



Cinema Memory and the Digital Archive

Home pages of Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain participants

Home pages of Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain participants

Written and compiled by Annette Kuhn

All core CCINTB interviewees have their own home pages on the CMDA website [<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/cmda/>] along with a number of pilot interviewees and participants who sent in letters, essays and other writings setting out their cinemagoing memories. Some interviewees (couples or friends interviewed jointly) have a shared home page. Headings of all home pages include individuals' unique CMDA identifiers as well as their first names and surnames, for example: William Pickess (WP-95-217) and Hazel Pickess (HP-95-217).

In this compilation, home pages are ordered alphabetically by participants' surnames. Group interviews (such as interviews conducted in care homes) are listed under the name of the institution (for example, Cranmer House), with the page incorporating links to separate pages for named participants. Pair interviews of participants with different surnames are included here under both names (for example, Rosalind Avadis's and Mick Bloom's shared home page appears in this compilation under each surname).

Most of the home pages were composed during 2020 and 2021 as part of the process of editing and formatting interview transcripts and other participant materials in preparation for their addition to the CMDA website by web developer Julia McDowell. Other pages have been added from time to time since (for example for participants mentioned in CMDA blogs), with more substantial additions and revisions made during 2025.

As well as providing background information on participants and summarising the contents of their contributions, home pages include links to archival assets associated with each participant (interview audio and transcripts, correspondence, memorabilia, etc) as well as to relevant items available on external websites. Some home pages also refer the user to pertinent publications.

On the CMDA website, home pages can be accessed via the Participant Attribute search function under 'Search the Archive' or (for interviewees) via links in the home pages of interview fieldwork locations:

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/cmda/index.php/ccintb-places/>

Please note: we do not have control over the validity of external weblinks. Should any no longer be active, please let us know using the email address: cinemamemory@outlook.com

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CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

TOMMY ADAMS (TA-95-013)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold contacted Glenwood Lodge, a Residential Care Home in Castlemilk, Glasgow which boasted a reminiscence group, with a view to interviewing residents for the project. Five residents volunteered, and Tommy Adams was among them. Mr Adams was born in 1920 in Govan, Glasgow; on leaving school at fourteen, he went to work at a shipyard in Govan, and later in life worked as a lorry driver. On 24 January and 13 February 1995 he took part in five-way interviews at Glenwood Lodge, the other four participants being [Nancy Keyte](#), [Sarah Louise Gale](#), [Tommy Dunn](#), and [Patrick McCambridge](#).



United Artists, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In their first interview, group members share their early cinemagoing memories, citing the names and locations of the many Glasgow cinemas --particularly in Partick, Govan, Burnside, and Rutherglen--that they remember. The conversation moves on to silent films, ticket prices, and queueing. They debate preferences in films and stars, and agree that American films were better than British ones. They chose which films to go to by looking in the newspapers, they say, or by noting the length of cinema

queues. One group member recalls chopping up fruiterers' boxes for firewood and selling bundles at tuppence a time to get 'picture money'. It is generally agreed that Donald O'Connor and Gene Kelly were the greatest ever dancers--"They could make their feet talk." There are recollections of children's behaviour in cinemas and of the strict discipline enforced by cinema staff. As a child, says one interviewee, you got fully immersed in what was happening on screen: "you used to imagine you were, you were the star of it."

The second Glenwood Lodge interview opens with group members talking about the various jobs they had done throughout their working lives. Perusal of film annuals and photos of film personalities then prompts discussion of stars (over fifty are named in the course of the interview) and films, as well as other youthful pastimes, dancing in particular. There are further details of the various neighbourhood cinemas they frequented; anecdotes about selling logs and recovering deposits on bottles and jars to amass money for admission; recollection of prices of cinema tickets (dearer for balcony seats); and mention of Green's being the first to show silent movies in the showgrounds of Gallowgate.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [The Picture Houses of Rutherglen](#) (rutherglenheritage.wixsite.com site)

 ['Going loco in Glasgow'](#) (lostglasgow.scot site)

 [Tommy Morgan tribute site](#) (glesga.ukpals.com site)

 [Chung Ling Soo](#) (Wikipedia entry)

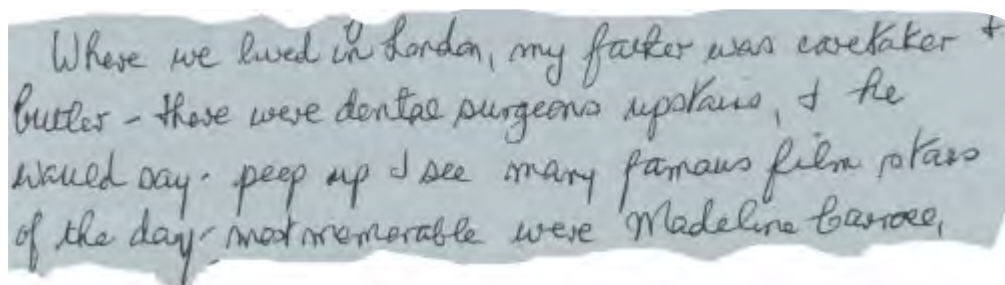
 [Extract featuring Eddie Cantor in *Whoopie!*, 1930](#) (YouTube)

 [Clip featuring James Cagney in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1942](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



IRIS ALDER (IA-95-079)





Where we lived in London, my father was caretaker +
butler - there were dental surgeons upstairs, & he
would say - peep up I see many famous film stars
of the day - most memorable were Madeline Carroll,

An extract from Iris Alder's letter

Early in 1995, Iris Alder (b.1924) saw a request for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain and responded with a letter in which she writes about her early years in London, where she saw Madeleine Carroll, Herbert Lom, and other British film stars in the flesh; about moving to Hampshire during the war and frequent visits to the cinema there; and about her enduring appreciation of wartime British films. Later in 1995, Mrs Alder took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey; attached to her completed form are lists of the stars and films of the thirties that she remembered (*see IA-95-079PW001 below for links to scan and transcript*).

 [Document scan \(IA-95-079PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(IA-95-079PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(IA-95-079GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

TESSA AMELAN (TA-95-183)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted **Heathlands**, a retirement home in Prestwich, **Greater Manchester** catering mainly for Jewish residents, seeking potential participants in the project. Heathlands residents took part in two interviews: on 27 April 1995 a group of six residents was interviewed, and on 29 May 1996 one member of the group, Tessa Amelan, was interviewed on her own. Both interviews took place at Heathlands.



Premier Cinema, Cheetham Hill (uploaded by CharmaineZoe). Creative Commons Attribute licence via cinematreasures.org

Group interview participants were: Gabrielle Adam (born in Russia in 1907), Tessa Amelan (born in Manchester in 1918; her father worked in the raincoat trade and her mother was a milliner before marriage; she left school at fourteen and took up work in the clothing trade, never marrying and eventually becoming housekeeper to her brother and carer for her ageing parents), Samuel Flamholtz (born in 1922 in Poland, grew up in Manchester; worked in a bakery after leaving school at fourteen), **Nat Frieling** (born in 1909 in Romania; moved to Manchester at the age of two, was orphaned before he was six and adopted by relatives; left school at thirteen and as an adult studied economics at a Trade Union college), **Rachel Tarsky** (born in Manchester in 1906; parents had migrated from Russia early in the 20th century; her father was a shoemaker and her mother had a grocery business, where Mrs Tarsky

worked after leaving school at fourteen), and another male resident whose name and details are not recorded.

Throughout the interview, speakers check and correct each other's recollections, and in parts of the conversation members of the group speak over each other. Subjects covered include names of stars and films, many of the films--including comedies, serials, and animal stars--made in the 1920s. Saturday matinees are mentioned, along with the cost of tickets for the humbler types of cinema ('bug huts') with their very basic seating (benches). The conversation moves on to the 1930s, as participants pore over photos of stars of the period and exchange comments and opinions. Topics of lengthier debate include Charlie Chaplin and his films, the 1937 version of *Lost Horizon*, the scandal surrounding Jessie Matthews and Sonnie Hale, and the films of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Discussion of films and cinema detours into collective consideration of the lack of availability of post-elementary education for members of their generation, before turning to recollections of the cinemas of central and suburban Manchester, assertions of the importance of the contributions of film producers and directors, and references to animated films of the 1930s (*Snow White* is mentioned) and foreign films (the *Cosmo* in Glasgow is referred to).

On the project's second visit to Heathlands, Tessa Amelan was interviewed on her own. Leafing through a 1938 film annual, she names some of her favourite stars, including Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Shirley Temple, and Anna Neagle. She insists she was not very interested in their private lives, which she regarded as totally unrelated to her own. She recounts her earliest cinemagoing memory--of being terrified by a vividly remembered scene in a film. She talks about the types of films she liked, about watching films on television, and about her hobbies and the group activities on offer at Heathlands. While she sometimes went to the cinema with her sister, she preferred going on her own, enjoying the solitary sensation of being in "another world".

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Manchester Ice Palace \(manchestereveningnews.co.uk site\)](#)

 [Charlie Chaplin in 'The Bank', 1915 \(YouTube\)](#)

[🔗 Harold Lloyd in 'Safety Last', 1923 \(YouTube\)](#)

[🔗 Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy singing 'Indian Love Call', 1936 \(YouTube\)](#)

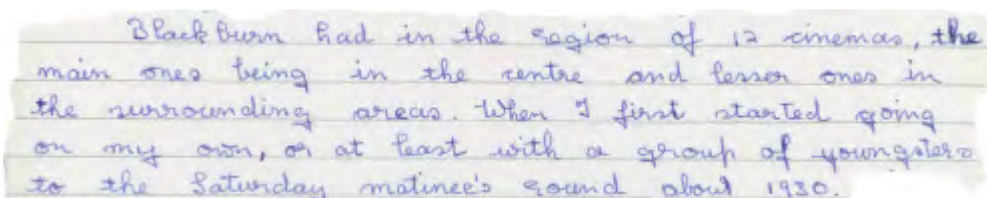
Publication relating to Tessa Amelan's interview:

Levitt, S. (1986). 'Manchester mackintoshes: a history of the rubberized garment trade in Manchester'. *Textile History* 17(1).

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



RAYMOND ASPDEN (RA-95-232)





Blackburn had in the region of 12 cinemas, the main ones being in the centre and lesser ones in the surrounding areas. When I first started going on my own, or at least with a group of youngsters to the Saturday matinee's sound about 1930.

Extract from one of Mr Aspden's letters

Raymond Aspden of Accrington, Lancashire contacted Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain during 1995 in response to an article about the project in a local newspaper. Born in Blackburn in 1923, he finished his fulltime education at the age of fourteen and took up a job in the Compositing Department of the Northern Daily Telegraph. In later years he worked in a range of roles including a 4½ year stint in the Army. In a long letter he tells of a memorable early cinema visit, describes some of the cinemas in his home town and recalls attending Saturday matinees with groups of friends: "The thirties was a magical age for the silver screen," he writes. Later in 1995, Mr Aspden took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(RA-95-232PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(RA-95-232PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(RA-95-232GQ001\)](#)

 [The Composed and the Heartfelt \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ROSALIND AVADIS (RA-95-199) AND MICK BLOOM (MB-95-199)

The friends Rosalind Avadis and Mick (Maurice) Bloom heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through a Jewish Friendship Club in the London suburb of Harrow. They offered to share their memories, and eventually joined the eighteen core CCINTB informants based in and around Harrow. They were interviewed together on 27 July and 27 November

1995 in the Middlesex New Synagogue, Harrow. Mr Bloom was born in the East End of London in 1909 and lived there throughout the 1930s, moving to Harrow in the early 1950s. His father was a tailor, his mother a housewife. On leaving school at the age of fourteen he followed his father into the clothing trade. Mrs Avadis was born in 1921 in Notting Hill in West London and the family moved to Neasden, a few miles north, soon after. Mrs Avadis's father was a tailor, her mother a housewife. Mrs Avadis left school at sixteen and went into clerical work until her marriage in 1946, when she and her husband moved to Leeds. The family returned to Harrow in the 1960s.

The first interview covers the informants' early ventures to the cinema: Mrs Avadis remembers her local picture house in Notting Hill and the first talkie that she saw; and Mr Bloom talks about some of the East End cinemas he frequented. Both recall



*Interior of the Trocadero, Kentish Town, London
(uploaded by Ken Roe). Creative Commons
(Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org*

stars and films of the 1930s, with a special mention for the 1929 musical *The Desert Song*, acknowledging their differences of opinion on certain film stars. Mr Bloom talks about his collection of film posters, and Mrs Avadis reiterates that she liked "a good film with a good actor or a good actress."

In their second interview, Mrs Avadis and Mr Bloom leaf through contemporary film annuals and reference books, discussing numerous films and commenting on the acting ability, appearance, and careers, of upwards of fifty stars. They discuss the particular qualities of their favourite films and share snippets of gossip about the stars' lives.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Troxy Stepney, London \(cinematreasures.org\)](#)

 [Deanna Durbin in 'One Hundred Men and a Girl', 1937 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Extract from 'The Desert Song', 1929 \(YouTube\)](#)

Publication relating to Mrs Avadis and Mr Bloom's interviews:

Toffell, Gil. (2018). *Jews, Cinema and Public Life in Interwar Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

EILEEN BARNETT (EB-95-195) AND JOE BARNETT (JB-95-195)

In June 1995, in the quest for participants in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Valentina Bold made contact with the Harrow Friendship Club, based at the Middlesex New Synagogue in the north London suburb of Harrow; and Mrs Eileen Barnett undertook to see if any fellow members were interested in taking part. Several of Harrow's eighteen core informants became involved in the project in this way, including Mrs Barnett herself and her husband, Joe. Eileen Barnett was born in Stamford Hill in 1924,

one of two children of parents who ran a family business in retail textile. On leaving school at the age of fifteen she took a job as a shop assistant; subsequently her main paid occupation was as a bookkeeper. Joe Barnett was born in Hackney in 1923, an only child. His father worked in the cinema industry and his mother was a housewife. Mr Barnett's first job on leaving school at fourteen was as a salesman, and his main lifetime occupation had been as an administrator in the fashion industry. Mr and Mrs Barnett were interviewed together at their home in Sudbury Hill, Harrow on 18 July, 1995.



Jessie Matthews (courtesy of BFI Film Stills, Posters and Designs)

The interview opens with Mrs Barnett producing a card, received from her brother on her sixteenth birthday, featuring a photo of her favourite star, Tyrone Power, with

Norma Shearer, his co-star in the film *Marie Antoinette*: this she donates this to the project. She recalls that she used to go to the cinema two or three times a week, and regards the full programme of shorts, newsreels, and so on alongside the main feature as exceptionally good value. She remembers the ubiquitous queues outside cinemas, and asking grownups to accompany her into 'A' films. The couple name several cinemas in and around Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington, where they grew up, and--a theme which comes up several times throughout the interview--insist that they have no desire whatsoever to go to the cinema today. Looking back on her youthful cinemagoing, Mrs Barnett remembers the expansive pleasures of the continuous programme, her excursions to the pictures with friends, and her mother's lifelong love of films. Photos produced by the interviewer elicit many memories of stars and films, including their 'likes' (Astaire and Rogers, Jessie Matthews, Deanna Durbin) and dislikes (Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo). They call to mind the particular pleasures of Cinerama and CinemaScope: "You had the feeling that you were in it." Mrs Barnett recalls the intense publicity surrounding child star Shirley Temple, and the Temple-style dresses that her mother bought for her. There are memories of reading the film magazines, of enjoying 'foreign' films in the West End, of cinemas that boasted tea rooms, and of leisure pursuits--playing outdoors, listening to radio, dancing--other than going to the pictures.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Finsbury Park Astoria](#) (cinematreasures site)

 [Regent Street Cinema](#) (cinematreasures site)

 [Jessie Matthews singing 'Over My Shoulder' from *Evergreen*, 1934](#) (Youtube)

 [Marie Antoinette Birthday Card](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

LOIS BASNETT (LB-95-187) AND BERT (HERBERT) PARTINGTON (BP-95-188)

Lois Basnett and Bert (Herbert) Partington came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through their membership of the Westhoughton History Society (WHS), and joined the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core



informants during the summer of that year. On 9 May 1995, the couple

Lido, Bolton (uploaded by Mike_Blakemore) Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

were interviewed, along with three other WHS members, at Westhoughton Library, and again on 30 May 1995 at their home in Westhoughton. Miss Basnett was born in Westhoughton, Bolton in 1919: her father, a socialist, vegetarian and local councillor, owned a newsagents shop. She attended the Canon Slade Grammar School in Bolton, went on to teacher training college, and took up a career as a secondary school teacher in her home town. Mr Partington was born in Bolton in 1918 and, aside from war service, had lived in the area all his life. He attended the Canon Slade Grammar School in Bolton, leaving at the age of sixteen and taking up employment as a shop assistant. His later jobs included Royal Air Force technical instructor and sales representative.

In their first interview, Miss Basnett, Mr Partington, and other WHS members share memories of Westhoughton's two cinemas, one of which began life as a roller skating rink, and proceed to consider Bolton's various 'classes' of cinema and the types of programming on offer. The high-profile activities of the local Watch Committee with regard to Sunday opening of cinemas and regulating and certificating films are debated. The cinema billboards advertising the week's films that graced shop fronts in town--and the free tickets shopkeepers received in return--are remembered. The feeling is expressed that films seemed to take a very long time to reach Bolton after their general release. Early picturegoing memories are highlighted: projector breakdowns, attendants failing to keep rowdy audiences in order, disinfectant sprays. The mighty organ at Bolton's supercinema is remembered, as are the double seats for courting couples in another local picture house, and the cheap seats behind the cinema screen in yet another.

The conversation in the couple's second interview ranges widely, with a prominent theme that they were very different people in the 1930s, that tastes change over the years, and that films that might have impressed them in their youth would probably seem silly now: "Nowadays we're far more sophisticated," says Mr Partington. Looking at cinema advertisements in a 1930s edition of the local newspaper prompts recollections of stars and films. Miss Basnett recalls being more interested in live theatre than in cinema, but does remember occasional teenage trips to the pictures in Manchester with an aunt, neglecting her Latin and Greek homework in favour of cinema visits with her sixth-form friends, and being frightened by the film *Night Must Fall* when she was at teacher training college. She expands on her father's eccentricities, about the miners and other locals who patronised her father's shop, the 1926 General Strike, a local pit tragedy, wartime bombing, and the arrival of evacuees in the town. Mr Partington reiterates the point about changing tastes, expresses regret that the past is too often romanticised, and offers some observations on film stars, good looks, beauty and style, as well as on female and male tastes in films.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)



 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS


 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Scan of CCINTB Questionnaire \(LB-95-187DQ001\)](#)

 Scan of CCINTB Questionnaire (BP-95-188DQ001)

 Scan of letter (BP-95-188PL001) |  Transcript

 Edward Basnett - History of Bolton Town Hall (boltonmayors.org.uk site)

 Odeon Cinema, Bolton (chestercinemas.co.uk site)

 Nightclub scene from *Scarface*, 1932 (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ADA BELLIS (AB-95-186)

Ada Bellis came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through her membership of the Westhoughton History Society (WHS), and was among the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants during 1995. One of four children, Miss Bellis was born in Bolton in 1909 and had always lived in Bolton.

Her parents had migrated to the area from North Wales before she was born; her mother was a housewife and her father had contracted a lung disease while employed in a local colliery that forced him to stop work. Miss Bellis left school at fourteen and took a job as a weaver; she later worked as a library assistant. She was interviewed along with four other WHS members on 9 May 1995, and again at her home in Westhoughton on 30 May 1995.

In her first interview, Miss Bellis and other WHS members share memories of the town's two cinemas, one of which began life as a roller skating rink, and they proceed to consider Bolton's various 'classes' of cinema and the types of programming on offer. The high-profile activities of the local Watch Committee with regard to Sunday opening of cinemas and regulating and certificating films are debated. The cinema billboards advertising the week's films that graced shop fronts in town --and the free tickets shopkeepers received in return--are remembered. A general feeling is



Film screenshot (Universal Pictures), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

expressed that films seemed to take a very long time to reach Bolton after their general release. Early picturegoing memories are highlighted: projector breakdowns, attendants failing to keep rowdy audiences in order, disinfectant sprays. The mighty organ at Bolton's supercinema is remembered, as are the double seats for courting couples in another local picture house, and the cheap seats behind the cinema screen in yet another.

In her second, solo, interview, Miss Bellis talks about the two cinemas in Westhoughton, about her mother's enjoyment of cinemagoing, and about the Saturday 'penny rush'. She went to the pictures once a week, she recalls, usually with her brother; and notes that although she had no particular favourites among film stars she did enjoy the Sherlock Holmes films and listened to songs by local celebrity Gracie Fields on gramophone records. She tells of an acquaintance meeting the Manchester-born actor Robert Donat and of another who met Jack Buchanan when the actor was performing in live theatre in Bolton.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Scan of CCINTB Questionnaire \(AB-95-186DQ001\)](#)

 [Empire Cinema, Westhoughton \(cinematreasures site\)](#)

 [Extract from 'The Voice of Terror', 1942 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

HILDA BENNETT (HB-95-223)

In Autumn 1995, Hilda Bennett came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through **Cranmer House** care home in Fakenham, Norfolk, joining the twenty-one individuals based in East Anglia who were interviewed for the project as core informants. Mrs Bennett was born in Walsingham, Norfolk in 1923, into a large family headed by a dock labourer father. On leaving school at the age of fourteen she took a job as a nanny, and after her marriage became a housewife. Mrs Bennett took part in two interviews at Cranmer House: on 24 October 1995 she was interviewed along with two other female clients: Mabel Manning, born in 1909, left school at fourteen and went to work as a housemaid; Alice [Marchbank?], born in 1915, left school at sixteen and found work as a "babysitter". On 21 November 1995 Mrs Bennett gave a solo interview.



The Regal, Wells next the Sea

Uploaded by LenGazzard. Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

Conversation between the three participants in Mrs Bennett's first interview opens with reflections on the kinds of films they liked, with cowboys, musicals, and gangsters being the agreed favourites. They also enjoyed comedies--preferring the films of Laurel and Hardy to those of George Formby, who could "Go too far with his jokes." As to star preferences, the elegant fashions and outstanding dance moves on

show in Astaire and Rogers films are referred to a number of times. Not claiming to be avid cinemagoers (they went because "there was nothing else to do"), the interviewees--all of whom had gone into domestic service on leaving school, and probably had little free time--recall weekly Saturday trips to the pictures in the nearest town, Wells next the Sea. They remember cinemas as busy, noisy places, where you might--at the risk of adult disapproval--secretly meet up with a boyfriend. Noting that the older generation was very strict at a time, they maintain, when the streets were safe and front doors could be left unlocked, they lament today's lack of discipline, while at the same time expressing approval of the fact that schools have become far more relaxed places for children.

In her solo interview, asked about the distinctive qualities of her favourite films and stars, Mrs Bennett recalls that she tended to prefer the female stars whose hairstyles and makeup inspired her ("I thought that was me in there, you know"). She reiterates that as a child she enjoyed cowboy films and was later drawn to Astaire and Rogers and to crooners like Bing Crosby. She mentions the strict religious observance of her childhood--three times to Chapel on Sundays; her parents' disapproval of cinema on religious grounds; the strength of local objections to Sunday film shows and the consequent absence of anything to do in town on a Sunday. Mrs Bennett's memories of going to the pictures before the war ("a wonderful thing") suggest that there was nonetheless pleasure to be had. She recalls enjoying the munificence of the continuous performance, which allowed her to stay in the cinema all day for threepence; and notes that the cinema was an agreeable meeting place. She stresses, however, that although she admired the makeup, the hairstyles, and the fashions, she did not aspire to the upmarket lifestyles portrayed in many films: "You knew you couldn't have anything like that."

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 ['Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, Old photographs'](#) (YouTube)

 [Joan Blondell in *Three Broadway Girls*, 1932](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

PHYLLIS BENNETT (PB-95-222)

In the late Summer of 1995, Phyllis Bennett answered a call in the East Anglian press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and eventually became one of the twenty-one individuals, couples and groups living in that region who were interviewed for the project later that year. One of four children, Mrs Bennett was



Screenshot from Mutiny on the Bounty

born in Norwich in 1915 and had lived in the city all her life. On leaving school at fourteen she took a job at a printing works, but much of her working life was spent at the Daniels Brothers horticultural nursery in Bedford Street, Norwich. She was interviewed at her home on the Heartsease Estate in Norwich on 27 October and 17 November 1995.

Mrs Bennett's first interview showcases her familiarity with the history of Hollywood studios and films and the lives of Hollywood stars. She used to go to the pictures four times a week and regularly bought fan magazines, she recalls, and was impressed by stars' lives and the lifestyles portrayed in them. She admits that she no longer goes to the cinema, but still enjoys reading star biographies and watching films and programmes about films on TV. Her impressive collection of books and magazines prompts numerous recollections: some sixty film personalities and over forty films are referred to in the course of the interview. The private lives of the stars--Clark Gable's womanising, preference for blondes, and many marriages, for example--are

discussed in depth. She remembers the Saturday matinees of her childhood, paying for admission with jam jars and rabbit skins, and being riveted by the cliffhangers that closed episodes of the weekly serial. Naming the Norwich cinemas she frequented, Mrs Bennett notes with regret that few remain.

Her second interview is focussed mainly on film stars, their lives and their films, with less emphasis on her own cinemagoing memories. An enthusiast for Hollywood films made before, during, and after the 1930s ("My films were everything to me"), Mrs Bennett shows the interviewer the album of star photos, film details, and so on covering the years from the 1930s to the 1950s that she created herself and had professionally bound at her workplace (very much against the rules). She continues to read widely about the lives of Hollywood stars, and her assessment of them is based largely on their star personae, the kinds of (often less than perfect) people they were in real life, and their ageing and mortality. Particularly prominently featured in the conversation are special favourites Clark Gable and Norma Shearer, but in the course of the interview over eighty film personalities and more than sixty films are named and discussed, with Mrs Bennett also alluding to classic films recently, or soon to be, broadcast on TV.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |



 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)



 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Scan of Letter \(PB-95-222PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of Letter \(PB-95-222PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [The Norvic, Norwich \(cinematreasures.org\)](#)

 [Early Buck Rogers film short \(1934\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Extract from Jezebel \(1938\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Daniels Brothers/Eaton Nurseries \(colonelunthanksnorwich.com site\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

BENTLEY DAY CENTRE (BC-95-204)

In Spring 1995 Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted Bentley Day Centre in the London suburb of **Harrow**, seeking participants in the project; and two interviews were conducted there later that year. On 7 July, a group interview took place involving four of the Centre's clients: the participants were: Kathleen Wicks (born in Islington in 1916, moved to Harrow in 1950), who left school at the age of fourteen and entered the world of work as a nursemaid; Jessie (surname and year of birth unrecorded; born in Blackfriars, moved to Harrow in 1950), whose father was secretary of the local Labour Party; she left school at sixteen and worked as a shorthand typist; Pat (surname, birthplace, and year of birth unrecorded; moved to Harrow in 1950), who left school at eighteen and joined the Civil Service; and **Lynn Chalk** (born in Fulham in 1911). On 21 July Mrs Chalk was interviewed on her own as a core informant.



*Dominion Theatre, Tottenham Court Road, 1931
(cinematreasures.org site)*

The group interview opens with a brief discussion of the participants' early cinemagoing, which took place before they moved to Harrow from other parts of London. Prompted by photographs of stars and local cinemas, all agree that the


Harrow Granada was particularly luxurious, and that while all the 30s stars were “nice” none stand out in recollection. Cinema and films, they affirm, were altogether “a better thing in those days”, when they would go to the pictures once or twice a week. The conversation turns to additional attractions—orchestras, cinema organs--available in some cinemas; to other leisure pursuits, dancing in particular; and thence to the role of dancing and picturegoing in courtship. The interview concludes with remarks on how much Harrow—still a largely rural area in the 1930s—has changed over the decades.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

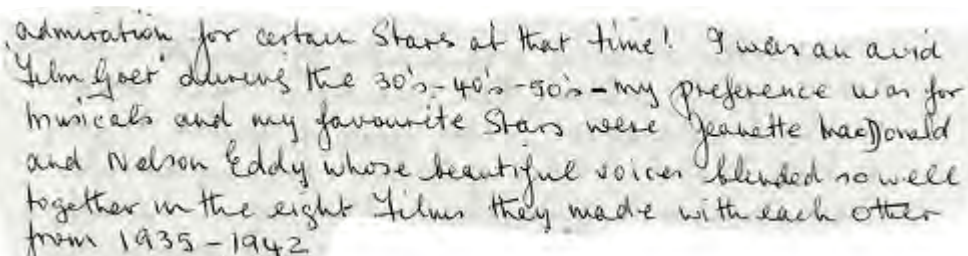
 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Granada Harrow \(cinematreasures site\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



JOAN BICE (JB-95-228)





admiration for certain Stars at that time! I was an avid
Film Goer during the 30's-40's-50's - my preference was for
Musicals and my favourite Stars were Jeanette MacDonald
and Nelson Eddy whose beautiful voices blended so well
together in the eight films they made with each other
from 1935-1942

Extract from one of Joan Bice's letters

In Summer 1995, Joan Bice of Plymouth, Devon heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain from a friend and wrote to the project office about her lifelong admiration of the singing duo Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Born in Plymouth in 1925, Mrs Bice left school at sixteen and took a job as a shorthand typist; she was a housewife for much of her subsequent working life. Later in 1995, she took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(JB-95-228PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(JB-95-228PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(JB-95-228GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



JOAN BILLINGE (JB-22-001)



Joan Billinge was born in Birkenhead on Merseyside in 1924, the middle of three sisters. Her father was a shipyard labourer, her mother a housewife; and on leaving school at the age of eighteen she took up office work. Early in 2022 her daughter, Lindsey Billinge, came across the Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain website and contacted the project office with an offer to donate forty-five film star postcards collected by her late mother, a keen cinemagoer in the 1930s and 1940s and a particular fan of Clark Gable. The offer was enthusiastically accepted, and the postcards were added to CMDA's memorabilia collection along with a short essay by Lindsey setting out some details of her mother's background, naming cinemas attended, and listing over seventy films her mother saw during 1947.



*Donated postcard of Clarke Gable
(JB-22-001PC020)*


In her daughter's account, Joan Billinge was at the pictures when the end of the war was announced: "The film was stopped to make the announcement and everybody stood to sing the national anthem before leaving I can only presume that she was going regularly throughout the war."

 Document scan (LB-22-001PL001) |  Transcript

 Document scan (LB-22-001PW001) |  Transcript

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Star Postcards Collection](#)

 [Ritz Cinema, Birkenhead](#) (cinematreasures.org site)

 [Gaumont Cinema, Birkenhead](#) (cinematreasures.org site)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ASHLEY BIRD (AB-95-198)

In Summer 1995, Ashley Bird heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through Roxeth Local History Society in the London suburb of Harrow and offered to take part in the project, joining the eighteen core CCINTB informants based in and around Harrow. Mr Bird was born in 1917 in South Harrow, and lived there until the late 1930s. His father had been killed in action in World War One just two months before his birth, and his mother later married again--his stepfather, a builder, was the only father he knew. On leaving school at fifteen Mr Bird took a job as an office boy, and later in the 1930s worked for a gas company. After World War Two, he went into the horticulture business, jointly managing a garden centre. His interviews took place on 12 July 1995 and 26 July 1995 in the noisy milieu of Harrow Civic Centre.



Coliseum Cinema, Harrow

Uploaded by AndreasP. Public Domain License via

cinematreasures.org

Much of Mr Bird's first interview is devoted to reflections on cinemagoing, including his recollections of the coming of sound. He also muses on what life was like during the 1930s, especially in relation to the affordability of going to the pictures. Towards the close of the interview he shares some touching thoughts on old age and memory.

Mr Bird's further reflections on cinemagoing in his second interview are aided by looking through a 1938 film annual brought along by the interviewer. As he leafs through it, he discusses many stars of the period--over sixty film personalities are named in the course of the interview. He talks about his local area and recalls some of the activities he enjoyed as a boy, highlighting the strategies he and his friends devised for getting into the cinema for nothing. He recalls stars--including Jessie Matthews, Cicely Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert--who lived in the Harrow area. He calls attention to the animated films of the thirties, and points up the key role played by cinema newsreels during those pre-war years.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Granada Theatre, Harrow \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Information on Lyon's Nippies \(wikipedia site\)](#)

 [Information on Lyons & Co \(graciesguide.co.uk\)](#)

 [The Elite, the Cosy and the Cosy bus \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ROSALIND AVADIS (RA-95-199) AND MICK BLOOM (MB-95-199)

The friends Rosalind Avadis and Mick (Maurice) Bloom heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through a Jewish Friendship Club in the London suburb of Harrow. They offered to share their memories, and eventually joined the eighteen core CCINTB informants based in and around Harrow. They were interviewed together on 27 July and 27 November

1995 in the Middlesex New Synagogue, Harrow. Mr Bloom was born in the East End of London in 1909 and lived there throughout the 1930s, moving to Harrow in the early 1950s. His father was a tailor, his mother a housewife. On leaving school at the age of fourteen he followed his father into the clothing trade. Mrs Avadis was born in 1921 in Notting Hill in West London and the family moved to Neasden, a few miles north, soon after. Mrs Avadis's father was a tailor, her mother a housewife. Mrs Avadis left school at sixteen and went into clerical work until her marriage in 1946, when she and her husband moved to Leeds. The family returned to Harrow in the 1960s.

The first interview covers the informants' early ventures to the cinema: Mrs Avadis remembers her local picture house in Notting Hill and the first talkie that she saw; and Mr Bloom talks about some of the East End cinemas he frequented. Both recall



*Interior of the Trocadero, Kentish Town, London
(uploaded by Ken Roe). Creative Commons
(Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org*

stars and films of the 1930s, with a special mention for the 1929 musical *The Desert Song*, acknowledging their differences of opinion on certain film stars. Mr Bloom talks about his collection of film posters, and Mrs Avadis reiterates that she liked "a good film with a good actor or a good actress."

