for stockshot library, because it is so brittle, not brittle but so sensitive, whereas 35mm negatives, even though they were chucked around, somehow they seemed to last, you could always resussitate them. And you've only got to look at some of these old movies on television that were shot in the 1930s and they're absolutely immaculate, they could have been shot yesterday, whereas the 16mm films don't last.

Stephen Peet: I suppose partly it is that a thumbnail scratch on 35 is a tiny proportion, on 16 it's four times as big, unless I've got my mathematics wrong, the same tiny scratch.

John Legard: Well we certainly, all the later films we made were entirely 16mm except for one curious film, we made a film called *Overture 125*. Now there was a chap called David Gow who was commissioned by British Rail Western Region to compose a piece of music to celebrate the introduction of the Intercity 125 service to Bristol. And it was performed, the first performance of Overture 125 at the Colsten Hall Bristol on the same day, the evening of the first running of that 125 train. And somebody thought up the idea, why don't we make a film about this so you could match the music to appropriate pictures. And so that's what we did. We got some very fine stuff. There was some very fine helicopter shooting of the 125 travelling and we had various characters, David Lockner shot a sequence or two on the track side and in the signal boxes down the line, and David Gow came along with his music and copied by, it turned out it was copied by his girl friend, the copying was done by his girlfriend, she wasn't very accurate and we had this music session down at Denham, it was quite funny actually, because we had the London Symphony Orchestra and for once the music was being performed, David Gow he was professor of music at Swindon Polytechnic or something like that so he wasn't a professional and hadn't had experience of working in the cinema and we had a bit of a nightmare session because all the copying was inaccurate and we wasted quite a lot of time before we finally got down to recording the music in it's entirely. It didn't matter and they learnt and they were delighted. The film, it was the last 35 mm film we made, in 1976.

Stephen Peet: In 1976, and you were director too.

John Legard: David Lockner was director

Stephen Peet: It says here you were director.

John Legard: I think I had been credited with director of that one, I don't know why. But Jimmy Ritchie was sort of overall supervising it and I was, it was one of those films where we had a Grierson type credit again, just a number of names.

And there was no commentary at all, the first sequences were the train being manufactured in the workshop in Birmingham or wherever it was. The second sequence was the train being tested out with various equipment, mock up coach. Then finally the train going into service, and it ran 7 minutes and it got a circuit release in 1977.

Stephen Peet: Rather like *Snow*, that was music and effects only.

John Legard: Yes. That was the very cold winter of 1962-3 and it was bitterly cold. The snow went on till about March. And we kept on saying we ought to make a film about this, wonderful. And Edgar, unfair to Edgar again, well Edgar would say I don't know, I think it will be thawing any minute. Eventually we did get going and Su, Suschitsky and Geoffrey Jones, Ivanich went out and they got this marvellous stuff. It was just in time, it was beginning to thaw. Perhaps it was a good thing it was beginning to thaw because perhaps they'd have got stuck in a snow drift. And of course Geoffrey worked on his own really. I don't know where he cut it because he had a chap called Roy **Aiten** who helped him with the editing

John Legard: Do you like his work. Well he used to call it, he'd say I hope you realise I'm going to use my vibrato technique on this editing, and he always did use a vibrato technique, because he made another film for us called *Rail* which was about the changeover from steam to diesel locomotion. Again it was an impressionistic film, all done with it this Eisenstein cutting as you call it, I think *Snow* was the best one that was a very excellent soundtrack, a pounding rhythm.

Stephen Peet: That's the one that's remembered.

John Legard: Yes. Edgar had a very high opinion of Geoffrey Jones and a quite rightly too. But Edgar was a great person to work for. I feel very lucky having been with him for so long. For we used to get very worked up about him from time to time but that wasn't because we didn't like him but because we wanted to get their films finished and Edgar, was involved in so many things other than the running British Transport Films. He was on delegations to Russia and committees on this and that and he would say right well, that's a very good, he would see a rough cut, and he would say we another look at that and the next day you would go in and say we must make a booking in a couple of weeks time when we've made our alterations and his secretary would say well he's off to Russia you know on Thursday and we won't be seeing him again for another three weeks or so. So every think stopped. But generally speaking you had other things to get on with because you had several films going at the same time. I suppose looking back on it you could say way were very lucky if, well lucky working with Edgar but it was a rather different from the average unit because we weren't pressurised all the time, we weren't looking over our shoulders, we were able to get the films completed to our own satisfaction before anybody was bothering us. On the other hand, as I was saying you had

the instructional films which had to be done quickly and Dr Beaching suddenly appeared on the scene and said well now, we're going to institute these improvements, alterations or cutbacks and he'd want a film made sort of literally in three days time, so all hands to the pump and we'd be working all the hours available to get films finished.

Stephen Peet: You were able to switch to working at speed obviously.

John Legard: I'm quite happy working at speed. I generally tried to avoid those films if I could

Alan Lawson: Leads to making slips, working at speed

John Legard: Leads to making slips yes but very often with those sort of films, if they're topical, it doesn't, provided you keep in sync and the diagrams are all right, yes that's true. I suppose we were lucky to be working on 35 mm all the time in those days because you could see what you were doing. We didn't do, you say we didn't have these awful problems of working in features, all that business of post synching, that was one of the jobs I hated working on it, post synching in the early days before you had **budge** in loops and so on. The I used to get very troubled by that in Crown Film Unit because we did have quite a lot of sync stuff there, you know, sync shot out on a location with all sorts of background and then we had to the re-voice it in the theatre with loops. And you just had to a whole load of optical tracks. I just went cross-eyed after the time trying to post sync. There was a chap named, who wants a our supervising editor for a time at Crown Film Unit called Peter **Besonsanay** and he was a very good editor and he enjoyed the problems of post sync and if I'd got into trouble I used to take it along to Peter and say can you tackle this. And he was our supervising editor for about a year or so. He worked with Freddie Wilson and Ralph May and people when they, there was organisation called Independent Frame at Pinewood, this sort of simplified sets and all that. Do you remember anything about Independent Frame? They did about four or five films. There was one called *Floodtide*, there was one called *Poets Pub* and as they were directed by Freddie Wilson

Alan Lawson: Donald Wilson

John Legard: Donald Wilson, it was Rank

Alan Lawson: Yes it was the Rank Organisation, it was the scriptwriters dream.

John Legard: They were working on it and it sort of folded rather suddenly, Independent Frame didn't. And two or three of those key people came and joined us at Crown, it must have been 1950, and one of them was Peter Besonsanay, because he was their editor and Freddie Wilson joined us he was another editor, and he directed some of them, didn't he for. And it Donald Wilson, no Donald Wilson went to Group Three and Ralph May the person who had originally been MOI he came and joined us as general manager. And as I say, Peter was a great asset to me because I learnt a lot. I was very lucky with the editors

with whom I worked in the early days. There was a very nice man called Sid Stone and he taught me an awful lot about handling film.

Alan Lawson: He came from features.

John Legard: Very much so. You see it that they did have these feature editors, they used to come in for a week or two on films to tidy up sometimes and Sid was working with RKO I think basically at the time. And he joined us because he edited *The True Story Of Lili Marlene*, because at that time Stewart McAllister had gone down with rheumatic fever, so Sid came in and edited that. And then I got to know him a bit later on. And also another one called, another man caught Alan Osweston, he worked with us. And they were able to give you an awful lot of information and advice

Alan Lawson: Osweston wrote an awful lot for Sight And Sound.

John Legard: Yes he was known as the Silver Fox, because he was rather sleek and I think he was an Australian, yes that was his nickname. And Sid Stone, he was a person who didn't like to spend too much time on editing, he liked to work very, very fast and he had two assistants, I can't remember their names now, anyway for they were all very keen poker players, they would get through the editing and then settle down and have a game of cards and then they would go off to the pub. And they always got the job done and I think he must have been one of the fastest editors but he taught me to not be frightened of film, you see, you have to take it by the scruff of the neck and shake it and that sort of thing. And he showed me how to assemble a sequence, not a scripted sequence, a whole lot of disparate shots, to show his way of doing it and it always seemed to be so right to. I suppose he had been in the business before a long time, the Thirties, but he was mainly a features man.

Stephen Peet: So you learnt a lot from him

John Legard I learned a lot from him

Stephen Peet: What about yourself working with assistants, have any of your assistants gone to it bigger and better things, you feel you're their mentor. Who are they

John Legard: I don't know, let me think now. Well there was a chap called Alan Marshall who was my assistant for a time on some of these *Rail Reports* that we were talking about earlier and he went on to become the producer with Alan Parker, you see he carried on with editing for a bit and then he decided he really wanted to be a big producer and he produced *Bugsy Malone* and he produced *Fame* was it, the one about the arts college in New York and several films and he lives in Hollywood now. And he certainly made a go of it, not necessarily in editing but in film-making in general. I can't think, immediately comes to mind, I'm sure that some of them have. There are quite a few people who have gone on to television. There is a chap called Justin **Amneston** and he was my assistant, I have seen his name on credits and drama programmes on television, drama films

Stephen Peet: have you done any teaching

John Legard: I got involved slightly with the International London Film School at one time, in the days when Ralph Bond was in charge, it wasn't Ralph Bond who got me into it,

Stephen Peet: Ralph Bond was in charge of documentary.

John Legard: He was course director, he was the documentary chief. I remember going down one year and talking about editing in general terms once or twice. And then we did one or two courses at a summer schools down in Somerset called for Dillington House and I went two or three years running to that. There was a group of us from British Transport Films went down. There was John Shearman and there was Paul Lesaux and there was me and maybe one other and we spent a very intensive week with a number of people who had paid their fee and wanted to know learn film-making in a week.

So the first day we scripted and the second day we went out shooting, the second and third day. And then all the rushes went off to Kodak and then we got them back about the end of the fourth day and the last part of the course was feverishly editing and then presenting the finished films to all the people who were doing different courses at Dillington House including the theatre course people. We presented our finished films and I suppose we divided ourselves up into what, perhaps there were 25 on the course and we would divide ourselves up into five different teams.

God I was absolutely knackered after that, it was really hard work and people wanted to stay up all night talking about films, and that was only daytime when we were making the films, in the evening we were showing films for, have you done this, I'm sure you have. Anyway looking at all these films in the evenings, classic films and up in the morning early, out on location. I think I did that two-year to running, I think John Shearman was very good at that, he is a great teacher, he loves all that. I wasn't terribly good at it, I enjoyed it, it was an interesting experience but John was a natural.

Stephen Peet: Another just a general question, at music sessions as editor what did you see your role as, generally listening and judging whether a piece of music had been beautifully played but didn't really look as if it fitted the picture and decid that you were going to go with the music as had been recorded and were going to adjust the picture afterwards

John Legard: As an editor just that, I wasn't really too concerned about the performance obviously, my one idea was to make sure that everything was fitting and that bit of sound there is going to match that, is it or is it not. If I was a producer I suppose I would have been looking after it from an entirely different point of view, whether the music was any good or whether I liked it. I think if it you're editing you're so closely concerned about the actual fitting that you don't necessarily notice if the music is ideal for the film, that you can only judge when you've seen it altogether, you either like it or you don't like it. Sometimes if you don't like it, it doesn't mean that it's wrong for the film, it is very often

marvelous for the film. And sometimes if you like it very much, all these lovely tunes, well they can ruin a film, can't they, because they become too dominant. It's a very vexed question this business of music, and you always have people outside the business saying if only there wasn't all this music, it ruins it. But I think that applies more to television than it does to the cinema, it's a question of the level of it.

Alan Lawson: It is the level. I hate going into the cinema for a symphony concert, I didn't go for that reason

John Legard: Did you see *The English Patient.*

Alan Lawson: No

John Legard: It had a very dominant music track, I thought it was very good but I was thinking while I was watching this would look ghastly on television, it would be much too much, or it would sound too much on television and because the picture is that much smaller, you don't need to have so much emphasis, it's gilding the lily, isn't it. Whereas it's not sort of gilding the lily so much

Alan Lawson: It becomes super emotive.

John Legard: Yes, and totally counter productive, it's a different medium isn't it, really, I'm afraid. We could go on forever on this

Stephen Peet: Here we are on the 30th April continuing where we left after

John Legard: Just to pick up on a few bits we were discussing on the previous session, where I couldn't remember names or titles or hadn't completed a subject. Now we were talking about John Krish and I was saying he worked on this film about the shoe factory doing a journey to London, a day's outing in about 1950, and I couldn't remember the title, the film was called *This Year London* and it was commentated and written by Colin Wilson, and John Krish directed. It was a great success and went in the cinemas, 35 mm black and white, 1950.

And we started talking about a film that Rod Baxter directed a few years after *This Year London*, it was called *All This Mighty Heart* and it was about a day in the life of London as seen through the eyes of people working for London Transport, so we covered all aspects of buses and tubes and underground trains. And there was a mass of material shot over several weeks in the summer of about 1960 I should think, 60, 62 and Rod when he shot it all decided, and Edgar too, decided to get hold of John Betjeman for him to have a look at it. Unfortunately it hadn't been cut very tightly and it was very, very long. I remember John Betjeman coming into the theatre that morning, about nine o'clock and we set off running the stuff and after about half an hour we had got to from the six o'clock in the morning to nine o'clock. And I remember John Betjeman whispering in my ear good God does it go on for all day like this, this length of time.

Anyway we eventually got through, by lunchtime I think we'd probably seen all the material which was very interesting stuff as you would expect with Trevor Rowe and Rod Baxter directing, anyway John Betjeman decided he couldn't in fact help at us that particular stage. He said when you've got it down to a reasonable length I'll come along again and have another look at it. But between that time and when we reached the final cut we decided that perhaps what we should do is to leave it as and impressionist film and don't have any commentary at all, except perhaps a little bit at the beginning and a little bit at the end. And so we treated it as an impressionist movie starting the first thing in the morning and plenty of sound effects, natural sound, they did shoot quite a lot of natural sound on that film and there were sequences of people going to work in the morning, then there were was the lull in the mid-morning with people going shopping, the families going shopping, it was all shot at Stevenage when the new town was really new.

And then we went on to the afternoon and we took a Saturday afternoon and we had all the sporting activities with rowing and cricket and tennis and football, a sort of amalgam of all the sport's that were in London every Saturday, and how the crowds got there and back home again via London Transport. And we ended up in the evening with people going to the theatre , and all the while on the soundtrack we were playing the BBC, the familiar programmes during the day, like *Music While You Work.* Then getting on to the middle of the day the well-known announcers, Jack DeManio in the morning and John Arlott and Raymond Baxter, and we brought them all in and they did special pieces for us to fit in to the appropriate sequence. And we also used the tract from *That Is The Week That Was*, that dates it. It was about 1960, 1962.

And then starting off early in the morning we used a poem from Wordsworth, On London Bridge, I'll have to check up on that, stupidly I've forgotten but a well-known poem by Thomas Hood which was appropriate to the London scene, 300 hundred years earlier, 200 years earlier. And the film was about 25 minutes in length and it went out againon the Odeon circuit. So that's that one.

Stephen was asking me about people with whom I worked and who were my assistants and did they do well in future years and I mentioned Alan Marshall who had been working with Alan Parker and David Putnam before he joined as British Transport Films Department when they and were making commercials. And after he had been with us for a year or two he went back with them but this time they were making features, so Alan Marshall became the big-time producer, eventually working in Hollywood. Now that was him.

Now the other person who did very well, I like to think I might have helped him a bit was one Harry Hastings, who worked as my assistants in the late 1950s and then he went to the BBC where in fact if he had worked briefly beforehand and he went back to BBC documentary department and was Richard Cawston's editor for a number of years. And he was the editor of that brilliant documentary that Cawston made called This Is The BBC, it was an hour at documentary, perhaps slightly more. And then he went on editing for course to for some years and then it became a producer in his own right and did several series. He did a series called *The Commanders*, wartime leaders, and he did two

or three series on the history of aviation, Imperial Airways, BOAC, BA and he retired a few years ago, now he lives down in Cirencester. So he had a good career.

Now I think possibly we can go back to the early days. Having listened to the previous session I thought a possibly in one or two of places, not deliberately, I might have given the impression that some of our work was slightly easy going and indeed at moments frivolous. Well of course from making can be frivolous but taking it all round it was a very intense a way of life and a very demanding and although I may have put emphasis on the lighter moments that it is because one remembers them so clearly. But just going back to the Crown Film Unit for a moment, I was looking at the list of productions the Crown Film Unit were involved in, for 12 years they went from 1940 to 1952, and before that the Crown Film Unit was the GPO Film Unit and really the Crown Film Unit was the GPO Film Unit under a different war time situation, so come the war they put on a different guise and of course they were in a much stronger situation then because they became part of the Ministry of Information and therefore the resources were much greater and that was why the Crown Film Unit were able to make these distinguished and good propaganda films, a number of which are still shown on television from time to time.

But over the 12 years of their existence, from 1940 in 1952 they made 240, I work out from this list, approximately 240 pictures, sort of 20 films a year, well what it is a film, some were long, some were short, but that is a pretty good output. And there was quite a big staff there, there were several directors, several cameramen, several editors, the sound department was under the leadership of Ken Cameron and there was an art department run by Teddy Carrick and Scott MacGregor and Peggy **Gig** and their assistants. And looking back, it I think the Crown Film Unit was a remarkable story and it was sad in a way that it ended up rather downbeat. Because come the end of the war, the Ministry of Information, I am repeating a little bit what we talked about before but I am trying to widen it. Come the end of the war when the Ministry ceased and it became just a government department, the Central Office of Information, the budgets were so much reduced because the money was no longer there, it was no longer available because of the war, this film needs to be made getting shot.

And from then on, from 1945, 1946 onwards there was always this problem of getting it films budgeted and passed and because the Central Office of Information was a cumbersome and set-up anyway a lot of the overheads were included, the Central Office of Information overheads were included in our own budgets, so it not only did we have our own costing, but then there was always this surcharge put on top of every film which made it very, very difficult.

And as time went on there were questions being asked and of course eventually it came to an end, but possibly even the Conservative Party hadn't got in 1951, the Crown Film Unit I think might have survived, it was a political move to close them down, bbyut Conservative government, and there was a chap named Boyd Carpenter, I remember, who was at the Financial Secretary at the Treasury and it was he who actually brought up the axe down on that famous day in 1952, when two or three people from the Crown Film

Unit went along to a House of Commons and there were about four people in the howls and he was saying the Crown Film Unit is coming to an end.

But anyway if they had survived which they would have done if it had been a continuation of the Labour government, I think they would probably have continued to operate on a much smaller basis, they would probably have had to leave Beaconsfield Studios because Beaconsfield was a bit off a millstone. There was a big production staff there, not only the production crew but also the construction staff and it was the economically unviable. So I think it would probably have come back to London or perhaps have been like GPO Film Unit before the war working not necessarily down at Blackheath where the Film Unit was housed but perhaps somewhere in xxxxx they might have had a small unit there and they might have kept going for many years. However that is purely surmise. Perhaps they had served their purpose and produced all these films.

But I was very lucky to have been working there, whilst I was not on the permanent staff or anything, we were all temporary staff, but we felt we had some continuity, and we weren't constantly looking over our shoulders and worrying about whether this was all going was all suddenly going to come to an end. We didn't make a lot of money out of it, we were all working on a minimum rate so as far as a I remember, ACTT minimum rates but if you have the continuity it doesn't matter so much because you can plan ahead according, you know where you Juan.

We all had aspirations, we all wanted to get into features, particularly the young ones, and indeed some of the directors very soon after the war, or even sometimes before the end of the wall had departed some of the original GPO directors. There was Pat Jackson's who had achieved great acclaim and success with the making of *Western Approaches* so he was immediately in demand and he was under contract to Alexander Korda but unfortunately nothing came of that but he went to Hollywood and alas his early promise was not quite fulfilled, although he made several very good films over the years. Anyway he left to Crown pretty early on and he was in features. Jack Lee was another one, he had made a number of films for Crown of great quality and he went into features and he was there until the end of peace, now he went to Australia in the end and he became the chairman or managing director of the South Australia Film Corporation – he had a sort of resurgence in his career late on in his life. He's still alive incidentally old Jack and he lives down in Sydney, I think it is.

Did I talk about going over to Beaconsfield Studios

Alan Lawson: Not much

John Legard We left Pinewood at the end of 1946 and we went to Beaconsfield and from then on although we liked Beaconsfield very much indeed, it was a pleasant little studio, once they'd had it rebuilt and all the departments were working properly -- it took about nine months to a year to get it absolutely running properly. Fom 1947, 48, 49, work continued fairly steadily and the budgets were modest, there were one or two distinguished films I think during that time. There was a film that Phil Leacock made

called *Life In Her Hands* which was about the nursing service and that did very well. And then there was *Out Of True* which was the one about sanatoriums and care for the mentally disturbed that was also directed by Phil Leacock', and Terry Bishop was with us for quite a time. He made a film called *Daybreak In Udi* that was all shot in Nigeria, it was about the building of a maternity home in deepest Nigeria.

John Legard Side 7

John Legard: Terry Bishop who worked on *Daybreak In Udi* and he did several other films for us and I think he left us well before the unit finally came to an end in 1952. Yes because he was working on feature films at Group Three.

I didn't edit any of the major films, I was very, very junior in those days, obviously, because I only started at Crown in 1943 in the library and I was in the cutting rooms by the end of 1944 and I was an assistant until 1946. This first film that I did mention before which was called *Breeding For Milk* and the next film I made was called *Pigs On Every Farm* which we shot rather surprisingly it was shot on the university experimental farm part of Edinburgh at university, just outside the Edinburgh, a place called Ballernow, and I remember we had this unit, Richard Warren directing I think and there was a cameraman probably Teddy Catford and we'd spent all the day for in this pig farm, and we were staying in a rather smart hotel in Edinburgh, Charlotte Square, and I remember always coming back into the hotel, these rather tidy looking people and rather comfortable lounges just and here we coming in stinking to high heaven.

You may ask what was the editor doing there. Well it's a very good question. I can't remember why, I think they may have been short of an assistant director for a few days so I was asked to join them. But the whole film wasn't shot in Edinburgh, just that rather important sequence about farrowing or something like that.

Alan Lawson: That's a common practice actually, even in features, for the editor to go on location, not permanently but to go on location on special things.

John Legard: Possibly because, for the benefit of the editor or because it's convenient crew wise

Alan Lawson: No, benefit of the editor.

John Legard: Well certainly that did apply with me on another film we made which I have talked about called *Ocean Terminal* and I remember I was sent down to Southampton mainly to see the procedure of towing out the Queen Elizabeth with a view to getting the cutting order right, because it's quite a complicated process with all these tugs and the movements of the ship swinging out and down Southampton Water. And Jack Holmes said you must come down because it will be of great help for you to watch this and see exactly the procedure and it will help you with the editing, and indeed it did. And also psychologically it was very good because I had only just joined the unit and I was able to meet the crew for the first time. That was always very good at British Transport Films, Edgar was very enlightened. He always encouraged people to move around if they possibly could. But we're still talking about Crown Film Unit in fact, we're about 1948 - 1949 and there was *The Steps The Ballet* which I've mentioned. And then I was involved in editing the road safety films which were very popular at that time.

If you remember the accident figure in road safety in those days was absolutely appalling. Obviously it was that bad during the war because of the blackout and so on but of course the traffic was building up quite a lot by the late 1940s, more cars were coming back onto the road and the roads hadn't really had much improvement done to them during the war so that there was a lot of traffic congestion and people in a hurry, and compared to the today when you have 20 million cars on the road, whatever it is, and there were probably in those days for or 5 million, the accident figure was much more than today. Today comparatively speaking is very good, not that it is a ever very good. Anyway ROSPA, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, asked us to make various films, the one I made was called *Mr Jones Takes The Air* which were once about Mr Jones who always used to go to the pub after work before taking his car home. It was obviously a fairly light-hearted approach. Geoffrey Sumner played Mr Jones, a rather amusing comic actor of those days, and not only a comic actor, he was also a film producer in his own right and a writer, and it was directed by somebody called Martin Wilson who had been out in the Middle East I think during the war

Alan Lawson: As a cameraman.