In their second interview, Mrs Avadis and Mr Bloom leaf through contemporary film annuals and reference books, discussing numerous films and commenting on the acting ability, appearance, and careers, of upwards of fifty stars. They discuss the particular qualities of their favourite films and share snippets of gossip about the stars' lives.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Troxy Stepney, London \(cinematreasures.org\)](#)

 [Deanna Durbin in 'One Hundred Men and a Girl', 1937 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Extract from 'The Desert Song', 1929 \(YouTube\)](#)

Publication relating to Mrs Avadis and Mr Bloom's interviews:

Toffell, Gil. (2018). *Jews, Cinema and Public Life in Interwar Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

DORRIS BRAITHWAITE (DB-95-038)

Early in 1995, Dorris (Doris) Braithwaite of Bolton, Greater Manchester responded to a request for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and joined the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants later that year. Mrs Braithwaite was born in Stockport in 1922: her father was an engineer, her mother a housewife. On leaving school at fourteen, she worked as a shop assistant and in later years as a machinist, a typist and a housewife. A published author, Mrs Braithwaite was a member of Bolton's Clarence Street Creative Writers Group and had written articles and a book about the singing star Nelson Eddy. She was interviewed along with her friends and fellow writers, [Vee \(Vera\) Entwistle](#) and [Kath \(Kathleen\) Browne](#) on 11 May 1995, and with Vee Entwistle on 5 June 1995.



MGM, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In the first interview, which took place in Bolton Library, the three share their earliest cinemagoing memories, which involve some unforgettably frightening films; and recollect the cinemas they attended as they were growing up--how often they went and how they decided on which films to see. Mrs Braithwaite takes the interviewer

through her extensive collection of correspondence with Nelson Eddy, Alice Faye, and other stars, and the conversation takes in other favourites, including Astaire and Rogers ("I felt I could get up and dance," says Kath Browne). There follows general discussion of the plots of some Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald films, and memories of sending off to film magazines for photos of stars. The topic of British films is raised: there is some talk of Lancastrian film personalities, and Mrs Braithwaite records her experience of being an extra in the 1934 Gracie Fields vehicle *Sing As We Go!* Praise for British World War II films segues to a discussion of the VE Day commemorations that were in train at the time of the interview--which ends on an amusing note, with anecdotes about Nelson Eddy buying a horse and the interviewees' jealousy of Eddy's wife.

The second interview was recorded during a day-long visit to Mrs Braithwaite's house, which included a viewing and discussion of the Eddy/MacDonald film *Maytime* and a presentation of Mrs Braithwaite's collection of film memorabilia, several items of which she donated to the project. Comparisons are drawn between Nelson Eddy and other male stars of his day, and more than sixty film personalities, both male and female, are named along with their films. There is discussion of US radio programmes featuring Eddy and other stars, of Mrs Braithwaite's writings, of her membership of the Nelson Eddy Appreciation Society and contacts with other Eddy fans in the UK and overseas, and of her extensive correspondence with her other favourite, Alice Faye. The interviewees offer detailed recollections of dreams about their idols, and of acting out love scenes from films with friends. Towards the end of the interview, discussion returns to Nelson Eddy's life, with anecdotes and gossip about his working relationships with co-stars, his acting skills, and his singing voice and repertoire.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Scan of CCINTB Questionnaire \(DB-95-038CQ001\)](#)

 [Scan of letter \(DB-95-038PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(DB-95-038PL003\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(DB-95-038PL006\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 Scan of letter (DB-95-038PL008) |  Transcript

 Scan of letter (DB-95-038PL009) |  Transcript

 Alice Faye singing 'Now it Can be Told' (YouTube)

 Extract from 'Sing as We Go' with Gracie Fields, 1934 (BBC site)

 Bolton News article on Dorris Braithwaite, 1995 (DB-95-038AR001)

 Bolton News article on Dorris Braithwaite, 1997 (theboltonnews site)

Book chapter drawing on Mrs Braithwaite's interviews:

Kuhn, A. (2002). *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*. London: I.B. Tauris, Chapter 8.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

KATH BROWNE (KB-95-044)

In March 1995, Kath (Kathleen) Browne of Bolton, Greater Manchester contacted Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through the writers' group she belonged to, joining the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants later that year. Miss Browne was born in Bolton in 1921, the daughter of a housewife mother and a regular soldier father turned warehouse storeman; aside from war service as a firefighter, she had lived in Bolton all her life.

Grammar School-educated, Miss Browne left full-time education at sixteen and entered office work. She was interviewed along with her friends and fellow writers **Dorris (Doris) Braithwaite** and **Vee (Vera) Entwistle** on 11 May 1995, and on 1 June 1995 she gave a one-to-one interview at her home.

In their three-way interview, which took place in Bolton Library, Kath Browne, Dorris Braithwaite and Vee Entwistle share their earliest cinemagoing memories and recollect the cinemas they attended as they were growing up--how often they went and how they decided on which films to see. The conversation takes in Nelson Eddy, Alice Faye, and other favourites including Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers ("I felt I



Employee(s) of MGM, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

could get up and dance," says Miss Browne). General discussion follows of the plots of some Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald films, and memories of sending off to film magazines for photos of stars are shared. The topic of British films is raised, with reference made to Lancastrian film personalities like Gracie Fields, scenes in whose 1934 vehicle *Sing As We Go!* were shot in the nearby seaside resort of Blackpool. Praise for British World War II films segues to a discussion of the VE Day commemorations that were in train at the time of the interview--which ends on an amusing note, with anecdotes about Nelson Eddy buying a horse and the interviewees' jealousy of Eddy's wife.

Miss Browne's second, solo, interview, opens with recollections of some Bolton cinemas, and of favourite stars including Bing Crosby, Carole Lombard, and Spencer Tracy. She recalls that an intense period of cinemagoing began around 1934, with regular trips to the pictures accompanied by her school friend Edna, a fan of Bette Davis. Miss Browne notes that she herself favoured film musicals, adding that she also enjoyed theatregoing and Gilbert and Sullivan operas. She shows an acute ear for accents, and at a number of points during the interview conversation turns to regional and local accents and to the question of actors' voices and diction. Discussion ranges further, taking in the religious and political affiliations of close friends and family and 'making do' during wartime food shortages. Perusal of a 1938 film annual brings the conversation back to cinema, and numerous stars and films are alluded to--more than 100 film personalities and over 60 films are named in the course of the interview. Hollywood gossip and scandal are mentioned, and the topic of homosexuality in Hollywood raised. Boltonian authors Bill Naughton and Leslie Halliwell are discussed alongside local film personalities. Miss Browne talks about her passion for reading, and shows the interviewer some items from her extensive library: Halliwell's film guides and a book about British films. Reverting to favourite stars, she confesses to a liking for actors with moustaches. As the interview draws towards its close, the art galleries and museums of Manchester and Glasgow are compared, Dorris Braithwaite's article on Nelson Eddy in 'Evergreen' is mentioned, and Miss Browne tells the interviewer about her enjoyable Saga trip to Glasgow.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Bolton home page](#)

 [The Lido, Bolton \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 ['We're Not Dressing' Trailer \(1934\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Bette Davis in "Jezebel" red dress scene \(1938\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

Publications related to 1930s cinemagoing in Bolton:

Jones, J. (2019). 'These Intimate Little Places': Cinema-Going and Public Emotion in Bolton, 1930-1954, *Cultural and Social History*, 16:4, 451-466, DOI:

[10.1080/14780038.2019.1609801](https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1609801)

Richards, J. (1994). Cinemagoing in Worktown: regional film audiences in 1930s Britain, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 14:2, 147-166, DOI:

[10.1080/01439689400260131](https://doi.org/10.1080/01439689400260131)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

LILIAN BUIK (LB-94-012)

In Autumn 1994, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold renewed an earlier contact with Hamiltonhill, a day centre in Possil, Glasgow where she had conducted interviews with some of its elderly users before joining the project. She arranged to carry out three further interviews, and five of the centre's clients were interviewed for CCINTB. Lilian Buik was among them. Mrs Buik was born in Dobbies Loan, Glasgow, in 1913. She had one sister, and her mother died when she was very young; her father was an electrician, and her jobs had included serving in a butcher's shop and work in a hospital. On 18 November 1994, she took part in a five-way interview at Hamiltonhill, the other four interviewees being **John Shearer**, **Sarah Irvine**, **Nellie (Helen) Donaghy**, and **Davy (David) Paterson**

Discussion during this interview centres mainly on the range and variety of cinemas in the Glasgow area, with recollections of the buildings' interior features and the various forms of entertainment on offer, as well as reflections on the behaviour of cinemagoers. Other leisure pursuits, such as children's games and dancing, are also remembered.



The Vogue, Govan, Glasgow (image © Glasgow City Council, Libraries and Archives via [TheGlasgowStory website](#))


 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Bijou Picture Palace \(TheGlasgowStory site\)](#)

 [Extract of Charlie Chaplin in *Gold Rush*, 1925 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

NANCY CARRINGTON (NC-95-196)

In Summer 1995, Nancy Carrington came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through Harrow Libraries Housebound Readers' Service, joining the project's eighteen core informants based in and around the London suburb of Harrow. Born in Harrow in 1911, Mrs Carrington was one of five children: her father worked for Harrow Council and her mother was a housewife. On leaving school at the age of fourteen she took a job as a mother's help, looking after six children under the age of ten, and later worked in a range of roles, including mending cricket nets at Harrow School. Nancy Carrington took part in four interviews in all: on 7 July and 22 November 1995 she was interviewed on her own; and on 25 July 1995 and 30 April 1996 was joined by her childhood friend and fellow core informant **Nancy (Agnes) Prudhoe**. Also participating on 25 July 1995 was Mrs Prudhoe's sister, Elsie Horne. All the interviews took place in Mrs Carrington's home in South Harrow.

Mrs Carrington's first interview opens with recollections of several cinemas in Harrow —of ticket prices and presenting jam jars for admission--and moves on to memories



Mystery of the Wax Museum, 1933 (poster)

of adolescent cinemagoing—queues outside cinemas, courtship at the pictures--and the particularity of returning home from the cinema at night when Harrow was still semi-rural and all around were “fields and buttercups”. Prompted by the interviewer presenting photographs of film personalities, discussion turns to favourite stars and films, and Mrs Carrington states her preference for “clean romances”. She recalls the toys and games of her childhood and silent films with their piano accompaniment; and in later years dressing up to go to dances. Towards the end of the interview Mrs Carrington suggests that two of her friends might like to be interviewed, and the meeting closes with her reciting a poem by Walter de la Mare.

Mrs Carrington and her friends Nancy Prudhoe and Elsie Horne prompt each other’s memories throughout the lively second interview, in which conversation ranges over local cinemas—with vivid recollections of the Cosy on Harrow Hill; of going to the pictures two or three times a week, dressing up to go, copying the stars’ styles, and queueing to get in. They talk about different star personae and the “clean” films of those years (“You never saw them in bed, did you?”). They exchange gossip about various film personalities, including Jessie Matthews, Gracie Fields, Shirley Temple, “cruel” Joan Crawford, and the recently deceased Ginger Rogers. They ponder the appeal of Laurel and Hardy and Charlie Chaplin. They scare each other with visceral memories of horror films and agree on a preference for American over British stars, acting styles, and films. Towards the close of the interview the tone turns elegiac, with recollections of how quiet and rural Harrow once was and memories of childhood games and toys. Mrs Carrington recites another de la Mare poem and a poem about her children that she wrote herself; and the conversation concludes with reflections on lifelong friendship.

A feeling of loss pervades Mrs Carrington’s third interview, in which she restates her preference for ‘romantic’ films and refers again to the Cosy Cinema on Harrow Hill, mentioning the special Cosy bus that transported picturegoers there and back in the years before the launch of a public bus service, a time when the area was still semi-rural and walking home alone late at night was perfectly safe. She recalls that some local cinemas featured live acts and music alongside films; and on being asked about her feelings on being in the cinema in those days replies “We thought we were there. Actually on the film.” She alludes to the affordability of cinema tickets when she was a child—a few pence or some jam jars--and contrasts the simplicity of her own childhood pursuits with young people’s lives today, and the financial hardships and strict parental discipline of her youth with the unwarranted sex now pervading films and TV now: “I just don’t like the things of today at all.”

When interviewed for the fourth time in Spring 1996 Mrs Carrington had recently

returned from a visit to Zimbabwe with her son and daughter-in-law, and whilst waiting the arrival of Nancy Prudhoe she shows the interviewer the drawings that she had made during her trip. When the interview begins in earnest, the conversation turns towards queueing to get into the cinema and staying to see the film twice over at one sitting. Local cinemas including the Cosy, the Odeon and the Granada are described in some detail and talk turns to favourite stars and the preferred 'romantic' films, with recollections exchanged of going to the pictures and dances with boyfriends. The interviewees have a heated discussion about whether the boys were out of work or not and in consequence whether or not they could afford to pay cinema or dance admission for the girls, or even for themselves. On the subject of getting home after an evening out, the friends debate whether there were any local buses, and mention using an unofficial taxi service to get home. Finally, they return to the subject of the immense changes in the area that have taken place—and continue to do so--during their lifetimes.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 4\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 4\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(3 of 4\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(4 of 4\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Cosy Cinema, Harrow \(cinematreasures site\)](#)

 [Trailer from *The Mystery of the Wax Museum*, 1933 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Jessie Matthews in *Evergreen*, 1934 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [The Elite, the Cosy and the Cosy bus \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ELLEN CASEY (EC-95-182)

Ellen Casey learned about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through the Harpurhey Local History Group, of which she was a member, and joined the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants during 1995. Born in Collyhurst, an inner city area of Manchester, in 1921, and the oldest of ten children,

Mrs Casey had lived in that part of the city nearly all her life. Her father, a jobbing labourer, was often unemployed; in consequence the family sometimes had to seek assistance from the local Board of Guardians. On leaving school at the age of fourteen, Mrs Casey got a job running errands in a raincoat factory and later achieved her ambition of becoming a machinist.

Mrs Casey's local history group held its meetings in Harpurhey Library, where her interview took place on 31 May 1995. In it she recalls regular visits from the age of about five to her beloved local picture house (the "Cinny"), which she describes in detail. The Cinny's closure whilst being equipped for sound, and the alternative arrangements that had to be made, are vividly recollected. She talks about the various stratagems she devised as a youngster for making money to go to the pictures, and recollects singing songs from musicals; asking to be taken in to 'A' films; crying at sad films; and discussing films with her schoolmates. She describes being



Warner Brothers trailer screenshot featuring Ross Alexander. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

taken to the pictures by a young man who resembled the actor Ross Alexander, and recalls the names upwards of fifty film stars she liked, as well as some sixty films. She confesses that she would have been happy to go to the pictures every night, and remembers her feelings when she was at the cinema--envy, longing, wanting to be like the glamorous people she saw on the screen. Her husband was an award-winning ballroom dancer, she says, but she didn't go dancing herself because she didn't have the right clothes. She smartened up during WW2 when she had access to extra clothing coupons and was able to swap clothes with the Jewish refugees she worked with. She reflects on some favourite male stars and on her likes and dislikes, the latter including George Formby, serials, and gangster films; and passes on some gossip about Clark Gable and Loretta Young's secret love-child. About her life, Mrs Casey concludes: "I had the will-power to do anything".



 [Audio-synced interview](#)



 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)



DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Scan of questionnaire\(EC-95-182DQ001\)](#)

 [Scan of letter \(EC-95-182PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of essay \(EC-95-182PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(EC-95-182PL003\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Rex Picture Hall, Manchester \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Gracie Field singing in Rochdale \(YouTube\)](#)

 [The Clothing Aspect \(News & Blog area\)](#)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

HILDA CATCHPOLE (HC-95-215)

Hilda Catchpole of Lowestoft, Suffolk became involved with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through her lifelong friend **Peggy Kent**. Mrs Catchpole was born in Lowestoft in 1916, and her father was a boilermaker. Her first job after leaving school at the age of fourteen was at the Premier Laundry in Lowestoft, where she met the women who were to become her lifelong friends: **Peggy Kent**, **Gladys Kent**, **Barbara Harvey**, and **Hilda Green**. She was



The Odeon, Lowestoft (uploaded by Mike_Blakemore). Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

interviewed, along with all four of her fellow 'laundry girls', at Peggy Kent's home in Lowestoft on 18 October 1995; and again with three of the four--Peggy Kent, Gladys Kent and Barbara Harvey--on 13 November 1995.

In their lively and laughter-filled first interview, Mrs Catchpole and her friends--who now rarely see each other as a group--share memories of the good times they enjoyed in the thirties. Described in the interviewer's field notes as "glamorous pensioners", they reminisce about the fun they had and recall the complex web of social events they shared. They offer hilarious yarns about work at the laundry, getting ready to go to the pictures or the dance hall, trying out hairstyles, makeup, and fashions; looking your best ("And we did look lovely!"); imitating film stars and getting ideas from the films about what they were going to wear; going for a dip in

the sea on the way home from an evening out. They update each other with anecdotes and news about their families, and vividly recall a wartime bombing raid on Lowestoft.

While most of the conversation in the friends' second interview again consists of shared reminiscences about their youthful exploits, their boyfriends, husbands and children, the women are induced to talk about stars and films when shown a film star annual from the 1930s. They swap opinions about favourite stars, most of whom are male; they remember how people copied actions, gestures, fashions, and hairstyles from films; and share amusing anecdotes about cinema visits with friends and family members.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Palm Court Orchestra, The Grand, Eastbourne](#) (mastersofmeolody.co.uk site)

 [South Pier, Lowestoft](#) (lowestofthistory.com site)

 [Health & Beauty Display At Wembley, 1939](#) (YouTube)

 [Donated Photographs](#)

Book chapter drawing on Mrs Kent's interviews:

Kuhn, A. (2002) 'Growing Up with Cinema', in *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, Chapter 5. London: I.B.Tauris/Bloomsbury.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

LYNN CHALK (LC-95-204)

In Spring 1995 Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted **Bentley Day Centre** in the London suburb of Harrow, seeking participants in the project; and two interviews were conducted there later that year. On 7 July, four of the Centre's clients took part in a group interview; and on 21 July one of the four, Lynn Chalk, was interviewed on her own as one of Harrow's eighteen core informants. Mrs Chalk was born in Fulham in 1911; her father was a house painter and her mother a housewife. She left school at fourteen and was employed as a cashier for most of her working life. She moved to Harrow in 1934.



Kim Traynor, CC BY-SA 3.0 , via Wikimedia Commons

The group interview opens with a brief discussion of participants' earliest cinemagoing, which took place before they moved to Harrow from other parts of London. Prompted by photographs of stars and local cinemas, all agree that while all the thirties stars were "nice" none really stand out in recollection. All recall going to the pictures once or twice a week in the 1930s, and Mrs Chalk remembers weekly visits to the Embassy cinema in Harrow with her mother. There is general agreement that cinema and films were altogether "a better thing in those days". The conversation turns to extra attractions—orchestras, cinema organs--available in some

cinemas; to other leisure pursuits, dancing in particular; and thence to the role of dancing and picturegoing in courtship. The interview concludes with remarks on how much Harrow—still a largely rural area in the 1930s—has changed over the decades.

In her solo interview Mrs Chalk elaborates on cinema visits with her husband early in her marriage, recalling that their favourite venue in Harrow was the Dominion. Her eyesight is poor, but with the interviewer's assistance she is able to refer to a 1930s film annual throughout the interview. Discussion of around forty film personalities ensues, with their ageing—not on the whole graceful—being a recurrent theme. Most of the stars that she names are male, and she maintains that she had no particular favourites among them: “We liked them all. You know?” Reverting to memories of going to the pictures with her late husband, she remembers enjoyable trips into London's West End (“up town”): strolling around, seeing a film, and perhaps calling in at a Lyons Corner House for refreshment. Once again she recollects cinema visits in Harrow with her mother, noting that her cinemagoing days came to an end when her sight began to deteriorate.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Richard Tauber singing 'My Heart's Delight' \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

BEATRICE COOPER (BC-95-208)

In 1995, Beatrice Cooper heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain from a friend, contacted the project office with an offer of assistance, and eventually became one of CCINTB's eighteen core informants based in and around the London suburb of Harrow. She was interviewed in her home on 20 July and 27 November 1995. Mrs Cooper was born in Hendon, north London, in 1921, and her father was Russian. She left school at the age of sixteen and won a scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She was a secretary in her first job, and later a housewife and a performer.



'Road to Life' poster. Mezhrabpomfilm, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In her first interview, Mrs Cooper recalls her earliest cinemagoing memory—of being impressed by a particular scene in the 1927 version of *Seventh Heaven*, which she saw in a cinema in Kentish Town at the age of five or six: she had been taken there by the family's maid. She mentions, and describes scenes from, films seen in favoured haunts such as the Academy cinema in Oxford Street and the Everyman in Hampstead, recollecting her particular enjoyment of the 1931 Soviet film *Putyovka v zhizn*/Road to Life. She talks about collecting photographs of film stars—her all-time favourite was Greta Garbo: "I was totally in awe of her. She had a special sort of

magic” –and about winning a Picturegoer competition and meeting Madeleine Carroll at the prizegiving ceremony; about weekday afternoon visits, usually with school friends, to a cinema where the programme featured live acts and service of tea at seat during the interval. She liked Deanna Durbin and Grace Moore and the British actress Nova Pilbeam, whom she once saw on a train. In the course of the interview Mrs Cooper names upwards of fifty films that she remembers seeing. Unusually among our informants, she recalls enjoying Russian, German and French films, and refers to the many emigré film actors and directors working in Britain in the 1930s. She talks about queuing to get into the cinema and about the packed and smoky picture houses that you could sit in all day: “such a lovely atmosphere.”

In her second interview, Mrs Cooper takes the interviewer through her autograph book, talking about some of the actors who signed it and about other stars of the period, including Elisabeth Bergner, Norma Shearer, and Nova Pilbeam, who starred in emigré director Berthold Viertel’s *Little Friend* (1934).

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS


 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Article 'Madeleine Carroll Among the Fans' \(Beatrice Cooper is one of prizewinners\) \(BC-95-208AR001\)](#)


 [Palace Cinema \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Picturegoer editions January-April 1935 \(large file; archive.org site\)](#)

 [Little Friend, 1934 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Road to Life, 1931 \(YouTube\)](#)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

 [A 'Curious Death' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

BETTY COOPER (BC-95-019)



Betty Cooper heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain via the Pensioners' Association and contacted the project office in early February 1995. Born in London in 1934, the only child of a house decorator, she had lived in London, in Worthing, Sussex, and also in Glasgow, where she underwent post-secondary education. Her varied working life included administrative jobs in retail and in public services.



In a telephone conversation with Research Fellow Valentina Bold, Miss

Cooper talked about her background and filmgoing history (her earliest visit to the cinema was to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at the age of four) and kindly offered to donate five film books from the 1930s that had been given to her by her mother. She was sent a single-page questionnaire, which she completed and returned in March, enclosing a letter expanding on her responses to the questionnaire and mentioning some particularly impactful cinemagoing memories: the voice of Bambi's mother urging Bambi to run from the fire; and seeing the newsreels of the liberation of Belsen and Auschwitz at the age of ten at her father's insistence--"To this day I still see those images."





'Film Lovers Annual' donated by Better Cooper


 Document scan (BC-95-019PL001) |  Transcript

 Document scan (BC-95-019PL002) |  Transcript

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 Questionnaire (BC-95-019CQ001)

 Dome Cinema, Worthing (cinematreasures.org site)

 Rivoli Cinema, Worthing (cinematreasures.org site)

 Donated books and annuals

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

JOHN COOPER (JC-95-045) AND MARION COOPER (MC-95-046)

In Spring 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted a number of local organisations in Bolton, Greater Manchester, seeking volunteers to take part in the project. Among these organisations was the Bolton branch of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) which supported a local history study group. Former study group secretary John Cooper and his wife Marion were among the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed as core informants later in 1995.



*Embassy Cinema, Bolton Uploaded by Ken Roe.
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cinematreasures.org*

Born respectively in 1915 and 1910, John and Marion Cooper were among our older participants (the median year of birth for all our core informants was 1919). Mrs Cooper was born in Little Lever, near Bolton, one of three children: her father, who was a Labour Party member and a local councillor, worked in a cotton bleachworks, as did her mother before she had children. Mrs Cooper left school when she was fourteen, and when she was twenty-seven went to agricultural college and later worked in a dairying laboratory. Mr Cooper, whose father was a cotton spinner, was born in Bolton. On leaving school at fourteen, he worked with his father as an operative cotton spinner and subsequently taught and lectured on textiles, latterly at

the Bolton Institute of Higher Education. Mr and Mrs Cooper had both lived in and around Bolton all their lives, and were interviewed together at their home in Dunscar, Bolton, on 8 May and 14 June 1995.

As they stress at the start of their first interview, neither informant had ever been a keen cinemagoer—though Mr Cooper was aware of the social contexts of interwar leisure activities and knowledgeable about Mass Observation’s 1930s Worktown studies. Mrs Cooper, who was “not encouraged” to go to the pictures as a child, recalls being taken to the cinema by her father on one memorable occasion, after which she was left wondering for years about how the ‘cliffhanger’ at the end of the serial was resolved. Mr Cooper notes that he considered most Hollywood films to be trivial rubbish, but that he would be interested in films based on literary sources. When her husband leaves the room towards the end of the interview, Mrs Cooper talks about her childhood in Little Lever, about going to dance halls in Bolton as a teenager, and family holidays in the nearby seaside resort of Fleetwood.

For their second interview, the Coopers were joined by Mrs Cooper’s sister Alice, and the conversation begins with recollections of a famous experiment in progressive education in the village of Prestolee, not far from Little Lever where Mrs Cooper and Alice grew up. The Prestolee school was also a community centre that offered leisure activities at all hours—which meant that Prestolee didn’t need a cinema. The interviewees share memories of the only picture house in Little Lever and agree that cinemagoing was regarded as a working-class pursuit at the time. When talk turns to film stars, Mr Cooper remarks that he doesn’t know many stars’ names; and, talking about a cinema in Bolton, reiterates that “We didn’t go a lot”—though he did, he says, follow local celebrity Gracie Fields, and bought her records; he also mentions well-known Boltonians Alice Foley and Bill Naughton.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Ken Howarth 'An Oral History of Oral History' \(British Library Sounds site\)](#)

 [Extract from 'Modern Times' with Charlie Chaplin, 1936 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [National Clarion Cycling Club \(clarioncc.org\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

CRANMER HOUSE (CC-95-223)

In Autumn 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted Cranmer House care home in Fakenham, Norfolk, seeking potential participants in the project; and between October that year and the following May five interviews were conducted there. On 24 October 1995, two group interviews took place: in the morning with four residents and in the afternoon with another three. Participants in the morning session were **Jack and Rose Smith**, Fred Barnes, born 1901, a retired farm worker, and Bert (surname unrecorded, born 1921), with a carer present. In the afternoon, **Hilda Bennett** was interviewed along with Mabel Manning and Alice [Marchbank?]. On 21 November 1995, Jack Smith and Hilda Bennett gave separate solo interviews; and on 2 May 1996, Jack and Rose Smith were interviewed together. All the interviews took place at Cranmer House.



*The Norvic, Norwich (uploaded by Mike_Blakemore)
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cinematreasures.org*

While none of those taking part in the morning interview on 24 October claim to have been regular cinemagoers, they jog each other's memories, naming several cinemas in Norwich and also mentioning the names of music hall artistes and radio personalities who made films--these include Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge, who were particular favourites of Jack Smith's. Mr Smith recalls that his main

interests were cricket and football, and he says he would only go to the pictures when there was nothing else to do; while Mrs Smith says she rarely went because she grew up in a rural area "miles from anywhere". The film *Mandy*, which the couple saw together, had made a great impression on them, and is mentioned more than once. The interviewer shows some photographs of stars, and this elicits further memories. The participants offer vivid recollections of earlier entertainments such as crystal radio sets and street musicians, the latter prompting reminiscences of old-time street traders--knife grinders, barrel organ players, rag-and-bone men, and the like.

Conversation between the participants in the afternoon interview opens with reflections on the kinds of films they liked, with cowboys, musicals, and gangsters agreed favourites. They also enjoyed comedies--Laurel and Hardy rather than George Formby, who according to Alice could "Go too far with his jokes." As to star preferences, the elegant fashions and outstanding dance moves on show in Astaire and Rogers films are referred to a number of times. Not claiming to be avid cinemagoers ("There was nothing else to do"), the interviewees--all three of whom had gone into domestic service on leaving school, and probably had little free time--recall weekly Saturday trips to the pictures in the nearest town, Wells next the Sea. They remember cinemas as busy, noisy places, where you might--at the risk of adult disapproval--secretly meet up with boyfriends. Noting that the older generation was very strict when they were young-- at a time, they maintain, when the streets were safe and front doors could be left unlocked--they lament today's lack of discipline-- while at the same time expressing approval of the fact that schools have become far more relaxed places for children.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [The Hippodrome, Norwich](#) (cinematreasures site)

 ['Do you remember these Norwich Cinemas'](#) (Eastern Daily Press site)

 [Harry Lauder singing 'Keep Right On To The End of the Road', 1926](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

GEORGE CULLUM (GC-95-220) AND ETHEL CULLUM (EC-95-220)

George and Ethel Cullum responded to a call in the East Anglian local press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and they were among the twenty-one individuals, couples and groups living in that region who were interviewed during late 1995. Born respectively in 1910 and 1908, Mr and Mrs Cullum were among our oldest participants (the median year of birth for all our core informants was 1919). Ethel

Cullum was born in Sprowston in Norfolk and left school at the age of fourteen and went to work in a boot factory, but for most of her working life she was a housewife. George Cullum, born in Spixworth, near Norwich, also left school at fourteen and worked as a bricklayer and later as a printer.

The Cullums' interviews took place on 25 October and 14 November 1995 at their home in Spixworth. In their first interview Mrs Cullum talks about the deprivations of her early years in a family of twelve children headed by an extremely strict, even brutal, father who, according to family legend, was the illegitimate son of an aristocratic mother. The young Ethel was not allowed to go dancing, and "every time my mother had a child, she used to get a hiding off my father." The couple talk about the cinemas in Norwich that they went to in the 1920s and 1930s, and Mr Cullum recalls being told by elders about some places in Norwich where films were screened during the 1910s. The couple chat about film stars and their interest in stars' lives,



*Cinema de Luxe, Norwich. Uploaded by granola.
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cinematreasures.org*

and about their own current lives, family members, outings and hobbies, and about Mr Cullum's domestic skills.

In their second interview Mrs Cullum, a lifelong film fan, does most of the talking, with vivid accounts of 'making do' as a child as well as recollections of favourite films and stars of the 1930s and of the decades since; of enjoying solo trips to the cinema as a young mother; and—uniquely among our informants—expressing a preference for current films over the films of her youth: "Films nowadays are made so much better."

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Scan of letter to Stephen Peart \(EC-95-220PL001\)](#)

 [Transcript](#)

 [News article about Alfred Warminger \(mentioned in interview\)](#)

 [News article about the Thatched cinema \(mentioned in interview\)](#)

 [Final screening at 'The Norvic Cinema' \(East Anglian Film Archive website\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

GWEN CURNICK (GC-95-191) AND FRED CURNICK (FC-95-192)

In the early summer of 1995 Gwen Curnick heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through her local history society, and contacted the project office with an offer of assistance.



The Grosvenor, Harrow (uploaded by Granola).Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

With her brother, Fred, she soon joined CCINTB's eighteen core informants based in and around the London suburb of Harrow. Gwen and Fred Curnick were both born in South Harrow, in 1924 and 1920 respectively, into a family of three children, plus two considerably older half-sisters from their father's first marriage. Mr Curnick Senior was a tallow merchant; and, aside from some paid employment during the war, his wife was a full-time housewife. Both siblings left school at fourteen, with Fred at first following his father into the tallow trade, and then later running a greengrocer's shop and a tobacconist. Gwen took an office job on leaving school, and spent most of her subsequent working life in the Civil Service and in local government. Aside from Fred's war service in India, both had

lived in South Harrow all their lives, Gwen in the house that she and Fred grew up in. It was there that the pair were interviewed together on 5 July and 19 July 1995.

Their first interview opens with a discussion of some of the cinemas operating in Harrow during the 1930s, and with recollections of their parents' cinemagoing habit. They talk about the free bus service that ferried filmgoers up Harrow Hill to the Cosy Cinema and down again; about motor excursions and holidays with parents; and about cinemagoing and courtship. They reflect on the popularity of ballroom dancing in the 30s, recalling a dancehall and a school of dancing in South Harrow owned by a friend. Reflections on why people preferred American films to British-made ones lead into shared memories of listening to songs from film musicals on gramophone records and on the radio. They ruminate on the huge changes Harrow has undergone during their lifetimes: when they were young, they recall, the countryside was just a short walk from the house. The interview concludes with amusing tales of mixed fortunes during holiday trips to Scotland.

The second interview opens with the naming of celebrities living in Harrow, before turning to consideration of the special qualities of various film personalities and the changes over the years in their own star and film preferences. In the course of the interview, prompted by each other and by leafing through 1930s film annuals brought along by the interviewer, the siblings call to mind a hundred or more film stars. On the British film stars who were not snapped up by Hollywood, their agreed verdict is that "We only had the dregs over here". Going to the pictures, they emphasise, was the main leisure opportunity in their youth, being far more affordable than it is today. They recollect the lively family life they shared as youngsters--their parents were strict, but were happy to welcome their children's friends and other visitors into the home. They discuss the "rare treat" of going to London's West End to see a play or a film, and about film screenings at school; and Fred recalls putting on home film shows with a projector and reels of early films and newsreels that he was given at the age of about ten.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

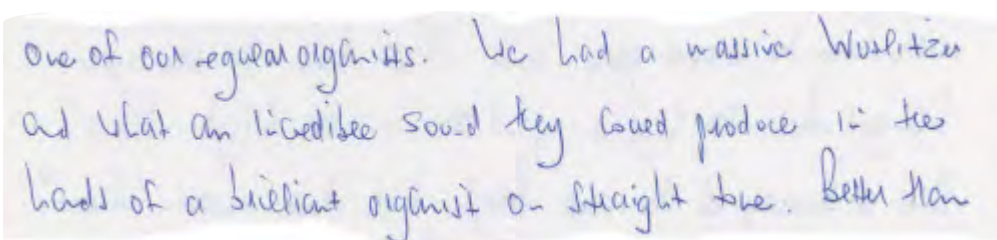
 [Cosy Cinema, Harrow \(cinematreasures.org\)](#)

- 📄 Harrow Cottage Hospital (harrowonline.org)
 - 📄 Extract from *Cape to Cairo*, 1926 (YouTube)
 - 📄 Fred Astaire singing 'Top Hat, White Tie and Tails', 1932 (YouTube)
 - 📄 The Elite, the Cosy and the Cosy bus (News & Blog area)
-

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



MAURICE DE LA BERTAUCHE (MD-95-097)



One of our regular organists. We had a massive Wurlitzer and what an incredible sound they could produce in the hands of a brilliant organist on straight tone. Better than

An extract from Maurice de la Bertauche's letter

Early in 1995, Maurice de la Bertauche of Evesham, Worcestershire responded to a call in 'Mature Times' for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in Hornsey, north London in 1923, he left school at fourteen and found employment as a newsagent's errand boy. His jobs in later life included cinema projectionist, electrical engineer and schoolteacher. In a long letter he writes about his early cinemagoing in Cheam, Surrey, with his mother, an avid cinemagoer, and about entertaining his school friends with imitations of characters in films. He describes his work in the projection booth--the long hours, the organ interlude ("We had a massive Wurlitzer and what an incredible sound they could produce in the hands of a brilliant organist on straight tone."). He details the typical cinema programme: "feature film, second feature, newsreel, travelogue perhaps, trailers, plus an organ show;" and describes memorable moments in some favourite films, vouchsafing a particular fondness for film music and recalling enjoyable singalongs to the cinema organ. Mr de la Bertauche later took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(MD-95-097PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

IRENE DENNERLEY (ID-95-031)

In February 1995, Irene Dennerley contacted Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to an appeal in the local press, and joined the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants during the summer of that year. Born in Warrington in 1918, Mrs Dennerley was one of eight children; her father, whose family migrated to England in the late nineteenth century,¹ was a waterproof garment maker. Her mother, a housewife, was born in Manchester. On leaving school at the age of fourteen Mrs Dennerley took up employment in a waterproof garment factory. During World War Two she worked in light munitions manufacture, and was later employed for some years at Heathlands Retirement Home. Mrs Dennerley was interviewed on 1 May and 12 June 1995 at her home in Prestwich, both interviews being of interest for what they reveal about Manchester's experience of the Second World War as well as about the geography of Jewish Manchester.



Post card of Clark Gable donated to CCINTB (JB-22-001PC017)

Much of Mrs Dennerley's first interview, which took place close in time to the nationwide commemoration of the 50th anniversary of VE Day, is taken up with details of her family background and memories of the war years, including her work in munitions, the Manchester Blitz, and her wartime leisure activities. Encouraged to talk about her cinemagoing, she names and locates a number of cinemas close to where she lived as a child, recalls dressing up to go to the more luxurious cinemas in the city centre as she grew older, and confesses to a liking for romantic films and 'nice' adventure pictures. She volunteers that her favourite film star was Clark Gable, and when prompted names some other stars that she liked. Recounting close encounters with wartime bombing raids over the city and noting that she took care to let her father know where she would be going on a night out, she concludes: "We did have a nice time, but there were nights when you didn't know if you'd be alive in the morning."

Notwithstanding the interviewer's tactful efforts at redirection, most of Mrs Dennerley's second interview again covers non-cinemagoing related topics. It opens with an account of her recent local shopping trips and the difficulties she faces in getting about because of her corns. Asked about her memories of the Ice Palace, which had been referred to in the first interview, she describes its location, how to get there by bus, and how the area has changed in recent years. She recalls that the venue hosted live shows in winter and that in summer the rink was converted into a cinema auditorium. Reverting to memories of her wartime years, Mrs Dennerley implies that she enjoyed male company and admits that she was a flirt—though "never intimate with any fellas". The new dances she learned from the US servicemen stationed nearby were different, she says, from the ones in the Astaire/Rogers musicals she had previously enjoyed; and, on the subject of musicals, she offers a detailed account of recent coach trips to London to see stage shows. About her earlier cinemagoing, she mentions the leaflets produced by cinemas announcing coming attractions and refers to Laurel and Hardy and Chaplin, noting that she probably wouldn't find them funny today. On clothes in films, she says that men and women onscreen always looked elegant and smart, and that she herself liked to dress well--she recalls buying dress fabric and garment samples at discount from local businesses. Conversation reverts to Clark Gable's charms, and (prompted by the interviewer) to the qualities of several other stars. The interview closes with memories of a dalliance with a workmate at the munitions factory ("just a good friend", she insists), who stayed in her mind after her husband's death many years later.

¹While Mrs Dennerley's recollection is that her father was born outside the United Kingdom, UK Census records have it that he was born in Manchester in 1893, and

that his parents and older siblings had migrated from “Kiev, Russia”. Mrs Dennerley’s maiden name of Moss is an Anglicisation of Moshensky.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Entry on Michael Fidler, waterproof garment manufacturer](#)
(snaccooperative.org)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

Publication relating to Irene Dennerley's interview:

Levitt, S. (1986). 'Manchester mackintoshes: a history of the rubberized garment trade in Manchester'. *Textile History* 17(1).

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

HELEN DONAGHY (HD-94-012)

In Autumn 1994, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold renewed an earlier contact with Hamiltonhill, a day centre in Possil, Glasgow where she had conducted interviews with some of its elderly users before joining the project. She arranged to carry out further interviews, and five of the centre's clients were interviewed for CCINTB. Nellie (Helen) Donaghy was among them. Mrs Donaghy was born in 1910 in Townhead, Glasgow, one of fourteen children; her father worked on the railway and her mother was a housewife; she left school at the age of fourteen and worked as a waitress. On 18 November 1994, she took part in a five-way interview at Hamiltonhill, the other four interviewees being Lily (Lilian) Buik, Sarah Irvine, Davy (David) Paterson, and John Shearer; and on 3 March 1995 three of the five (herself, Mrs Irvine, and Mr Paterson) were interviewed again. Both interviews took place at Hamiltonhill Day Centre.



Programme from the Seamore, Glasgow (image © Glasgow City Council, Libraries and Archives via TheGlasgowStory website)

Discussion during the first interview centres mainly on the range and variety of cinemas in the Glasgow area, with recollections of the buildings' interior features and the various forms of entertainment on offer, as well as reflections on the behaviour of cinemagoers. Other leisure pursuits, such as children's games and dancing, are also remembered.

In the second interview, the three participants add further recollections of Glasgow cinemas they frequented, with details of strategies employed to avoid paying for admission; rowdy audience behaviour at Saturday matinees; shouting at the cliffhangers that concluded episodes of serials; singalongs with song lyrics displayed on the screen; silent films with piano accompaniment and audience members contributing sound effects. Over forty film personalities are alluded to in the course of the interview, with lively debate about the merits of some, including singing duo Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy and popular male stars Wallace Beery and George Raft.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Bijou Picture Palace \(TheGlasgowStory site\)](#)

 [Extract of Charlie Chaplin in *Gold Rush*, 1925 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Extract from *The Bowery*, 1933 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

TOMMY DUNN (TD-95-013)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold contacted Glenwood Lodge, a Residential Care Home in Castlemilk, Glasgow which boasted a reminiscence group, with a view to interviewing residents for the project. Five residents volunteered, and Tommy Dunn was among them. Mr Dunn, CCINTB's oldest informant, was born in 1902; a self-described "Jack of all trades", his first job on leaving school was driving horses; later in life he drove lorries and other motorised vehicles for a living. On 24 January and 13 February 1995 he took part in five-way interviews at Glenwood Lodge, the other four participants being **Tommy Adams**, **Sarah Louise Gale**, **Nancy Keyte**, and **Patrick McCambridge**.



The Astoria, Glasgow (image © permission of Glasgow City Council, Libraries and Archives via [TheGlasgowStory](#) website)

In their first interview, group members share their early cinemagoing memories, citing the names and locations of the many Glasgow cinemas --particularly in Partick, Govan, Burnside, and Rutherglen--that they remember. The conversation moves on to silent films, ticket prices, and queueing. They debate preferences in films and stars, and agree that American films were better than British ones. They chose which films to go to by looking in the newspapers, they say, or by noting the length of cinema queues. One group member recalls chopping up fruiterers' boxes for firewood and selling bundles at tuppence a time to get 'picture money'. It is generally agreed that Donald O'Connor and Gene Kelly were the greatest ever dancers--"They could make

their feet talk." There are recollections of children's behaviour in cinemas and of the strict discipline enforced by cinema staff. As a child, says one interviewee, you got fully immersed in what was happening on screen: "you used to imagine you were, you were the star of it."

The second Glenwood Lodge interview opens with group members talking about the various jobs they had done throughout their working lives. Perusal of film annuals and photos of film personalities then prompts discussion of stars (over fifty are named in the course of the interview) and films, as well as other youthful pastimes, dancing in particular. There are further details of the various neighbourhood cinemas they frequented; anecdotes about selling logs and recovering deposits on bottles and jars to amass money for admission; recollection of prices of cinema tickets (dearer for balcony seats); and mention of Green's being the first to show silent movies in the showgrounds of Gallowgate.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [The Picture Houses of Rutherglen](#) (rutherglenheritage.wixsite.com site)

 ['Going loco in Glasgow'](#) (lostglasgow.scot site)

 [Tommy Morgan tribute site](#) (glesga.ukpals.com site)

 [Chung Ling Soo](#) (Wikipedia entry)

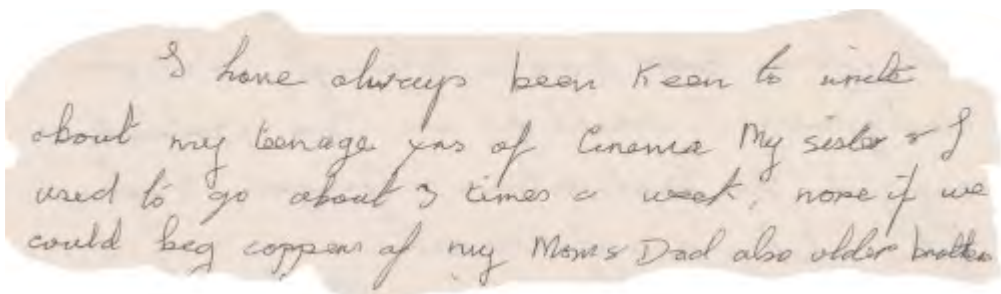
 [Extract featuring Eddie Cantor in *Whoopie!*, 1930](#) (YouTube)

 [Clip featuring James Cagney in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1942](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

DORIS ENGLISH (DE-95-319)







I have always been keen to write about my teenage yrs of Cinema My sister & I used to go about 3 times a week, none if we could beg coppers of my Mums Dad also older brother

Extract from one of Doris English's letters

In May 1995, Doris English of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire contacted Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to a newspaper article about the project, expressing enthusiasm about the opportunity to write about her “teenage years of cinema”. One of ten children, Mrs English was born in Birmingham in 1916 and grew up there, finishing her full-time education at fourteen and spending the majority of her working life at Lucas Industries.

Later in the year, Mrs English took part in CCINTB’s postal questionnaire survey, and in a long letter attached to her completed questionnaire form recalls enjoying going to the cinema on the annual Hospital Sunday, when box-office takings were donated to the local hospital: “My dad used to say you will never go to heaven going to the pictures on Sunday – but it was for a good cause”. She concludes by commenting on the happy memories evoked in answering questions about her cinemagoing and expressing delight that her memories were seen as worthy of record: “I was very pleased to help in answering all your questions [...] PS It is nice to think that at my age 79 I am in some use to people like you.”

 [Document scan \(DE-95-319PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(DE-95-319PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(DE-95-319Q001\)](#)

 [The Composed and the Heartfelt \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

VEE ENTWISTLE (VE-95-051)

Vee (Vera) Entwistle became involved with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain via recommendation from a fellow member of the Clarence Street Creative Writers Group in Bolton, Greater Manchester. One of five children, Mrs Entwistle was born in Bolton in 1926 and had lived in the town all her life. Her father was a regular soldier who became a miner on leaving the Army, and her mother took in washing. Her first job on leaving school at the age of fourteen was as a weaver, and she later worked as a confectioner. In the 1990s, she described herself as a writer and performer.

A fan of the singing duo Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald, Mrs Entwistle took part in four interviews, all conducted in Bolton and all involving other CCINTB informants. She participated in a three-person interview, conducted at Bolton Library, with **Dorris (Doris) Braithwaite** and **Kath (Kathleen) Browne** (11 May 1995), and in a day-long session alongside Dorris Braithwaite that included a screening and discussion of the Eddy/MacDonald film *Maytime* (5 June 1995). She also acted as support and interpreter for the hearing-impaired interviewee **Norman Wild** (16 May and 13 June 1995). Mrs Entwistle



English: Illustration by James Montgomery Flagg. "Copyrighted by Columbia Pictures Corp., New York, N. Y., 1937"., Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

donated to CCINTB a booklet produced by the Clarence Street Writers Group called 'Times Remembered' to which she had contributed, and a booklet of her own poems.

Note: The interview links below relate to the interviews that were conducted with Dorris Braithwaite. Those where Mrs Entwistle supported Norman Wild can be accessed via his [home page](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Scan of CCINTB Questionnaire \(VE-95-051CQ001\)](#)

 [Scan of Letter \(VE-95-051PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript of Letter](#)

 [Nelson Eddy singing 'When I Grow Too Old to Dream' \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Cinemagoing part of every day life in Bolton \(article from \[thisislancashire.co.uk\]\(http://thisislancashire.co.uk\)\)](#)

 [Cinema on 'every street corner' \(article from \[theboltonnews.co.uk\]\(http://theboltonnews.co.uk\)\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



JOHN FORD (JF-95-141)



I would occasionally accompany my parents to this palace of delights in the evening, no matinee performances then. Initially the films were all silent with sub-titles, in spite of the limited vocabulary of a seven year old I was quite able to suss out what was going on, this, of course would not be too difficult when watching Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Felix the Cat and Harold Lloyd.

Extract from John Ford's essay

In February 1995 John Ford of Eastbourne, East Sussex saw an announcement about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in 'Mature Tymes', a monthly magazine for pensioners. He was born in Bristol in 1923, and on leaving school at the age of eighteen joined the Royal Air Force ground staff for war service. His subsequent jobs included twenty years as a College of Technology lecturer.

Mr Ford was inspired by the 'Mature Tymes' feature to write a "motion picture autobiography"—recollections of his youthful cinemagoing—and send it to the project office with a covering letter. "I can still recall the smells, the tobacco smoke from hundreds of cigarettes, the thick pile carpet in the plushier cinemas and the scent of the 'Flit' air freshener sprayed in the older ones. Happy days!" Later in 1995, Mr Ford took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(JF-95-141PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(JF-95-141PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

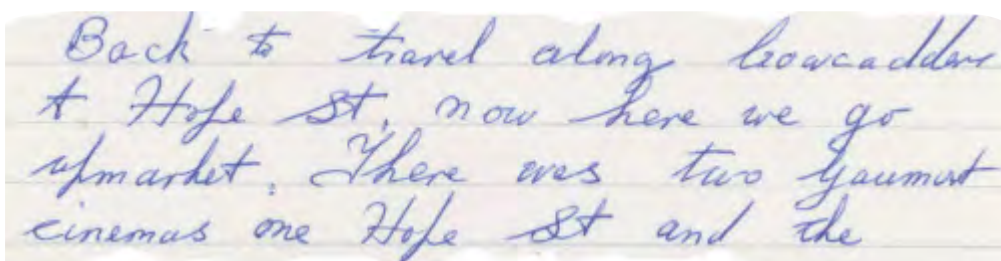
 [Scan of questionnaire \(JF-95-141GQ001\)](#)

 [The Composed and the Heartfelt \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

JOHN FOWLER (JF-95-153)



An extract from John Fowler's letter

Early in 1995, John Fowler of Sudbury, Suffolk responded to a media call for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in Glasgow in 1925, he left school at the age of fourteen and found work as a messenger boy; his main occupation in later years was transport driver. In a long letter Mr Fowler refers to his 1930s childhood in the Port Dundas area of Glasgow, recalling the city's many cinemas and music halls. He leads the reader on a mental 'walking tour', taking in around twenty cinemas and detailing the precise location of each, complete with colourful memory-snippets. He names favourite films and stars (including Lew Ayres in *All Quiet on the Western Front*) and types of films: "the comedy films were the finest[...]. *Lucan and McShane*, who were *Old Mother Riley* and her daughter *Kitty*, always had an extended run, *George Formby*, as the gormless lad, was always a sure fire hit. *Frank Randle, Lancashire lad*;" and names the cinemas he patronised whilst on holiday in *Saltcoats, Ayrshire*. Mr Fowler later took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(JF-95-153PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 Scan of questionnaire (JF-95-153GQ001)

 Glasgow Audio Walking Tour

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

NAT FRIELING (NF-95-185)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted **Heathlands**, a retirement home in Prestwich, **Greater Manchester** catering mainly for Jewish residents, seeking potential participants in the project.

Heathlands resident Nat Frieling took part in two interviews, joining CCINTB's twenty-two core informants in the Greater Manchester area. Mr Frieling was born in Romania in 1909, the son of a tailor who migrated to England when Mr Frieling was two years old. Orphaned a few years later and taken in by relatives, he left school at thirteen to work as an errand boy at a grocer's shop. An

active trade unionist, in later life he studied for a diploma in economics through the Labour Movement. He took part in a group interview at Heathlands on 27 April 1995 and was subsequently interviewed on his own on 6 June 1995.

The other participants in Mr Frieling's first interview were fellow core informants **Tessa Amelan** and **Rachel Tarsky**, along with Gabrielle Adam (born in Russia in 1907), Samuel Flamholtz (born in Poland in 1922), and another male resident whose name and details are unrecorded. Throughout the interview, speakers check and correct each other's recollections, and in parts of the conversation members of the group



Poster of *No Limit* film (1935) via Wikipedia

speak over each other. Subjects covered include names of stars and films (many of which—including comedies, serials, and animal stars—were made in the 1920s). Saturday matinees are mentioned, along with the cost of tickets for the humbler types of cinema ('bug huts') with their very basic seating (benches). The conversation moves on to the 1930s, as participants pore over photos of stars of the period and exchange comments and opinions. Topics of lengthier debate include Charlie Chaplin and his films, the 1937 version of *Lost Horizon*, the scandal surrounding Jessie Matthews and Sonnie Hale, and the films of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Discussion of films and cinema detours into collective consideration of the lack of availability of post-elementary education for members of their generation, before turning to recollections of the cinemas of central and suburban Manchester, assertions of the importance of the contributions of film producers and directors, and references to animated films of the 1930s (*Snow White* is mentioned) and foreign films (the Cosmo in Glasgow is referred to).

At the start of his second, solo, interview, Mr Frieling inquires about the interviewer's knowledge of 'foreign' films and political cinema, invoking *Battleship Potemkin*. Noting that he was orphaned before the age of six, he explains that he had no secondary education because he had to leave school as early as possible and go out to work: this left him with a lifelong thirst for learning. He talks about the newspapers that he reads and why he reads them, alluding to a current series of 'Sunday Times' supplements on the history of cinema and donating the latest instalment to the project. The interviewer shows him the 1935 *Daily Express* film book with a view to guiding discussion towards popular films and stars, and a commentary on George Formby's qualities ensues. He notes a particular liking for Shirley Temple and for "unforgettable" biblical epics and recalls his childhood pleasure in film serials with their agonising cliffhangers. He favours Social Realism in cinema and films about the working class and its struggles, citing Gracie Fields and Paul Robeson as exemplars.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)


 [Manchester Ice Palace \(manchestereveningnews.co.uk site\)](#)

 [Charlie Chaplin in 'The Bank', 1915 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Harold Lloyd in 'Safety Last', 1923 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy singing 'Indian Love Call', 1936](#)

(YouTube)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

SARAH LOUISE GALE (SG-95-013)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold contacted Glenwood Lodge, a Residential Care Home in Castlemilk, Glasgow which boasted a reminiscence group, with a view to interviewing residents for the project. Five residents volunteered, and Sarah Louise



*The State Cinema, Glasgow (uploaded by Granola)
Creative Commons (Attribution) License via
[cinematreasures](#) website)*



Gale was among them. Miss Gale was born in Glasgow in 1926 and left school at fourteen; during the war she served in the Women's Land Army, and later worked at the Rolls Royce factory at Hillington, near Glasgow. On 24 January and 13 February 1995 she took part in five-way interviews at Glenwood Lodge, the other four participants **Tommy Adams**, **Nancy Keyte**, **Tommy Dunn**, and **Patrick McCambridge**.

In their first interview, group members share their early cinemagoing memories, citing the names and locations of the many Glasgow cinemas --particularly in Partick, Govan, Burnside, and Rutherglen--that they remember. The conversation moves on to silent films, ticket prices, and queueing. They debate preferences in films and stars, and agree that American films were better than British ones. They chose which films to go to by looking in the newspapers, they say, or by noting the length of cinema queues. One group member recalls chopping up fruiterers' boxes for firewood and selling bundles at tuppence a time to get 'picture money'. It is generally agreed that Donald O'Connor and Gene Kelly were the greatest ever dancers--"They could make their feet talk." There are recollections of children's behaviour in cinemas and of the

strict discipline enforced by cinema staff. As a child, says one interviewee, you got fully immersed in what was happening on screen: “you used to imagine you were, you were the star of it.”

The second Glenwood Lodge interview opens with group members talking about the various jobs they had done throughout their working lives. Perusal of film annuals and photos of film personalities then prompts discussion of stars (over fifty are named in the course of the interview) and films, as well as other youthful pastimes, dancing in particular. There are further details of the various neighbourhood cinemas they frequented; anecdotes about selling logs and recovering deposits on bottles and jars to amass money for admission; recollection of prices of cinema tickets (dearer for balcony seats); and mention of Green's being the first to show silent movies in the showgrounds of Gallowgate.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [The Picture Houses of Rutherglen \(rutherglenheritage.wixsite.com site\)](#)

 ['Going loco in Glasgow' \(lostglasgow.scot site\)](#)

 [Tommy Morgan tribute site \(glesga.ukpals.com site\)](#)

 [Chung Ling Soo \(Wikipedia entry\)](#)

 [Extract featuring Eddie Cantor in *Whoopee!*, 1930 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Clip featuring James Cagney in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1942 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



HELEN GILMOUR (HG-92-025)
















I could recollect my earliest visits to what was no doubt one of the first custom built Picture Houses in the area. The frontage was in its time quite impressive with large billboards on either side of the entrance door on which the coming attractions were displayed.

An extract from one of Helen Gilmour's essays



Helen Gilmour (born in 1922 in Ayr in the west of Scotland) contacted CCINTB in 1992 in response to an item about the project that she had heard on her local radio station. This began a correspondence that continued over eight years, in the course of which Ms Gilmour sent three essays on aspects of her lifetime involvement with cinema, both as a keen cinemagoer and as the daughter of the manager of a number of cinemas in and around the town of Ayr. A covering letter suggests that the essays were produced in a writers' group and that they might have been intended for publication. 'Nostalgia', dated March 1987 [HG-92-025PW001], celebrates two unnamed cinemas in her neighbourhood: "How nice it is to recall these happy days when the Cinema was a place of escape from the realities of the workaday world." "'Q' Here', written in March 1992 [HG-92-025PW002], names a number of local cinemas and adds little stories about each of them. The author notes that by 1938 Ayr boasted as many as six cinemas. Her father was Managing Director of one of them, the Ritz. 'Movie Memories' [HG-95-025PW003], sent to CCINTB in 1996, recounts Ms Gilmour's earliest memories of enjoying silent films in one of the earliest purpose-built picture houses in her neighbourhood: 'The whole atmosphere of the cinema might be described as "magical"', she says.

 [Document scan \(HG-92-025PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(HG-92-025PW002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

-  Document scan (HG-92-025PL001) |  Transcript
-  Document scan (HG-92-025PL002) |  Transcript
-  Document scan (HG-92-025PL003) |  Transcript
-  Document scan (HG-92-025PL004) |  Transcript
-  Document scan (HG-92-025PW003) |  Transcript
-  Document scan (HG-92-025PL005) |  Transcript
-  Document scan (HG-92-025PL006) |  Transcript
-  Document scan (HG-92-025SL002) |  Transcript

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

-  [The Ritz Cinema, Ayr](http://scottishcinemas.org.uk) (scottishcinemas.org.uk site)
-  [The Composed and the Hearfelt](#) (News & Blog area)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

GLASGOW FILM THEATRE WORKSHOP (GF-92-000)

The precursor of Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain was a small-scale research project undertaken in 1991 by Annette Kuhn, then based in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of Glasgow. The research involved a summer spent in the British Library's Newspaper Division reading (on paper, still, at this time) every issue of every popular film-related periodical published in Britain during the 1930s—an exhaustive and intense exercise that yielded intriguing new insights into the cinemagoing experience of the time and the kinds of films and film personalities that appealed distinctively to British cinemagoers. The project's findings, presented at a conference in Norway the following year^[1], were the foundation of 'Popular Cinema in the 1930s', a short season of screenings put on at Glasgow Film Theatre in late 1992. The season comprised *One Hundred Men and a Girl* (US, 1937); *Cavalcade* (US, 1933); *Sunshine Susie* (UK, 1931); *The Littlest Rebel* (US, 1935); *Evergreen* (UK, 1934); and *The Ghost Goes West* (UK, 1935). On 3 December, after a matinee screening of the Jessie Matthews vehicle *Evergreen*, audience members took part in an open workshop, which was recorded, in which the 1930s cinemagoers present were invited to share their cinemagoing memories. Speakers, some of whom joined CCINTB as participants when it was launched two years later, recalled their earliest cinema visits, described the Glasgow picture houses



Press release for GFT Screenings, 1992

they went to, and between them mentioned close to forty films and as many film personalities from the 1920s and 1930s.

The recording of the workshop has since been transcribed and synced (see links below). Workshop participants who were later interviewed during CCINTB include:

- Norman MacDonald
- Tony (Anthony) Paterson

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 1\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [GFT Screenings - flyers and programme notes \(10 MB\)](#)

 ['A new world opened: CMDA's Glasgow Homecoming'](#) (blog post by Sarah Neely and Annette Kuhn)

 [Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs memorabilia](#) (Bill Douglas Museum site)

 [Jessie Matthews in *Evergreen*, 1934](#) (YouTube)

 ['Tiptoe Through the Tulips' from *The Gold Diggers of Broadway*, 1929](#) (YouTube)

^[1] Annette Kuhn, 'Researching Popular Film Fan Culture in 1930s Britain', *The Reception History of Film and Television*, University of Bergen, Norway, June 1992.

Publications drawing on findings of the 1991 project include:

Kuhn, A. (1996). 'Cinema Culture and Femininity in the 1930s', in Christine Gledhill and Gillian Swanson (eds.), *Nationalising Femininity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

E.J. GODBOLD (EG-95-214)

In August 1995 Mr E.J. (Jim) Godbold responded to a call in the East Anglian Daily Times for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and joined the twenty-one individuals, couples and groups living in that region who were interviewed later that year. He was born in 1918 in the small Suffolk town of Stowmarket and, aside from war service, lived there all his life. His father was a shoe mender who, before suffering injury in WW1, had been a butler in a big house; his mother was a housewife who also took in washing. Mr Godbold left school at fourteen, and during the 1930s worked in the building trade. He later became a Labour Party activist. He was interviewed at his home on 17 October and 7 November 1995.



Warner Bros. Studio (work for hire), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Mr Godbold's interviews include stories of lengthy journeys to get to cinemas in the county town of Ipswich--a contrast with the urban cinemagoer's experience in the 1930s, when every neighbourhood could boast a good number of cinemas. He recalls his enjoyment of gangster films, musicals and westerns, his preference for Hollywood over 'corny' British films, and trips in a friend's car to dances in Suffolk village halls.

Mr Godbold treats his interviews very much as formal occasions, dressing smartly to welcome the interviewer into the best room. For the first interview he has clearly prepared some sociological-style observations on gangster films and their regulation by the Hays Office. Such comments are countered somewhat by anecdotes about himself and his friends imitating the mannerisms and the fashions of the Hollywood gangsters. While Mr Godbold's stories reveal an interest in male fashions in the films, he shows rather less interest in what female stars wore--"unless they were in a bathing costume".

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Regent Theatre, Ipswich](#)

 [Nat Gonella and the Georgians band \(YouTube\)](#)

Publication drawing on Mr Godbold's interviews:

Kuhn, A. (1999). 'Memories of Cinema-Going in the 1930s', *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, 2.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

MAY GODDEN (MG-95-200)

In June 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold contacted Westminster Nursing Home in the London suburb of Harrow with a view to interviewing residents for the project. Interviews took place there on 5 July and 25 July 1995 and involved five named residents in total, two of whom—May Godden and **Celia Piggott**--took part in both interviews as core informants.



Odeon Wealdstone

*Uploaded by Granola. Creative Commons
(Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org*

In the first interview, Westminster Nursing Home residents Norma, John, and Lilian (surnames unrecorded) participated alongside Mrs Godden and Mrs Piggott. Born in Fulham in 1897, Mrs Godden is the oldest of all the Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain interviewees. After leaving school at the age of thirteen she worked as a childminder before taking a job in a munitions factory during World War One. Norma was born in Wandsworth in 1904, and left school at fourteen to take up employment as a kitchen maid in a hotel; Lilian, who was born near King's Cross in 1912, left school at sixteen and worked as a GPO telephonist; John, born in 1914 in Kentish Town, left school at fourteen and eventually became an artisan plasterer who worked on the decoration of Royal properties, including Buckingham Palace. In the first interview, the five

participants share relatively vivid memories of visits to music halls, prompting each other in recollecting the names and locations of cinemas in Harrow and elsewhere in London and mentioning the ubiquitous cinema queues and the live acts that featured alongside film screenings. They recall the coming of sound, the rowdy audience behaviour at children’s matinees, and the key role of ‘the pictures’ in young people’s lives as they grew up and started courting. Prompted by the interviewer, they name and discuss a number of film personalities, with agreed favourites including Bette Davis. Mrs Godden admits to never having been an avid cinemagoer: she was well into her twenties when she saw her first film, she recalls, citing a dislike of sitting in the dark. She does however admit to a mild interest in the British stars Robert Donat and Jessie Matthews, a local resident: “She was walking along on the other side of the road. Just in an ordinary skirt and white blouse. And somebody said to me, ‘You know who that is? That's Jessie Matthews’.”

In the second interview, prompted by a 1930s film annual brought along by the interviewer, discussion returns to the question of film star preferences. Mrs Godden vouchsafes a liking for the singing duo Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, refers again to Jessie Matthews, talks about the distinctive qualities of some of the cinemas in Harrow, and implies that she was rather more interested in football than in films.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Playhouse Cinema, Greenford \(cinematreasures site\)](#)

 [Euston Palace of Varieties \(arthurlloyd.co.uk site\)](#)

 [S.G. Brown, Engineer \(gracesguide site\)](#)

 [Clipping of opening of the Granada Theatre \(CM-20-001RP001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

GLORIA GOOCH (GG-95-221)

In September 1995, Gloria Gooch answered a call in the East Anglian press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain; and she eventually became one of the twenty-one individuals, couples and groups living in that region who were interviewed for the project during the last months of 1995.

Mrs Gooch was born in Lowestoft, Suffolk in 1917, one of three children. Her mother was a housewife and her father, Douglas Attree, was well known locally as a showman and cinema entrepreneur. She left school at sixteen and attended commercial college before taking up employment in accountancy. Mrs Gooch was interviewed at her home in Bradwell, Norfolk on 26 October and 16 November 1995.

Her lively first interview focuses around Mrs Gooch's photographs and her memories of numerous events organised in and around Lowestoft by her showman father during the 1920s, including publicity stunts for films shown at his cinemas. She shares recollections of circuses and carnival parades, also organised by her father--"There were prizes galore"--and shows more photographs: a mannequin parade; a ghost train, cinema staff dressed up as film characters; and a young Gloria herself as a



*Coliseum, Gorleston (Uploaded by Mike_Blakemore).
Creative Commons (Attribution) License via
cinematreasures.org*

swan, advertising a carnival organised to raise funds for local charities. She remembers the arrival of the talkies and recalls seeing *The Singing Fool*; and mentions later on working as a secretary on her father's holiday camp, where Polish troops were billeted during World War II.