John Legard: Yes he was. Unfortunately that film, when they saw it, ROSPA, were rather horrified because it was considered a little bit too frivolous, a bit too humorous. And although it they did show it, we had to tone it down quite a bit.

And there was the film about the Antarctic which I've talked about before, and there was Margaret Thomson's film about foster parents, and there was *Caribbean* about the West Indies. I think I've talked about all those. But these were just my films and there were several other editors, production units continuing, working very hard all that time and there was no question of,at that stage, of things being whittled down .

Alan Lawson : One question. Did you have a choice of what film you went on to or were you allocated?

John Legard: No, there was a supervising editor always, Terry Trench was the supervising editor when we were at Beaconsfield. When we were at Pinewood, the supervising editor for a time was Sid Stone, and later on Peter Besonsanay came in and he was the supervising editor. So the allocation was not up to the individuals. But I suppose if there was something interesting we might have said to Peter or Terry any chance of doing it this one because this is a subject after my own heart and I might be able to bring something useful to it. But no I don't think so. There were no problems, people didn't grumble. They accepted what was offered and indeed we were all the while training people, we were getting new people in.

We had a trainee department which was, well the trainees in the cutting room obviously, those were the days worked day, when the trainee system started to and it was obligatory, it was an ACT thing wasn't it, and if there was nobody available on the books who was considered suitable then you were entitled to bring in a trainee. And they came in fairly

regularly and several of the assistants left anyway to go on to features, because perhaps they had been there earlier, in features, and come in for a short time and you know there was quite a turn over over the years. I always said that working at Crown Film Unit because people came and went, you got to know so many people from so many areas of the film industry, you obviously had the regular ones who stayed there like myself over 8 years but you had people through came in on individual films as directors, writers, cameramen and sometimes assistant editors and assistant cameraman and by the time I had finished my eight years at Crown Film Unit I felt I really had got to know that the industry pretty well. And when we went out on our dubbing sessions during 1947 when Ken Cameron's new recording theatre hadn't been completed we were able to go to different studios. We dubbed at Shepperton, we dubbed at Pinewood and Elstree and at Riverside Studios, we went to Riverside once or twice where a chap named to George Burgess, he was a terror to work with, very frightening, a very frightening man. But very good of course

Alan Lawson: Did it you work at the RCA place at Hammersmith.

John Legard Yes we did, York Scarlet, that's right now he had been with the GPO film Unit in the very early days, if you see a typical Grierson type of credit it just said sound Scarlet and he ran RCA Hammersmith, that was a large hall, was it used full time for dubbing, that theatre

Alan Lawson: No, it was used a lot, the BBC I know used it, and other people used it.

John Legard: There was a lot going there, I remember there were rehearsal rooms there for the Royal Ballet and so one. I remember one day going along and opening a door and finding myself confronted by all these beautiful creatures at the bar. But it was a funny old place, Hammersmith, it was rather ramshackle in a way the actual hall or cinema, it wasn't a cinema, it was a great big room, I seem to remember. He was a very good dubbing mixer, York Scarlet very sensitive. And this was a little later on because on the whole Crown Film Unit the end of 1947 - 1948 we got our own dubbing theatre going properly, Ken Cameron, it was a lovely little theatre.

Alan Lawson: That was the Anvill Theatre.

John Legard: No it became Anvill eventually, because it was Crown Film Unit in those days and that is how it started and he was able to continue after Crown Film Unit closed down, his department set themselves up in business on there own and they had the opportunity of the acquiring it, the lease from I suppose Ministry of Works was the actual managing organisation, that's right it was, but it was owned by a King's College, Cambridge, the ground, Beaconsfield Studios, yes property owned by King's College Cambridge. So Ken Cameron was able to set himself up very rapidly after Crown Film Unit closed down in 1952, and he relied on many of his documentary chums over the years to keep him in business like Edgar and British Transport Films, and The Coal Board Film Unit, and other documentary units in and around and about town.

And Ken also in fact made quite a number of films himself. He and Muir Mathieson got together and made a whole series of films called *We Make Music* which were sponsored by I suppose Ministry of Education, or something like that. And at one or two of the pilot ones they actually made privately, they made a little felt called *Beethoven Sonata* and it was Dennis Brain and Denis Matthews playing the Beethoven Horn Sonata, Sonata for horn and piano, and that was something be made absolutely as a speculative venture. But having completed it, they were then able to show it as an example of their capacities and capabilities and arising from that they made 24 films called *We Make Music* for presumably the Ministry of Education, teaching films about the different instruments of the orchestra. That is not Crown Film Unit of course, but that's the spin-off from Crown Film Unit.

And the other unit that was set up from the ashes, the Phoenix rising from the ashes of Crown Film Unit was Bob Angel, and he formed a a little company called Film Partnership and he had Godfrey Jennison and he had perhaps Arthur Worcester for a little bit, I'm not sure about that, and he had Michael Johns who was actually not at Crown but an old friend and then there was Dick Marden , he was there and there were four or five of them, a small unit and they set up, not at Beaconsfield, they had their own premises down near Great Portland Street I seem to remember for some years and they made sponsored films. And they were very lucky, they got Richard Dimbleby to become a their chairman, there was a some link with Richard Dimbleby and in fact they made a series of travel films with Richard Dimbleby's wife and the children, David and Jonathan traveling around, but that was another useful spin-off.

But of course it was a sad time for those who were at the very end of Crown. I had happily from a my personal point of view left the Crown Film Unit and I was already working with British Transport Films, I left about nine months, slightly more than nine months, I left about 10 months before the Crown Unit closed down. So they were wound up . And it was the end of an era as far as sort of like Grierson's original set-up, which was the Empire Marketing Board in 1931, he was set-up, he set up a unit to make films for the Empire Marketing Board in 1931, 1932, and then that became eventually the GPO Film Unit by which time there were other organisations making documentaries, these were very much social documentaries, these were Gas Council films, Edgar Anstey made *Housing Problems* for the Gas Council and there was the Shell Film Unit which started up roughly the same time as the GPO Film Unit I suppose, because Edgar Anstey was put in charge of that, by Grierson and so this was in fact the beginning of the British documentary movement. And I suppose it reached its peak as far as the scale of production of during the war with the Crown Film Unit because of this particular situation of the Ministry being in charge and therefore, but not only were the Crown Film Unit making films, so were the many other companies making films for the Ministry, there was Basics Films and there what Strand and there was Film Producer's Guild of course making, Green Park Film Unit, Verity Films, they were all making documentaries connected with the war effort, not all propaganda, a lot of them were very much for down to earth how to put a out the incendiary bombs and all that sort of thing and how to grow

potatoes. They were sort of unrecognised and forgotten, unfortunately now, but it is useful to be able to talk about it a bit because the films I imagine are there still in existence with either the National Film Archive or Central Office of Information and of course a lot of them with the Imperial War Museum.

So that's that. Now I did give the impression that I worked hard I think at the Crown Film Unit and indeed I told you about working with John Taylor, he was quite a demanding producer and we worked very quickly, it was always the sort of tight scheduling

Alan Lawson: no bodies talked much about John really.

John Legard: No no, he was very different from what he was in later life, as I told you when I worked with him at Transport Films even a few years later he had become much more relaxed but then you see he was in charge of this very bigUnit at Crown, there was this enormous staff there, there was I don't know was it 150 or something like that I should think. I guess it must have been quite a nightmare for him in a way. He was at Realist for so many years, he was part of Realist and he was persuaded I suppose by Basil, I think probably Basil and Edgar and a different people said you ought to have a go at this, he was a bit of the younger than the rest of them. And he was absolutely the right person to move in at Beaconsfield because things were very restricted because a studio being not readily and being the budgets working out on, we were budgeting films properly by then and it had to be worked out on a very businesslike basis. He had quite a good associate with him, a chap named Gordon Smith

Alan Lawson: Yes, he finished up at the Beeb.

John Legard: A slightly sort of lean tallish, slightly neurotic character

Alan Lawson: Very.

John Legard: He was John's sidekick, he was like the production supervisor I supposed. In fact they shared an office, or they were in neighbouring offices. I remember if you were up for John, generally Gordon would be there too. not necessarily up before,, even if you were discussing on a pleasurable basis some new production, Gordon was very much involved. I liked Gordon, I thought he was quite a a good man really. He was rather amusing because he always seemed to be apparently in a state of panic all the time because you would go into his office and occasionally he would say to you now don't worry, everything is going to be all right, even before you'd said anything.

Anyway John was a young man, I suppose he was quite young to be in charge of such a set up, he was about 32 I should think, 32 or 33 and he didn't stay there all that long because unfortunately he got across, he and his brother in law disagreed because when Grierson came back from Canada, Grierson had been running the day the National Film Board of Canada for many years, right from the beginning of the war and then he came back to England and he was put in charge of the films at the Central Office of Information

and he was in fact the producer, that was right, he wanted John to do different things , I think that's right and Johns said not on your Nelly. So he left and Grierson was always up at the Central Office Of Information and he put in charge at Crown his other brother-in-law, his other brother-in-law was Donald Taylor. Because Donald Taylor married Grierson's sister and Grierson married John Taylor's sister, it's always a rather confusing. They were no relation and they were totally different characters, temperamentally John was easy going, he was more of a country type really and Donald Taylor was urbane and smooth and rather intellectual and rather remote. I quite liked him, I got on very well with Donald. In fact he was helpful in getting me to be completed this West Indies film that I was talking about earlier that Grierson was so pleased with, Donald was actually the producer in charge at that time although Grierson was the executive.

Anyway what else can I say about John. It was only about a period of two years but he was there and of course I didn't see him all that that but when I did see him I saw him a lot because he would come into the cutting room to help out overnight or something like that or we would be working closely on some feverish bit of scheduling to get a film out the following week and of course we used to adjourn to the pub. He was a great raconteur, he was a lovely story teller and he had so many stories to tell about his days with Flaherty and all that and of course we've recorded him and he was a wonderful wasn't he. He was one of our best interviews. And where were they living then , John and Barbara, I think they lived down near Windsor, Raysbury, that's right, and they had a house down at Raysbury.

And we had some rather good parties at Crown Film Unit. I remember there was an occasion when we completed a film with Burgess Meredith called *The Yank Comes Back*, this was at Beaconsfield. And Burgess Meredith had previously made a film called *Welcome To Britain* which was directed by Anthony Asquith and *Welcome to Britain* was a film made for the American troops coming over to England, explaining how life went on, and it was very clever and amusing film. You probably saw it. And this was sequel, the one we made in 1948 called *The Yank Comes Back* and Burgess again having a look at England, a rather sardonic look at England since the war had finished and the age of austerity and all that, very well observed. I think it did quite well, but I don't think it was shown, it was for a different purpose in a way, it was more of a theatrical film . Ideally they should have shown the two in harness. I don't think they did it. But *Welcome To Britain* and was made not by Crown Film Unit, that was made by Strand I think. Anyway when the film was completed because it was a feature length and it was going out on the circuit everybody got back pay, feature rates so they were suddenly a mass of money floating around with the people who'd actually worked on that film. So and they decided to entertain us, paupers they called it. So we went off, probably The White Hart at Beaconsfield or it might have been The George and it was a really good old piss up and I remember in those days of course you didn't have safety belts and you didn't have worries about drink driving and so on, going back to our road safety films.

Everybody got home safely but I remember there were a lot of sore heads and somebody, I think John Taylor's car ended up in a curious state somewhere, something came adrift. I

think the steering wheel came off. Anyway there was a story that John Taylor had been delayed on his way home after the pauper's party whether it was John or not I don't know I think it was true something happened. We were all OK, we got home in the end

Now onto the next stage, well I possibly gave the impression in the first part that British Transport Films was very easy-going compared with Crown. It wasn't so much easier going as the theory was we wanted to get the films made, not to have to rush them through but to be able to think but through and get them right. And at that time be films we were making weren't scheduled pictures so much, they were general public relations information films that it didn't need to be made overnight and pushed out on some of topical subject and Stewart McAllister was very anxious that we should be able to work comfortably. And he used to say I think when you first come to work you what to it sharpen your mind, and read the papers, get yourself gened up on current affairs. And if you're feeling a little bit claustrophobic, if you been doing a bit of cutting, why not go and walk round the block, go down to the Piccadilly Circus and look at shops or something. I thought it was very enlightened.