Offering further details of her father's activities as a cinema proprietor and local entrepreneur, Mrs Gooch's second interview focuses on the 1930s and later, with greater emphasis on films and stars and more details of the various cinemas in and around her locality. Recalling events from the standpoint of the cinema trade, she notes that although local exhibitors resented getting films many months after their initial release, audiences were generally happy with what they saw, the most popular films ('money spinners') being the 'cheerful'/'jolly' ones. And at a time when travel abroad was not available for most people, she points out, cinema audiences could see the world through films. She recollects the closure of cinemas at the beginning of the war, and people's fears of invasion. The postwar popularisation of TV, the decline of cinemas and cinemagoing, and the consequent fate of local cinemas are discussed, with regrets expressed at the waning of local charitable work.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS


 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Scan of Letter \(GG-95-221PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [The Grand, Lowestoft](#) (cinematreasures.org site)

 [Trailer featuring Harold Lloyd in *The Freshman*, 1925](#) (YouTube)

 [Photographs of the Coliseum](#) (ourgreatyarmouth.org.uk)

 ['The Mystery of Ernest Barr'](#) (greatyarmouthmercury.co.uk)

Related publications with reference to Douglas Attree and the Coliseum:

Peart, S. (1980). *The Picture House in East Anglia*. Lavenham Press Limited.

Snelson, T. (2017). Where the exceptional and the everyday meet: Exploring cinema culture in British seaside towns. In J. Thissen, & C. Zimmermann (Eds.), *Cinema Beyond the City: Small-Town and Rural Film Culture in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



BARBARA GOULTER (BG-95-078)



LEE AND LAURENCE OLIVIER

Does anyone still remember Lee-on-Solent's brief encounter with cinematic glory, the part it played in the progress from Larry Olivier, Ronald Colman look-alike, to Lord Olivier, national institution?

Extract from an essay by Barbara Goulter

In February 1995, Barbara Goulter of Gosport, Hampshire wrote to Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to an article in a monthly newspaper for pensioners. Born in Southsea in 1917, Mrs Goulter lived in the nearby seaside town of Lee on Solent during the 1930s. Her first job on leaving school at the age of fifteen was in trade journalism and she was a housewife for most of her subsequent working life. Along with her letter to CCINTB she enclosed a piece, written some years earlier, that had been submitted to, but rejected by, her local newspaper. It consists of an archly written account of a week-long film shoot that took place in the early thirties on the beach at Lee-on-Solent: "Most of Lee had opted out of its usual occupations to sit on the sea wall and watch the goings-on." The film, featuring Laurence Olivier and Gloria Swanson, was *Perfect Understanding* (dir Cyril Gardner, 1933). Later in 1995, Mrs Goulter took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(BG-95-078PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(BG-95-078PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(BG-95-078GQ001\)](#)

 [The Composed and the Heartfelt](#) (News & Blog area)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

JEAN GOWING (JG-96-003)



Jean Gowing was born in 1919 in Hartismere, Suffolk, the only child of a well-to-do farmer living near the town of Halesworth. In March 1996 she came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through her friend **Ida Jarron**, and sent the project: a list of titles and dates of films that she saw during the second half of the 1930s; a pocket diary for the year 1937 in which she kept a daily record of her activities, including trips to the cinema; and a scrapbook of clippings from 1930s film magazines. She donated the film list and the scrapbook and kindly gave permission for the diary to be photocopied in its entirety before it was returned.





*A sample page from Jean Gowing's scrapbook
(JG-96-003MM001)*

Miss Gowing's list suggests that she saw close to three hundred films, mostly in double bills, between April 1934 and 30 December 1939—around fifty films a year on average, while her diary records forty-nine cinema visits during the year 1937. Each daily diary entry begins with a brief weather report ("Dull"; "Quite sunny", etc) and records her activities of the morning and afternoon, with occasional mentions of evening activities. All, or virtually all, of her trips to the cinema took place in the afternoon; and in her diary she never mentions the title of the film or the name of the cinema, but invariably notes who she went with. The entry for Friday 16 July, for instance, reads: "Sunny. Sold flags in the morning and [sea] bathed with Ida. Went to

Ida's for tea and we played tennis and went to the pictures." Having guests for tea, or having tea at someone else's house, is frequently mentioned; there are regular trips to Yarmouth and occasional excursions in the family car, as well as short stays in London that might involve art gallery visits and other cultural activities. The daily entries suggest that Miss Gowing usually went to school in either the morning or the afternoon, rarely all day (she would have been eighteen at this time, presumably a sixth-former enjoying relative freedom). Accordingly, the entry for Thursday 23 September reads: "Sunny. Went to school in the morning. Went to the flicks in the afternoon with Mummy." Crosschecking this latter against her list of films reveals that on this occasion Miss Gowing and her mother saw the Deanna Durbin film *Three Smart Girls*. All in all, Miss Gowing's diary reveals a highly active social life with many visits to and from friends and relatives and numerous hobbies and outings—tennis, dances, school art club, and more.

 [Document scan \(JG-96-003PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(JG-96-003PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scrapbook](#)

 [1937 Diary](#)

 [Film Listing](#) (flipbook version)

 [Chroniclers of Picturegoing](#) (News & Blog area)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

HILDA GREEN (HG-95-215)

Hilda Green of Lowestoft, Suffolk became involved with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through her lifelong friend **Peggy Kent**. One of seven or eight children, Mrs Green was born in Lowestoft in 1919; her father was a boilermaker, her mother a housewife. Her first job after leaving school at the age of fourteen was at the Premier Laundry in Lowestoft, where she met the women who were to become her lifelong friends: Peggy Kent, **Hilda Catchpole**, **Gladys Kent**, and **Barbara Harvey**. She was interviewed, along with all four of her fellow 'laundry girls', at Peggy Kent's home in Lowestoft on 18 October 1995.



The Palace, Lowestoft (uploaded by rasLXR). Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

In her lively and laughter-filled interview, Mrs Green and her friends--who now rarely see each other as a group--share memories of the good times they enjoyed in the thirties. Described in the interviewer's field notes as "glamorous pensioners", they reminisce about the fun they had and recall the complex web of social events they shared. They offer hilarious yarns about work at the laundry, getting ready to go to the pictures or the dance hall, trying out hairstyles, makeup, and fashions; looking your best ("And we did look lovely!"); imitating film stars and getting ideas from the films about what they were going to wear; going for a dip in the sea on the way home from an evening out. They update each other with anecdotes and news about their families, and vividly recall a wartime bombing raid on Lowestoft.


 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Palm Court Orchestra, The Grand, Eastbourne](#) (mastersofmeolody.co.uk site)

 [South Pier, Lowestoft](#) (lowestofthistory.com site)

 [Health & Beauty Display At Wembley, 1939](#) (YouTube)

 [Donated Photographs](#)

Book chapter drawing on Mrs Kent's interviews:

Kuhn, A. (2002) 'Growing Up with Cinema', in *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, Chapter 5. London: I.B.Tauris/Bloomsbury.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

RAPHAEL HART (RH-95-201)

In June 1995, Ralph (Raphael) Hart heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through a Jewish Friendship Club in the London suburb of Harrow. He volunteered to take part in the project, joining its eighteen Harrow-based core informants. Mr Hart was born in 1921 in Brixton, South London, the only child of middle-class



Regal, Norwood (uploaded by Ken Roe) Creative Commons (Attribution) License via [cinematreasures](#)

parents; his family moved to Golders Green when he was around seven years old. Having won a scholarship to a grammar school in Ashford, Kent, he lived in Norwood, South London during his years in secondary education. His first job on leaving school at the age of nineteen was as a railway clerk; and after taking a University degree later in life he worked as a tutor in a correspondence college. He was interviewed on 24 July and 27 November 1995 at the Middlesex New Synagogue in Harrow.

Mr Hart's first interview opens with recollections of early visits to the cinema from the age of seven or so in the company of his mother. He recalls some films and stars of the time, and names a couple of cinemas in Golders Green that he frequented. Alluding to the film newsreels that he saw during the 1930s, he declares his left-wing political sympathies and mentions some films about World War One. While confessing that he liked musicals--especially Astaire and Rogers--for their entertainment value, he is dismissive of other types of popular cinema ("I was a

serious sort of chap"). He remembers going to see Russian and other 'foreign' films in the thirties, and recollects a varied diet of film viewing when on war service in the Far East. From time to time throughout the interview, he asks the interviewer to look up films in the copy of Halliwell's Film Guide that he has brought along.

Mention of the 1933 British film *I Was A Spy* at the start of his second interview reminds Mr Hart of a school visit to the WW1 battlefields of Belgium. Most of his schoolmasters, he says, had served in that war--it was "only yesterday" to those men, and "living history" to his own generation. This triggers a discussion of war films, in the course of which Mr Hart reiterates that serious films and "realism" appeal to him, that he likes mysteries because they call for intelligence on the viewer's part, and that his preference is for films with plenty of action and a complete absence of women and "soppy love interest". He reflects on Britain's unpreparedness for war in the 1930s, and on Nazi propaganda and the films of Leni Riefenstahl. He recalls being deeply and lastingly upset by the film *Outward Bound*. He is unable to bring to mind any engagement on Hollywood's part with the Great Depression of the 1930s; and offers an interesting analysis of the plot of *King Kong*. Leafing through a 1938 film annual elicits recollections of many more films and personalities, and calls to mind his mother's favourite stars. Again, the interview is punctuated with requests for the interviewer to look up certain films in his copy of 'Halliwell's Film Guide'.


(Note: audio unavailable for 1st interview)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)  [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Curzon, Mayfair \(cinematreaures site\)](#)

 [Clip from *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1930 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Clip from *Gold Diggers of 1933* \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Trailer from *Outward Bound*, 1930 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

BARBARA HARVEY (BH-95-215)

Barbara Harvey of Lowestoft, Suffolk became involved with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through her lifelong friend **Peggy Kent**. As an only child, Miss Harvey was born in Lowestoft in 1919; her father was a fish buyer, her mother a housewife. Her first job after leaving school at the age of fourteen was at the Premier Laundry in Lowestoft, where she met the women who were to become her lifelong friends: **Peggy Kent**, **Hilda Catchpole**, **Gladys Kent**, and **Hilda Green**. She was interviewed, along with all four of her fellow 'laundry girls', at Peggy Kent's home in Lowestoft on 18 October 1995; and again with three of the four--Peggy Kent, Gladys Kent, and Hilda Catchpole--on 13 November 1995.



The Marina, Lowestoft (uploaded by Mike_Blakemore). Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

In their lively and laughter-filled first interview, Miss Harvey and her friends--who now rarely see each other as a group--share memories of the good times they enjoyed in the thirties. Described in the interviewer's field notes as "glamorous pensioners", they reminisce about the fun they had and recall the complex web of social events they shared. They offer hilarious yarns about work at the laundry, getting ready to go to the pictures or the dance hall, trying out hairstyles, makeup, and fashions; looking your best ("And we did look lovely!"); imitating film stars and getting ideas from the films about what they were going to wear; going for a dip in the sea on the way home from an evening out. They update each other with

anecdotes and news about their families, and vividly recall a wartime bombing raid on Lowestoft.

While most of the conversation in the friends' second interview again consists of shared reminiscences about their youthful exploits, their boyfriends, husbands and children, the women are induced to talk about stars and films when shown a film star annual from the 1930s. They swap opinions about favourite stars, most of whom are male; they remember how people copied actions, gestures, fashions, and hairstyles from films; and share amusing anecdotes about cinema visits with friends and family members.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Palm Court Orchestra, The Grand, Eastbourne](#) (mastersofmeolody.co.uk site)

 [South Pier, Lowestoft](#) (lowestofthistory.com site)

 [Health & Beauty Display At Wembley, 1939](#) (YouTube)

 [Donated Photographs](#)

Book chapter drawing on Mrs Kent's interviews:

Kuhn, A. (2002) 'Growing Up with Cinema', in *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, Chapter 5. London: I.B.Tauris/Bloomsbury.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

HEATHLANDS RETIREMENT HOME (HR-95-047)

In February 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted Heathlands, a retirement home in Prestwich, Greater Manchester catering mainly for Jewish residents, seeking potential participants in the project; and on 27 April 1995 six residents took part in a group interview. Three of them — **Nat Frieling**, **Rachel Tarsky**, and **Tessa Amelan** — subsequently gave solo interviews, joining the project's twenty-two core informants in the **Greater Manchester** area. The other group interviewees were Gabrielle Adam (born in Russia in 1907), Samuel Flamholtz (born in Poland in 1922), and another male resident whose name and details are unrecorded. All the interviews took place at Heathlands.



Throughout the group interview, speakers check and correct each other's recollections, and in parts of the conversation members of the group speak over each other. Subjects covered include names of stars and films, many of the films--including comedies, serials, and animal stars--made during the 1920s. Saturday matinees are mentioned, along with the cost of tickets for the humbler types of cinema ('bug huts') with their very basic seating (benches). The conversation moves on to the 1930s, as participants pore over photos of stars of the period and exchange comments and

opinions. Topics of lengthier debate include Charlie Chaplin and his films, the 1937 version of Lost Horizon, the scandal surrounding Jessie Matthews and Sonnie Hale, and the films of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Discussion of films and cinema detours into collective consideration of the lack of availability of post-elementary education for members of their generation, before turning to recollections of the cinemas of central and suburban Manchester, assertions of the importance of the contributions of film producers and directors, and references to animated films of the 1930s (Snow White is mentioned) and 'foreign' films (the Cosmo in Glasgow is referred to).

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Manchester Ice Palace](#) (manchestereveningnews.co.uk site)

 [Charlie Chaplin in 'The Bank', 1915](#) (YouTube)

 [Harold Lloyd in 'Safety Last', 1923](#) (YouTube)

 [Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy singing 'Indian Love Call', 1936](#) (YouTube)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!'](#) (News & Blog area)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

MARGARET HOULGATE (MH-95-111)

For 3 hours the outside world was forgotten, worries over school, work, relationships, money disappeared as we lived through the screen. And we did copy the screen actors. In the same way that I believe the young people copy their pop idols, and TV characters nowadays, we too followed our heroes and heroines. The sad difference is that nowadays the "heroes" are too often violent, undisciplined and to my ears rude.

An extract from Margaret Houlgate's letter

Early in 1995, Margaret Houlgate of Lyndhurst, Hampshire responded to a call for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in South Norwood, London in 1920, she finished her full-time education at the age of seventeen and began her working life as a doctor's receptionist. Later jobs included secretarial work and market research. In a long letter she writes about going to the pictures in south London in the 1920s and 1930s, when cinema "was the main entertainment and interest of people of all ages". She notes that there were ten cinemas close to where she lived, with programmes that might include floor shows and organ music as well as films. She recalls the chocolates and ices sold in the aisles during the interval; smoking, patrons' large hats, continuous performances, and the National Anthem. She adds recollections of going to the pictures on a first date, queueing outside the cinema, and the excitement on finally being admitted and getting a good seat. She mentions the musicals she enjoyed and names some of her favourite stars. Later in 1995, Mrs Houlgate took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(MH-95-111PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(MH-95-111GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

DENIS HOULSTON (DH-95-034)

Mr A. D. (Denis) Houlston responded to a call in the Manchester Evening News for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in



'Picturegoer Postcard Club' membership card

1930s Britain, and was among the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants during 1995. Born in Levenshulme in 1917, he lived there all his life apart from a period of war service. His father worked as a chief clerk in a printing works and his mother was a housewife. On leaving school at the age of seventeen, Mr Houlston went into clerical work, first as an office boy and later as a cost clerk and cashier. He was interviewed in his home on 26 April and 25 May 1995.

In his first interview, Mr Houlston speaks at length about cinemas in his neighbourhood, showing a keen feeling for the local topography and its changes over the years. He even takes the interviewer for a walk around the area, pointing out places where the cinemas had once been. His recollections of cinema exteriors and interiors is unusually vivid, as is his memory both of cinema programmes and of scenes or images in the films that he enjoyed as an adolescent. Having liked Westerns as a boy, he recalls that with the onset of puberty the focus of interest turned

towards sex: in a time of innocence and restraint, he says, films were a source of education as well as of entertainment. He talks of his preference for blondes over brunettes (Madeleine Carroll was his favourite star); for sophisticated romantic comedy over gangster films (Lubitsch was his preferred director); and, notwithstanding his amused dismissal of the lah-di-dah accents of some British actors ("sspeak licke thaht, yew knyow?"), for British films and stars over their Hollywood counterparts. Toward the end of this interview, Mr Houlston donates his entire memorabilia collection to CCINTB.

In his second interview, Mr Houlston talks about writing letters to British film stars—and receiving replies; and about seeing British film actors onstage in Manchester and getting their autographs. He muses on reasons for going to the cinema and on the particular pleasures of other pastimes, like reading and listening to the wireless, as against the particular pleasures of cinema; about watching a film for the story vs watching it for the star: "You went [to the cinema] purely for pleasure!"

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Scan of letter \(DH-95-034PL01\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(DH-95-034PL02\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(DH-95-034PL05\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(DH-95-034PL13\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Picturegoer Postcards](#)

 [Golden Albums](#)

 [Autographed Postcards and Photographs](#)

Publications drawing on materials in Mr Houlston's interviews, letters and memorabilia:

Kuhn, A. (1999). 'Memories of Cinema-Going in the 1930s', *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, 2: 100-120.

Street, S. (2000). *British Cinema in Documents*. Routledge: 158-166.

Kuhn, A. (2009). 'Film Stars in 1930s Britain: A Case Study in Modernity and Femininity', in Tytti Soila (ed.), *Stellar Encounters: Stardom in Popular European Cinema*. John Libbey:180-194.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

JOAN HOWARTH (JH-95-091)

If my brother had still been alive he would have been able to tell you many a tale.... Tom Mix, Roy Rogers etc. My remembrances are very slight. One is, being taken by my mother to watch a film about a werewolf and I was terrified; hiding my face in my mother's shoulder and peeping, from time to time, through my fingers.

Extract from Joan Howarth's letter

In February 1995, Joan Howarth of Corsham, Wiltshire wrote to Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to an article about the project in a monthly magazine for pensioners. While confessing to having few cinemagoing memories, she does offer a singular recollection of being terrified, at a very early age, by “a film about a werewolf”. Mrs Howarth’s vivid bodily memory (“hiding my face in my mother’s shoulder and peeping, from time to time, through my fingers”) stands as evidence of the distinctiveness of memories of being frightened at the cinema as a young child.

 [Document scan \(JH-95-091PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

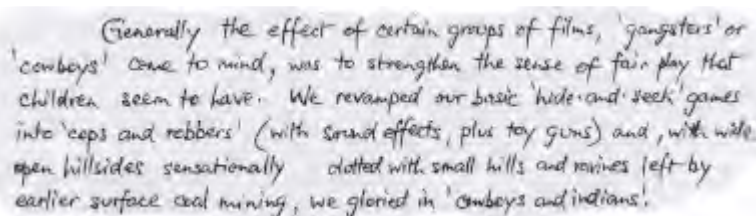
Kuhn, A. (2002). ‘When the child looks’, in *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*. London: I.B. Tauris): 66-99.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

LEWIS HOWELLS (LH-95-100)

In February 1995, Lewis Howells of Blaenavon in South Wales contacted Cinema Culture in 1930s







Generally the effect of certain groups of films, 'gangsters' or 'cowboys' come to mind, was to strengthen the sense of fair play that children seem to have. We revamped our basic 'hide-and-seek' games into 'cops and robbers' (with sound effects, plus toy guns) and, with wide open hillsides sensationally dotted with small hills and mines left by earlier surface coal mining, we gloried in 'cowboys and indians'.

An extract from Mr Howells's essay

Britain by mail in response to an announcement in a monthly newspaper for pensioners. Born in Blaenavon in 1922, his father worked in the coal mining industry. On leaving school at sixteen he went to work in the local Post Office as a sorting clerk and telegraphist; in later years he had a variety of jobs, including factory supervisor, industrial graphics display artist and civil servant.

Declaring a special interest in CCINTB, Mr Howells wrote: "Several years ago I helped a local amateur publishing group with gathering nostalgic material about the way people used to live." Enclosed along with his letter was neatly handwritten ten-page essay entitled 'Cinema in the Town of Blaenavon, Gwent in the 1930s' which opens with a description of the local cinemagoing scene, complete with details of each cinema—the building, its management, its programming, its ticket prices; and continues with recollections of some memorable cinema visits. Later in 1995, Mr Howells took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(LH-95-100PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(LH-95-100PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 Scan of Questionnaire (LH-95100GQ001)

 The Composed and the Hearfelt (News & blog area)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

REG IRELAND (RI-95-137)

Born in January 1921, my first memory of the cinema was, aged about five years, walking in a group from the village school to the "Palace" at Stroud, Gloucestershire, to see 'Ben Hur'. I also recall seeing my first talking film 'The Singing Fool' starring Al Jolson. I think this was the film in which he sang 'Sonny Boy' - a very sad film.

Extract from Reg Ireland's letter

Early in 1995, Reg Ireland of Stroud, Gloucestershire responded to a call in 'Mature Tymes' for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in Stroud in 1921, Mr Ireland left school at nearly seventeen and took an office job in local government; in later years he worked as a mental welfare officer and in mental health administration. In a long letter full of lively detail he recalls his first cinema visit at the age of about five; names some favourite stars, including Wallace Beery, Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell; and describes a number of particularly memorable films of the 1920s and 1930s. He writes about queuing to get into the cinema and stratagems for securing good and/or affordable seats. He recalls Saturday matinees with friends and calling at the local cake shop on the way to the cinema for "two pennyworth of stale buns". He describes various cinemas in Stroud and nearby towns and the bus service that provided transport for cinemagoers living in rural areas. He touches on other leisure pursuits: village football, listening to the wireless, outings on his father's motorbike. "They were truly happy days," he concludes. Later in 1995, Mr Ireland took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(RI-95-137PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of Questionnaire \(RI-95-137GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

SARAH IRVINE (SI-94-012)

In Autumn 1994, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold renewed contact with Hamiltonhill, a day centre in Possil, Glasgow where she had conducted interviews with several of its elderly users before joining the project. She arranged to carry out further interviews, and five of the centre's clients were



Film screenshot (Paramount Pictures), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

interviewed for CCINTB. Sarah Irvine was among them. Mrs Irvine was born in 1904 in Townhead, Glasgow, and had one brother; her father was a tradesman--his precise trade is unrecorded--her mother a housewife; she left school at fourteen, and her occupations had included domestic service, cleaning, and shop work. On 18 November 1994, she took part in a five-way interview, the other four interviewees being **Lily (Lilian) Buik**, **Nellie (Helen) Donaghy**, **Davy (David) Paterson**, and **John Shearer**; and on 3 March 1995 three of the five (herself, Mrs Donaghy, and Mr Paterson) were interviewed again. On 2 December 1994, CCINTB interviewed Mrs Irvine on her own. All three interviews took place at Hamiltonhill Day Centre.

Discussion during the first interview centres mainly on the range and variety of cinemas in the Glasgow area, with recollections of the buildings' interior features and the various forms of entertainment on offer, as well as reflections on the behaviour of cinemagoers. Other leisure pursuits, such as children's games and dancing, are also

remembered. In the second interview, the three participants add further recollections of the Glasgow cinemas they frequented, with details of strategies employed to avoid paying for admission; the rowdy audience behaviour at Saturday matinees; shouting at the cliffhangers that concluded episodes of serials; singalongs with song lyrics displayed on the screen; silent films with piano accompaniment and audience members contributing sound effects. Over forty film personalities are alluded to in the course of the interview, with lively debate about the merits of some, including singing duo Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, and popular male stars Wallace Beery and George Raft.

In her solo interview, Mrs Irvine recollects going to children's matinees and talks about the audience's wild expressions of excitement; she liked cowboy films and boxing films best, she says. She recalls the cluster of cinemas around Cowcaddens that were popular for their children's screenings, and shares memories of the arrival of talking pictures and the enthusiastic response from audiences when synchronous sound was first heard in the cinema. In the interview's second half, Mrs Irvine talks about the fashions of her youth, maintaining that she was always was--and indeed remains--passionate about clothes. The interview closes with reflections on her own background, her lack of educational opportunities, and her first experiences of work.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 3\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 3\)](#)


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(3 of 3\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Bijou Picture Palace \(TheGlasgowStory site\)](#)

 [Extract of Charlie Chaplin in *Gold Rush*, 1925 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Extract from *The Bowery*, 1933 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ZONIA IVES (ZI-95-272)



In the Summer of 1995, Zonia Ives (born in 1926 in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk) contacted CCINTB in response to an article about the project in the 'Great Yarmouth Mercury', her local newspaper.



In a long letter [ZI-95-272PL001], she notes that her father, Jack Weller Snr, owned and managed the Plaza Cinema in Yarmouth, "known as the local flea pit", one of the benefits of having a showman father being that throughout her childhood she never had to pay to enter any cinema.

Later in 1995, Mrs Ives took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey, and with her completed form enclosed a letter containing further details about her family and their showbiz connections, alongside memories of her father's generosity and showmanship. "Thank you so very much," she says, "For making me think and realise what a wonderful life I've had."



The Plaza, Great Yarmouth (cinematreasures.org)

 [Document scan \(ZI-95-272PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(ZI-95-272PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

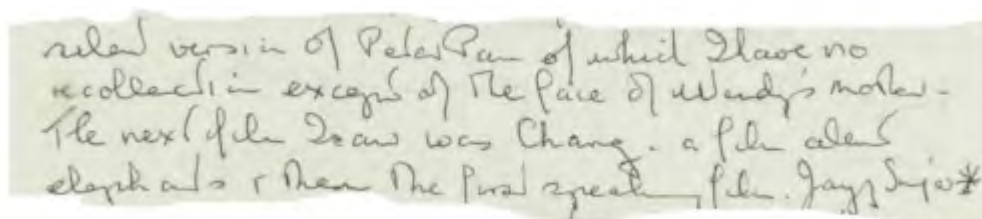
 [Scan of questionnaire \(ZI-95-272GQ001\)](#)

 [The Composed and the Hearfelt \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

IDA JARRON (IJ-95-307)







reel version of Peter Pan of which I have no
recollection except of the face of Wendy's mother -
The next film I saw was Chang, a film about
elephants & then the first speaking film. J. J. S. J. *



Extract from Ida Jarron's letter to Stephen Peart



Ida Jarron wrote to Stephen Peart (author of "The Picture House in East Anglia") in the late Summer of 1995 in response to his call in the East Anglian press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain; and in December 1995 she took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey. Born in Gorleston, Norfolk, in 1921, Mrs Jarron grew up in Great Yarmouth: her father was a garage manager and accountant, her mother a housewife. She left school at the age of eighteen and her first job was in teaching. She moved to Edinburgh after marrying in 1943 and--women of her generation being obliged to leave the teaching profession on marriage--she became a housewife, took on charitable work, and joined the WRVS [Women's Royal Voluntary Service].



Writing from her home in Edinburgh, she informs Stephen Peart that she had seen his letter in the local newspaper during a recent trip to Gorleston. Alongside recollections of the first films she saw, she remembers attending the opening ceremony of the Regal in Gorleston, at which Merle Oberon was present; and also recalls Saturday afternoon cinema visits in Yarmouth when she was older. Enclosed with her completed questionnaire was a letter noting that **Jean Gowing**, her friend in Gorleston, kept a record of all the films she saw from the mid to the late 1930s and collected photos of film stars: "If you are interested, she would be pleased for you to have them." This offer was enthusiastically accepted.

 Document scan (IJ-95-307PL001) |  Transcript


 Document scan (IJ-95-307PL002) |  Transcript

 Document scan (IJ-95-307PL003) |  Transcript

 Document scan (IJ-95-307SL001) |  Transcript

 Document scan (IJ-95-307SL002) |  Transcript

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 Questionnaire (IJ-95-307GQ001)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

GLADYS KENT (GK-95-215)

Gladys Kent of Lowestoft, Suffolk became involved with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through her lifelong friend (and sister-in-law) **Peggy Kent**. Born in Lowestoft in 1919 Gladys Kent was one of five children, her father a painter and decorator. She left school at the age of fourteen and worked at the Premier Laundry in Lowestoft, where she met the women who were to become her lifelong friends: Peggy Kent, **Hilda Catchpole**, **Barbara Harvey**, and **Hilda Green**. She was interviewed, along with all four of her fellow 'laundry girls', at Peggy Kent's home in Lowestoft on 18 October 1995; and again with three of the four--Peggy Kent, Hilda Catchpole, and Barbara Harvey--on 13 November 1995.



RH Louise, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In their lively and laughter-filled first interview, Miss Kent and her friends--who now rarely see each other as a group--share memories of the good times they enjoyed in the thirties. Described in the interviewer's field notes as "glamorous pensioners", they reminisce about the fun they had and recall the complex web of social events they shared. They offer hilarious yarns about work at the laundry, getting ready to go to the pictures or the dance hall, trying out hairstyles, makeup, and fashions; looking your best ("And we did look lovely!"); imitating film stars and getting ideas from the

films about what they were going to wear; going for a dip in the sea on the way home from an evening out. They update each other with anecdotes and news about their families, and vividly recall a wartime bombing raid on Lowestoft.

While most of the conversation in the friends' second interview again consists of shared reminiscences about their youthful exploits, their boyfriends, husbands and children, the women are induced to talk about stars and films when shown a film star annual from the 1930s. They swap opinions about favourite stars, most of whom are male; they remember how people copied actions, gestures, fashions, and hairstyles from films; and share amusing anecdotes about cinema visits with friends and family members.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Palm Court Orchestra, The Grand, Eastbourne](#) (mastersofmeolody.co.uk site)

 [South Pier, Lowestoft](#) (lowestofthistory.com site)

 [Health & Beauty Display At Wembley, 1939](#) (YouTube)

 [Donated Photographs](#)

Book chapter drawing on Mrs Kent's interviews:

Kuhn, A. (2002) 'Growing Up with Cinema', in *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, Chapter 5. London: I.B.Tauris/Bloomsbury.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

PEGGY KENT (PK-95-215)

In August 1995, Peggy Kent of Lowestoft, Suffolk contacted Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to a call in the East Anglian press for volunteers to take part in the project, and became one of the twenty-one individuals, couples and groups living in the region who were interviewed later that year. One of four children, Mrs Kent was born in Lowestoft in 1920 and

had lived in the town all her life: her father was a painter and decorator, her mother a housewife. Soon after leaving school at the age of fourteen, she went to work in the Premier Laundry in Lowestoft, where she met the women who were to become her lifelong friends: **Hilda Catchpole**, **Gladys Kent**, **Barbara Harvey**, and **Hilda Green**. Mrs Kent was interviewed, along with all four of her fellow 'laundry girls', at her home in Lowestoft on 18 October 1995; and again with three of the four--Hilda Catchpole, Gladys Kent, and Barbara Harvey--on 13 November 1995. In 2000, Mrs Kent donated a number of photographs of the group to the project.

In their lively and laughter-filled first interview, Mrs Kent and her friends--who now rarely see each other as a group--share memories of the good times they enjoyed in the thirties. Described in the interviewer's field notes as "glamorous pensioners", they reminisce about the fun they had and recall the complex web of social events they shared. They offer hilarious yarns about work at the laundry, getting ready to go



Photograph of Peggy Kent and her friends from the laundry, taken on Corton Beach, Lowestoft

to the pictures or the dance hall, trying out hairstyles, makeup, and fashions; looking your best (“And we did look lovely!”); imitating film stars and getting ideas from the films about what they were going to wear; going for a dip in the sea on the way home from an evening out. They update each other with anecdotes and news about their families, and vividly recall a wartime bombing raid on Lowestoft.

While most of the conversation in the friends' second interview again consists of shared reminiscences about their youthful exploits, their boyfriends, husbands and children, the women are induced to talk about stars and films when shown a film star annual from the 1930s. They swap opinions about favourite stars, most of whom are male; they remember how people copied actions, gestures, fashions, and hairstyles from films; and share amusing anecdotes about cinema visits with friends and family members.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS


 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Scan of letter from Annette Kuhn \(PK-95-215SL003\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter from Peggy Kent \(PK-95-215PL003\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of follow-up letter from Annette Kuhn \(PK-95-215SL004\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Palm Court Orchestra, The Grand, Eastbourne \(mastersofmeolody.co.uk site\)](#)

 [South Pier, Lowestoft \(lowestofthistory.com site\)](#)

 [Health & Beauty Display At Wembley, 1939 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Donated Photographs](#)

Book chapter drawing on Mrs Kent's interviews:

Kuhn, A. (2002) 'Growing Up with Cinema', in *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, Chapter 5. London: I.B.Tauris/Bloomsbury.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

NANCY KEYTE (NK-95-013)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold contacted Glenwood Lodge, a Residential Care Home in Castlemilk, Glasgow which boasted a reminiscence group, with a view to interviewing residents for the project. Five residents volunteered, and Nancy Keyte was among them. Born in 1917 in Hamilton, near Glasgow, Miss Keyte had worked at Collins the publishers and in a bakery. On 24 January and 13 February 1995 she took part in five-way interviews at Glenwood Lodge, the other four participants being **Tommy Adams**, **Sarah Louise Gale**, **Tommy Dunn**, and **Patrick McCambridge**.



*Casino, Glasgow (uploaded by Mike_Blakemore)
Creative Commons (Attribution) License via
[cinematreasures](#) website)*

In their first interview, group members share their early cinemagoing memories, citing the names and locations of the many Glasgow cinemas --particularly in Partick, Govan, Burnside, and Rutherglen--that they remember. The conversation moves on to silent films, ticket prices, and queueing. They debate preferences in films and stars, and agree that American films were better than British ones. They chose which films to go to by looking in the newspapers, they say, or by noting the length of cinema queues. One group member recalls chopping up fruiterers' boxes for firewood and selling bundles at tuppence a time to get 'picture money'. It is generally agreed that

Donald O'Connor and Gene Kelly were the greatest ever dancers--"They could make their feet talk." There are recollections of children's behaviour in cinemas and of the strict discipline enforced by cinema staff. As a child, says one interviewee, you got fully immersed in what was happening on screen: "you used to imagine you were, you were the star of it."

The second Glenwood Lodge interview opens with group members talking about the various jobs they had done throughout their working lives. Perusal of film annuals and photos of film personalities then prompts discussion of stars (over fifty are named in the course of the interview) and films, as well as other youthful pastimes, dancing in particular. There are further details of the various neighbourhood cinemas they frequented; anecdotes about selling logs and recovering deposits on bottles and jars to amass money for admission; recollection of prices of cinema tickets (dearer for balcony seats); and mention of Green's being the first to show silent movies in the showgrounds of Gallowgate.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [The Picture Houses of Rutherglen](#) (rutherglenheritage.wixsite.com site)

 ['Going loco in Glasgow'](#) (lostglasgow.scot site)

 [Tommy Morgan tribute site](#) (glesga.ukpals.com site)

 [Chung Ling Soo](#) (Wikipedia entry)

 [Extract featuring Eddie Cantor in *Whoopie!*, 1930](#) (YouTube)

 [Clip featuring James Cagney in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1942](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

IRENE LETCHET (IL-95-207) AND BERNARD LETCHET (BL-95-207)

Early in 1995, Irene Letchet heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through a local social group and contacted the project office with an offer of assistance. With her husband, Bernard, she eventually joined CCINTB's eighteen core informants based in and around the London suburb of Harrow, and the couple were interviewed at their home in North Harrow on 21 July and 23 November 1995. In August 2002 extracts from the Letchets' interviews featured in BBC Radio 4's 'Woman's Hour'.



*Photograph taken Jan 1939 © Historic England
Archive ref: bb87/03863*

Mrs Letchet was born in Islington in 1923: her father worked at the Post Office all his life, starting out as a mail sorter and rising to Chief Inspector; her mother was a dressmaker before marriage. On leaving school at sixteen Mrs Letchet took a job as a railway clerk, and during WWII served in the Wrens (Women's Royal Naval Service). She met her future husband during the war, and later trained as a teacher and worked in a primary school until her retirement. Mr Letchet was born in Finchley in 1926, his father an accountant and his mother a housewife. He left school at seventeen and worked briefly at Foyles Bookshop before entering a lifelong career in accountancy.

In their wide-ranging first interview, the Letchets talk about their earliest memories of going to the pictures, of Saturday morning cinema, of the joys of continuous programming ("This is where we came in"), and about the prevalence of the cinemagoing habit when they were young. They vividly recall the number and the different types of cinema in London's West End as well as those in and around their own area, remarking on the luxury and comfort afforded above all by the new supercinemas of the 1930s and on the feeling of uplift a cinema visit could deliver. They mention by name some fifty film personalities, including--unusually among our informants-- several Hollywood bit part players who popped up repeatedly in the same sort of roles. They pore over contemporary press reports of the 1937 grand opening of the Harrow Granada. They mention Hollywood stars' immaculate clothes and makeup; Fred Astaire's perfectionism and "not a Pavarotti" voice; and the studios' exploitation of juvenile stars like Shirley Temple, Deanna Durbin and Judy Garland. Naming over forty films, they recall in particular the 'scary' Disney feature animations Snow White and Fantasia and the hype surrounding their first release.

In their second interview, the couple, now conversing more between themselves and prompting each other's memories, revisit many of the themes and details arising in the earlier interview. The question of the qualities of the films and stars they liked is pursued further--lightheartedness, entertainment value, sophistication, and frivolity are mentioned, along with portrayals of life in the USA--a world they considered entirely apart from their own, to be admired from afar rather than aspired to. They did not expect high art from films--"You just went for the story"--and again stress the importance of cinema in people's daily lives at the time. They talk about seeing film and television stars in the flesh, about collecting autographs, and about British films and stars like Robert Donat ("a bit of a wimp") and Jessie Matthews ("cut-glass accent"). Moving on from the 1930s, they talk about going to the pictures during WW2--the blackout, carrying gas masks, the pervading anxiety ("We were just sort of waiting to be killed"), and about Mr Letchet's disappointing postwar visit to Hollywood: "All my life I wanted to see Hollywood Boulevard and I've been so disappointed. It's so scruffy."

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Scan of Tarzan Questionnaire \(BL-95-207TQ001\)](#)

 [Granada Theatre, Harrow \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Clipping of opening of the Granada Theatre \(CM-20-001RP001\)](#)

 [Extract from 'The Ghost Goes West' \(1935\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Feathery Gown dance scene from 'Top Hat', 1935 \(YouTube\)](#)

Publication relating to material in the Letchets' interview:

Kuhn, A. (2009). 'Film Stars in 1930s Britain: A Case Study in Modernity and Femininity', in Tytti Soila (ed.), *Stellar Encounters: Stardom in Popular European Cinema*. John Libbey.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

DOREEN LYELL (DL-95-216)

In September 1995, Doreen Lyell answered a call in the East Anglian press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and eventually became one of the twenty-one individuals, couples and groups living in that region who were interviewed during the last months of 1995. Miss Lyell was born in Lowestoft, Suffolk in 1922. Her mother was a housewife and her father a jobbing labourer who did short-term and seasonal work--gardening, maintaining fishing boats, and suchlike; in later life he worked for the local council as a rates collector. After leaving school at fourteen, Miss Lyell worked for many years as a bookkeeper at the Co-op before leaving to become her parents' full-time carer. She was interviewed at her home in Pakefield, Lowestoft on 19 October and 13 November 1995.



*The Odeon, Lowestoft. Public Licence via
cinematreasures.org*

In her first interview Miss Lyell talks about her family background and her father's various jobs. She went to the pictures regularly, she says, describing the experience as "really lovely". She feels that the films of her youth had a simple moral code and offered entertainment, enjoyment, and "a bit of glamour in a dull world"; and recalls particularly enjoying westerns and musicals and disliking horror and violence in films. She names some favourite stars and talks about the cinemas in Lowestoft she went to

with her friends. She takes the interviewer through the film scrapbooks that she has promised to donate to the project: "I just want them to go somewhere where they can still be of some use, you know. Because I've got no family and nobody is interested in them any more. I wouldn't like to see them thrown away."

The second interview is focussed on the wider social aspects of cinemagoing. For her generation, says Miss Lyell, cinema was the main entertainment, a regular, essential part of life. Going to the pictures was about learning and broadening one's horizons, she adds, and films at that time offered more profound messages than they do today. She insists that her peers had no desire to change the lives they had: rather, the simple enjoyment of the pictures "helped us through the week". While fully aware that they presented a fantasy world, the films, film magazines, and photographs of stars seemed to be "addressed to us alone". She discusses the qualities that attracted her to particular films and her feelings about favourite stars; and reiterates that her generation got so much out of cinemagoing because, unlike today's youngsters, they had little else in their lives. She points to the powerful international appeal of Hollywood cinema and the superior quality of those working in the studios, noting that the film industry created many jobs all over the world.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |



 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Scan of letter \(DL-95-216PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [The Grand Theatre, Kirkley \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Trailer from 'The Good Earth', 1937 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Extract from 'A Tale of Two Cities', 1937 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Donated Scrapbooks](#)

 [Photograph Album - 1930 Stars](#)

Related publication:

Extracts from and discussion of Miss Lyell's interviews appear in *An Everyday Magic*, pp.149; 230-231; 232;233:

Kuhn, A. (2002). *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London: I.B. Tauris).

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

NORMAN MACDONALD (NM-92-005)

In December 1992, Norman MacDonald attended a **screening and discussion** on 1930s popular cinema in the 1930s at Glasgow Film Theatre, and filled in a short questionnaire which he later delivered to Annette Kuhn along with a list of films that he saw during the 1930s. He was born in Glasgow's West End in 1915; an only child, his father was a local government officer and his mother a dressmaker who ran her own business. He studied Law at the University of Glasgow and pursued a lifetime career as a solicitor, interrupted only by war service with the Army in India and Burma. He was interviewed at his home in Glasgow on 17 November and 7 December 1994.



Film Poster of Pudovkin's film 'Mother', 1926

In his first interview, Mr MacDonald talks about the first picture house he remembers attending and describes this and various other cinemas in Glasgow that he went to as a boy. He recounts an early memory of screaming with laughter at a Charlie Chaplin film and being threatened with ejection from the cinema, and notes the generally rowdy behaviour of child audiences. His fondest recollections are of seeing "foreign"--especially Russian--films, while insisting that he also enjoyed "big, American films".

The conversation ranges over the representation of Scotland in films, the value for money offered by a typical cinema programme, and the opportunity to sit through more than one screening of a film that continuous programming offered. He lists his other youthful leisure pursuits and mentions the "real atmosphere" pervading well-appointed cinemas. He laments the relatively high cost of going to the pictures today, and finally recollects his visits to cinemas in India and Burma during WW2, which offered an escape from the heat.

Mr MacDonald's second interview opens with recollections of his parents' occasional visits to the cinema and the theatre. He then produces his journal, 'My Kind of Thirties', covering the years 1935 and 1936, and including details of his cinema visits in those years. He talks about his parents' families with their tradition of independent women, and about his own internationalism--the friendships he made through membership of the University's International Club, his interest in Indian cinema, and the documentary films he saw during the 1930s. He muses on the films he saw as a child, with their simple moral codes and stereotypical characters: this leads to some reflections on racism in films. He remembers seeing Jessie Matthews perform live at a ballroom in Glasgow, dressing up to go to Friday night dances at the University, seeing Deanna Durbin in a film when he was in India, and going to a cinema in Moscow during a visit to the USSR in the 1970s. The interview concludes with Mr MacDonald offering to loan his 1930s journal to the project.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 ['Going to the Flicks' essay \(NM-92-005PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Extracts from 1935 journal \(NM-92-005PW002\)](#)

 [Alhambra Theatre \(arthurlloyd.co.uk site\)](#)

 [Battleship Potemkin \(1925\) \(YouTube\)](#)

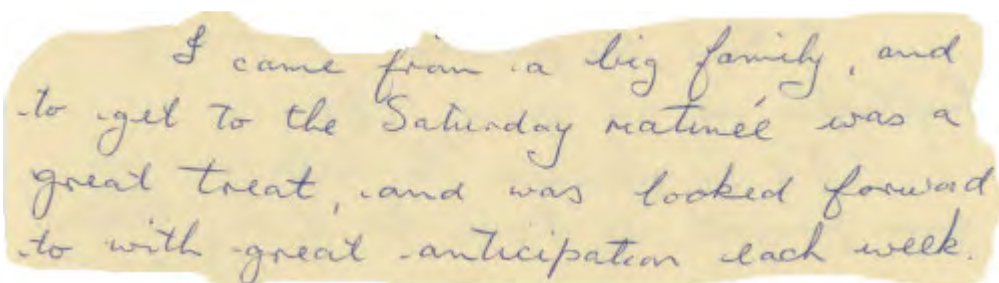
 [Photograph from Norman MacDonald's wedding to Molly, 1941 \(NM-92-005PH001\)](#)

 [Chroniclers of Picturegoing \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



BARBARA MACK (BM-92-028)



I came from a big family, and to get to the Saturday matinee was a great treat, and was looked forward to with great anticipation each week.

Extract from Barbara Mack's letter

In May 1992, Barbara Mack of Irvine in southwest Scotland wrote to Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain after hearing about the project on local radio. Born in Glasgow in 1924, Mrs Mack came from a large family and went to school in the Gorbals. Describing the Saturday matinée as "a great treat" and something that was eagerly anticipated by children in the area, she recalls that boys would "imitate their cowboy 'heroes'," while girls "would dream of becoming glamorous film stars and fantasise in a dream world." Mrs Mack ends her letter by noting that "the 'pictures' was one of the highlights of my young life."

 [Document scan \(BM-92-028PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Thomas McGoran artwork - Glasgow cinemagoing](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



ALEX MAWER (AM-92-032)

Every household was affected by the Cinema. The youngsters were catered for by Saturday matinees, morning and afternoon. The unemployed (of whom there many) were tempted by reduced prices in the afternoon. Then parents with young families could easily find a family babysitter to allow them to have a night at the Cinema together.

Extract from Alex Mawer's letter

In April 1992, Alex Mawer of Bearsden, Glasgow (born 1914) wrote to Annette Kuhn in response to a feature in local media about 1930s cinemagoing. His entertaining letter recalls twice-weekly cinema visits as a teenager, and stresses that cinemas catered for every demographic. He describes later attending plush city centre cinemas with girlfriends, noting the care people took in dressing smartly for the occasion and naming some popular film stars of the day. He offers an amusing anecdote about his parents' weekly cinema visits and their encounters with annoying fellow patrons, concluding with the observation that films provided plenty of grist for lively family discussions.

An interview with Mr Mawer was arranged for December 1994, but he was taken ill before the appointed date and sadly passed away soon after.

 [Document scan \(AM-92-032PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 ['Glasgow's Picture Palaces'](#), Glasgow City Archives (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

PATRICK MCCAMBRIDGE (PM-95-013)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold contacted Glenwood Lodge, a Residential Care Home in Castlemilk, Glasgow which boasted a reminiscence group, with a view to interviewing residents for the project. Five residents volunteered, and Patrick McCambridge was among them. Mr McCambridge was born in Glasgow in 1923; he left school at fourteen and was a lorry driver throughout his working life. On 24 January and 13 February 1995 he took part in five-way interviews at Glenwood Lodge, the other four participants being **Tommy Adams**, **Tommy Dunn**, **Sarah Louise Gale**, and **Nancy Keyte**.



Campbells Fruiterers, Glasgow (image © Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Museums via [TheGlasgowStory](#) website)

In their first interview, group members share their early cinemagoing memories, citing the names and locations of the many Glasgow cinemas --particularly in Partick, Govan, Burnside, and Rutherglen--that they remember. The conversation moves on to silent films, ticket prices, and queueing. They debate preferences in films and stars, and agree that American films were better than British ones. They chose which films to go to by looking in the newspapers, they say, or by noting the length of cinema queues. One group member recalls chopping up fruiterers' boxes for firewood and selling bundles at tuppence a time to get 'picture money'. It is generally agreed that Donald O'Connor and Gene Kelly were the greatest ever dancers--"They could make their feet talk." There are recollections of children's behaviour in cinemas and of the

strict discipline enforced by cinema staff. As a child, says one interviewee, you got fully immersed in what was happening on screen: “you used to imagine you were, you were the star of it.”

The second Glenwood Lodge interview opens with group members talking about the various jobs they had done throughout their working lives. Perusal of film annuals and photos of film personalities then prompts discussion of stars (over fifty are named in the course of the interview) and films, as well as other youthful pastimes, dancing in particular. There are further details of the various neighbourhood cinemas they frequented; anecdotes about selling logs and recovering deposits on bottles and jars to amass money for admission; recollection of prices of cinema tickets (dearer for balcony seats); and mention of Green's being the first to show silent movies in the showgrounds of Gallowgate.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [The Picture Houses of Rutherglen \(rutherglenheritage.wixsite.com site\)](#)

 ['Going loco in Glasgow' \(lostglasgow.scot site\)](#)

 [Tommy Morgan tribute site \(glesga.ukpals.com site\)](#)

 [Chung Ling Soo \(Wikipedia entry\)](#)

 [Extract featuring Eddie Cantor in *Whoopee!*, 1930 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Clip featuring James Cagney in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, 1942 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

MARY MCCUSKER (MM-92-008)

In 1992, Mary McCusker responded to a media request for contacts from cinemagoers of the 1930s, and was invited to a screening and discussion of popular cinema in the 1930s held at Glasgow Film Theatre in December of that year. She was unable to attend, but submitted notes of, and a published essay on, her early cinemagoing memories; and also made a personal visit to the Project Director's Office. Mrs McCusker subsequently joined Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain's seventeen Glasgow-based core informants, and was interviewed at her home in Cowcaddens, Glasgow on 22 November and again on 13 December 1994. In June 1996, along with several other Glasgow interviewees, she visited CCINTB's exhibition at the *Screen Studies Conference* at Strathclyde University.

Born in 1916 in the Gorbals, Glasgow, Mrs McCusker was the only child of Irish parents. Her father's jobs included barman and furnace worker, and her mother was a housewife. On leaving school at fourteen she took a job as cashier in a grocery, and subsequently worked as manager of a grocery store until her marriage in 1939.



Screenland magazine, Inc., Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In her first interview, Mrs McCusker shares vivid recollections of the cinemas that she attended in her early years in the Gorbals ("You could walk to them all"), recalling the names and details of many other cinemas in Glasgow and of some of the films she saw in them in later years: over thirty of the city's cinemas are described in the course of the interview. She offers lively memories of her childhood picturegoing, recalling the first talking picture she ever saw, and hearing news of the 1929 Paisley cinema fire. She relives her delight at the later arrival of colour films and CinemaScope, and talks about going to cinemas and dance halls when courting her future husband. She recalls a couple of occasions when she went to dance halls when still very young--and feeling very much out of her depth. She evokes children's matinees, reciting Edith Little's poem 'Saturday Matinee', mentioning the practice of tendering jam jars instead of money for admission, and recalling her own enjoyment of serials and action films. She admires the 1938 film annual brought along by the interviewer: leafing through the book triggers facts and gossip about numerous film personalities (over eighty stars are named during the interview), as well as memories of reading about stars in magazines, etc. She notes her own and her husband's film preferences, and tells a story about the couple seeing an 'arty crafty' film at La Scala that did not meet their preferences at all--and complaining to the manager. The interview draws to a close with memories of copying star fashions and hairstyles, and of the glamour of Glasgow's ballrooms, which inspired their patrons to take dancing lessons and dress up in style for an evening of dancing.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Scan of Letter \(MM-92-008PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of Newspaper Article \(MM-92-008AR001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of Letter \(MM-92-008PL004\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 ['Saturday Matinee' poem by Edith Little \(MM-92-008AT015\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [The Paragon, Glasgow \(cinematreasures.org\)](#)

 [The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu \(1923\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [The Clothing Aspect \(News & Blog area\)](#)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

Publication drawn on by Mrs McCusker in her interview:

When Sixpence Was a Fortune: Poems by Edith Little for Concerts and Recitations. Glasgow, Heatherbank Press, 1978

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

FREDA MCFARLAND (FM-95-189)

In May 1995, Freda McFarland came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain via the Bolton WEA (Workers' Educational Association) Local History Study Group, and joined the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core

informants later that year. One of four children, Mrs McFarland was born in Wigan, Lancashire in 1916 and moved to Bolton at the age of five. Her father was a joiner and her mother a housewife who died when Mrs McFarland was twelve years old. After leaving school at fourteen, Mrs McFarland embarked on a series of jobs, including factory work, waitressing, and work in a tannery. She was interviewed at her home in Bolton on 7 June 1995.

Mrs McFarland observes that Bolton boasted more than twenty cinemas during the 1930s, and in the course of her interview names, locates and describes most of them-while stressing that she herself was not a regular cinemagoer until she met her film-loving husband-to-be in 1934. She briefly mentions some film stars that she liked, and talks at greater length about leisure activities of her youth such as Sunday school, outdoor play, and dancing. She discusses her interest in local history, including her



Rialto Picture Playhouse, Bolton (1936)

Uploaded by HJHill. Creative Commons (Attribution)

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published research on the Morris Green area of Bolton, and offers vivid accounts of local church customs and mourning rituals. She recollects details of her mother's funeral, of a camping trip with the Girl Guides, and of her own early working life, weaving into her account reflections on the expected role of girls and young women within the household in the interwar period.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Opening of the Capitol Cinema, Bolton \(1920s\)](#) (huntleyarchives.com site)

 [Bolton local history site: Daubhill](#) (bolton.webeden.co.uk site)

Publication related to Mrs McFarland's interview:

McFarland, F. (1988). *The History of Morris Green*.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

THOMAS MCGORAN (TM-92-009)

In 1992, former cinema projectionist Thomas McGoran read Annette Kuhn's article about 1930s popular cinema in *The Glaswegian*, and wrote to her offering information (see link below). He was among the earliest Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain interviewees and one of the project's seventeen Glasgow-



'Saturday Night at the Movies' (T McGoran)

based core informants. He was interviewed at his home on 30 November 1994 and 22 February 1995. One of nine children, Mr McGoran was born in Ayr in 1927 and the family moved to Glasgow in 1930. His father was a labourer, his mother a housewife. He left school at the age of fourteen, and his first job was as a spoolboy (rewinding films after they had been projected) and he later went on to work as a film projectionist. A gifted artist, his paintings have been exhibited in Glasgow and some of them can be viewed at the artuk.org website. He donated his collection of 35mm film spool offcuts, along with digital versions of his paintings *'Saturday Night at the Movies'* and *'Matinee Mayhem'*. In June 1996, along with several other Glasgow interviewees, Mr McGoran visited CCINTB's exhibition at the *Screen* Conference at Strathclyde University, and in 2000, he took part in CCINTB's Tarzan questionnaire survey. He remains in contact with the project, and was interviewed again in 2020.

His wide-ranging first interview opens with his earliest memory of being in a cinema, fascinated by the projector beam; and includes a story about a private film show he put on at the age of eight or nine in the shared lavatory of his tenement building. In

the course of the interview he mentions close to forty Glasgow cinemas, including particular favourites the Arcadia, where he worked; the Orient, venue of a memorable ninth birthday visit to see his favourite star, Deanna Durbin; and Green's Playhouse with its various attractions. He goes into the details—duties, working conditions, routines, and vicissitudes—of his work as a projectionist, and compares his duties and the various technicalities with film projection today. He talks about collecting comics and film magazines as a teenager and swapping them with friends, about widescreen and 3D films, British versus American films, the dance halls of Glasgow, and charity Sunday film shows during the war. The interview closes with memories of the thrilling serials screened at children's matinees, and of anticipating the denouements of the weekly cliffhangers: "Aww, it was marvellous days, marvellous. We didn't have much but you got a good laugh!"

In his second interview, Mr McGoran talks about the short films and newsreels that featured in the normal/regular cinema programme, and guides the interviewer through the collection of spool offcuts that he subsequently donated to the project.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)



 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)



 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)



 [Scan of letter \(TM-92-009PL01\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(TM-92-009SL004\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(TM-92-009PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(TM-92-009PW01\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of letter \(TS-00-001GL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of essay \(TM-92-009PW02\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of Tarzan questionnaire \(TM-92-009TQ001\)](#)

 [Paintings \(artuk.org website\)](#)

 [Arcadia Cinema, Glasgow \(cinematreaures website\)](#)

 [Deanna Durbin singing 'Danny Boy', 1945 \(YouTube\)](#)

Lecture and Publication relating to materials in Mr McGoran's memorabilia:

'Snow White in the 1930s', Raphael Samuel Memorial Lecture, Bishopsgate Institute, London, November 2007. Kuhn, A. (2010). 'Snow White in 1930s Britain', *Journal of British*

Cinema and Television, 7(2).

 Snow White in 1930s Britain

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

SHEILA MCWHINNIE (SM-92-004)

In 1992, Sheila McWhinnie saw Annette Kuhn's article in 'The Glaswegian' and heard her broadcast on local radio about popular cinema in the 1930s. She wrote a letter in response and eventually became one of Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain's seventeen Glasgow-based core informants. She was interviewed at her home on 21 November and 12 December 1994.



Sheila McWhinnie (far left)

One of five children, Mrs McWhinnie was born in 1919 in the Gorbals, Glasgow. Her father, who had joined up at the age of sixteen to fight in World War One, afterwards had a variety of jobs, street sweeper and fish seller among them. He earned well, Mrs McWhinnie recalls, but the family suffered economically because of her mother's gambling addiction.

In her first interview Mrs McWhinnie talks about her first jobs—as a seamstress and in a sweet factory—before finding work in a cinema. She talks about the Clydebank Blitz and remembers film stars George Formby and David Niven visiting cinemas that she worked in, and about receiving a letter and a signed photograph from Bing Crosby. Favourite stars included Charles Laughton and Deanna Durbin, and she generally preferred American films over British ones.

In her second interview, she talks about the various Glasgow cinemas she worked in, with details of her job as an usherette; audience behaviour, charity Sunday shows during the war; and about the glamour of cinemas and their importance in people's lives: "There'd have been a revolution if it hadn't been for the cinemas!"

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |



 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Scan of first letter \(SM-92-004PL02\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of second letter \(SM-92-004PL03\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Donated Photographs](#)

 [The Clothing Aspect \(News & Blog area\)](#)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

NANCIE MILLER (NM-92-014)

In May 1992, Nancie (Agnes) Miller responded to Annette Kuhn's call for 1930s cinemagoers in a **Glasgow** local radio broadcast with a letter setting out a brief history of her cinemagoing years. Towards the end of 1994, she was contacted with an invitation to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain; and on 17 February 1995 gave an interview at her home in Knightswood as part of CCINTB's fieldwork pilot.

Mrs Miller was born in Glasgow's South Side in 1920 and had lived in the city all her life aside from service in the Women's Land Army during WW2. One of two children, her father had worked on the Carlisle--Glasgow railway before she was born but was unemployed throughout her childhood; her mother worked as a cleaner. On leaving school a few weeks before her fourteenth birthday, Mrs Miller found work in the post room of a local ironmongery firm whilst acquiring office skills at night school.

Through her interview Mrs Miller often touches on how her younger years were affected by her father's joblessness, stressing her keenness to make the most of the educational opportunities that were available to her. She talks about her teenage



Little Women Poster. RKO Pictures, Morgan Litho Co.,
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



cinemagoing and names some regular haunts and favourite film stars—her top favourite being Robert Taylor. Towards the end of the interview she recollects people and events at some of her office jobs and tells the interviewer about why she decided to join the Land Army.

 [Interview audio](#) (audio file only)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Scan of letter \(NM-92-014PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Wellington Palace, Glasgow](#) (scottishcinemas.org.uk site)

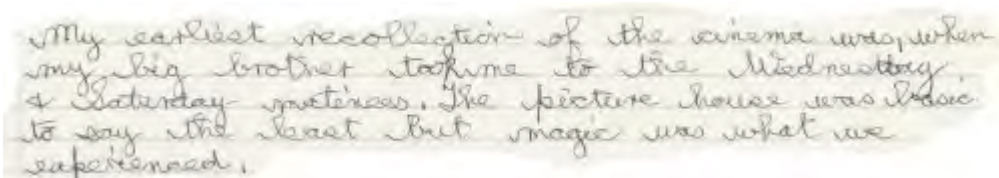
 ['Terrible waste of a brain!'](#) (News & Blog area)

 [The Clothing Aspect](#) (News & Blog area)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ROSE MINT (RM-92-033)





My earliest recollection of the cinema was, when my big brother took me to the Wednesday & Saturday matinees. The picture house was basic to say the least but magic was what we experienced.

Extract from Rose Mint's letter

In May 1992 Rose Mint of Edinburgh (born 1920) wrote to Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to an item she heard on local radio. She recalls s being taken by her older brother to Wednesday and Saturday matinees at what she describes as a “basic” cinema: “magic was what we experienced,” she writes. She lists serials she enjoyed as a child, as well as comedy stars such as Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy, and names some stars she swooned over in later years.

She concludes by highlighting the importance of cinema in helping people find respite from the challenges of living through the Great Depression: “The cinema took us away from reality for a while, it was a big part of our lives just for that reason.”

 [Document scan \(RM-92-033PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Fast Freight, 'Our Gang' episode \(1929\)](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

MICK (PERCIVAL) MITCHELL (PM-95-024)

Mick (Percival) Mitchell was born in Liverpool in 1926, one of four children. His father was a labourer in a sugar works, his mother a housewife. He left school at fourteen, and one of his first jobs was packing and dispatching cans of film for a distributor in Liverpool; he later worked in a variety of different jobs--in engineering, building and for an electricity company, among others. In 1945, he was called up for National Service, and served with the Army in Greece and Egypt. Although Mr Mitchell was not among Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain's core informants, his interview, which took place at his home in Oldham, Greater

Manchester on 10 May 1995, was transcribed in 2017 and is now presented alongside a written memoir of his cinemagoing that he sent to the project.

In the interview, Mr Mitchell recalls his early cinemagoing in Liverpool, the cinemas he went to--the differences between them, their typical film programmes, and so on. He talks about his experiences as a film packer during the 1940s, and about going to the pictures in Egypt and Greece during his time in the Army. He was joined part way



English: "Copyright 1938 RKO Radio Pictures Inc.",
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

through the interview by his wife, Margaret, and the couple share memories of cinemas and filmgoing in Manchester, and some anecdotes about people they knew who appeared in films.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Scan of essay \(PM-95-024PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Cabbage Hall Picture House, Liverpool \(cinematreasures.org\)](#)

 [Caesar and Cleopatra \(1945\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [The Composed and the Heartfelt \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

DAVID AND JEANNE MOORE (DM-92-034)

David (J.D.D.) Moore was born in 1917 in Crowborough, Hampshire. His father was an officer in the Royal Navy (RN), and his mother had been a governess before her marriage. On leaving school at thirteen, David entered Dartmouth RN College as a cadet, then midshipman from 1935, finishing his Navy education in 1937. In the late 1930s he served mostly in the Mediterranean and during WW2

he was a Navigating Officer in various theatres (Atlantic, Arctic, D-Day, Pacific) In the early 1990s, he wrote to Annette Kuhn about his 1930s cinemagoing, listing and commenting on films that he had seen. Some years earlier he and his wife, Jeanne, had taken part in an interview conducted by Annette Kuhn about their interwar cinemagoing. Jeanne Moore (nee Knight) was born in 1919 in Farnborough, Hampshire. Her father was a solicitor and her mother had been a musician before marrying. On leaving school at the age of seventeen, Jeanne worked in catering with MI5 and at Blenheim Palace. As well as the correspondence and the interview, the Cinema Memory Archive holds an account of David Moore's involvement as Naval liaison in the production of *Morning Departure* (1950), directed by Roy Ward Baker ("extremely skilful at getting the best out of the actors").















Poster of the 1950s film 'Morning Departure'
(Wikipedia site)

[🔊 Interview audio](#) (audio file only)

[📄 Interview transcript](#) | [📄 Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

-  Scan of document (DM-92-034MI001) |  Transcript
 -  Scan of document (DM-92-034PL001) |  Transcript
 -  Scan of document (DM-92-034PL002) |  Transcript
 -  Scan of document (DM-92-034PW001) |  Transcript
 -  Scan of document (DM-92-034PW002) |  Transcript
 -  [Chroniclers of Picturegoing \(News & Blog area\)](#)
 -  [The Composed and the Heartfelt \(News & Blog area\)](#)
-

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

JIMMY MURRAY (JM-95-039)

Early in 1995, Jimmy Murray responded to a call for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and was among the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants during 1995.

Born in Bury in 1920, aside from a period of war service he lived

in the area all his life. His father worked as a fireman on locomotives and his mother was a housewife. On leaving school at fourteen, Mr Murray followed his father into the railways, firstly as a fireman and later as stoker. He was interviewed in his home in Bury on 9 May and 5 September 1995.



The Art Cinema, Bury. Public Domain License via cinematreasures.org

In his first interview, Mr Murray offers extensive recollections of cinemagoing in the late silent and early sound periods--mainly in Bury but also occasionally in Manchester city centre. He rarely if ever went to the cinema with his parents, he says, but mainly attended with friends: he remembers himself and his friends avoiding paying for admission by sneaking each other in through toilet windows. He mentions *Birth of a Nation* playing in Bury, with different screening days for men and women. He talks about silent films accompanied by live musicians and cinema organ recitals by Sidney Torch and Sandy MacPherson, and recalls seeing films overseas during WW2, including screenings in a makeshift corrugated-iron hut on an Icelandic military base. He names some favourite stars, both male and female, and remembers

Anna Neagle visiting Bury in 1936 to open the Odeon there. The interview concludes with a long discussion of foreign travel.

Mr Murray's second interview is focused more closely on cinema history, with particular attention given to film stars, of whom forty or so are named in the course of the conversation. Of actors in British films, he highlights his particular appreciation of fellow Lancastrians George Formby and Gracie Fields, stressing a preference for stars who seemed like "ordinary people". At the same time, he notes that he enjoyed the spectacle and the artifice of Hollywood musicals, and was particularly impressed by Astaire and Rogers as well as by the short 'aquamusicals' that the swimmer Esther Williams appeared in, drawing insightful comparisons between the glamorous settings of the films and his home town's more down-to-earth locales. He recalls film-inspired children's games of Cowboys and Indians involving sticks and cap guns, and older boys deploying trilby hats and cigarettes to emulate characters in gangster movies. His conclusion is that cinema was an important part of his childhood--to the extent that his schooling might well have suffered as a result, but that it occupied a less central place in his adult life.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Scan of document \(JM-95-039PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Palais de Dance/Castle cinema](#) (manchesterbeat.com site - scroll down for photos)

 [Sidney Torch plays "Our Love Affair" on the Wurlitzer](#) (YouTube)

 [Ripley's 'Believe It Or Not'](#) (YouTube)

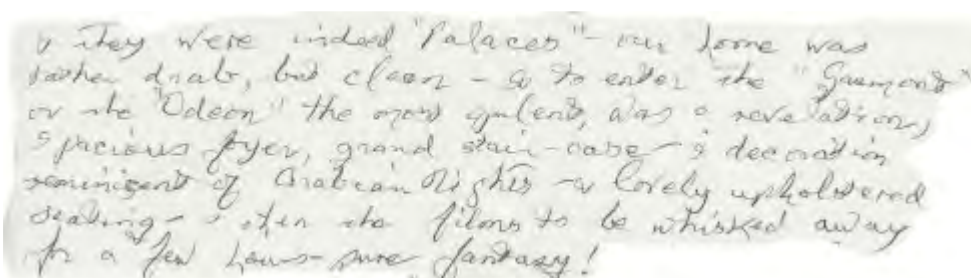
Publication drawing on Mr Murray's interview (Ch 7: 'An Invitation to Dance'):

Kuhn, A. (2002). *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*. London: I.B. Tauris.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



MEGAN NEESOM (MN-95-145)





They were indeed "Palaces" - one some was rather drab, but clean - to enter the "Gaiety" or the "Odeon" the great grand, was a revelation, spacious foyer, grand stair-case & decoration reminiscent of Arabian Nights - lovely upholstered seating - often the films to be whisked away for a few hours - pure fantasy!