And I remembered getting into trouble because I started to putting stuff together, I started spitting a sequence on *Ocean Terminal* and Mac was very much the associate producer, he was almost like the supervising editor. He never said to meet don't start cutting edge but I was looking at the pressures and I thought I know how that goes together so I put it together. And Mac turned up and he said now we must have another look at this stuff. And I said I have already cut it. He said you what, who gave you permission to cut it. I said it's a natural thing to do. And he said no, no, wait a minute now, let's have another look. So I had to be assembled quite a lot of stuff I remember.

Curious intellect. But Mac was quirky character. He was a brilliant editor, absolutely brilliant. What is a brilliant editor. He was able to weigh up shots and think about them. He used to work on a rewinder, he would look at shots, he would actually look at the shot on the rewinder, not running it through the machine but just winding the shots through, this is 35mm of course and you could do that to in those days. And he would think about them, he would wind them backwards and forwards and he would say it that one should go there, that one should go there. So the films grew. He felt there was away of editing films so they grew naturally and there was a right to place for every shot, if you had time to think it out. I think we were extremely lucky. It was rather like working on handsomely bound volumes are supposed to paperbacks. And the films were like that they did have this particular quality, they had this gloss and Humphreys, the black and white printing, black white shooting in those days was beautiful. Humphreys was a marvellous labs, I don't know why, the rushes always looked so good from Humphreys. I don't know whether that's just in the mind but the Denham stuff always seemed to be OK, it was all right in the end but there was certain gloss about the Humphreys printing, maybe it was partly due to the cameramen at British Transport Films had this great ability to

Alan Lawson: No I think Humphreys at she did have a very high reputation and quite rightly so for quality but eventually that all went

John Legard It's a shame how they went into a decline but that was much later on

Alan Lawson: Well they tore the heart out of the place really, this is the trouble. I mean again with Den labs for a time there was no heart there at all, it was just a business that's all, it will be alright, when we print it properly it will be much better.

John Legard: It interesting you saying that because you obviously know them both very well as a cameraman, so what I'm saying it's true is it

Alan Lawson: Yes, that's right

John Legard: Yes there was something a bit rough and it ready, you could judge the stuff all right, I don't think we said, well we used to have to send for the reprints more often from Den labs at that time, because they'd perhaps came out a bit light or something all too dark. Whereas generally with Humphreys it was spot-on and they always seem to take an immense amount of trouble.

Anyway I was working on *Ocean Terminal* and I was working on the Highland film and they were comparatively easy times from the point of view of scheduling and we worked again from 9 to six again I felt myself very, very lucky to have been attached to a set-up for so long where you didn't have to look over your shoulder, wondering whether what's going to happen next, is it going to last, it was there. The only possibly, from my own personal training point of view, we never had the problem of worrying about costing and finance at that stage, both the early days at Crown when it was at the Ministry and the early days of British Transport Films, because we had our annual vote, which we talked about a earlier, of getting the money spent before the end of the year and possibly it would have benefited me if I had learnt a bit more about working on a business like basis of tightly budgeted films but that didn't come until very much later. Whereas I imagine most of the people working in these small units in Wardour St and Soho as opposed to Beaconsfield and Pinewood, and our large scale productions one would have learnt very much quicker the business side.

Alan Lawson: There were financial restraints because opticals cost more money than having a straight fade or some things like that, when you start doing opticles that brings up the cost.

John Legard: Yes, indeed. Well we never had to bother about it does absorbed of costs costings. If we decided we needed opticles we would just go ahead and order them, we wouldn't be asking the Office can we afford opticles. Not at that time anyway. And looking back on it, it would have been better had we known a bit more. I personally and some of my colleagues, junior ones, both in the editing department and productions I suppose but has opposed it was an essential at at time because we were learning the trade and it was necessary for a us to do what was right for the film and not again looking over our shoulders, can we afford it.

But those days to carried on, 1951 I'd joined British Transport Films, and up to about 1957 or 1958 it was fairly steady going. And then the British Transport Commission sort of came to an end. This catered for the railways, docks and inland waterways, British Road Services, hotels and the buses to. And they were all part of the British Transport Commission. And then come I think it was the British Transport Commission came to an end and the separate organisations like the waterways and the docks, they will still nationalised but they weren't under that overall banner. And British Railways Board started in 1958. So we then changed from the British Transport Commission as our pay master and we were under the British Railways Board. But British Transport Films kept their name, original name.

From then on I think possibly the budgeting was taken more seriously and from then on we were working very much as we were at the Crown Film Unit in the later it days, practical film by film basis and everything was budgeted closely and we had to be very much more careful. And indeed as the years went by we had to become more and more careful. I think we were still able to order colour prints with comparative abandon, you know when necessarily. And probably if you wanted to have a music session, we would probably cost it fairly closely, we would say if we are going to have a music session for this particular film, what sort of orchestra can we afford. Well Eddie Williams was very good at reproducing wonderful music for 2 or 3 instruments. So our big scale orchestras, big scale music sessions tended to reduce. That didn't matter so much, because the days of those glossy travellogues had come to an end by then and we were making much more practical films. Now that is as far as the generalisation is concerned.

Now where had we got to do, we were still at Saville Row, that's right, in the early 1960s we were still at Saville Row and we were still making films mainly on 35mm. And then there came a time when the lease was due to expire at Savoy Row, where are we going to next. And it was also a bit of a crisis time with the British Railways Board because they were having an economy drive and so the search light was got going on to different departments, including the film unit. And there was quite a reduction in staff in 1964 or 65, I think it was. So we had to be fairly careful. We also had to be fairly careful when Crown Film Unit closed down incidentally, in 1952 because there was the search light having been on Crown Film Unit and that was finished, then what other film units were there, possibly being funded by public funds. So we did keep a fairly low profile for a short time. It probably it wasn't really necessary because the British Transport Commission was a sort of public corporation. It wasn't government, it was a public corporation, rather like the BBC

Alan Lawson: Talking about Saville Row, that was *March of Time* wasn't it, I mean *This Modern Age*

John Legard: Yes Saville Row was a originally setup as a film office or department by Spectator films in 1938 or 9, because that was a new building the just before the war. And then Spectator were there until the war and I believe Crown Film Unit were there for a

very short time between leaving Blackheath, because GPO Film Unit where at Blackheath Studios, funny little studios that they had down there. And then they hadn't got a proper home because the lease I suppose or something to expired at Blackheath and for a very short time but they were at 25 Saville Row. Then I think there was an air raid and the building was damaged but very soon after that the moved to Denham

Alan Lawson: Pinewood you mean

John Legard: No Denham. They moved to Denham, Crown Film Unit it moved to Denham in 1940 and they were there till 1942, they were down in old house, the company offices at the old house and *The Target For Tonight* that famous documentary about Bomber Command, directed by Harry Watt was actually shot, the interior of the aircraft, the mock-up of the Wellington bomber that was actually at Denham and quite a few other films. They were making *First Of The Few* there at the same time I believe. There was an editor there, somebody called Adam Dawson. He married Nora, who became Jack Lee's wife eventually, his first wife was Nora and she was a production manager, at Crown Film Unit. Anyway the lease was due to expire at 25 Saville Row and I haven't quite completed answering your first question. *This Modern Age* started about 1946 or 1947, didn't they and they were there until 1951, did they fold then or did they move down to Pinewood

Allen also Well Rank put it over, I forgot what he called it

John Legard: But anyway they moved out from Saville Row and that was when we were able to acquire, British Transport Films were able to acquire those premises. British Transport Films had been housed in their early days at an office in Petit France which I imagine was part of, I don't know if it was part of the British Transport Commission or whether it was a London Transport. Anyway we were there from 1951, at 25 Saville Row and the lease came to an end in 1966. And at the end of 1965 we were beginning to think where are we going to go to next and pretty quickly it was established that it the obvious thing to do was for us to move Marylebone Station, because Marylebone Station was the head quarters of British Railways Board. They occupied a large building opposite to the entrance of Marylebone Station which he used to be called the Great Central Hotel and it was built in 1899, 1900 and it was a hotel like the other London railway hotels and I gather it wasn't a great success at the hotel, it lasted for about 30 years, I think it closed down a bit in the early 1930. I have got a picture of Headley Verity and Bill Bowes leaving the Great Central Hotel at Marylebone Station on the way to catch a bus to take them to be oval to play in the test match against Australia, a sign of the times, of those times

I've also got a picture, or did have a picture once of the great big banqueting hall when there was a dinner taking place in the Great Central Hotel. Anyway during the war it was commandeered by the War Office, it was a transit camp, a transit posting for everybody, millions of people must have moved Marylebone Station Hotel during the war. And come nationalisation of the railways and indeed the British Transport Commission, they were at

the Great Central Hotel, in other words 222 Marylebone Road. That was the whole thing and then after a few years they needed more space so they built a great building alongside a platform four of Marylebone Station called **Melberry** House. It was an 11 storey building at one side and then there was a cobbled car-park in a courtyard and then there was another great block there, it was a huge, massive great building. And we were able to take over the 11th floor of Melberry House alongside the platform four of Marylebone Station and in 1966 we moved there at the end of March, the middle of March in 1966.

And I remember it well because compared with a space we had at 25 Saville Row it was very very tight indeed to. Fortunately we were able to overflow into an adjacent building called Blandford House where all the 16 mm distribution department, they were housed in Blandford House. And the cutting rooms we had at Melberry House would just made upout of three or four large a offices, we just sliced them up, so we had, to 1, 2, 3 fairly small cutting rooms and a big sort of general junk room, general sort of space for overflow next to the three small cut in rooms, so in fact generally it worked out quite well.

Now where was the camera department. The camera department must have been over in Blandford House but it was a very tight squeeze, administrative problem, it didn't stop us film-making obviously.

And we had our theatre, we had a very nice theatre built in the main hotel, what it used to be the hotel. No problem there at all because it was a much better and bigger theatre than we had at Saville Row which was a fairly small one. And we've had three excellent projectionists at 222 Marylebone Road. We had Roy Richardson and Ron Loxton and and Ernie Wells, and we had proper double-header projection and all that, and we had 16 mm projection and, and we were overall improved in our technology, as it were. And possibly it was a good thing because we were also able to get to know our colleagues as it were, people we didn't know before, actually involved in the railways administration. And we were alongside the station itself so probably it was a good thing because we were perhaps a little bit rarefied and separated at 25 Saville Row.

Edgar had a very nice office at Melberry House, he had a lovely large office overlooking the hotel. And we had a splendid view over London both ways, East West. And in fact that to lead to a few years later to an inspired thought. Edgar Anstey and Jimmy Ritchie thought up the idea of training assistant cameraman, giving them the opportunity to shoot a bit of stuff, we used up short ends, any short ends over well two hundred ft perhaps, well that is hardly a short end

Alan Lawson: Over hundred I expect

JohnLegard: Over a hundred, if you've got any reasonable short ends, keep them carefully and if there is ever anything interesting and you happen to be there and there is nothing going on, get up on to the roof, because we had access to the roof, or even out of the window, shoot what you can see, and this again is a bit off enlightened I suppose film-

making, in a way, because it didn't cost anything, the unit was there, the only cost was the processing which is nothing. Or in those days it was comparatively reasonable. And over a year 1/2 I suppose they built up, not a lot of shooting, the finished film that he made, the ratio was something like to took one, or perhaps less, 1 1/2 to 1, of really it was using every thing we got. And things happened every now and again, for example the Royal Horse Artillery were garrisoned up somewhere beyond, Abbey Road and they used to come down they used to come past

Alan Lawson: Off the Avenue somewhere .

John Legard: Heywood Road it's called which goes past Melburry House and we used to see them coming along from a distance and we would get up on to the roof and shoot that sort of stuff and then Anthony Armstrong Jones built that great cage up at the Regent's Park Zoo, the famous avery and we got the big lens, 300 mm, it's about a mile away and we got some rather good shots, the Zoo from a distance, and the changing seasons, we had the snow, we had the spring, we had the people up the trees doing the tree surgery work, we had a chimney on fire just below in Boston Road and lovely shots of this chimney, smoke and flames pouring out of. And a fireman appearing through a sort of skylight and getting up to the chimney, and he had a great big saucepan and he poured water down, it seemed rather a strange way of dealing with the fire, but it's probably a rather a good way.