Extract from Mrs Neesom's letter

In February 1995 Megan Neesom of Hyde, Cheshire responded to an announcement in the Manchester Evening News about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. She sent a letter setting out her memories of the different types of cinemas in and around her home city of Manchester and mentioning recent correspondence with her favourite film star, James Stewart. Mrs Neesom was born in 1922 and left school at the age of fourteen to take up a job as a clerk. In later years she had a range of occupations, including housewife, and at the time of her contact with CCINTB was doing voluntary work. Later in 1995, Mrs Neesom took part in our postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(MN-95-145PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(MN-95-145PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(MN-95-145GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ARTHUR ORRELL (AO-95-175)

In Spring 1995, Arthur Orrell was contacted by Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain via the Bolton WEA (Workers' Educational Association) Local History Study Group, and joined the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants later that year. Mr Orrell was born in Bolton in 1920, one of two children. His father worked in the cotton industry as a mule spinner and his mother was a housewife: in the early years of their marriage, the couple worked in the cotton mills of Western Massachusetts, USA for several years before returning to Bolton to raise their family. After leaving school at fourteen, Mr Orrell worked a series of jobs, mostly involving clothing and footwear, before moving south at sixteen to join a youth employment scheme; his subsequent work was mainly in the field of electrical engineering. His interviews, conducted al fresco in Manchester city centre, took place on 12 May and 9 June 1995. In 2000, Mr Orrell took part in CCINTB's Tarzan questionnaire survey.



Tom Mix Cigarette Card

© Wills (now Imperial Brands PLC). Reproduced
courtesy of *Bill Douglas Cinema Museum*

The wide-ranging first interview, which took place outside Manchester's Tourist Information Centre, touches on Mr Orrell's earliest cinemagoing memories and the range and diversity of the often short-lived cinemas in Bolton at the time. He describes the clatter of clogs on cinemas' wooden floors, live musical accompaniment to silent films, and singsongs. He recalls the names of his favourite stars of film westerns, and talks about some of his other childhood leisure pursuits, including Sunday School treats, playground games, and collecting cigarette cards. He remembers the Saturday night queues of his adolescent years, when he went to the pictures two or three times a week, and the double seats provided for courting couples in some cinemas. He notes his film preferences and favourite stars (over seventy stars — favourites and others — are mentioned in the course of the interview) and is voluble on the topic of Lancastrian film personalities—such as Gracie Fields, whose 1934 vehicle *Sing As We Go!* includes scenes that were filmed close to his home. He offers anecdotes about film shoots that he witnessed: one in North Wales involving British star Stewart Granger, and another—involving Richard Attenborough—at a school where he was working. Perusal of Mr Orrell's collection of articles and clippings from local newspapers prompts further discussion of performers, writers, and other creatives from Bolton and nearby; and the interview draws to a close with memories of cinemas Mr Orrell went to when he was working in London.

Before the start of his second interview, conducted on a bench at Manchester Piccadilly station, Mr Orrell guided the interviewer on a walking tour of the city centre. Conversation throughout is facilitated by the collection of film star cigarette cards he has brought along. He explains how he came by the cards as a boy—this often involved approaching random strangers as they were opening new cigarette packets. He talks about the stars featured on the cards, mentions some of the earliest films he remembers and the cinemas where he saw them, and once again reflects on the number and variety of cinemas in Bolton. He refers to the organs installed in upscale cinemas, noting that there were several famous cinema organists called Reginald. He enjoyed comedy and slapstick in films, he says, identifies several male dramatic actors that he liked, and insists that he avoided 'women's films'. He names a number of celebrities, including Buffalo Bill, who visited Bolton, and mentions some Hollywood films that were shot in scenic UK locations. Conversation then turns to amusing scenes from WC Fields and Harold Lloyd films, gossip and scandal about film stars' lives, and 'gentleman' actors in British postwar films.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

[🏠 Bolton home page](#)

[📄 Scan of letter \(AO-95-175PL003\) | 📄 Transcript](#)

[📄 Scan of Tarzan Questionnaire \(AO-95-175TQ001\)](#)

[📄 The Queen's Picture House, Bolton \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

[📄 Rare footage of Buffalo Bill \(YouTube\)](#)

[📄 Harry Lauder in "Safety Last" skyscraper scene \(1923\) \(YouTube\)](#)

[📄 Cinema on 'every street corner' \(article from theboltonnews.co.uk\)](#)

Publications related to 1930s cinemagoing in Bolton:

Jones, J. (2019). 'These Intimate Little Places': Cinema-Going and Public Emotion in Bolton, 1930-1954, *Cultural and Social History*, 16:4, 451-466, DOI:

[10.1080/14780038.2019.1609801](#)

Richards, J. (1994). Cinemagoing in Worktown: regional film audiences in 1930s Britain, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 14:2, 147-166, DOI:

[10.1080/01439689400260131](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

LOIS BASNETT (LB-95-187) AND BERT (HERBERT) PARTINGTON (BP-95-188)

Lois Basnett and Bert (Herbert) Partington came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through their membership of the Westhoughton History Society (WHS), and joined the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core

informants during the summer of that year. On 9 May 1995, the couple

were interviewed, along with three other WHS members, at Westhoughton Library, and again on 30 May 1995 at their home in Westhoughton. Miss Basnett was born in Westhoughton, Bolton in 1919: her father, a socialist, vegetarian and local councillor, owned a newsagents shop. She attended the Canon Slade Grammar School in Bolton, went on to teacher training college, and took up a career as a secondary school teacher in her home town. Mr Partington was born in Bolton in 1918 and, aside from war service, had lived in the area all his life. He attended the Canon Slade Grammar School in Bolton, leaving at the age of sixteen and taking up employment as a shop assistant. His later jobs included Royal Air Force technical instructor and sales representative.



Lido, Bolton (uploaded by Mike_Blakemore) Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

In their first interview, Miss Basnett, Mr Partington, and other WHS members share memories of Westhoughton's two cinemas, one of which began life as a roller skating rink, and proceed to consider Bolton's various 'classes' of cinema and the types of programming on offer. The high-profile activities of the local Watch Committee with regard to Sunday opening of cinemas and regulating and certificating films are debated. The cinema billboards advertising the week's films that graced shop fronts in town--and the free tickets shopkeepers received in return--are remembered. The feeling is expressed that films seemed to take a very long time to reach Bolton after their general release. Early picturegoing memories are highlighted: projector breakdowns, attendants failing to keep rowdy audiences in order, disinfectant sprays. The mighty organ at Bolton's supercinema is remembered, as are the double seats for courting couples in another local picture house, and the cheap seats behind the cinema screen in yet another.

The conversation in the couple's second interview ranges widely, with a prominent theme that they were very different people in the 1930s, that tastes change over the years, and that films that might have impressed them in their youth would probably seem silly now: "Nowadays we're far more sophisticated," says Mr Partington. Looking at cinema advertisements in a 1930s edition of the local newspaper prompts recollections of stars and films. Miss Basnett recalls being more interested in live theatre than in cinema, but does remember occasional teenage trips to the pictures in Manchester with an aunt, neglecting her Latin and Greek homework in favour of cinema visits with her sixth-form friends, and being frightened by the film *Night Must Fall* when she was at teacher training college. She expands on her father's eccentricities, about the miners and other locals who patronised her father's shop, the 1926 General Strike, a local pit tragedy, wartime bombing, and the arrival of evacuees in the town. Mr Partington reiterates the point about changing tastes, expresses regret that the past is too often romanticised, and offers some observations on film stars, good looks, beauty and style, as well as on female and male tastes in films.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)



 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS


 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Scan of CCINTB Questionnaire \(LB-95-187DQ001\)](#)

 Scan of CCINTB Questionnaire (BP-95-188DQ001)

 Scan of letter (BP-95-188PL001) |  Transcript

 Edward Basnett - History of Bolton Town Hall (boltonmayors.org.uk site)

 Odeon Cinema, Bolton (chestercinemas.co.uk site)

 Nightclub scene from *Scarface*, 1932 (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

DAVID (DAVY) PATERSON (DP-94-012)

In Autumn 1994, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold renewed an earlier contact with Hamiltonhill, a day centre in Possil, Glasgow where she had conducted interviews with some of its elderly users before joining the project. She arranged to carry out further interviews for CCINTB, and five of the centre's clients were interviewed for CCINTB. Davy (David) Paterson was among them. Mr Paterson was born in Maryhill, Glasgow, in 1917, and had one sister; his father worked in the docks, and his mother was a cleaner; he left school at fourteen and worked in a foundry and later as a lift operator in a bakery. On 18 November 1994, he took part in a five-way interview at Hamiltonhill, the other four interviewees being [Lily \(Lilian\) Buik](#), [Sarah Irvine](#), [Nellie \(Helen\) Donaghy](#), and [John Shearer](#); and on 3 March 1995 three of the five (himself, Mrs Irvine, and Mrs Donaghy) were interviewed again. Both interviews took place at Hamiltonhill Day Centre.



Employee(s) of MGM, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Discussion during the first interview centres mainly on the range and variety of cinemas in the Glasgow area, with recollections of the buildings' interior features and

the various forms of entertainment on offer, as well as reflections on the behaviour of cinemagoers. Other leisure pursuits, such as children's games and dancing, are also remembered.

In the second interview, the three participants add further recollections of Glasgow cinemas they frequented, with details of strategies employed to avoid paying for admission; rowdy audience behaviour at Saturday matinees; shouting at the cliffhangers that concluded episodes of serials; singalongs with song lyrics displayed on the screen; silent films with piano accompaniment and audience members contributing sound effects. Over forty film personalities are alluded to in the course of the interview, with lively debate about the merits of some, including singing duo Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy and popular male stars Wallace Beery and George Raft.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Bijou Picture Palace \(TheGlasgowStory site\)](#)

 [Extract of Charlie Chaplin in *Gold Rush*, 1925 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Extract from *The Bowery*, 1933 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

TONY (ANTHONY) PATERSON (TP-92-013)

In May 1992, Dr Tony (Anthony) Paterson responded to Annette Kuhn's call for 1930s cinemagoers in a local radio broadcast in Glasgow. Later that year he attended a **screening event** on 'Popular Cinema in the 1930s' at Glasgow Film Theatre and completed a short questionnaire. In 1994 he was contacted again with an invitation to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and was interviewed at his home in Glasgow's West End on 29 November 1994 as part of CCINTB's fieldwork pilot.



The Savoy cinema, Glasgow (uploaded by elmorovivo). Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

Born in 1920 in Newport, Fife, Dr Paterson had lived in Glasgow for most of his life. His father was a Lloyd's ship surveyor and his mother did office work before leaving paid employment to get married. He studied English at the University of Glasgow, and later took postgraduate degrees in Theatre Studies at the universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde. His occupations included school teaching and theatre administration, with posts at the Pitlochry Festival Theatre and at Glasgow's Citizens' Theatre.

A keen film buff, Dr Paterson ranges widely over the cinema industry, films, film stars, and Glasgow cinemas in his interview. He recalls going to the pictures with his mother, an avid cinemagoer, from the age of five, and names some of the films he

saw at the local cinemas he went to at the time. He takes a mental 'walking tour' of cinemas in Glasgow's city centre, complete with detailed descriptions of their architectural features and interior decor and of the facilities available at the grandest of them: orchestras, live acts and 'cine-variety', cafes with waitress service, ballrooms. He talks about the coming of sound and recalls a number of early talkies; and discusses British films of this period, noting that many were adapted from popular stage plays. He talks about his devotion to Jessie Matthews, expanding on her many talents and the difficulties she faced in her film career. He offers well-informed accounts of the place of actors in the Hollywood studio system, which offered career development and steady work. He details the launch of colour films, and draws aesthetic comparisons between colour and black-and-white films. More Hollywood stars and films are discussed, with biographical information and snippets of gossip. He enumerates his likes (musicals, gangster films, Norma Shearer, and Alice Faye) and dislikes (he regards Anna Neagle as overrated). He talks about film magazines and states his preference for 'Film Weekly', which he regards as more serious than the others. He recalls that he went to the cinema two or three times a week until the 1960s or 1970s, when he became more interested in theatre. He talks about his cinemagoing as a student and the makeshift outdoor film screenings he attended when he was on war service overseas. He still goes to the Glasgow Film Theatre occasionally, he says, but preferred it when it was still the Cosmo. He shows the interviewer his books about the Hollywood studios and his collection of film photos and postcards.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [The Salon cinema](#) (scottishcinemas.org.uk site)

 [Extract from 'The Little Foxes', 1941](#) (YouTube)

 [Extract of Lew Stone's Monseigneur Band \(1933\)](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

WILLIAM PICKESS (WP-95-217) AND HAZEL PICKESS (HP-95-217)

In August 1995, Bill (William) Pickess answered a call in the East Anglian press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and he and his wife Hazel joined the twenty-one individuals, couples and groups living in that region who were interviewed for Cinema



*The Norwich Electric Theatre (uploaded by Granola)
Creative Commons (Attribution) License via
cinematreasures.org.*

Culture in 1930s Britain as core informants. One of four children, Mr Pickess was born in Lowestoft, Suffolk in 1916 and, aside from war service, had lived in the town all his life. On leaving school at the age of fourteen, he took a job as a warehouseman, and his later occupations included work in a bakery, managing a grocery shop, and running a chandlery. Also a native of Lowestoft, Mrs Pickess was born in 1918, one of three children. Her first job on leaving school at fourteen was as an upholsterer with the Eastern Counties bus company; she later worked as a machinist and as a housewife. The Pickesses' parents were employed in the same two key local industries: both their fathers were fishermen, and until marrying their mothers worked in Morton's food cannery factory. William and Hazel Pickess were interviewed together at their home in Lowestoft on 19 October and 14 November 1995.

Film lovers for much of their lives, the Pickesses note in their first interview that they went to the cinema two or three times a week in their youth, recalling the names,

locations and distinctive characteristics of the local cinemas they frequented. They share memories of being schoolchildren during the 1923 teachers' strike, and talk about how they started courting as thirteen-year-olds--and how this involved frequent visits to the cinema: "Used to sit in the front row. And we used to keep looking at one another." They offer details of ticket prices for different seats, and remember the first talking picture shown in Lowestoft; while Mrs Pickess's second prize in the 1936 Miss Lowestoft competition is mentioned several times. They loved musicals, read film magazines avidly, and kept up to date with forthcoming releases. They went to dances regularly, liked big band music, and knew by heart the lyrics of songs from the musicals they enjoyed; Mr Pickess plays a tape of songs by his favourite star, Dick Powell. Looking through their 'Daily Mirror' film book, acquired in the 1930s, the couple share gossip about the stars--over forty film personalities, including many stars of British films, are named in the course of the interview. The conversation turns to memories of Lowestoft before and during the war: dances and confetti fights on the Pier; the Scots girls who travelled to East Anglia every year to gut the herring; the local fishing industry during World War Two; and Lowestoft as a holiday destination, past and present.

In their second interview the couple look through two film annuals from the 1930s brought along by the interviewer, and talk a little about the distinctive qualities of some of their favourite stars. A look at part of their video about MGM Studios (which they loan to the interviewer) prompts further conversation about stars (during the interview around fifty are named--and often discussed in some detail). Cinema, they stress, was so important to them because it was the main entertainment available at the time. Mr Pickess expands on his deep and enduring admiration for Dick Powell: "I get a lump in my throat. it's a funny sensation really" , while both are eloquent about their feelings for, and pleasure in, films and stars ("You modelled yourself on them, you know"), and about how they felt when watching films ("You were glued on the screen"). Discussion turns to Lowestoft's cinemas during the war and to the bombing of the town, while Mr Pickess remembers going to open-air cinemas in Egypt during his war service. The interview closes on an elegiac note, with further recollections of how they first met--their courtship, going to dances in rural villages, and their pleasure in entertainments like dance bands and the local carnival.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Morton of Lowestoft \(letslookagain.com\)](#)

 [Royal Navy Blue Mariners Dance Band \(music.apple.com\)](#)

 [Extract from 'The Lion Roars', MGM documentary \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Dick Powell singing 'I only have eyes for you', 1934 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

CELIA PIGGOTT (CP-95-200)

In June 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold contacted Westminster Nursing Home in the London suburb of Harrow with a view to interviewing residents for the project. Interviews took place there on 5 July and 25 July 1995 and involved five named residents in total, two of whom—Celia Piggott and **May Godden**--took part in both interviews as core informants.



Odeon Wealdstone

*Uploaded by Granola. Creative Commons
(Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org*

In the first interview, Westminster Nursing Home residents Norma, John, and Lilian (surnames unrecorded) participated alongside Mrs Piggott and Mrs Godden. Born near King's Cross in 1910, Mrs Piggott left school at fourteen and stayed at home for a year or so before starting work in the fur trade. She was alone among the Westminster Nursing Home interviewees in having lived in Harrow during the 1930s. Norma was born in Wandsworth in 1904, and left school at the age of fourteen to take up employment as a kitchen maid in a hotel; Lilian, who was born near King's Cross in 1912, left school at sixteen and worked as a GPO telephonist; John, born in 1914 in Kentish Town, left school at fourteen and eventually became an artisan plasterer who worked on the decoration of Royal properties, including Buckingham

Palace. In the first interview, the five participants share relatively vivid memories of visits to music halls, prompting each other in recollecting the names and locations of cinemas in Harrow and elsewhere in London and mentioning the ubiquitous cinema queues and the live acts that featured alongside film screenings. They recall the coming of sound, the rowdy audience behaviour at children's matinees, and the key role of 'the pictures' in young people's lives as they grew up and started courting. Prompted by the interviewer, they name and discuss a number of film personalities, with agreed favourites including Bette Davis.

In the second interview, Mrs Piggott recalls that she used to go to the cinema every week, that she preferred dramatic films, and that one of her favourite stars was Ray Milland, "a gentleman sort of." She remained a regular cinemagoer until her marriage in the late 1920s, and recalls that during her early married life would sometimes go and see a picture on her own on a Saturday afternoon after finishing the housework.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Playhouse Cinema, Greenford \(cinematreasures site\)](#)

 [Euston Palace of Varieties \(arthurlloyd.co.uk site\)](#)

 [S.G. Brown, Engineer \(gracesguide site\)](#)

 [Clipping of opening of the Granada Theatre \(CM-20-001RP001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

G.W. PLEASANCE (GP-95-289)

In August 1995 G.W. Pleasance of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk contacted CCINTB in response to an article about the project in a regional newspaper and later that year took part in our postal questionnaire survey [GP-95-289GQ001]. In addition to completing the questionnaire he composed and typed a six-page essay [GP-95-289PW001].

Born in 1922, Mr Pleasance grew up in Shepherds Bush, west London. On leaving school at the age of fourteen he found work as a factory hand, later progressing to cinema projectionist and electrician.

His 'motion picture autobiography' covers the period between around 1930 and 1950. While he vaguely remembers being taken to the cinema at the age of about four, the real beginning of his interest in filmgoing, he says, came a few years later: "The first all talking film I can remember seeing was Atlantic (1929), a German/British production of the Titanic disaster, it was showing at the New Park Cinema, Shepherds Bush."



Theatrical release poster of 'Atlantic', 1929 (via Wikipedia)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(GP-95-289GQ001\)](#)

 [The Composed and the Heartfelt \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

NANCY PRUDHOE (NP-95-196)

Nancy Prudhoe came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in July 1995 through her friend **Nancy Carrington**, a project participant based in the London suburb of Harrow. Born in Manchester in 1913, Mrs Prudhoe moved to Harrow at the age of two when her engineer father's job was relocated to London during World War One. Her first job on leaving school at the age of fourteen was in a sweet shop and she later worked in a brush factory in Wealdstone. She took part in two interviews conducted in conjunction with Nancy Carrington at the latter's home in South Harrow.



Mystery of the Wax Museum, 1933 (poster)

In her first interview, which took place on 25 July 1995, Mrs Prudhoe is accompanied by her sister Elsie Horne (born in Manchester in 1908), and the three women prompt each other's memories in a lively conversation which ranges over local cinemas—with vivid recollections of the Cosy on Harrow Hill; of going to the pictures two or three times a week, dressing up to go, copying the stars' styles, and queuing to get in. They talk about different star personae and the “clean” films of those years (“You never saw them in bed, did you?”). They exchange gossip about various film personalities, including Jessie Matthews, Gracie Fields, Shirley Temple, “cruel” Joan

Crawford, and the recently deceased Ginger Rogers. They ponder the appeal of Laurel and Hardy and Charlie Chaplin. They scare each other with visceral memories of horror films and agree on a preference for American over British stars, acting styles, and films. Towards the close of the interview the tone turns elegiac, with recollections of how quiet and rural Harrow once was and memories of childhood games and toys. The conversation concludes with reflections on lifelong friendship.

When Mrs Prudhoe was interviewed for a second time on 30 April 1996, she was accompanied to Mrs Carrington's home by her grandson, Nicholas. The discussion begins with memories of queueing to get into the cinema and staying to see the film twice over at one sitting. Local cinemas including the Cosy, the Odeon and the Granada are described in some detail and talk turns to favourite stars and the preferred 'romantic' films, with recollections exchanged of going to the pictures and dances with boyfriends. The friends have a heated discussion about whether the boys were out of work or not and whether or not in consequence they could afford to pay cinema or dance admission for the girls, or even for themselves. Mrs Prudhoe recalls that she stopped going to the cinema once she had started going dancing every night. On the subject of getting home after an evening out, the women debate whether there were any local buses, and mention using an unofficial taxi service to get home. Finally, they return to the subject of the immense changes in the area that have taken place—and continue to do so—during their lifetimes.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Cosy Cinema, Harrow](#) (cinematreasures site)

 [Memories of South Harrow by Nancy Carrington](#) (forgottenmemories site)

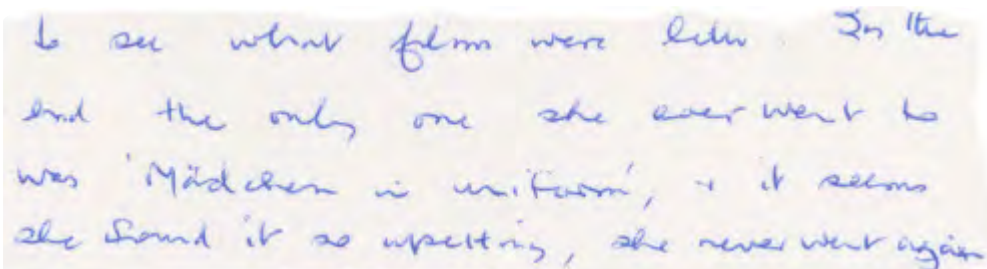
 [Trailer from *The Mystery of the Wax Museum*, 1933](#) (YouTube)

 [Jessie Matthews in *Evergreen*, 1934](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



D RAMSAY (DR-95-117)



to see what films were like. In the end the only one she ever went to was 'Mädchen in uniform', & it seems she found it so upsetting, she never went again.

An extract from Mrs Ramsay's letter

Early in 1995, Mrs D. Ramsay of Brockworth, Gloucester responded to a call in 'Mature Times' for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in 1922, Mrs Ramsay left school at the age of seventeen and took a job as a typist with Glasgow Corporation; in later years she worked as secretary and housewife. In her letter she writes about going to the pictures in the Glasgow suburb of Knightswood, where she grew up: as a teenager, she would go to evening shows with her parents two or three times a week. Her favourite stars included Leslie Howard, Ronald Colman and the singing duo Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald. She also tells the story of her grandmother's one and only visit to the cinema: "My Grandmother only went to a cinema once in her life. There was a bit of persuasion needed to get her to see what films were like. In the end the only one she ever went to was *Mädchen in Uniform*, and it seems she found it so upsetting she never went again." Later in 1995, Mrs Ramsay took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(DR-95-117PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(DR-95-117GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

DOUGLAS RENDELL (DR-95-169)

In March 1995, Douglas Rendell contacted Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to an appeal in the local press, and joined the twenty-two individuals living in the



The Palace Cinema, Sale (photograph taken by Mr Rendell in 1937 or 1938)

Greater Manchester area who were interviewed for the project as core informants during the summer of that year. Born in Sale, Greater Manchester in 1918, Mr Rendell was one of three children; his father was an engineer, his mother a housewife. From a small private school he went on to Altrincham Grammar School, and from there to Manchester Technical College and then Regent Street Polytechnic, London, where he studied photography. Mr Rendell had worked as a photographer all his life, including during war service in the Royal Navy. He was interviewed on 12 May and 8 June 1995 at his home in Hale, and kindly donated some of his own photographs of Hale and Altrincham, including a set of postcards of cinemas in the towns.

In his first interview, Mr Rendell names the earliest cinemas he remembers, and talks about his childhood love of cinemagoing: "I got glued at the cinema". He talks the interviewer through photographs of local cinemas and names some film stars--his favourites included Chaplin, Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton--noting that he was just twelve years old when he first went to Manchester city centre on his own to go to the

cinema. Recalling his youthful interest in the technical side of film, he mentions that he learned to use a cine camera at school. He describes the cinema owned by his grandfather-- the Queens Hall, Accrington--and details the typical cinema programme of the day. The interview closes with Mr Rendell's recollections of studying photography in Manchester and London before the war and his wartime experiences as a photographer in the Navy.

Prompted by leafing through a 1930s film annual, Mr Rendell's second interview opens with a conversation about film stars and films. Recalling that his taste in films was led first by his family and then by his student peers at college, he observes that he enjoyed musicals for the dancing and the spectacle rather than for the "silly stories". With his college friends he saw foreign and more unusual films, including the abstract animations of Len Lye, propaganda films, and the documentaries of the GPO Film Unit. Mention is made of the screenwriter Ronald Gow, who was an alumnus of Mr Rendell's school and made films with them. Later in the interview, Mr Rendell projects some early silent film reels, including items of local interest such as a children's outing, a sports day, and a 1917 film produced by the Altrincham District War Hospital Supply Depot in conjunction with Hilaire Belloc.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Scan of Essay \(DR-95-169PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [The Queens Hall, Accrington \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Day trip to Mobberley, 1909 \(North West film archive site\)](#)

 ['Listen to Britain', 1942 \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Photographs and negatives](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

MICKIE RIVERS (MR-95-210) AND LEONARD RIVERS (LR-95-210)

After Mickie Rivers responded to a call in the East Anglian press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, she and her husband, Leonard, joined the twenty-one individuals, couples and groups living in that region who were interviewed during the last months of 1995. Mrs Rivers was born in Ipswich, Suffolk in 1923. She left school at the age of fourteen and went to work in the Post Office, later taking up office work with the local District Council.

At the time of the interview she was busy at home caring for her housebound husband. Leonard Rivers was born in 1920 in the Suffolk village of Creeting St Mary. On leaving school

at fourteen he worked for a while at a gentleman's outfitters before moving to the ICI Paints Division at Stowmarket. The Rivers were interviewed on 11 October and 8 November 1995 at their home in Needham Market, Suffolk.

In their first interview they recollect their earliest cinema visits. Mrs Rivers grew up in a religious household where cinema was regarded as sinful--but both she and her mother managed to make (separate) secret visits, and after the age of sixteen or seventeen she went to the pictures regularly with a friend. Mr Rivers offers a vivid



*Opening week Regent Theatre, Ipswich (1929).
Uploaded by Mike_Blakemore. Creative Commons
(Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org*

memory of a film that he saw as a child: *The Wrecker* (1933)--and refers to it again in the second interview. Among the couple's favourite stars was Anna Neagle, who came to Ipswich in 1937 to open the new Ritz cinema. They name and describe a dozen or so other cinemas in Ipswich, and also recall going to cinemas in Maidstone, Kent when Mr Rivers was in the Army, and to a picture house in Beccles that boasted double seats for courting couples. They describe a typical 1930s cinema programme, talk enthusiastically about the Wurlitzer cinema organ, mention their liking for musicals (Astaire and Rogers were favourites, and Mr Rivers was a fan of Deanna Durbin), and their dislike of gangster films. Mrs Rivers describes the feeling of 'being there' on the screen whilst watching a film--"I used to live it"--an experience totally different from watching films on TV. She explains a little about her youth--how she was taken away from grammar school because the family couldn't afford the uniform--and about her current life as her husband's carer, and her craftwork and hobbies.

During the second interview various stars are named and discussed, among them Charles Boyer, a particular favourite with Mrs Rivers, who liked his "dark brown, velvet voice". The conversation ranges over actors' voices, diction and regional accents; the basis on which films were chosen (their stars rather than their stories); glamorous male stars; and how the outbreak of WW2 affected cinemas and picturegoing. Mrs Rivers remembers the cinema newsreels showing troops and, with her husband away on war service, her acute awareness that the soldiers' locations were never revealed. Mr Rivers was involved in the Dunkirk evacuation, and his wife recalls her anxiety during the long wait for news of him. Poring over a 1930s film annual, the couple chat about stars and films, and Mrs Rivers recalls the feelings of longing inspired by the lovely clothes in films. She had few clothes herself, she says, and made do by repurposing jumble sale garments and making things for herself and her children out of fabric remnants. She again refers to the feeling of being caught up in the world of the film, while remaining fully aware of the artifice. She talks about her household duties as a child; about the sweets you could buy for a halfpenny (old money); and about the contrast between the privations of home and the luxury of the cinema, which "made you feel you were queen". She and her husband don't go out any more, she says, and she misses getting spruced up to go to the pictures.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [The Social Settlement, Ipswich \(ipswichsociety.org.uk site\)](#)

 [Urban legend: The Missing Bride \(liveabout.com site\)](#)

 ['Who's Been Polishing the Sun', 1935, performed by Jack Hulbert \(YouTube\)](#)

 [The Clothing Aspect \(News & Blog area\)](#)

 ['Terrible waste of a brain!' \(News & Blog area\)](#)

Related publication:

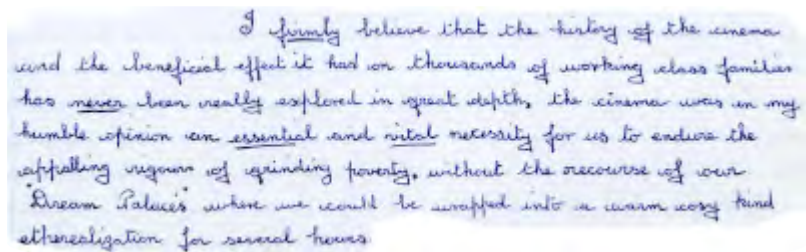
Kuhn, A. (2000). 'Smart Girls: Growing up with Cinema in the 1930s', in Ib Bjondeberg (ed.), *Moving Images, Culture and the Mind* (Luton: University of Luton Press).

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

RAY ROCHFORD (RR-95-035)



Early in 1995, Ray Rochford of Salford, Greater Manchester responded to a call in the local press for 1930s



I firmly believe that the history of the cinema and the beneficial effect it had on thousands of working class families has never been really explored in great depth. The cinema was in my humble opinion an essential and vital necessity for us to endure the appalling rigours of grinding poverty, without the recourse of our 'Dream Palace' where we could be wrapped into a warm cosy kind of etherealization for several hours.


An extract from Mr Rochford's letter

cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, sending a long letter about his childhood in the Hanky Park district of Salford. Born in 1925, Mr Rochford left school at fourteen and went to work as a bobbin boy in a local cotton mill; later in life he worked in the building industry. In his letter he describes Hanky Park, the "largest concentration of slums in Europe", as home to numerous neighbourhood cinemas, painting a picture of cheap entertainments enjoyed in the face of poverty and deprivation. Each cinema, he says, attracted its own loyal local clientele, many of whom claimed particular seats as their own. He describes the "Dickensian" manager of one cinema, and the social class "apartheid" of the seating arrangements in that establishment. He contends that, because most historians are middle class, the history of cinema audiences and the value of cinema as "the opium of hope" for the working class has "never been explored in great depth". Later in 1995, Mr Rochford took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(RR-95-035PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 Scan of questionnaire (RR-95-035GQ001)

 Guardian photo essay of demolition of Hanky Park, 1960 (guardian.com site)

 The Composed and the Hearfelt (News & Blog area)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

J.B. RYALL (JR-95-48)

The 'Ionic' was the last cinema that I remember taking jam jars in lieu of entrance money - I think this died out about 1934. Normally when we went to the Ionic, one of us would pay and then having been seated by the usherette would go to the toilet and open the emergency exit doors and let our friends in for free.

Extract from Brigadier Ryall's letter

In February 1995 Brigadier John Ryall of Bournemouth, Dorset read about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in a newspaper and responded with a long letter to the project office. In it are set out vivid memories of his youthful cinemagoing in North London, complete with details of local picture houses, recollections of paying for admission with jam jars, Saturday matinees, the joys of continuous programming, the impressive cinema organ—and more. Later in 1995 he took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey. Born in Hendon in 1922, Mr Ryall grew up in nearby Golders Green. On leaving school at sixteen he started work as a house and estate agent with the intention of pursuing a career as a Chartered Surveyor. In 1939 he was “an under age Territorial and at annual camp when war was declared”. From that day on he remained in the Army until retiring in 1978.