Side Eight

John Legard: The thing from Melberry House was eventually completed and, I'll tell you about the completion, whilst we were shooting it we were thinking well this is all very interesting, we've got lots of rather it natural stuff, like the Horse Artillery and the chimney on fire, and if we've got the changing seasons but perhaps can we give it a little bit of a boost. So we thought we need a little bit of sex in it, so we got some of the girls to strip off in the hot weather and put on their bikinis, and we got them to do a little bit of sun bathing on a flat roof within camera shot, quite reasonably close by, and that was fine. And then to there were one or two candid camera shots of looking through, you know that Hitchcock film *Rear Window* which was shown on television the other day, we got one or two *Rear Window* shots and one or two little bits of kissing and cuddling seen through windows, we had to get in the legal man in to check up and see that we hadn't had trespassed at all on people's privacy. In fact it was all very, it very tactful compared to nowadays, it was very nice, it just gave it a little bit of a lift. And we had a pub shot, I think there was Ted Eggs and it one or two of the people sat outside a pub and brought along pints of beer and just general candid camera observation. And at the other thing, there was a Roman Catholic school just at the back there, off Heyward Avenue, and Lissom Grove and all that, well Lissom Grove it is one side and Heyward Avenue is the other, and thing between their heirs the Roman Catholic school, and during the holidays you have these novitiate nuns doing it their morning constitutional, they walked in pairs backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, across the school playground. So we got some of that sort of stuff and during the term time we had the children are playing, Kids with their balls, fun and games, rounders, that sort of thing.

And the street scenes, we had people during a rush hour, rushing hither and thither, and eventually we decided perhaps we had got enough material and we thought well now how are we going to do with this, can't we have a few sound effects, perhaps we need a music track. So Muir came along and had a look at it and he said why don't you get hold of Vaughan Williams' London Symphony and see if you can find one or two bits of that which might fit. So I got a recordings of the London Symphony, I tried it out and yes that was fine. Edgar looked at it and said yes that's very good, yes we must think about it, typical of Edgar, he said we've got so far, I think perhaps if we ought to leave it for a time, you can imagine Edgar saying this, John I think we ought to brood about it for a bit. So we put it on the shelf and carried on with other work and then I got sort of, pity in a way, so we don't want to leave this forever. So I said to Edgar well maybe we should think about it a bit more and let's have another look after it. And then one day Muir rang up and he said I'd got the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, I've got two hours spare with them, we're having a session in the morning, we have got a whole day but we can't use the whole of the second half. And would you like to do the London Symphony experts that you've chosen for your recording.

And I said to Edgar here we are, we've got the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Muir, and Edgar agreed to. So we had an hour and a half and I suppose we recorded to picture

because it fitted fairly well, I'd been very careful about selecting the right bits obviously and they all seemed to fit. So we gave Muir the measurements and he was able record to picture and probably one or two extra bits as well just in case. And so the film was eventually finished and it was called for *The Scene From Melberry House*.

The very first shot was a track in on Melberry House itself, this hideous building, 1950s office block, rectangular, and we had a camera on top, a camera on its own, but the camera was actually turning on its own and it was panning on its own and you tracted in very slowly on to the camera, and then you had the main title, *The Scene from Melberry House* and then it you carried on which the film. That was in fact shot from a flat that I had, I was living in a flat about five minutes walk from the office and they had a good few of the building from my sitting room window, they shot that from there.

And then the film was finished and it was shown on BBC 2, never shown in the cinema but it was shown on BBC2. I remember there was an occasion when the Test match was rained off and that they said it now or wait going to put on *The Scene from Melberry House*. Because it was a Test match from Lords, just up the road.

But that again was the rather more frivolous side of British Transport Films and those were very, very occasional because really we were an extremely practical and a busy Unit, and getting more so as time went on. And again in the early 1970 there was the video unit because video was beginning to become in. They used a video a certain amount in the railway workshop for training purposes, they would look after particular work techniques and work methods and they would shoot stuff. John Shearman when he came back from the Middle East he rejoined us in the early Sixties, he was the first person to work on video I think, and there were as a young editor named Ted Eggs who was interested in video and he became the technician in charge of the video activity of British Transport Films. As time went on the video came in and eventually we bought a lot of equipment. We had our own video suite in one of the offices, it was in 222 in the main building of the Marylebone Road , the video suite and it was quite elaborate and they did quite a lot of internal programme material. For example of the chairman of British Rail would do an annual address to the staff and it was shot by Ted Eggs and the video unit and it was shown all over the railways, all over the railway centres, the Railways Board to begin with but the railway centres around the country, they had these videos which were programme to be screened within a few days of the chairman giving his address. And they were edited it, bringing in material which was appropriate to what he was talking about. And that went on quite a time.

And then we had our photographic department, stills and photographed department, a chap named Ian McNeil ran it that and he did many stills programmes, training and also for the travel promoting and offers for travel for the general public which were shown in the railway offices throughout the country, travel agents, that's the word I'm thinking of, travel agents, and eventually they became even more elaborate. Some of those very good skills programmes, they will call to tape slide shows, they were actually put on to 16 mm

and shown on 16 mm. I always thought it was a desperate thing to do. They simply put the camera in front and photographed them, perhaps you come across this

Alan Lawson: Like the old Horace Shepherd

John Legard: In a way it was quite a good way of putting stuff across. Perhaps you might have a programme which is partly movie. And you could put across one of these because you didn't have to have the extra equipment, you see. But it was of course slightly devitalised I thought, for once you shoot it on 16 mm from the original carousel, the original stills pictures, but the commentary was good, you had a commentary and music and all these things flowing along. So they were quite sophisticated but I always thought it was a bit of a cheat. I don't think that it lasted all that long. I think you would have to talk to some of the people who actually worked on those, and Ron Craigen, he photographed a lot of those conversions from stills to 16 mm. But that's another story, I think it might be worth getting hold of Ted Egg some time to talk about the early days of a video production in public service unit.

We are getting now to the late Sixties and early Seventies. We were still making the *Rail Report* films that I talked about earlier in detail earlier when I was involved in setting up the different sequences acting as a sort of associate producer or progress chaser. But John Taylor didn't work on the later ones. The later ones were made by directors from the unit itself. There was Nick Nicholls who was one of our directors and there was David Lockner who was another director. And they directed the later *Reports on Modernisation*, they were called the *Rail Report* in later days.

And I talked about the film we made in Europe for the UIC. That was called *Cybernetica*. And Edgar retired in 1974, he had set up the unit 49 59 69, so he was there 25 years and he retired finally, and he actually retired slightly later than he meant because he was going to be working with Arthur Elton on some project but Arthur died suddenly perhaps young and, well not all that young , he was in his late Sixties I suppose. So Edgar stayed on a bit longer as a sort of ad hoc producer which was rather interesting.

So the new producer had taken over, a man called John Shepherd the used to be with the Ministry of Defence, he was in charge of the Naval section of the Ministry of Defence, a nice man John Shepherd, he was a very different type of producer, I think I told you, he wasn't a film maker by training, he did quite a lot of photography. He was stills man by training.

Anyway Edgar came in on one more film as a line of producer, and he made a film called *The Age Of Invention* which was about the history of the railways from the very early days true the industrial revolution.. And that was shot by, directed by a David Lockner, shot by Trevor Rowe and the commentary was written by Ian Ferguson, and it came out in 1974. I can't tell you an awful lot about that although I was the editor. I don't have very strong recollections of the detail, all I knowis that it was the last film that Ian Ferguson

worked on. He had already left British Transport Films several years before and he was a freelance.

Anyway Edgar left hand John Shepherd took over and Jimmy Ritchie was one of the producers and so was Lionel Cole and all went well under a different regime. Charles Potter had left by then and actually I rather went back to editing because once we got these two producers, Jimmy Ritchie and Lionel Cole, they were handling all aspects of producing, so I was able to get back to my first love which was editing. And during that time we made a film for London Transport called *The Nine Road* which was about the No. 9 bus and the life of a bus conductor and a bus driver working that route and the maintenance of the buses. And it was shot on 16 mm, we were getting on to 16 mm full time by then.

And we also made a film called *Landscape With Castles* which was made for, I can't remember which department, where it was one of these subject heading films and he wants a travelogue about castles. Then we made a film called *Woodland Harvest* which was made for the Forestry Commission. There was a man and named David Rook, rather a good name for about woodland and he wants the films officer for the Forestry Commission. And this was another of our what do you call the proper outside source repayment films, so British Rail probably put him a percentage and the rest was paid for by the Forestry Commission. And it was shot over a period of several months in woodland in Scotland and in the Lake District and in East Anglia and in the South, Hampshire, the New Forest area. And it was survey of the activity of the work of the Forestry Commission and obviously the hardwood forest and the softwood forests, and it was a very good informative film, good educational film, it was a good PR film, I say good, whether you liked it or not is another matter but from the point of view of the subject matter, and we had a chap named Humphrey Searle who wrote rather a strange music score which in fact was quite effective.

And there was a chap named Tom Pocock whom I might have mentioned earlier, he was the chap who came along to Pinewood in the very early days, because he had been invalided out of the Navy and he wanted to know whether he could get a job with Crown Film Unit. However he went on to become a very distinguished journalist and he worked for various newspapers, *Times* and *Daily Mail* and *Evening Standard* and he was an historian and he wrote books about naval history. And he knew quite a lot about woodlands because he had worked on a series of articles on forestry for the *Daily Mail* years ago.

Anyway I knew him from my days at school together. And I said to Tom would you like to do this commentary for us. And he wrote a very interesting and informative commentary. And a chap named William Franklin spoke it in the end. And the film went out on the circuit. Surprising in those days, as late as 1976 we were still able to get our films onto the circuit. But this was long after E J Fancey and New Realm, I think they'd packed up by then. It was probably another company that distributed it for us. I think if that was about the last of our major theatrical films.

And then we went back to the 16 mm, well I did. Well I went back to making films in 16 mm. We did a film for the English Tourist Board called *England's North Country* which was again the sort of travel film but it was of more a non theatrical nature, it wasn't a cinema film, it was made for the English Tourist Board in 16 mm and we needed to cover a certain series of Houses and centres, tourists centres. And I went out with David Lockner and did a recce and we did a brief tour of the North starting in in Blackpool or somewhere, Preston, Preston that's right, we went from Preston up to Glasgow and then across to the border country and down to Northumberland, the East Coast ending up at Scarborough's which of course I was delighted to be at because that was my old stamping ground and also we did a sequence at the Scarborough Cricket ground, we shot eventually. And that turned out in 1978 and came out quite a nice little, I don't know how they used it because the 16 mm distribution by then, we didn't handle it, our own staff and family shows had long since ceased so it was entirely up to the English Tourist Board to arrange for the distribution of that film

Alan Lawson: did the British Council get involved in any of these

John Legard: No the National Trust did

Alan Lawson I was wondering whether the British Council might have used them overseas

John Legard: No the C O I acquired a lot of our films for overseas distribution but thinking about *England's North Country* although our staff and family shows had come to an end we still had our library, our 16 mm Library Department. But in the early days they were free, you just got in touch with our library and you could get your films free. But now of course people had to pay. So I imagine it did fairly well, *England's North Country,* it probably got quite a good airing. It was never shown on television as far as I can remember but to go back to what you were asking. A lot of these films and particularly the travel film and a lot of the public relations films they were acquired by C O I perhaps on a seven-year lease or something like that and they were shown overseas, or maybe indefinite because I think some of them are still are still available.. They were shown in the Commonwealth countries. I know somebody living in Fiji find she went along to the showing of documentary films in Fiji, it might have been organised by the British Council out there, I don't know and one of the films they saw was *The Heart is Highland*, the one on which I was talking about very early on which was shot in in mono pack, John Taylor and Ron Craigen and they were absolutely delighted with it because a lot of of ex patriot Scot's in Fiji and apparently they were in tears at the end seeing home thousands of miles away and bringing back the early days of their childhood and so on. So the films were shown a lot and film like *London's Country* which is a film we made about the Home Counties, that was shown very widely overseas. And the distribution therefore was very considerable.

This is always a thing, someone will say we would like you to make a film and the first phase of John she man or Edgar and stay would say if we are going to make film, how are you going to use it, it's a very expensive process, get yourselves organised first before you really embark on it. On the other hand sometimes, we made a film for the Bergen Line called *The Dream of Norway* and that was an early sort of what you call repayment films and I think they worked out very carefully how they were going to use it before they actually shot it.

I think this is always the case now, for example I'm involved in a charity and they want to make a video of one person a reason for and is a member of the charity organisation said video it is a complete waste of time because all that happens is they get beautifully made and put in a drawer and forgotten. If you're going to make a film of that nature it is very important that it should be planned in advance, the distribution otherwise it's a complete waste of time and money unless you are going to do it, it's going to be of sufficient interest and be shown on television, it's a rather a different thing.

So then we were still working away on these different productions on 16 mm. We made films for the hovercraft people and we made films for the different departments, for example we made a film about the workshops. And there was a film called *The Trainmakers* directed by it Richard Tumbling which was about the manufacturing process, manufacturing and maintenance. And that again was a) for internal use and b) for general public relations within the railways, being 16 mm it obviously relied on the non-theatrical, our library. They obviously weren't being as widely shown to the general public in later days because the subject-matter had changed and it was much more films literally in the service of industry as opposed to PR.

Of course there was this splendid organisation called the BISFA, British International Scientific Film Association and we met every year, they had their three day conference either at Brighton or in London at the Shell Centre sometimes, and they had documentary films, factual films from all over the industrial world. And it was interesting to see what an enormous number of films were being made, we talking about the late Seventies and early Eighties and they had 13 or 14 different categories of production , specialised films and public relations films. And they screened the films during the first two or three days, they had seminars, teach ins mainly for industry, learning how they could make use of film or video as it became more and more as time went by, or even a film script and visual aids, various sorts of visual aids. That went on for many years. Edgar was the chairman in the early days BISFA, British Industrial And Scientific Film Association.

And in the early days we used to enter our stuff and we used to do very well. I remember one year I went up to BISFA for a conference, and it was in Harrogate and I think we won about seven out of the 14 or 15 categories, first prize, but that never happened again. I think it was probably the early days when it hadn't really got going but later on the competition was terrific and their work so many different companies making the use of films,, industrial areas of life making use of film and they were being made by the private

film company's around and about the country. That came to end I think and it was replaced by something based on video entirely.

Alan Lawson: That association, was it partly held together because of Edgar's personality

John Legard: Not really, no it was only Edgar to begin with, it was called up something else originally. It started off about 1960, early in 19 Sixties. And it carried on for 20 years or so. Well Edgar was very much at the top of that documentary scene in those days and he loved that,

Alan Lawson: Would you like to talk about Edgar, again everybody has talked about him in passing

John Legard: He was unique. I always considered I was very fortunate in having Edgar as a producer because he was able to be involved in films quite closely but at the same time not to be too involved. So he would leave you to it for quite a time. He would say when you've got it ready for me to see let me see it but don't but don't feel that you have to bring me in on every stage. That applied to both the films he was directly producing or executive producing through somebody like Ian Ferguson or McAllister.

And I found this was great because he was so good at looking at films are objectively, particularly in the cutting rooms as we all know, and indeed the producers and the directors, because they are so closely involved and they see how it's going and they think how it's going, Edgar it would come in and have a look at it and say well I don't know, you've nearly got it right, maybe a little bit of work needs doing our the commentary, or perhaps that sequence is not doing what it should, have that you thought of trying it the other way round, so he was editing in that sense. And I would have thought he would have been a great producer of features too, I think he rather hoped to do feature were later on. He did a one or two films. He worked with they Children's Film Foundation for a time, he produced one or two features for them.

But he was absolutely spot on at assessing, and the great thing was he was able to stand back and leave his unit to get on with it. And he also protected us from the problems he had with British Transport Commission, British Railways Board. His position was originally he was the films officer -- with the Transport Commission, he was at the films officer and later on he became the chief officer, films, so he was a very high grade with the British Railways Board, so he had these two positions really, he was a) a film maker and he was chief officer as a railway man and he was answerable to such and such a person within the Railways Board. Sometimes he was answerable to the chairman like Richard Marsh, who was the chairman out one time and Edgar and he got on very well. Edgar always got on with the chairmen, and Peter Parker, now was Edgar still there, yes to begin with he was there, yes.

I've just remembered talking about the bosses, I go back to Crown Film Unit, who was the boss who really set-up, kept the Crown Film Unit going and that it in the early days

was somebody called Jack Beddington, who wants the public relations chief at the Ministry of Information and head of the films division. And then when we got to British Transport Films the man we had was somebody called Jack Brevner. Now he had been a public relations man with Shell before the war. So we'd always had very high-powered people were were at our overseers and always had their respect, fortunately. I think one or two chairman at British Rail, of course they came and went quite a bit. There was some body called Stanley Raymond who was a real tough guy, he tended to bawl out his staff in front of everybody else. He was

Alan Lawson: A bully

John Legard: Bully. Somebody said he was his own sergeant major. And I remember him coming into the theatre one day and some of his sidekicks were there and he said what are you all doing here, you should be out in your offices. What are we seeing Anstey, what is it today. But I suppose he was alright, he worked his own way and he probably got the films made. But on the whole it was a good association, good collaborations Edgar always had with the chief people. And he always was held in very high esteem. A remarkable man, actually Anstey, did you know him after all.

Alan Lawson: Very vaguely. He was up the road from me. I passed him on the Heath going for walks with Daphne. Had he ever worked in the cutting room as an editor

John Legard: Yes he had. He worked with Grierson as an editor. I think there was a film called *Grantham Trawler* which was made not very long Grierson made *Drifters*, that sort of period, early days, and *Industrial Britain*, there was a film called *Industrial Britain* which Edgar edited. I think he rather gave up the technical side at a fairly early period because he became very much in charge, you see he was appointed the producer of the Shell Film Unit in 1934, and he was working during the war on training stuff as a producer, and various set ups, I couldn't tell you exactly, I would have to look it up. So he really ceased being technical. *Housing Problems,* he directed and John Taylor photographed and Ruby Grierson was the assistant cameraman, I don't know. And then he was working with Film Centre for many years of course, before he set up the British Transport Films Unit. But I remember Stewart McAllister saying to me when I joined, he said it now we must encourage Edgar, he tends to stick it in his office rather a lot, it is very good for him to come and see rushes and see stuff. I thought this is rather strange because I understood that Edgar, but McAllister was right in a way because Edgar had been so involved in the office running, administration that perhaps now he had his own film Unit for the first time hands on, he would have the opportunity, and of course Edgar did work very, very closely with the us on a lot of films. But always with the ability to be able to stand back and come in and look at stuff. And because he was held in very high esteem with the people up at the top he was able to keep that film unit going so long. I'm sure other people might not have been able to manage it as well, it is a matter of casting isn't it. You see Arthur Elton, I never actually worked with Arthur Elton but he always was I suppose held in very high esteem

Alan Lawson: Well he had a great presence

John Legard: Meanwhile the colleagues like Basil Wright, Basil carried on with The Realist Film Unit and Stewart Legge was working at Shell, and who have else was there, I suppose Alex Shaw, he was mainly in Europe or America

Alan Lawson: Did you work with Basil?

John Legard: I knew Basil because he was in charge of the unit, Crown Film Unit after Jack Holmes left and I didn't work on any films closely when he was there although I suppose he must have come into the theatre from time to time. Let's think now 1944, 1945 what was I doing, I'll was working with Jos Jackson on the Channel Islands film which I talked about. Basil I didn't really know a talk, I knew Alex Shaw better than Basil. I got to know Basil rather later, more on the social manner because he used to turn up to it see a Edgar or bump into him on his way home, because he used to live out in Bucks and we would perhaps have a drink in the pub and chat on about movies. There was it John Trumper who edited *Instruments Of The Orchestra* and was also working on *Diary For Timothy* the Humphrey Jennings's film. And Basil of course worked very closely with Humphrey on *Diary For Timothy* and obviously that was quite an interesting movie to work on.

I remember Humphrey Jennings quite well because although I never worked with him I was working in the next cutting room, this is when they were editing *Diary for Timothy*. Every now and then he would come into my room and sit down and say oh God, how anybody ever makes a proper feature full length, hour and a1/2, this is only a modest documentary but it is really taking the something out of me, words to that effect, that I'm exhausted. Well that was the way Humphrey worked, he was an artist wasn't he, and he shot a great amount of material for *Diary For Timothy* which was in fact about 40 minutes, 35 to 40 minutes but at the amount of its stuff he shot, because it was like a compilation in a way, because it was shot over a period of six months, from 1944 autumn to spring 1945. And that was the working title, it was called *Six Months*. I suppose they planned to shoot for six months because it was based on this little baby who was born in September 44, Timothy, and they said that will make a film, will cover his first six months of his life whatever happens during the war time, perhaps the war will be over by the time he's six months old. Well that film turned out as it did. But Humphrey was always very pleasant, good company and we used to chat over lunch about this and that and I think he always went his own way. But Basil and he got on very well . Humphrey always liked to have a good producer. He said when Jack Holmes left and there was an interregnum and Humphrey said well what are we going to do, I can't work without a producer, who are we going to have next. I remember him saying that. I also remember the first time I ever had any conversations with Humphrey was I working in the film library in 1943, 1944, and I was given the job of looking through all the cuts and spares of *Fires Were Started* which was Humphreys big feature about the fire service and the air raids down at the London docks and my job, Pentecost, Adelaide Pentecost, Penty as she was known, she said now John will you go through all this material, stacks of cans, she

said find out anything that might be useful for library and the rest you can chuck away. All the stuff that was shot sync and studio and the headquarters of the fire service, well that obviously wasn't any use for any future film, because if they were going to use any sequences they would take it from the cut film. So I took her at her word and I went through this stuff, I'd kept quite a bit, there was some good scenes of the river at night and the docks, and I remember walking down a passage one-day and came up against Humphrey walking the other way, and he looked at me and he said I think you've been very stupid, because he'd heard his precious material, I said well I was only doing what I was asked to, would you like me to show you what I've kept. No. Fortunately I was not in the library longer than 18 months, but it was long enough. But unfortunately I never worked directly with Humphrey. I'd loved to have been on a film with him. Because I think he left Crown before the move to Beaconsfield and he was working with Dalrymple, Wessex productions, have we come to the end.

No we haven't quite come to the end because we're still with the John Shepherd and the days of Melberry House and Lionel Cole and Jimmy Ritchie and the films were still coming off the production line but meanwhile back at the Railways Board, things were getting a bit tricky and they were cutting back staff and and there was searchlight, again I use the word searchlight which I think is the right word, where can they find areas staff can be reduced. So come 1982, early 1982 there was a directed from the man who was in charge of personnel, we have decided to wind up the film unit as a permanent thing and they gave us a about six months in which to wind up, I think March, maybe slightly less, March to July. They didn't wind up the unit completely, they said and what we're going to do is we're going to reduce it to down to a small department so that when films are required you can draw on people from outside to come in and work. And the first choice must be to ex British Rail staff, ex British Transport Films staff must be given the opportunity to work on anything that comes up.

So at the end of June, the beginning of July the unit as such came to an end , some of us were invited to stay on in the Department, the small department as it was and I wasn't very much in doubt because I thought well if I stay on, we don't know how long it is going to last be so I decided to take early retirement. And we were very lucky because we were able to get a sort of redundancy pay off, quite a few of, not all of us, depending on how long you'd been there. And my last week when I had a call from a certain person whose name is Jack Dennis who is a director of documentaries and he had worked with us as an assistant editor at one time, and he said to me we're looking for an assistant director for a series of films we're making about cricket, this is Athos Productions. I said I'll find out, I'll have a chat with Lionel and Jimmy and see if they have got any ideas. And we talked about it quite a bit and couldn't think of anybody who might be an assistant director but I rang back and I didn't talk to Jack Dennis, I talked to Peter Bucknell on the return call and I said I understand you're looking for an assistant director, I can't help you there but if by any chance you need an editor I shall be available next week because we are coming to an end. Oh that's an interesting idea. So I went straight from working at British Transport Films on the Friday to the following Monday working

with Peter Bucknell at Athos down at Hanwell making it a series of films on cricket for schools and training films.