 [Document scan \(JR-95-048PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

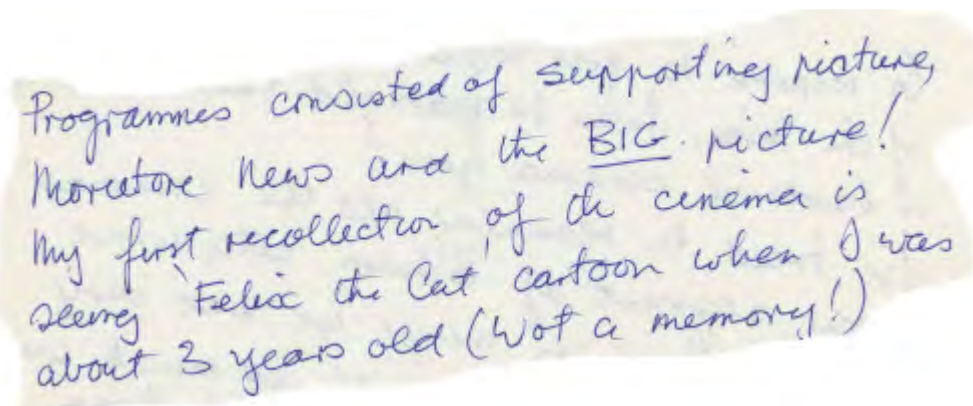
 [Scan of questionnaire \(JR-95-048GQ001\)](#)

Note: Brigadier Ryall's testimony is alluded to in Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic*, Chapter 3, 'Jam Jars and Rabbit Skins'..

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



MARK SANDOZ (MS-95-065)



Programmes consisted of supporting picture, Moreton News and the BIG picture!
My first recollection of the cinema is seeing 'Felix the Cat' cartoon when I was about 3 years old (Wot a memory!)

Extract from Mark Sandoz's letter

Early in 1995 Mark Sandoz of Tanworth in Arden in Warwickshire heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, responding with a four-page letter about his early filmgoing. Born in Southsea, Hampshire in 1920, he grew up in Birmingham, leaving school at sixteen to pursue a career in engineering and draughtsmanship. In his letter he notes that his first remembered cinema visit, at the age of three, he saw a Felix the Cat cartoon. He remembers silent films with their live musical accompaniment, vividly recalling the lady pianist at one cinema who “was always greeted with a great roar from the scruffy kids; and seeing Al Jolson in the earliest talkie, *The Singing Fool*. Later in 1995, Mr Sandoz took part in CCINTB’s postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(MS-95-065PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

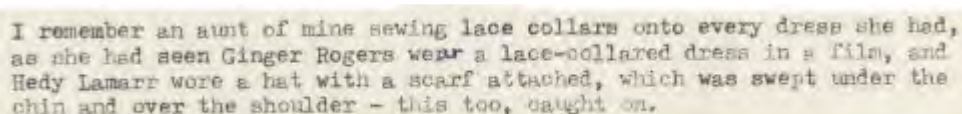
OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(MS-95-065GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



MYRA SCHNEIDERMAN (MS-95-077)



I remember an aunt of mine sewing lace collars onto every dress she had, as she had seen Ginger Rogers wear a lace-collared dress in a film, and Hedy Lamarr wore a hat with a scarf attached, which was swept under the chin and over the shoulder - this too, caught on.

An extract from Myra Schneiderman's letter

Early in 1995, Myra Schneiderman of Cardiff responded to a request in 'Mature Tymes' for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in London in 1931, Mrs Schneiderman left school at the age of seventeen and was a shorthand typist throughout her working life. In a long letter she details memories of early visits to the cinema with her mother to see "suitable" films including *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *The Wizard of Oz*; of queueing to get into "the pictures" and what it was like inside the cinema; of the varied items in a cinema programme; of added attractions such as the cinema organ that appeared "magically from some subterranean kingdom"; and of copying fashions from the films: "I remember an aunt of mine sewing lace collars onto every dress she had, as she had seen Ginger Rogers wear a lace-collared dress in a film." Later in 1995, Mrs Schneiderman took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(MS-95-077PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

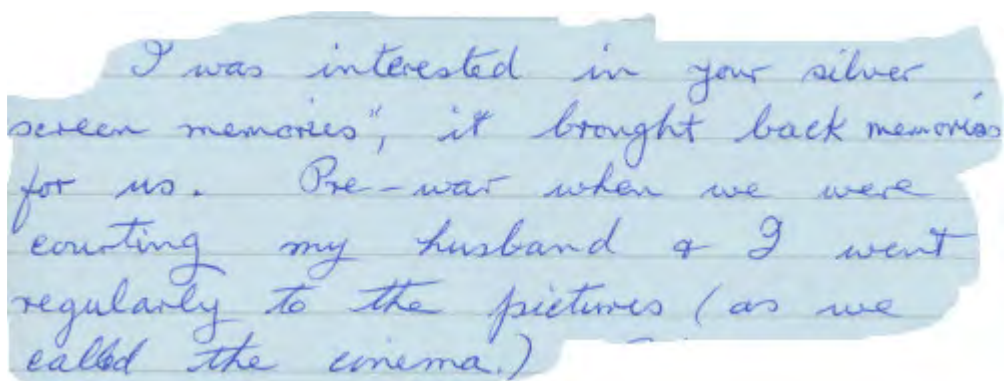
OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(MS-95-077GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

C.R. SCOTT (CS-95-241)





I was interested in your silver screen memories", it brought back memories for us. Pre-war when we were courting my husband & I went regularly to the pictures (as we called the cinema.)

Extract from Mrs Scott's letter

Mrs C.S. Scott of Doncaster was a few months away from her fiftieth wedding anniversary when she heard about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain and wrote to the project office about her regular visits to the cinema when she was courting her husband-to-be during WW2: as a member of the emergency services he was entitled to free cinema tickets for himself and a guest.

In their early married life the couple went to the cinema every night, simply to enjoy some time alone together (they were living with his mother at the time). All three of Mrs Scott's sisters worked as usherettes in Doncaster cinemas, and all three met their own husbands in the course of their work.

 [Document scan \(CS-95-241PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [The Picture House, Doncaster](#) (cinematreasures.org site)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

EILEEN SCOTT (ES-95-213)

In September 1995 Eileen Scott of Ipswich, Suffolk heard a call on her local radio station for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. She contacted the project office and eventually joined the twenty-one individuals, couples, and groups living in **East Anglia** who were interviewed during the last months of 1995. Born in Ipswich in 1921, her father was a cabinet maker and her mother a piano teacher who also provided musical accompaniment to silent films. When she was ten years old Mrs Scott's brother died in tragic circumstances and she needed help to recover from the shock. Her parents wanted to give her a sheltered life and she was withdrawn from school at the age of thirteen to finish her education at home. She entered the world of work as a dance teacher. Mrs Scott's interviews took place on 16 October and 9 November 1995 at her home in Claydon, Ipswich.



Stage show poster of 'Funny Face', 1927

In her first interview she shows the interviewer her extensive collection of song scores from film and stage musicals, and names some of her best-loved films and

actors: her all-time favourites are Astaire and Rogers, she says. She shares memories of her musically accomplished mother, who played piano to accompany silent films in one of Ipswich's cinemas. She confesses that she would have liked to go on the stage or into films herself, but her father stymied her ambitions: "He absolutely ruled my life." She tells of the tragedy of her elder brother's early death, how it affected her education--and led to her meeting Sir Henry Wood of Promenade Concerts fame and to being reunited with a long-lost possession decades later. She talks the interviewer through the family photos prominently displayed on her piano and notes that her children and grandchildren are also musically talented.

Mrs Scott's second interview opens with a discussion of her dislike of Westerns: "There's no peace about them," she says, noting that she prefers romantic films (*Now Voyager* being a favourite) and that she likes mysteries if there is "nothing too violent". Ahead of the interview she has prepared a list of films and talks about the plots and stars of some of them, making great efforts to remember details. On the qualities of the stars that she liked, she uses words like 'caring', 'cosy', and 'quiet' to describe her favourite male stars. Asked what going to the pictures used to feel like, she mentions some difficult times in her life when she was feeling low, and going to see a film musical, say, would cheer her up and make her want to dance. The topic of death comes up more than once during the conversation—friends of her own age dying, for example, and film personalities who have died in tragic circumstances. Shown a 1930s film annual, she responds enthusiastically, commenting on the facial features of stars pictured in it and recollecting details of the lives and deaths of some of them. Most of the hundred or so film personalities named during the interview are commented on in some way, and she recalls that her enthusiasm for all things cinema-related was parlayed into inventing family games that involved guessing film titles.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Dorothy Lamour singing 'I'll Remember' \(1939\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Paul Robeson singing 'Trees' \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Front cover of the Daily Express book \(c.1935\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

OLGA SCOWEN (OS-95-190)

In April 1995, a local newspaper in the London suburb of Harrow published an item about Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, and Olga Scowen contacted the project with an offer to take part, joining the eighteen individuals based in and around Harrow who were interviewed as core informants later that year. Born in Harrow in 1918 and one of three children, Mrs Scowen had lived in the area all her life aside from a brief spell in Blackpool early in the war. Her father was a journalist, her mother a housewife. She attended Harrow County Grammar School, leaving at the age of sixteen to take up a Clerical Grade post in the Civil Service, which she left on her marriage. She was interviewed at her home in South Harrow on 7 June and 18 June 1995, and in 2000 took part in a questionnaire survey about her memories of the *Tarzan* films.



Armando Seguso (per Heritage Auctions), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In her first interview Mrs Scowen demonstrates an encyclopaedic knowledge--and a continuing interest--in 1930s and 1940s films and stars, naming close to sixty films

and describing how she and her friends would visit Harrow market to buy second-hand film magazines and stick stars' photos in albums. She recalls that later, with her husband a prisoner of war for five years, she found cinemagoing helped combat boredom as it "set you in another world", and that she would feel something was missing if she didn't go to the pictures several times a week. She details the cinemas she visited in and around Harrow, and the special 'cinema bus' that transported people up to the 'Cosy' picture house on Harrow on the Hill. Discussing her film and star preferences, she notes that she was not keen on British films ("in the old days they were dreadful"), but loved musicals and romances, and recalls seeing Jeanette MacDonald perform live in London. She finds war films particularly interesting because they show "what we'd lived through", and that cinema newsreels were informative as there was no radio at home. Throughout, Mrs Scowen highlights the importance of cinemagoing for her: "The cinema was really the centre of our lives in those days."

In preparation for her second interview, Mrs Scowen had drawn up categorised lists of stars and films remembered from the 1930s and 1940s, and the ensuing conversation ranges over the hundred or more stars and sixty-odd films on her lists, as she highlights her likes and dislikes: "I didn't like the rough Yankee knockabout types. I liked, I liked the Englishmen, you know." She enthusiastically leafs through a 1938 film annual, offering snippets of detail on films and actors, explaining why she enjoyed particular sorts of films, recalling that she would often get books out of the library to read before going to see certain pictures, and noting that her opinion of actors was based on personality rather than acting ability. She recalls being impressed by the comparative luxury of lifestyles on display in Hollywood films--the ubiquity of refrigerators in American homes above all--and comments that American styles and fashions influenced how people in Britain dressed and did their hair.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [The Granada, Harrow \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Extract from *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, \(1933\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Betty Hutton singing 'Murder, he says', \(1947\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Trailer for *Dark Victory* \(1939\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [The Elite, the Cosy and the Cosy bus \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

JOHN SHEARER (JS-94-012)

In Autumn 1994, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain Research Fellow Valentina Bold renewed contact with Hamiltonhill, a day centre in Possil, Glasgow where she had conducted interviews with several of its elderly users before joining the project. She arranged to carry out further interviews there for CCINTB, and five of the centre's clients were interviewed for CCINTB. John Shearer was among them. Mr Shearer was born in Kirkcudbright in 1914, one of nine children; his father was a baker, his mother a housewife; on leaving school at sixteen he took a job in a grocery, and his later occupations included cabinetmaker, seat fitter in a cinema, and driver.



*Grosvenor, Glasgow (uploaded by LenGazzard)
Creative Commons (Attribution) License via
[cinematreasures](#) site*

On 18 November 1994, Mr Shearer took part in a five-way interview at Hamiltonhill, the other four interviewees being **Lily (Lilian) Buik**, **Sarah Irvine**, **Nellie (Helen) Donaghy**, and **Davy (David) Paterson**

Discussion during this interview centres mainly on the range and variety of cinemas in the Glasgow area, with recollections of the buildings' interior features and the

various forms of entertainment on offer, as well as reflections on the behaviour of cinemagoers. Other leisure pursuits, such as children's games and dancing, are also remembered.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Bijou Picture Palace \(TheGlasgowStory site\)](#)

 [George Palmer - cinema king \(ScottishCinemas site\)](#)

 [Extract of Charlie Chaplin in *Gold Rush*, 1925 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ROSEMARY SKINNER (RS-95-118)

There was great excitement when Gracie Fields film came, "Sally", every village in the area flocked to see the film. All seats were taken, and kitchen chairs were brought in, and fold up garden chairs, fire restrictions went by the board.

Extract from Rosemary Skinner's letter

In February 1995, Rosemary Skinner of Bournemouth, Dorset responded to a call for cinemagoing memories published in an edition of the pensioners' monthly free newspaper 'Mature Tymes'. Born in Gillingham, Dorset, she left school at the age of fourteen to work in her parents' shop. In later life she worked as a housewife and shopkeeper. In a long letter setting out a wealth of cinemagoing memories, Mrs Skinner paints a vibrant picture of cinemagoing in and around Brighton and Hove, Sussex, during the 1930s. Standout recollections include moving to Brighton from a small village and a memorable introduction to continuing performances: after an afternoon during which she and some friends sat through the entire programme several times, "The Cinema turned out [after] its evening performance..., I was met by a very irate father, and never allowed to go with the children again." She recalls courting a young man who worked as a door boy at a cinema in Hove who would later become her husband; enjoying the films of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy; and the massive box-office appeal of Gracie Fields's films. Later in 1995, Mrs Skinner took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(RS-95-118PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of Questionnaire \(RS-95-118GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

HELEN SMEATON (HS-92-036)

Helen Smeaton made contact with Annette Kuhn in the Spring of 1992, in response to an item on 1930s cinema in a local newspaper in Glasgow. She was contacted again when Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain was launched in 1994, and eventually joined the project's seventeen Glasgow-based core informants. Born in Glasgow in 1917, her father was a gas maintenance engineer, her mother a nurse, and she lived in Glasgow most of her life. After a college education, she took a job as a secretary, and later became a college librarian. She was interviewed at her Glasgow home on 23 January and 28 June 1995.




The ABC Coliseum cinema, Glasgow (uploaded by Granola). Creative Commons (Attribution) License via cinematreasures.org

Mrs Smeaton stresses that her childhood and family memories are very important to her; and her lively, wide-ranging interviews bear witness to this. Her first interview begins with an amusing story about going to the pictures one afternoon to see John Ford's *The Four Sons*, sitting through the film several times round, returning home late, and being met by a very anxious mother. She describes the neighbourhood cinemas she went to as a child, and her later visits to the Cosmo (now Glasgow Film Theatre), where she saw a film on her wedding day in 1939. She recalls choosing between going to the pictures and going dancing at weekends, joining long queues outside huge, busy cinemas, and bunking off work one weekday afternoon to see an Astaire/Rogers film. She talks about listening to music on the gramophone and the

wireless, and about the plethora of new inventions and social changes in her lifetime, including the coming of sound and colour to films. She talks about how her parents met, and says her mother saw such poverty in her nursing job that she became a socialist and an active Labour Party member. She tells how she herself met her future husband, a typesetter at the 'Glasgow Herald', at badminton club. She recalls her sister's skilful juggling of boyfriends, among them the son of the Cosmo's owner.

Mrs Smeaton's second interview focuses more closely on films and cinemagoing and on the changes wrought by ageing and by cultural and social transformations. She talks about the smell of body odour and unwashed clothes in cinemas in the 1930s, when many houses lacked indoor plumbing; about how standing (or not) for the National Anthem was sometimes a contentious issue; about cinemagoing and courtship; and about the comfort she derived from solo visits to her local cinema when she was caring for young children and a disabled mother. She tells of her love of romantic films and musicals; how she wanted to be as slim as the film stars she admired: "I wanted life to be romantic, and I wanted to be thin." She remembers the pleasures of reading film magazines and mentions some favourite stars and the roles they played; and finally reflects on the different meanings of films and cinema in people's lives today as compared with the days of her youth.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Blythswood Cinema \(scottishcinemas.org.uk site\)](#)

 [The Cosmo \(scottishcinemas.org.uk site\)](#)

 [Extract from 'Four Sons' \(1928\) \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Extract from 'Un carnet du bal' \(1937\) \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

JACK SMITH (JS-95-223) AND ROSE SMITH (RS-95-223)

In Autumn 1995, Jack and Rose Smith came into contact with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain through Cranmer House care home in Fakenham, Norfolk, joining the twenty-one individuals based in East Anglia who were interviewed for the project as core informants. One of six children, Jack Smith was born in 1911 in Wighton, Norfolk; his father was a foreman on three farms. He left school at fourteen and took up work in agriculture and in the grocery trade. Born in Wales in 1912, Rose Smith was one of five children of a gamekeeper father. On leaving school at fifteen, she took a job as a nanny, and subsequently entered the nursing profession. In later years she served as a youth leader and magistrate.



Publicity photo from Charlie Chaplin's 1921 movie "The Kid". Public domain, via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The Smiths took part as a couple in two interviews: on 24 October 1995, they participated in a group interview along with two other **Cranmer House residents**, and on 2 May 1996 they were interviewed together. Meanwhile, Mr Smith gave a solo interview on 21 November 1995. Because of Mr Smith's visual impairment and his

wife's difficulties with hearing, the dynamics of these interviews, all of which were conducted at Cranmer House, are at times difficult. They are distinctive, however, in shedding light on the rural cinemagoing experience in the interwar years.

None of the participants in the group interview claim to have been regular cinemagoers, but they jog each other's memories, naming several cinemas in Norwich and also mentioning music hall artistes and radio personalities who made films--these include Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge, particular favourites of Jack Smith's. Mr Smith recalls that his main interests were cricket and football, and says he only saw a film (which could involve walking from his home in the village of Wighton to one of the two cinemas in Wells next the Sea) when there was nothing better to do. Rose Smith, who grew up in rural Wales, likewise rarely went to the pictures, because she lived "miles from anywhere". However, the film *Mandy*, which the couple saw together, clearly made a great impression on them: it is mentioned in all three of their interviews.

Jack Smith's solo interview, conducted when his wife was in hospital, opens by revisiting the film personalities mentioned previously, and he is asked what he liked about favourites such as Cicely Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert. He recalls that he would go to the cinema in Wells next the Sea from his home village of Wighton by bicycle or on foot. Reiterating that he was not much of a filmgoer, his main hobbies being cricket and football, he insists that he did not discriminate when it came to choosing films to see--"We just went to the pictures"-- though he does concede that he might take "a young lady". He finds it difficult to put into words his reasons for liking or disliking a star or a film, or to say how he felt at the pictures; but he does admit to a liking for westerns and for comedy of the knockabout variety, and even hints at an appetite for violence in films or sport. He recalls that he usually went to the pictures with male friends, and would occasionally travel by train to Norwich, where he found the cinemas more sophisticated than the ones in Wells. He notes that his parents were religious and never went to cinema themselves, though they did not object to his going. Further reference to *Mandy* prompts a discussion of child stars; and another insistent recollection is of his visit to the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley. Reverting to the present, the BBC 'Panorama' interview with Diana, Princess of Wales, which had been broadcast the previous evening, is discussed.

In the Smiths' joint interview, the names of film personalities mentioned previously come up once again. Discussion then ranges widely, with a focus on memories of rural life: Rose's early years and her post as a nanny; her father's work as a gamekeeper; Jack's first job on a farm; how the couple met; Jack's memories of village life in Wighton, where everyone knew each other; seeing magic lantern shows

as a child; religious observance in the villages; the special cinema bus that travelled between Wighton and nearby villages and Wells; and the general experience of growing up in the countryside. Once again Mr Smith refers to the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley; and the couple discuss violence in films today, drawing comparisons with the TV drama serials they enjoy.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 3\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 3\)](#)


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(3 of 3\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [The Norvic, Norwich \(cinematreasures site\)](#)

 [Theatre de Luxe, Norwich \(cinematreasures site\)](#)

 ['Do you remember these Norwich Cinemas' \(Eastern Daily Press site\)](#)

 [Tessie O'Shea \(fromthevaults-boppinbob site\)](#)

 [Extract from *Mandy*, 1952 \(YouTube\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

EMILY SOPER (ES-95-146)

The cinemas were still having teething problems with their 'talkie machines' and they seemed to break down just at some critical moment. When the hero and heroine were moving in for the big kiss or in the horror film when the 'nasty' was about to commit the foul deed!

An extract from Emily Soper's letter

In February 1995, Emily Soper of Gosport, Hampshire responded to a call in 'Mature Times' for 1930s cinemagoers to get in touch with Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in Cambuslang near Glasgow in 1920, Mrs Soper left school at fourteen and took a job in the local biscuit factory. She made a permanent move to England for her wartime Army service, where she trained as a nurse and spent most of her subsequent working life in the nursing profession. In her long letter Mrs Soper describes how her cinemagoing habits and tastes in films changed over the years. Recalling trips to the cinema with her parents and attending Saturday morning children's shows, she charts her early enjoyment of slapstick comedies and her adolescent interest in leading men like Cary Grant, Gary Cooper and James Stewart. She offers vivid recollections of projector breakdowns, fleabites acquired in some of the rougher picture houses, back row seats for courting couples, and squandering her wages on trips to Glasgow's "posh" Green's Playhouse. She confesses to a particular liking for romantic films when she was a student nurse, despite being fully aware that "those handsome young doctors you were supposed to find roaming the corridors of every hospital were just a myth found in story books!" Mrs Soper later took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(ES-95-146AL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(ES-95-146GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



KATHLEEN SOUTHWORTH (KS-22-004)




Kathleen Southworth was born in **Bolton** in 1921, one of three children. Both her parents were teachers. She left school at the age of sixteen and throughout most of her career worked as a secretary. Aside from war service in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, she lived in Bolton all her life. In October 2021 Miss Southworth's niece, Margaret Marks, attended Cinema Memory and the Digital Archive's **screening event** at Bolton Little Theatre and told the research team about her late aunt's 1930s diaries and the many trips to the cinema recorded in them. Mrs Marks later loaned these diaries--which cover the years 1932 (when Miss Southworth turned eleven), 1933, 1934, 1937, 1938, and 1939--and provided further information, including a resumé of Miss Southworth's life and a list of films that she saw during 1936, one of the years for which there is no diary.






*Kathleen Southworth as Rose Queen, Kings Hall
Bolton, 1932 (KS-22-004PH001)*

In the earlier diaries, Miss Southworth's visits to the cinema—undertaken with regularity on Saturday evenings and very often during the week as well—are recorded as being made in the company of family members. In later years, she would usually be accompanied by a female friend, with the Queen's Picture House and the Hippodrome favourite haunts. Film titles are invariably noted, as are the diarist's picturegoing companions, while as often as not stars are named too: across the six diaries around five hundred films and film personalities are named. In nineteen-thirty-seven, for example, around eighty cinema visits are recorded, while ten film titles are noted for the month of January alone. All in all, the diaries evidence an active social and cultural life, with Chapel--attended every Sunday, often more than once--at its centre. There were family trips to Manchester, too, to see plays, as well as holidays in Blackpool and other seaside resorts, and visits to and from friends and relatives. Diary entries generally confine themselves to recording everyday activities—with very occasional allusions to wider events: "Work. Went into town at night. Was fitted with gas mask" (21 June 1938); "Work. Germany invaded Poland and bombed 8 towns. General Mobilisation declared in France and Gt. Britain. Lighting restricted" (1 September 1939).

 [Document scan \(KS-22-004PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(KS-22-004PL002\) unavailable](#) |  [Transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Document scan \(KS-22-004PW001\) unavailable](#) |  [Transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Document scan \(KS-22-004PW002\) unavailable](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Photograph of Kathleen Southworth as Rose Queen, 1932 \(KS-22-004PH001\)](#)

 [Photograph of Kathleen Southworth's Diaries \(KS-22-004PH002\)](#)

 [Photograph of a page from Kathleen Southworth's diaries \(KS-22-004PH003\)](#)

 [Chroniclers of Picturegoing \(News & Blog area\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

MARGARET YOUNG (MY-92-001) AND MOLLIE STEVENSON (MS-92-002)

In November 1992, Margaret Young (nee Stevenson), a regular cinemagoer in Glasgow in the 1930s and 1940s, saw Annette Kuhn's announcement in the local press of a screening and discussion event about 1930s cinema at the Glasgow Film Theatre.

She responded,

expressing interest but regretting that she would be unable to attend. In reply, she was sent a short questionnaire about her past cinemagoing, which she shared with her sister, Mollie Stevenson. Both the sisters submitted detailed replies, and both eventually joined Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain's seventeen Glasgow-based core informants. They were born in Glasgow--Mrs Young in 1925 in Riddrie, Miss Stevenson in 1923 in Broomhill--and both had lived in the city all their lives. Their father was a commercial traveller, their mother a housewife. Mrs Young left school at seventeen and took a job as a shorthand typist, leaving paid work when she had her children. In her forties, she embarked on a career change and trained to be a teacher. On leaving school at fourteen, Miss Stevenson took up secretarial work, and worked at Burma Oil for more than thirty years. The sisters were interviewed together at Mrs Young's home in Cambuslang, Glasgow on 5 December 1994 and 20 February 1995. Mrs Young subsequently donated a number of items of memorabilia to the project, including a notebook containing lists of favourite stars and films seen between 1939



*A page from the Player Cigarette Cards album,
donated by Margaret Young*

and 1944, her collection of film star cigarette cards, and several 1930s and 1940s fan publications about films and film stars.

Mrs Young and Miss Stevenson's first interview ranges over their early lives and their cinemagoing memories, with descriptions of the cinemas they remember going to as children, including one where high teas were served at seat. They recall waiting in long queues outside cinemas and being entertained by buskers and kept in order by commissionaires. They detail ticket prices, singsongs, and rowdy behaviour in children's matinees; and call to mind their intense enjoyment of film magazines as teenagers: "we devoured them." Mrs Young presents the notebook in which she listed and rated all the films she saw during the second half of 1939. They talk about the British stars they liked, including Jessie Matthews and Anna Neagle, and draw comparisons between the American and British film industries. They allude to some of the hazards of cinemagoing during WW2: "We weren't deterred by the blackout: we went with our torches." There is further discussion of Glasgow cinemas, and amused recollections of arguing over film magazines and star photos. They reflect on the musicals they enjoyed and their admiration for stars like Deanna Durbin ("lovely singer, lovely clothes") and her hat "with a wee feather", and Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire ("great tunes, great melodies").

In their second interview, the sisters again recall their enthusiastic consumption of film magazines and books, referring to the publicity surrounding the film *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and exploring the particular appeal of its star, Errol Flynn. They discuss their film and film star preferences, expressing appreciation for both good acting and 'frothy' films. They talk about British actors who worked in Hollywood and about some favourite male stars and their films, and revisit the topics of Glasgow cinemas and the Hollywood musicals that they enjoyed.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS


 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Scan of document \(MY-92-001PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of document \(MY-92-001PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of document \(MS-92-002PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Players Cigarette Cards: Album of Film Stars \(MY-92-001PA001\)](#)

 Listings of stars and films, 1939-1944 (scan ID MY-92-001MM001; transcript ID MY-92-001WT001)

 Donated books and annuals

 Chroniclers of Picturegoing (News & Blog area)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

RUBY STEWART (RS-94-024)

In November 1994, Ruby Stewart of Clydebank, Glasgow wrote to Annette Kuhn following a visit by the Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain team to her local WEA [Workers Educational Association] branch. Born in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire in 1913, she was one of five children: her father was a shipwright and her mother was in service before marrying. The family moved to Clydebank when Ruby was eight years old. After leaving school at the age of fourteen, she worked at the Singer sewing machine factory until her marriage in 1937. On 7 February 1995 she was interviewed at her home in Clydebank as part of CCINTB's fieldwork pilot.




Empire Cinema, Clydebank (cinematreasures.org)

In the course of a wide-ranging conversation Mrs Stewart mentions a number of relatively recent films she had seen locally. With the interviewer's encouragement she talks about some films and stars of the 1930s and, alluding to the immense changes in Clydebank's urban landscape since the 1930s, expresses regret about the loss of local cinemas. Much of the interview, however, consists of a lengthy and riveting eye-witness account of the Glasgow Blitz of March 1941. She was returning home from the cinema—she recalls that the film was *The Mark of Zorro*—when “all the commotion started, the guns and the bombs and everything.”

 [Interview audio](#) (audio file only)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Scan of document \(RS-94-024PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Clydebank Cinemas \(scottishcinemas.org\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

LAWRENCE STIRLING (LS-92-006)



King's Cinema, Glasgow (Glasgow City Archives)

Early in 1992, Lawrence Stirling heard Annette Kuhn's call for 1930s cinemagoers on a local radio station. He responded immediately with a long letter setting out details of some of the many cinemas across Glasgow that he visited regularly as a boy and a young man. Later that year, he was invited to a screening and workshop on popular 1930s cinema at Glasgow Film Theatre; and towards the end of 1994 was contacted once again with an invitation to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. On 22 November he gave an interview at his home in Paisley as part of CCINTB's fieldwork pilot.


A lifelong film buff, Mr Stirling's cinemagoing was at its most intense during the mid to late 1930s, "when the cinema in Glasgow was at its height" and the city was a "magical" place. Throughout his interview, he displays tremendous enthusiasm for all

things film-related (as well as for theatre and opera, his other enthusiasms) and an encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject. He describes in detail some of the cinemas he frequented and names--unprompted—upwards of seventy films of the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and beyond as well as a similar number of the top stars of these decades. Unusually among CCINTB interviewees, he sometimes went to see a film more than once: on some of these he offers informed comments on plots, settings and performances.

 [Interview audio](#) (audio file only)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Scan of document \(LS-92-006PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of document \(LS-92-006PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of document \(LS-92-006PL003\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

LILY SUTCLIFFE (LS-95-181)

In February 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted **Thornlea Residential Home** in Blackley, Greater Manchester, seeking potential participants in the project; and on 4 May six residents took part in a group interview. Two of them, Lily Sutcliffe and **Elizabeth Woods**, were later interviewed again, joining the project's twenty-two core informants in the **Greater Manchester area**. Miss Sutcliffe was born in Manchester in 1917. She left school at fourteen, and her jobs included mill work and hospital work.



*New Central Cinema, Manchester
(cinematreasures.org site)*

Along with Miss Sutcliffe and Miss Woods, participants in the group interview were Wilfred Sevin (born 1913), Joe Dowlag (born 1928), Peter McDonough (born 1916), and Nelly (surname unrecorded, born 1915). All six had lived in Manchester all their lives. The interview opens with recollections of participants' local cinemas, extending to ticket prices, queues, and the typical supporting programme--newsreels, cartoons, and so on--for the main feature. Miss Woods indicates that although there were several cinemas in her neighbourhood, she didn't go to the pictures very often, though she would occasionally attend live shows or 'big pictures' along with workmates. Miss Sutcliffe recalls enjoying both films and music hall shows. Conversation turns to film stars, with a focus mainly on local celebrities, including Gracie Fields and Robert Donat; and to alternative amusements such as dancing, prompting memories of the Saturday evening 'dance train' to Blackpool.

Miss Sutcliffe’s solo interview, which took place at Thornlea on 29 May 1995, begins with naming and discussion of some of the cinemas close to where she lived—she recalls going to the pictures four or five times a week. Money was tight, she says, but it didn’t cost much to get in. The stars she liked included Edward G. Robinson and Laurel and Hardy, as well as local celebrities Gracie Fields and George Formby, and she recalls enjoying gangster and horror films. She talks about childhood games she used to play outdoors and the household duties she was called upon to do to assist her visually impaired mother. Conversation reverts to cinemas, seat prices, and the typical cinema programme. Towards the close of the interview, Miss Sutcliffe talks the interviewer through the family photos on display in her room.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

RACHEL TARSKY (RT-95-184)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted **Heathlands**, a retirement home in Prestwich, Greater Manchester catering mainly for Jewish residents, seeking potential participants in the project. Heathlands resident Rachel Tarsky took part in two interviews, joining the twenty-two CCINTB core informants in the Greater Manchester area. Mrs Tarsky was born in Manchester in 1906, one of six children; her father, who migrated to England from Russia, was a shoemaker and her mother kept a grocery shop. She left school at the age of fourteen and worked in the family business. Mrs Tarsky took part in a group interview at Heathlands on 27 April 1995 and was subsequently interviewed on her own on 6 June 1995.



Russell Ball (1896-1942) / Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The other participants in her first interview were fellow core informants **Nat Frieling** and **Tessa Amelan**, along with Gabrielle Adam (born in Russia in 1907), Samuel Flamholtz (born in Poland in 1922), and another male resident whose name and details are unrecorded. Throughout the interview, speakers check and correct each other's recollections, and in parts of the conversation members of the group speak over each other. Subjects covered include names of stars and films (many of which--

including comedies, serials, and animal stars—were made in the 1920s). Saturday matinees are mentioned, along with the cost of tickets for the humbler types of cinema ('bug huts') with their very basic seating (benches). The conversation moves on to the 1930s, as participants pore over photos of stars of the period and exchange comments and opinions. Topics of lengthier debate include Charlie Chaplin and his films, the 1937 version of *Lost Horizon*, the scandal surrounding Jessie Matthews and Sonnie Hale, and the films of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Discussion of films and cinema detours into collective consideration of the lack of availability of post-elementary education for members of their generation, before turning to recollections of the cinemas of central and suburban Manchester, assertions of the importance of the contributions of film producers and directors, and references to animated films of the 1930s (*Snow White* is mentioned) and foreign films (the *Cosmo* in Glasgow is referred to).

Early in her second, solo, interview Mrs Tarsky mentions her particular affection for Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald, whose films and songs are referred to several times in the course of the interview. She also recalls liking “handsome men” stars like Errol Flynn; and says that although she was a regular cinemagoer and occasionally went to live theatre in the city, she preferred reading as a pastime: she got through the eight hundred pages of *'Gone With The Wind'* in two days, she claims. Discussion reverts to film personalities, with comments and snippets of film world gossip and reference to other favourites, including Shirley Temple (“Whatever she played in was lovely”) and George Formby, who “made you feel happy”, as well as comments on Gracie Fields’s background and working life. She expresses a preference for “dramatic” films and admits to a liking for comedy, too, recalling an occasion when a funny film starring Joe E Brown jolted her out of a depression. She recollects the ticket prices in various cinemas she went to as a child; recalls the names of a number of these local cinemas, setting out an imaginary ‘walking tour’ passing by seven picture houses that were situated within a mile of each other. The interview includes a long ‘aside’ exchange with a fellow resident about a quest to buy cosmetics.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

 [Manchester Ice Palace](#) (manchestereveningnews.co.uk site)

🔗 Charlie Chaplin in 'The Bank', 1915 (YouTube)

🔗 Harold Lloyd in 'Safety Last', 1923 (YouTube)

🔗 Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy singing 'Indian Love Call', 1936
(YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

CLIFF RICHARD TEMPLE (CT-95-218)

In the late Summer of 1995, Cliff Richard Temple answered a call in the East Anglian press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, eventually joining the twenty-one individuals, couples, and groups living in that region who were interviewed for the project as core informants. Born in Great Yarmouth in 1906, Mr Temple's father was a labourer and his mother a staymaker. He had lived in Norfolk all his life, moving from Yarmouth to Norwich when he was in his twenties. On leaving school at fourteen he was apprenticed to the furniture trade, and later in life became General Manager of a furniture store. A keen photographer with an interest in local history, Mr Temple had authored a number of newspaper and magazine articles and books on Norfolk life.¹ He was interviewed at his home in Norwich on 23 October and 20 November 1995.



Film poster of Rain, 1932

For his interviews, Mr Temple had prepared lists of films and stars, and these are referred to sporadically throughout. In his first interview he shows his collection of cigarette cards and talks about silent films and their stars, with special mention of actors in cowboy films and childhood games of Cowboys and Indians. He notes that

he was a regular cinemagoer in his teens and kept a diary of films seen—insisting, however, that filmgoing was just one of many pastimes, his main hobbies being making model ships and photography. He names some cinemas in Great Yarmouth and Norwich and discusses several favourite stars and films, with particular reference to musicals, both film and stage. He shows the interviewer the photographs he has made of local musicals, plays, and circuses and brings out his collection of theatre programmes. Disappointed at not being paid for this interview, he nevertheless admits that he has enjoyed reliving his memories, while maintaining that he does not consider himself a film fan: film was incidental, he insists: his real love was ships.

Mr Temple's second interview opens with a conversation about his likes and dislikes: he prefers film stars to be "nice and jolly", implies that he dislikes "common" voices or vulgar star personae, and is critical of the real lives of some celebrities, especially as regards sexual misbehaviour. His likes include special effects (in King Kong, for example) and Robert Donat, "a proper gentleman". The last cinema film he saw was *The Sound of Music*, but he watches films on TV and "what I see I don't really like". Noting once again that films are one of many pursuits, he indicates that he has a particular interest in cinematography and offers clear recollections of early experiments with Technicolor. He talks about his various hobbies and voluntary work and shows the interviewer his photographs and some items in his collection of books on cinema. On the question of whether he preferred British or American films, he opts for the former, because "You can understand what they're talking about." Asked about the part cinema played in his life and how he felt after seeing a film, he eventually confesses to liking 'uplifting' films.

¹ Books by Mr Temple published around the time of his interviews include *Great Yarmouth and Gorleston: A Pictorial History*. Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1993; and *North Norfolk*. Stroud: Chalford, 1995.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |



 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Scan of letter \(CT-95-218PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of film list \(CT-95-218PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of film list \(CT-95-218PW002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 Photograph of Barron's Amusement Arcade (CT-95-218PH001)

 Bookcovers of two of Cliff Richard Temple's books (CT-95-218PH002)

 Photograph of miniature train referred to in interview (CT-95-218PH003)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

THORNLEA RESIDENTIAL HOME (TR-95-041)


In February 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted Thornlea Residential Home in Blackley, Greater Manchester, seeking potential participants in the project; and on 4 May six residents took part in a group interview. Two of them, **Elizabeth Woods** and **Lily Sutcliffe**, were later interviewed again, joining the project's twenty-two core informants in the Greater Manchester area. Born in Manchester in 1912, Miss Woods was one of three children; her father was a sheet metal worker and mother took in sewing. She left school at the age of fourteen and worked in a mail order firm for forty years. Along with Miss Woods and Mrs Sutcliffe, participants in the group interview were Wilfred Sevin (born 1913), Joe Dowlag (born 1928), Peter McDonough (born 1916), and Nelly (surname unrecorded, born 1915). All six had lived in Manchester all their lives. The interview opens with recollections of participants' local cinemas, extending to ticket prices, queues, and the typical supporting programme--newsreels, cartoons, and so on--for the main feature. Miss Woods indicates that although there were several cinemas in her neighbourhood, she didn't go to the pictures very often, though she would occasionally attend live shows or 'big pictures' along with



Gracie Fields (DH-95-034PC058) - postcard donated to CCINTB by Denis Houlston

workmates. Mrs Sutcliffe recalls enjoying both films and music hall shows. Conversation turns to film stars, with a focus mainly on local celebrities, including Gracie Fields and Robert Donat; and to alternative amusements such as dancing, prompting memories of the Saturday evening 'dance train' to Blackpool.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

VALENTINE TUCKER (VT-95-098)

The entertainment provided was worth every farthing of our precious twopence, and more. Before our wondering eyes our heroes and their adventures unfolded; Buck Jones, Flash Gordon my special favourite, a sort of blond Superman; Rin Tin Tin a wonderfully intelligent Alsatian dog, Our Gang, Tom Mix,

Extract from Valentine Tucker's letter

In February 1995, Valentine Tucker of Cardiff, South Wales responded to a request from Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in 1927, Mrs Tucker grew up in Dagenham, Essex and in adulthood worked as a GPO telephonist. Her letter to CCINTB sets out recollections of children's cinema screenings in Dagenham in the mid 1930s (the Saturday "Tuppenny Rush"). She describes buying sweets on the way to the venue, the hustle and bustle of the queue to get in, watching the adventures of her heroes unfold on the silent screen—with sound effects provided by screaming babies and toddlers in the audience: "in the sickly sweet warmth of the darkness," she writes, "almost anything could happen."

 [Document scan \(VT-95-098PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Former town hall of Dagenham](#) ('Dagenham in Pictures' site)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

GEORGE TURNER (GT-95-212)

In September 1995 George Turner of Ipswich, Suffolk responded to a call in the local press for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain, joining the project's twenty-one **East Anglian core informants**. Born in 1921 in the village of Ashbocking, Mr Turner was one of six children of a farm labourer father and a housewife mother. On leaving school at fourteen he took a job as a poultry boy on a farm, and was employed in and around agriculture for the rest of his working life. He was interviewed at his home on 13 October and 10 November 1995.



Unknown author, Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

Mr Turner's first interview opens with memories of some Ipswich cinemas: recollections of seat prices and programmes and naming of films and stars that he liked. For a village boy, he recalls, the only way of getting about was by bicycle: it was seven miles from his village to Ipswich and the nearest cinemas. He would go with friends, and they would sometimes make an excursion of it by stopping off for a beer on the way home. At

the pictures he enjoyed slapstick comedy and musicals and recalls seeing some Astaire/Rogers films several times. He tells how as youngsters he and his friends would improvise their play equipment: pop guns fashioned from elder tree branches, catapults from ash tree twigs. He remembers his enjoyment of football; card games played at home by lamplight; dressing up carefully to go to the pictures and trying to stop a smart outfit getting wet when cycling home in the rain.

In reflective mood in his second interview Mr Turner contemplates the nature and meaning of cinemagoing at different stages of life. When he was young and money was in short supply, he says, he managed to devise ways of going to the pictures, where his tastes reflected his age— it was “a big boost for you to go”, and he particularly enjoyed cowboy films and serials. Growing up, he recalls, you might go to the pictures with a “lady friend”, and at this stage you went for quality—better acting, more glamour, good music. He mentions his fascination with portrayals of American life in films; and struggles to put into words the appeal of seeing foreign places on screen, knowing that he could never visit those places himself. He explains how he would tailor his leisure choices to what he could afford: “I won’t go there. I can afford to go to some other good film.” The onset of war, getting married, and having children affected one’s cinemagoing in other ways, he muses. A 1938 film annual produced by the interviewer prompts a lively discussion of stars (more than fifty are mentioned in the course of the interview) and films. The interview draws to an elegiac close as Mr Turner revisits his reflections on the cinemagoing of his boyhood years.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [East Anglia home page](#)

 [Regent Theatre, Ipswich](#) (cinematreaasures site)

 [Frank Merriwell page](#) (Wikipedia site)

 [Extract from *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, 1937](#) (Youtube)

 ['Recalling the days of cinema magic'](#) (ipswichstar site)

 ['A look back at Fore Street'](#) (ipswichstar site)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ANTHONY VENIS (AV-95-202)

Early in 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted Pinner Local History Society to ask if any members might be willing to take part in the project. In April, Anthony Venis got in touch to offer help, eventually joining the eighteen CCINTB core informants based in and around the London suburb of Harrow. He was interviewed at his home in Pinner on 11 July and 27 July 1995.

Mr Venis was born in 1924 in Hampstead: his father was a postman, his mother a housewife. At the age of four he and his family moved to Wembley, where Mr Venis lived throughout the 1930s. On leaving school at sixteen he took a job as a draughtsman before entering war service in Africa, Burma and India. After the war he worked as a consultant engineer, and met his future wife through his job. He married and moved to Harrow in 1957.

In his first interview, Mr Venis notes that there were three cinemas close to where he lived in Wembley, and remembers attending with his mother and also going to the Saturday children's shows on his own. He recalls that some cinemas continued showing silent films into the 1930s, and that cinema newsreels were the main source



*Cover of the 'Metro-land Guide', 1921.
Cyril+A+Wilkinson, Public domain, via Wikimedia
Commons*

of news at the time. He liked comedies, and enjoyed Hollywood musicals both before and after WW2. During the war he collected film star cigarette cards and had film magazines sent out to him. He talks about his interest in local history: the interwar housebuilding boom that created 'Metroland'; his study of local buildings; his special interest in cinemas (he names a dozen or so in the course of the interview), and his wife's collection of old postcards of the area. He donates three Pinner Local History Society publications to the project.

In his second interview (unfortunately marred by poor sound quality), Mr Venis again alludes to cinema newsreels and talks about a typical 1930s cinema programme. He expands on his enjoyment of musicals, on his preference for Hollywood musicals (in musicals, he observes, spectacle is more important than plot), on memorable songs in musicals, and on his particular fondness for the Bing Crosby/Bob Hope 'Road' movies.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |


 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)


(Note: audio unavailable for 2nd interview)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Harrow home page](#)

 [Wembley Hall Cinema \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Road to Singapore \(1940\) trailer \(YouTube\)](#)

Publication relating to material in Mr Venis's interview:

Kuhn, A. (2002). 'Children, 'Horrific' Films, and Censorship in 1930s Britain', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 22(2).

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

TOM WALSH (TW-92-011) AND MARGARET WALSH (MW-92-011)

In 1992 Tom Walsh made contact with Annette Kuhn in response to a local radio item on 1930s cinema. He was contacted again in 1994 when Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain was launched, and he and his wife Margaret eventually joined the project's seventeen Glasgow-based core informants. Mr Walsh was born in Dalmarnock in 1922, one of four children; his father was a labourer and his mother a cleaner. He grew up in Bridgeton and subsequently lived in a number of other places in and around Glasgow, moving to his current home in Cambuslang in 1960.

After four years of secondary education, he qualified for a Royal Air Force traineeship in wireless mechanics, and then served in the Air Force through World War II. After the war he entered a career in teaching. Margaret Walsh was born in Glasgow in 1928, also one of four children. Her father was a civil servant, and she and her siblings were brought up by two aunts after their mother's death when Margaret was only five. University-educated, she had been a teacher all her working life. The couple had no children. Mr and Mrs Walsh were interviewed at their home on 25 November 1994 and 27 January 1995.



*AllTalking at en.wikipedia, Public domain, via
Wikimedia Commons*

Mr Walsh's forthright opinions dominate the conversations in both interviews. At the start of the first, he expands on his acute aversion to 'English' films before discussion turns to favourite Hollywood stars and genres, some Glasgow cinemas (sixteen in all are named in the course of the interview), ticket prices, children's screenings, live acts and organ music in cinemas, and Glasgow dance halls. He recalls shows and films he saw during War service, and both interviewees talk about films seen in recent years. The second interview expands on some of these themes, with mentions of cinema queues in the 1930s, dressing up to go to the pictures, and Mr Walsh's cycle ride from Glasgow to Blackpool to see the newly-released Snow White. Much of the interview is taken up with unprompted and detailed references, by both interviewees, to films and stars of the interwar and post-war years: in all more than forty films, dating from between 1931 and 1994, are named during the interview.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Riddrie Cinema, Glasgow](#) (cinematreasures.org site)

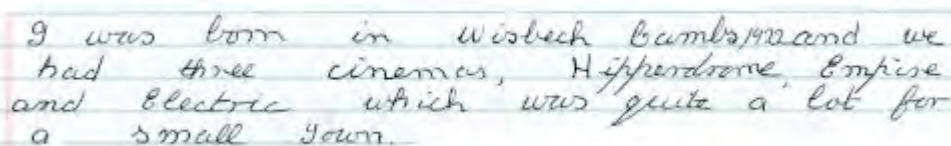
 [Joe Loss and his band](#) (YouTube)

 [Trailer from the Great Waltz, 1938](#) (YouTube)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

MARGARET WARD (MW-95-244)





I was born in Wisbech Cambs, and we had three cinemas, Hippodrome, Empire and Electric which was quite a lot for a small town.

Extract from Margaret Ward's letter

In May 1995 Margaret Ward of Maidenhead, Berkshire wrote to Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to a newspaper item about the project. She was born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire in 1922, and in her letter notes that during her childhood the town boasted three cinemas, which she recalls as scenes of lively social activity. Once she was fourteen and had left school, she would go to the cinema twice a week with friends and enjoy romantic films and weepies.

A treasured memory is of the owner of two of the local cinemas annually inviting all the children to an afternoon screening followed by tea. Known as the 'Robin Tea', this was the "highlight of the year".

 [Document scan \(MW-95-244PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

[The Hippodrome, Wisbech](#) (cinematreasures.org site)

[The Empire Theatre, Wisbech](#) (cinematreasures.org site)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

WILLIAM WARD (WW-95-083)

out. The management of the cinema use to use every device at their disposal to attract the patrons. Once I went to see Richard Tauber in Blossom Time and the whole of the front entrance was covered with pink blossom and two girls dressed in pink costumes. During the performance usherettes sprayed the cinema with perfume,

Extract from William Ward's letter

In February 1995, William Ward of Middlewich, Cheshire wrote to Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to a call in the 'Manchester Evening News' for 1930s cinemagoers. Born in 1923 in Old Trafford, Manchester, Mr Williams left school at fifteen to take up an apprenticeship at a bookbinder's; later in life he worked as an electrician and a Fire Service officer. In his letter he writes about his early years in Old Trafford and his cinemagoing there: attending children's matinees, being hooked by serials and their 'cliffhangers', and acting out the plots of westerns. He also recalls cinemas' publicity stunts: "Once I went to see Richard Tauber in *Blossom Time* and the whole of the front entrance was covered with pink blossom and two girls dressed in pink costumes. During the performance usherettes sprayed the cinema with perfume." He comments on the contrast between Manchester's 'fleapits' and the luxurious offerings of the city's more upmarket cinemas, such as "the organ [that] was much in evidence, rising out of the floor both before and during the interval of the performance." Later in 1995, Mr Ward took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(WW-95-083PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 Scan of questionnaire (WW-95-083GQ001)

Book chapter drawing on Mr Ward's memories:

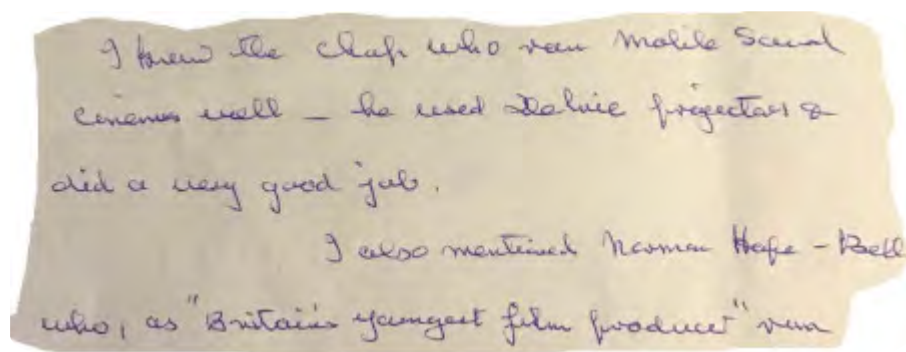
Kuhn, A. (2002) 'Jam Jars and Cliffhangers', in *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, Chapter 3. London: I.B.Tauris/Bloomsbury.

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND



JOHN WATSON (JW-95-323)



John
Watson of
Lingwood,
Norfolk
came into
contact
with
Cinema
Culture in





An extract from Mr Watson's first letter

1930s Britain in Autumn 1995, and over the succeeding few months engaged in correspondence about travelling film shows in Norfolk in the 1920s and 1930s. During this time he also gave a brief telephone interview that was recorded and transcribed. Born in 1918, Mr Watson grew up near Norwich, and remembers attending mobile film shows in the small market town of Aylsham whilst on weekend visits to his grandmother. The particular value of Mr Watson's contribution to CCINTB lies in its concern with the rural filmgoing experience in **East Anglia** during the interwar years.

 [Document scan \(JW-95-323PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Document scan \(JW-95-323PL002\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Interview transcript \(JW-95-323AT001\)](#)

 [Document scan \(JW-95-323PL003\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

Publication relating to mobile film exhibitions:

Stephen Peart, 'Meanwhile, back at the village hall', in *The Picture House in East Anglia*.
(Lavenham, Suffolk: Terence Dalton Ltd, 1980), pp.120-125.

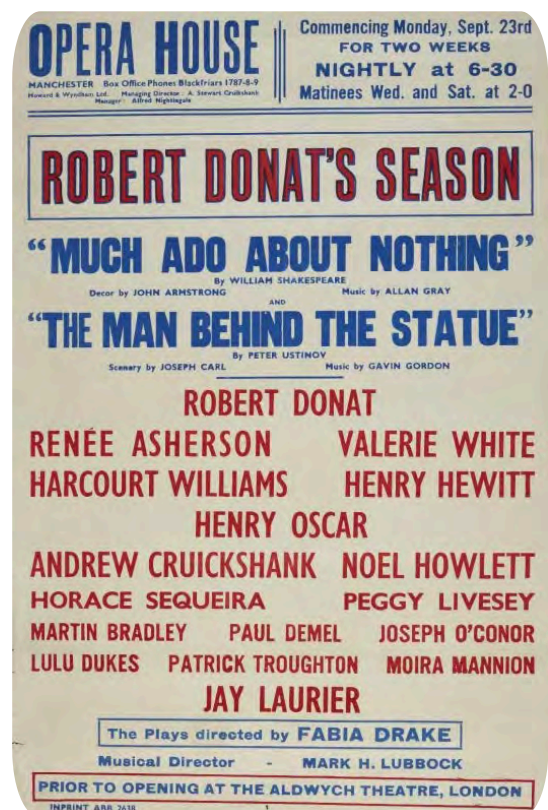
CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

WESTHOUGHTON HISTORY SOCIETY (WH-95-194)

In April 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted the Westhoughton History Society in Bolton, Greater Manchester, seeking potential participants in the project (Westhoughton is a town in the Borough of Bolton). Society members took part in three interviews: on 9 May 1995, five members were interviewed as a group, with three of these giving second interviews later that month. The group interview participants were: Harry Ackers, husband of WHS Secretary Phyllis Ackers, **Lois Basnett**, **Ada Bellis**, **Bert (Herbert) Partington** and another female informant whose name and details are unrecorded. Lois Basnett and Bert Partington, who had become a couple a few years earlier, subsequently gave a joint interview; and Ada Bellis was interviewed on her own. The second interviews took place on 30 May 1995.

Members of the Westhoughton History Society share memories of the town's two cinemas, one of which began life as a roller skating rink, and proceed to consider Bolton's various 'classes' of cinema and the types of programming on offer. The high-profile activities of the local Watch Committee with regard to Sunday opening of



Poster for *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Man Behind the Statue* at the Manchester Opera House, 1946. (Rylands Collection)



cinemas and regulating and certificating films are debated. The cinema billboards advertising the week's films that graced shop fronts in town--and the free tickets shopkeepers received in return--are remembered. A general feeling is expressed that films seemed to take a very long time to reach Bolton after their general release. Early picturegoing memories are highlighted: projector breakdowns, attendants failing to keep rowdy audiences in order, disinfectant sprays. The mighty organ at Bolton's supercinema is remembered, as are the double seats for courting couples in another local picture house, and the cheap seats behind the cinema screen in yet another.

 [Audio-synced interview](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Westhoughton Film Listings \(1923-26\)](#) |  [PDF version \(8 MB\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

NORMAN WILD (NW-95-036)

In February 1995, Norman Wild of Bolton contacted Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to a media call for volunteers to take part in the project, and was among the twenty-two individuals living in the Greater Manchester area interviewed as core informants during 1995. Five years later, Mr Wild accepted an invitation to take part in a questionnaire survey about his memories of the *Tarzan* films. Born in Bolton in 1926, he had lived in the area for most of his life. His father was employed on the railways and in the cotton trade, and his mother also worked in the cotton trade. After leaving school at fourteen, he worked for a time as a truck driver, and for most of his working life was a bus driver. Whilst on Army service he sustained an injury which left him with a permanent hearing impairment. During his two interviews, conducted at his home on 16 May and 13 June 1995, he was supported by **Vee (Vera) Entwistle**, another Bolton-based informant.



Johnny Weissmuller in 'Tarzan the Ape Man'. MGM, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In his first interview Mr Wild names and describes some of the cinemas that were functioning in Bolton during the 1930s, and remembers reading film reviews in the

local newspaper by the well-known Boltonian author and critic Leslie Halliwell. He talks about the cost of cinema tickets, names some favourite films and stars, including fellow-Lancastrians George Formby and Gracie Fields. He expands on his enjoyment of westerns and of the "visual comedy" of the likes of Chaplin and the Marx Brothers, recollects his reactions to horror films, and offers memories of gangster films and their stars. All his favourite stars were male, he notes, adding that he usually went to the cinema with a group of male friends. Among his other leisure pursuits, Mr Wild remembers enjoying football and supporting the local team, Bolton Wanderers.

Mr Wild's second interview opens with further thoughts on westerns and their stars, with recollections of the child audience's typically rowdy enjoyment of 'Cowboys and Indians'. He repeats the clearly pleasurable memory of going to the pictures with a group of peers: "We always used to go in a crowd like, you know." He affirms his dislike of "dancing pictures", his preference for adventure films and his lack of interest in female stars. Looking through a 1930s film annual with the interviewer, he points out some favourites, including Paul Robeson and the Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan films. He talks about the kinds of films he would actively avoid, drawing a contrast between men's films and women's films. Highlighting what he liked best, he returns to the topic of westerns, comic actors and gangster films, and mentions that he had had an interest in the technical side of filmmaking. As the interview draws towards a close, discussion ensues about the ages and the ageing, graceful and otherwise, of surviving film stars, with remarks about the cost of going to the cinema today and expressions of regret that films are not as good as they once were. Finally, Mr Wild and Mrs Entwistle enjoy a lengthy exchange about the plot of the 1937 Ronald Colman vehicle *Lost Horizon*.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS


 [Bolton home page](#)

 [Scan of CCINTB Questionnaire \(NW-95-036CQ001\)](#)

 [Scan of Tarzan Questionnaire \(NW-95-036TQ001\)](#)

 [Royal Cinema, Bolton \(cinematreasures.org site\)](#)

 [Extract from *Sanders of the River, 1935* \(YouTube\)](#)

 **Humphrey Spender's photographs of Bolton Wanderers** (collected as part of the Mass Observation Worktown study)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE



1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ERIC WILLIAMS (EW-95-276)

The PLAZA stands out best because every saturday afternoon crowds of us kids managed to procure a penny to go in, sometimes an egg was the entrance fee, the eggs were then given to the St Yarmouth hospital. It was great queuing up to go in, everyone was excited to see the trailer featuring TOM MIX the cowboy, it was

An extract from Eric Williams's letter

In September 1995 Eric Williams of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk wrote to Stephen Peart, author of 'The Picture House in East Anglia', in response to the latter's call in the local newspaper for volunteers to take part in Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain. Born in 1925 in Bicester, Oxfordshire, Mr Williams grew up in the port of Yarmouth and on leaving school at fourteen went to work as a bricklayer's apprentice. In his letter he writes about being taken to the pictures as a small boy by his grandfather, who worked as a "lumper of the quay". He describes the various cinemas in the town that he patronised as a youngster and recalls noisy children's matinees with their cowboy serials and 'cliffhangers'. His letter concludes with a memory of visiting a cinema in uniform at the end of the war and receiving a hero's welcome. Mr Williams later took part in CCINTB's postal questionnaire survey.

 [Document scan \(EW-95-276PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

OTHER DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Scan of questionnaire \(EW-95-276GQ001\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ELIZABETH WOODS (EW-95-180)

In February 1995, Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain contacted **Thornlea Residential Home** in Blackley, Greater Manchester, seeking potential participants in the project; and on 4 May six residents took part in a group interview. Two of them, Elizabeth Woods and **Lily Sutcliffe**, were later interviewed again, joining the project's twenty-two core informants



*Playhouse, Oldham Road Manchester
(cinematreasures.org site)*

in the **Greater Manchester** area. Born in Manchester in 1912, Miss Woods was one of three children; her father was a sheet metal worker and mother took in sewing. She left school at the age of fourteen and worked in a mail order firm for forty years.

Along with Miss Woods and Mrs Sutcliffe, participants in the group interview were Wilfred Sevlín (born 1913), Joe Dowlag (born 1928), Peter McDonough (born 1916), and Nelly (surname unrecorded, born 1915). All six had lived in Manchester all their lives. The interview opens with recollections of participants' local cinemas, extending to ticket prices, queues, and the typical supporting programme--newsreels, cartoons, and so on--for the main feature. Miss Woods indicates that although there were several cinemas in her neighbourhood, she didn't go to the pictures very often, though she would occasionally attend live shows or 'big pictures' along with workmates. Mrs Sutcliffe recalls enjoying both films and music hall shows. Conversation turns to film stars, with a focus mainly on local celebrities, including Gracie Fields and Robert Donat; and to alternative amusements such as dancing, prompting memories of the Saturday evening 'dance train' to Blackpool.

Miss Woods's solo interview took place at Thornlea on 29 May 1995. After some opening remarks on her health problems and the difficulties brought about by ageing, Miss Woods and the interviewer look through a 1938 film annual together. Although she struggles to recall film titles and names of stars (she insists that cinemagoing was never part of her weekly routine because after working hours she was tasked with household duties), she does remember occasionally going to see live musical theatre shows and 'big pictures' like *The King and I* with her sister or with workmates. In any event, she says, she no longer goes out to either the cinema or the theatre: "It's not nice in town at night now."

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

ANNIE WRIGHT (AW-95-032)

In February 1995 Annie Wright of Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester, wrote to Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain in response to calls in local media for participants in the project. In her letter she names a number of cinemas in and around Hulme, where she grew up, noting that she met her boyfriend, later her husband, in one of them. Borne in Hulme in 1919, Mrs Wright was one of six children whose father, a carter, abandoned the family when her youngest sibling was still in its infancy; her mother then supported the family by taking on odd jobs, including pub work, locally. On leaving school at fourteen, Mrs Wright entered the world of work as a weaver. She was interviewed at her home on 27 April and 26 May 1995.



McFadden Publications; 20th Century Fox, no photographer credited, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Asked about her family background at the start of the first interview, Mrs Wright recounts the story of her father's leaving his wife and six children to live with another woman. He was never heard from again, she says, musing on whether her background might have been upper class (in her second interview she declares "I was born for something better" than the humiliation of wearing clogs). This interview took place around the time of the 50th Anniversary of VE day, prompting Mrs Wright

to recollect the details of her husband's death in action after only a year of marriage. She recalls the last time they were together, and how she kept going afterwards by joining the ATS. Encouraged by the interviewer to talk about her cinemagoing, she offers a detailed account of first meeting her future husband in a local cinema, of the couple's two-year courtship (which involved going to the pictures almost every night), and of the tribulations surrounding their engagement and wedding. Towards the end of the interview, Mrs Wright is shown, and responds enthusiastically to, a book of photographs of cinemas in and around Manchester and the North-west of England.

Mrs Wright's second interview focuses more closely on memories of films and film stars, prompted by looking through some 1930s publications about popular cinema: in the course of the interview more than seventy films are referred to and close to two hundred stars mentioned, sometimes along with snippets of Hollywood gossip. Mrs Wright's preference was for "manly" male stars--"I've always liked men"—especially for those who, like Clark Gable, sported moustaches. She recollects seeing in the flesh a number of film celebrities in Manchester, including Vivien Leigh and Margaret Lockwood. She offers a vivid recollection of being terrified by a particular scene in a horror film; remembers chatting with friends and workmates about films and stars; and regrets the decline of cinemas and the loss of the sense of romance that surrounded going to the pictures--which was her main entertainment: "To me that was all there was really." The conversation turns to childhood play and adolescent leisure pursuits, from street games to cycling excursions into the countryside. Asked about how she used to feel about her favourite film stars, she refers to "hero worship", admitting to entertaining fantasies of dancing with George Raft.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS

 [Greater Manchester home page](#)

[Pyramid Cinema, Sale \(Chester cinemas site\)](#)

CINEMA MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

1930S BRITAIN & BEYOND

MARGARET YOUNG (MY-92-001) AND MOLLIE STEVENSON (MS-92-002)

In November 1992, Margaret Young (nee Stevenson), a regular cinemagoer in Glasgow in the 1930s and 1940s, saw Annette Kuhn's announcement in the local press of a screening and discussion event about 1930s cinema at the Glasgow Film Theatre.

She responded,

expressing interest but regretting that she would be unable to attend. In reply, she was sent a short questionnaire about her past cinemagoing, which she shared with her sister, Mollie Stevenson. Both the sisters submitted detailed replies, and both eventually joined Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain's seventeen Glasgow-based core informants. They were born in Glasgow--Mrs Young in 1925 in Riddrie, Miss Stevenson in 1923 in Broomhill--and both had lived in the city all their lives. Their father was a commercial traveller, their mother a housewife. Mrs Young left school at seventeen and took a job as a shorthand typist, leaving paid work when she had her children. In her forties, she embarked on a career change and trained to be a teacher. On leaving school at fourteen, Miss Stevenson took up secretarial work, and worked at Burma Oil for more than thirty years. The sisters were interviewed together at Mrs Young's home in Cambuslang, Glasgow on 5 December 1994 and 20 February 1995. Mrs Young subsequently donated a number of items of memorabilia to the project, including a notebook containing lists of favourite stars and films seen between 1939



*A page from the Player Cigarette Cards album,
donated by Margaret Young*

and 1944, her collection of film star cigarette cards, and several 1930s and 1940s fan publications about films and film stars.

Mrs Young and Miss Stevenson's first interview ranges over their early lives and their cinemagoing memories, with descriptions of the cinemas they remember going to as children, including one where high teas were served at seat. They recall waiting in long queues outside cinemas and being entertained by buskers and kept in order by commissionaires. They detail ticket prices, singsongs, and rowdy behaviour in children's matinees; and call to mind their intense enjoyment of film magazines as teenagers: "we devoured them." Mrs Young presents the notebook in which she listed and rated all the films she saw during the second half of 1939. They talk about the British stars they liked, including Jessie Matthews and Anna Neagle, and draw comparisons between the American and British film industries. They allude to some of the hazards of cinemagoing during WW2: "We weren't deterred by the blackout: we went with our torches." There is further discussion of Glasgow cinemas, and amused recollections of arguing over film magazines and star photos. They reflect on the musicals they enjoyed and their admiration for stars like Deanna Durbin ("lovely singer, lovely clothes") and her hat "with a wee feather", and Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire ("great tunes, great melodies").

In their second interview, the sisters again recall their enthusiastic consumption of film magazines and books, referring to the publicity surrounding the film *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and exploring the particular appeal of its star, Errol Flynn. They discuss their film and film star preferences, expressing appreciation for both good acting and 'frothy' films. They talk about British actors who worked in Hollywood and about some favourite male stars and their films, and revisit the topics of Glasgow cinemas and the Hollywood musicals that they enjoyed.

 [Audio-synced interview \(1 of 2\)](#) |

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

 [Audio-synced interview \(2 of 2\)](#)

 [Interview transcript](#) |  [Listing of cinemas, films and stars mentioned](#)

DOCUMENTS, MEMORABILIA AND RELATED LINKS


 [Glasgow home page](#)

 [Scan of document \(MY-92-001PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of document \(MY-92-001PW001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Scan of document \(MS-92-002PL001\)](#) |  [Transcript](#)

 [Players Cigarette Cards: Album of Film Stars \(MY-92-001PA001\)](#)

 Listings of stars and films, 1939-1944 (scan ID MY-92-001MM001; transcript ID MY-92-001WT001)

 Donated books and annuals

 Chroniclers of Picturegoing (News & Blog area)