John Legard

Side Nine

John Legard: So Athos came into the picture as it were. And I started off working at Hanwell in Athos cutting rooms, and that they had quite a nice little set up there in those days. Reg Hughes had retired of course and he had gone to live in Australia and there was Bert Eggleton and he was like supervising the cutting rooms and Peter Bucknell in charge and they brought in directors as required. They had a theatre there run by the sound department, called Peter Hodges, dubbing. The only problem with the working there was that it was very close to the runway of London airport and if the when the wind was in the wrong direction you would have the planes taking off the right over head, it was a flat roof there, terribly noisy and very hot.

In the next room, they hired out these cutting rooms to BBC quite a bit, and in the next room they were doing the editing of *Hi De High* Michael Rowbottom was the editor of that and it there was all that *Hi De High* music going on every day, and there was I working rather studiously on these sort of the training films. So we were making these films, we made five films on the subject of cricket for cricket clubs and teaching for the various areas, obviously schools, and they had to be absolutely topical so we used the current Test cricketers of the 1980s. We had Ian Botham demonstrating the art of seam bowling, seam and swing. We had to Norman Cullen's of Middlesex demonstrating the art of fast bowling. We had Phil Edmonds of Middlesex demonstrating spin and also XX XX who was a Pakistani leg break bowler, the art of leg break. And we had Alan Lamb doing doing the back strokes, and Graham Gooch demonstrating the forward strokes. We had Bob Taylor and David Gower demonstrating fielding and wicket keeping which was actually completed the following year. Any way there were five films in all and they were being made for the National Cricket Association, you might say this was quite a contrast from my previous work, working on anything to do with transport, here we are sport comes into it. Well I was delighted because I always had a great interest in cricket right from my childhood. I may have mentioned that earlier and although I didn't play it much, for obvious reasons I was fascinated by it and I still am and have been a member of Lords for years and years and it was really great to be working with these names which one had known over the years.

And the chap who was a our cricket technical adviser and writer was a chap named to Keith Andrew who one time was a wicketkeeper for Northants, he played in a few test matches early in his career and he became captain of Northants to and we had Geo Allan, known as Tubby Allan who was at the great authority on fast bowling and had played for England in the body line series with Harold Lawood in the early 1930s in Australia and was captain of Middlesex and on the MCC board and he had also written this MCC teaching guide, *How To Play Cricket* so he was our main technical adviser, Keith was the day to day expert.

And they were shot over a period of many weeks in the summer of 1982, and a lot of it was shot in slow motion, a very high speed slowed motion particularly with the bowling so you could demonstrate swing and seam. And what they did was they had a cricket ball, one side was red and the other side was white so you could see how the ball was turning in the air. And it was shot at 300 frames or 200 or whatever. We had these enormous great rolls of rushes, thousands of feet, and we had a very good Steenbeck at Athos, the latest Steenbeck and so we were able to whizz through that stuff, we were always running at a high speed

Alan Lawson: Is that 16.

John Legard: Yes 16. And we had technical advisers, below Keith Andrew we had Bob Carter who was the expert on bowling and he and Keith Andrew and the third person was somebody called Les Lemon who used to play cricket for Sussex and his son now plays Neil Lemon plays cricket for Sussex. And the three of them used to come in every now and again when there was a mass of the rushes and they would go through this stuff with me and they would select the take which worked.

It was real technical stuff. Good discipline for me because I hadn't done all that much technical stuff at British Transport Films, I'd always tried to avoid it, being in my position as a sort of head of the cutting rooms I always used to avoid the technical stuff if I possibly could. But I had, to be fair, done some technical film obviously, I had done my share of them. But I had never worked in such a detailed on analysis as it were on a subject before. And it really was very, very hard work and a very enjoyable, so I had to work really long hours in the sense that they were total 8 till 6, or 8.30 till 6. Am I being unfair, no, I don't think so, it was a long day. I didn't work overtime but I just worked very solidly and I remember disciplining myself and not spending long over lunch, I always brought my own lunch with me because they didn't have their own catering there obviously but they did have a little pub around the corner which we used to go to in the evenings And I had a very nice assistant, well I had one or two assistants over the period. And so we worked on this stuff and got it down to length and wedubed it, yes that's right, at a certain point cut when we got the film sign cut then Gubby Allen came in from Lord's and he would work very closely with us.

And then we finished the four of them, the first four. The fielding and wicket keeping we couldn't complete because the weather went bad on us, it was about September by at the time they got to be shooting and that the weather went bad on us and they said OK we'll leave that until next year. So we had these four films and as I was working freelance, of course I didn't do a five day week, I used to go in there for perhaps a week or two, work very, very hard, get it finished, the rough cut and then perhaps get Gubby Allen to come along, or whoever, and there would be perhaps a week's pause, so I would just staying at home and do other things which was quite nice. This was my first experience of working freelance.

Alan Lawson: There is one thing I want to ask you which you never mentioned before, you said when I was head of the cutting room, you never said that before

John Legard: No, there was a certain point when Edgar brought a notice up on the board, he said you will be pleased to hear that John Legard has been appointed, I think it was called the senior editor, that's right, and in charge of the cutting room programme. It didn't really mean an awful lot, I suppose perhaps I got a little bit more money but it was really keeping an eye on films and coming in on stuff as required. But after all we did have very experienced editors there.

We had in the early days Bert Eggleton and we had Alf Chapman. And we had Dickie best quite a time, in the later days, particularly at British Transport Films, Melbury House, we had Dickie Best with us for quite a time, and we had a girl called Francesca Bowen to was a young editor, she was very talented, yes her maiden name Francesca Ross, she went on to television later. So I didn't need to do an awful lot of work although obviously it was a matter of progress chasing, how are things are going. And the other regular editor was somebody called Bob Debenhams, Robert Debenham. For very briefly he was on the history project, he used to come along to meetings. He found it wasn't quite his scene so he didn't carry on with it. But he was with us for years, he'd actually been in distribution, started off as a projectionist and he came over to the cutting rooms and because he'd handled film as a projectionist he very quickly got into the art of handling film and he was an assistant for a time and then he started editing a number of films that John Shearman produced on the building of the Victoria line, and one or two of the travel films that John Shearman produced, Bob Debenhan edited and then he stayed on until right to the very end. He retired at the same time as me, or he took voluntary redundancy at the same time as me, Bob Debenham,

Alan Lawson: This brings us back to Athos again where you were freelancing

John Legard: Yes. My first experience of freelancing was after I'd been in the film world for quite some time, some thing like 38 years. So I worked with a Peter Bucknell during that summer and autumn editing and dubbing these four films and then we waited for a bit, I went on to other things for a bit and came back to Peter Bucknell in 1983 to do a few weeks work on the final film of the series which was called This Game Of Cricket Fielding And Wicket Keeping, the whole series was called This Game Of Cricket and that they were sponsored by the then National Westminster Bank, made for the National Cricket Association, and they sponsored a lot of films at that time, NatWest, not only films but perhaps more often than not they were tape/slides, what we used to call tape/slides, they were film strips, Carousel on over 20 different sports, very enlightened. This must have been comparative big budget for them, big movie, they were processed by Humphreys, all 16 mm rushes. They were the last days of Humphreys alas, they were just about the last time I used them. I think shortly after we finished they came to an end. I remember we had to get hold of the negs and ship them off to somewhere else. But you didn't really need a lot of printing because everything was transferred to video. Once we got the bulk order of the 16 mm prints, because they preferred to use, the professional

coaches who made use of these films around the country, in the different cricket ground and clubs, they preferred 16 mm because they could work with a reasonable audience, whereas with video of course you could only do comparatively small audiences at that time, but once they finished the bulk order I don't suppose any more prints were made and anything else was on video. I did hear that youngsters who had seen these films later on. But the final film was dubbed in 1983 and then we had a screening at BAFTA, we had a send off show of all these films, paid for by the National Cricket Association and we had all the cricketers there from Graham Gooch downwards, Ian Botham , John Emery and some of the old names from the past, Christopher Martin Jenkins who writes cricket and broadcasts and Gubby Allen came along, he was quite old by then he was well into his Eighties. What we did was showed excerts from the films, it was really a 20 minute programme introduced by the chairman of the National Cricket Association, and that was the launching show and it was a great get together of cricketers. I was highly delighted. I had never seen since so many, never had the opportunity of talking to so many professional cricketers all at once.

So by that time I was obviously looking for other work as a freelance. I worked with what was then called the British Transport Film and Video Unit which was what was left of a British Transport Films. And I came back to them to do a film called Just Like The Rest Of Us which was made as a training film for railway staff, how to deal with people who were disabled in anyway when they were travelling by train, and also the introduction of the coaches that had facilities for wheelchairs and all that, that was not at a bad little film.
It was directed by David Lockner under and the producer, what guest producer on that was Douglas Gordon, well-known for all his work with the Shell Film Unit, very distinguished producer he came in as a writer. And Lionel I think probably produced it, because he was still there. So the film was made during the summer of 1984, autumn 84, I guess, 20 minutes, and it demonstrated how to deal people who were suffering from all sorts of conditions, whether it was cerebral palsy or whether they were deaf or whether they were blind , lame. And it was shown to Prince Charles, I think, because he has this, the Prince Charles something for the disabled, he has this particular organisation, because he is very interested in all that all that sort of thing. In fact if he came along to see how people were being encouraged to make use of railways, to travel, disabled people, and he came a long to Euston one day and there he talked to all of us about it. That was shortly after the film was finished, but that wasn't just the film it self, it was just the railways in general and how they could work and bring help to disabled people when they are going by train, they don't have to need to worry in future, that sort of thing. I think it's done quite well actually, that film was useful because it was really addressed to the railway staff on how to be sympathetic and how to be helpful.

So that was that one. And then later on there was a film called Nigeria A Look Back And Look Forward to which was also a Douglas Gordon film. Because I'd worked with him for the first on the editing of Just Like The rest Of Us Douglas asked me if I would like to come and edit a film that they were making to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Independence of Nigeria, and it was called Nigeria A Look Back, A Look Forward. And

it was partly library material because of a lot of stuff had been it shot in Nigeria over the years, for made for the Shell area of life in Nigeria, and they also when out with a Unit and they shot things as they were in Nigeria that year, 1985 I suppose. And that was shoton 16 mm. We were using a lot of library material, some of it was 35 and some of it was 16. So it was really half and half. It was a big film, it was at least half an hour, it may have been slightly more. And it was really made for the third Nigerian government to be shown on television throughout Nigeria as a public relations celebratory film and that was hard work, of course. There was obviously a tight schedule, needed to be ready for the ceremonial event at the end of that year. I was lucky, the only time I've ever worked with Shell in my life, and I had a very good assistant called Alma Godfrey working with me on that, she was quite a good teacher, she worked as a teacher on sound editing at the National Film School at Beaconsfield for a long time.

And after that that I happened to be having lunch with John Trumper to I think it was, yes John Trumper at BAFTA one-day and he said I'm going to be doing a whole lot of work for the BBC and Anvill on films about modern, popular science, really they are translations, they are what are called English by television they called them, and they were films being made for Chinese television, educational films, shot, obviously made in English but they would be translated out there and they are about various aspects of life in China, comparing similar aspects in England. And there were about 12 films altogether, maybe more, 12 or 14. John said I think we may need a second editor because I'm editing seven or eight of them. So eventually I was invited to edit six of them. There was one about transport in China, actually it was transport in Hong Kong in fact, public transport, comparing it with public transport in the North East of England, the Newcastle integrated road rail system.

And there was one about pollution which was, I seem to remember, Shanghai, a lot of stuff was shot about the appalling state of sewage in Shanghai. That was another one. And then there was another one which was a slightly medical one about memory, about how old people lose their memory and again some of it was shot in China, some of it was shot in England. And then there was once another one called Making Glass which was about Pilkington's glass factory that was being set up in China. And some of it was shot there and some of it was shot in the Pilkington glass factory up in Lancashire.

And then there was another one called Typhoon Warning which was about bad weather in Hong Kong. Very interesting.

All these films, partly educational, partly Chinese English teaching, and they were shown very widely in China I gather on the television during similar to our Open University, something like that.

We had about three or four months schedule and most of them were directed by girl caught Gill Barnes, Gillian Barnes who was BBC. So we had one or two people from Anvill, like the dubbing was done at Anvill and there were one or two people from the BBC. And we edited these films in King's House in Queensway. And we used the BBC

canteen in Bush House I remember every day. They had quite good cutting rooms at King's House.

Incidentally going back to the Nigerian film, A Look Back A Look Forward, that was all edited in the Shell Centre of course. We had very good cutting rooms there on the first floor, very adequate equipment, and we had the theatre down below, oh there were two theatres, there was the big theatre and then there was the small theatre down in the basement. I found it sort of claustrophobic working in the Shell Centre, sort of airless and impersonal, you didn't get any feeling of a film unit at all. It was a number of people all involved in this activity. The only good thing about Shell was and they had this marvellous canteen down below with free lunches, really excellent. Again it was long hours but every minute of time was used, that is the difference of being freelance of course, I was learning a rather late in my career about the hard nitty-gritty of making use of every minute of time.

But that was about it apart from one film that I did for London Transport about the 50th anniversary of London Transport, we made a short film for them and I think I edited for them probably back at 222 Marylebone Road because after Melburry House came to an end what was left of the film unit moved across the road to the BR headquarters, they had an office or two up there and they had a cutting room. But Moving London was really a compilation film, looking back on the years London Transport since 36 whenever it was. No '32, that's right, because no 86, 50 years of London Transport, that was shown I suppose non-theatrically. But then that really was about the end, I didn't do any more editing after that, 1986, end of 1986. I think probably I would have carried on if anybody had asked me but I was by then getting my pension not only from British Rail, I had a pension from British Rail and my state pension so I thought well perhaps leave it for the moment and carry on with the interesting things like the History Project.

Alan Lawson: Looking back, John which is the highlight do you think.

John Legard: Highlight of my career. I suppose in a sense really movie making was working at Group Three on the Child's Play, the film which Margaret Thompson directed and Denny Densham photographed, with the well-known actors, a few of them, and the whole feeling of working on a feature. It was a highlight but at the same time I was quite glad to get back to documentary because I thought they were really my forte. But having thought so long that I needed to work on a feature and then I did have the opportunity purely through John Grierson who very kindly said have a go and see what it's like. I dare say that if I'd perhaps worked at a bigger Studios like Pinewood or Shepperton on a feature and I had the opportunity, maybe I would have carried on working, if the opportunity was there, but I somehow felt I liked the idea of Edgar Anstey of course, I respected him enormously and I liked the people there and I thought probably it's better for me and also there is this slight thought that people may have said to make so often, my friends who have moved into features say, the trouble is at the end of, just when you're dubbing it and getting to the most interesting point, they give you notice and you're out on your neck and you never know where the next film is coming from. On the other

hand you probably earned very good at money during that time and you would say maybe you can afford to wait a bit.

But I preferred to, I did have one. In my career when I thought possibly I'd been long enough at British Transport Films and television was just starting and they are wanting and 82 were aren't the is do film Unit in Regents Park. And Milton Schulman was in charge of the zoo film unit, the film critic and theatre critic so I remember having an interview with him somewhere or other and he offered me the job of editing job films for the zoo.. ATV, would it it to have been, would it have been, Associated Rediffusion probably in those days, but it was all 16 mm, this was 1956, 1957 and I went along to Edgar and I said I've got a job with the zoo film unit and he said you can't possibly work there. If I'd said I'm sorry I'm leaving you are not said any more, I've got other work, perhaps I would have left. But I thought I'd better discuss it with Edgar and he said very kindly under no circumstances must you go there because we've got to a lot more work for you to do, we've got interesting subjects coming up. So I was dissuaded.

And I also had the opportunity of working out at Film Centre on films that were being shot in Singapore, Jack Holmes was setting up a unit out in Singapore and they needed an editor there, so Jack said what you like to do the job. I said give me a week to think about it, maybe I should, maybe I need to get away from Anstey and Transport Films for a time, because it was a bit cosy there in a way isn't it, steady work

Any way after a week I thought, yes maybe I should go there and discuss the thing. So I went along to Jack and said yes I would like to take up, oh he said, I didn't think you would want to do it, we've got somebody else. So I seemed destined to stay on at the British Transport Films forever and ever and indeed I have did it really because I was there over a period of 31 years, with these short breaks like at a Group Three and Anvill and so on.

And I had a sabbatical. In 1965 I had the opportunity of going to America, because some relatives of mine I had going out there, well an aunt of mine was going out there and she asked me if I would like to accompany her. I said I don't know if I can manage that because I would have to leave the unit. And I talked to Edgar about this and I said perhaps if I get in touch with some of your film folk, at the West Coast or something like that. He said ah now that's an idea of, he said maybe we can do something there. And so he gave make a whole lot of addresses in Los Angeles and New York too, he said if you do take this trip we're prepared to give you unpaid leave for three months.

So I went to America by train, I went with my Aunt as far as Wyoming where she was staying, Larame, and then I went on by bus, Greyhound coach to Los Angeles where I had a whale of a time for two or three weeks going round in the studios because Edgar had given may a particular contact, the man who was in charge of Consolidated Film Laboratories, a man named Sidney Solow, I don't know if you've ever heard of him, S O L O W. And he said now John where would you like to visit. And I said Twentieth-Century Fox, MGM.

And I was staying with a friend who used to be at a Crown Film Unit years ago, a man named Thomas Stamford and he was an assistant editor with the Crown Film Unit and he went to America in the 1950s and he eventually got himself a union editing guild ticket and he worked as an editor in Hollywood and he edited West Side Story and got an Oscar for it, so I stayed with him and his wife and family. And we did a sort of tour of the studios which was quite fun. I suppose I could have stayed on their if I'd tried because I did think to myself well I might possibly, if anything happens to be going, it's a great thing about being the independent and unattached, I didn't have any sort of family attachments. So I was a free agent in that sense. And I managed to get myself a green card which not many people could, it wasn't so difficult in those days. So if the opportunity had arisen I would have been able to to do a bit of work out their temporarily. But having seen the place and didn't care for Los Angeles terribly much. I was based at Thomas Stamford house which was not very far from Twentieth-century Fox and we went to Warner Brothers and Twentieth-Century and Universal.

And there was a very nice man at Universal called William Hornbeck, he used to be editor in charge of film, and then there were not another one called David O'Connell who was in charge of television productions. So I went to Universal and I met William Hornbeck, I think I may have met him before, I don't know, in London. Anyway I was shown into his splendid office, awfully nice man, Muir Mathieson was a greater admirer of William Hornbeck, he used to say when he was looking at films, well Bill Hornbeck would have taken half the length of that shot, because they worked together at very closely in those days at Denham. And then I suppose I went to some of the other ones.

And I remember going on to the set of a film that was being, a starring Deborah Kerr, Frank Sinatra, and I remember being shown around the cutting rooms at Warner Brothers and I remember having lunch at the commisery at to Warner Brothers, a sort of day by day thing. That was that.

And then I went back to Larame be and I went across to the East Coast and visited various people, you get passed on from one place to another in America. It was quite a good thing to have done, a bit of a rest from all the chores and I was very grateful to Edgar for having given me all these contacts. I could have spent more time like the National Film Board of Canada but I had to a sort of the three months deadline, I got a return ticket, and also when one was doing it at one's own expense all the time, so the money was running out. I managed to do it very economically because the Greyhound buses in those days was so cheap, 99 dollars for 99 days and you could buy it the tickets in London at an office they had just next to Piccadilly Circus. And you buy the tickets there and pay your 99 dollars and you've run-out of a book of tickets provided in was within the three months you just went along to the Greyhound office wherever you are and they would give you another book, so you could travel all over. The only trouble with Greyhound of course is that it is a slow method, you have to be patient. The bus continues and they changed the crew every so often. An unforgettable trip

Alan Lawson: Did you have any real lows.

John Legard: The pits. Yes I suppose so, I don't know really. I don't think you remember the lows so much do you. I suppose and the lows would have been we have been if I'd been out of work because the great thing once although I may have been fed up at times, as we all are, film-making it is like any other job, a lot of it is just chores, isn't it. Good heavens, particularly nowadays

Alan Lawson: It's things you want to forget really, and you do forget them

John Legard: You do yes. Well from 1943 to 1982 I didn't have in fact a day out of work although I took unpaid leave on two occasions but I was continuously employed and it wasn't until 1982 when I went freelance, then I was able to do partly on my own terms, because as soon as I left British Transport Films, I was 57 so I qualified for the British Transport Films pension just, so I was getting money coming every month which was a great benefit, it meant I didn't have to work every day if the work wasn't there. But looking back on it, it was fantastic, if I'd had the opportunity of having my life over again I was it really have done the same thing, gone into the cutting room. Maybe I would have spent more time moving around instead of being stuck in one unit. People often said why did you manage to stay in one place so long. I said because maybe I'm not all that ambitious, I like to have a steady feeling. I think very quickly I would have had a feeling of insecurity, I think my nature is easily insecure.

Alan Lawson: I understand that to. I needed an umbrella, this is what it is really.

John Legard: Were you permanent staff, you were with the BBC but in the early days?

Alan Lawson: Well until the studio system was finished, when I started I was staff at the and I moved from the Bush to Stolls and moved from Stolls to Ealing and then the whole system kind of broke up.

John Legard: And then it was very dicey and ad hoc thing. I should imagine you had a moment's when you weren't working.

Alan Lawson: Yes, very cruel

John Legard: As bad as that

Alan Lawson Yes very cruel

John Legard: Do you talk about that in your

Alan Lawson : A bit I think

John Legard: I think if the opportunity had been there I might have tried to do other things like working on features and I might even have done a bit of a directing because I knew that I could direct perfectly well, in fact there was an occasion when I did a little amount of shooting on my own, making home movies and there was a film that I shot in the village where my father and mother live in the country and I shot a lot of stuff on 16 mm, I had a 16 mm camera that I bought when I left to Crown Film Unit because having been there for 8 years I got a curious sort of redundancy payment, an ex gratia payment of £68 I think it was far having worked with the civil service for eight years and with that I bought a camera, Bell and Howell. Any way I had this ex gratia payment of £ 68 and I had this 16 mm camera a Bell and Howell, no it wasn't, it was a Kodak BB, it was this spool loading Kodak, 16 mm. It was a lovely camera and it was obviously really made for home movies in those days, because that was the standard gauge for home movies in the Thirties and Forties and it shot t 16 frames so it was a very economical. I used to buying this lovely super X reversal, lovely stock, and I shot over a period of a year or so in our village at home, whenever I was down there for the odd weekend, I would shoot various sequences. And after a time I had enough a to build up a complete movie, silent of course. And we used to show it in the village hall and we used to raise money for whatever charity. In those days people didn't go to the pictures so anything like a film show and I used have either the Crown Film Unit mobile projection or the British Transport Films mobile projection, they used to come down. We would show some Crown films or we would show some British Transport Films and this was always the highlight, my little home movie, projected at 16 frames with me reading a commentary over the public address system.

Years went by, 25 years, 30 years later somebody rang me up from the village and said John do you remember that film you made years ago, any chance of getting it onto video because we would like to show our kids what it was like in the village in those days. So we managed to get it transferred to video, Barry Coward, the man who runs the British Transport Films archives he was very interested in it, so we transferred it and then they obviously bought copies, VHS. Then Barry Coward told Southern Television that this film was in existence and they came along and had a look at it and said we would like to do a programme based on this and so they did a then and now, 1988 the village and 1948, 1949, 1950, when I made that film. And that was shown and it was called, the village was called Burghclere as I the mentioned before and the film was called Burghclere Revisited and it was shown on Southern Television. It wasn't networked, it was a regional programme, it has been shown once or twice.

So that was an interesting exercise at the time when I had this 16 mm camera.

And eventually I sold the 16 mm camera because I needed a projector. So I bought a projector with the proceeds of the camera. I'd probably done enough 16 mm anyway and then I used to show the film. So that's the end of the story I think.

Alan Lawson: Thanks John that's great.