

BSFF 2016 Timetable

THURSDAY 28th April 2016

Arthur and Paula Lucas Lecture Theatre

2pm – LAWRENCE NAPPER	Welcome (no registration needed on this day)
2.10 – TONY FLETCHER	'Sound Before Blackmail' - a programme of early sound-on-disc films matched with their discs (30mins)
2.40 – SCREENING (80mins)	KNOCKNAGOW (Fred O'Donovan, 1918)
4pm	BREAK – Coffee in S-2.23 (30 mins)
4.30 – DAVID ROBINSON	'Leopoldo Fregoli, Superstar and Progenitor of Montage' (40 mins)
5.10 – SCREENING	MAISIE'S MARRIAGE (Walter Summers/ Alexander Butler, 1923) (95 mins)
6.45	BREAK – Coffee in S-2.23 (30 mins)
7.15 SCREENING	THE SOMME (M.A. Wetherell, 1927) (109 mins)
9pm	END

BRITISH SILENT FILM FESTIVAL SYMPOSIUM 2016
Thursday 28th April 2.40pm in the Lucas Lecture Theatre

KNOCKNAGOW (Fred O'Donovan, 1918)



"Knocknagow," *The Bioscope* (London) (16 October 1919), 58.

Pictures of Irish peasant life seventy years ago—Native Irish Production fully flavoured with political sympathies—interesting production needing thorough revision.

In 1850, in Knocknagow, Ireland, Arthur O'Connor gives up his idea of becoming a priest because he has fallen in love with Mary Kearney, who, however, is unaware of his passion through the accidental non-delivery of a letter on the eve of his departure for America. The peasants of the district groan beneath the injustices of Pender, agent of the absent landlord, Sir Garrett Butler, in whose name they are evicted in order that their huts may be pulled down to provide pasture land. Pender hatches a plot against Arthur, whom he hates, and has him arrested at Liverpool on his way to the States for robbery. It is ultimately proved that Pender has staged the whole affair, and Sir Garrett returns to end his agent's tyranny. Arthur and Mary meet again, and, declaring their mutual love, are happily married.

There is more than a soupçon of underlying propaganda about this native Irish production, which, although it has many technical faults, is by no means without charm and interest....The propagandist element of the play is discreetly veiled but is unmistakably present. The fact that the conditions represented are those of seventy years ago does not greatly modify the political sting of such titles as: "In the name of the law that protects you (the English agent), the huts are pulled down that the people may perish; there will be an awful reckoning, if not in our time then later." "It's a land of plenty, and God forgive those who come to Ireland to starve the Irish" and "What curse is on an Irishman that he cannot have even poverty's crumb for his dear's ones?" are other samples of the "literature" with which the acted scenes are plentifully interspersed. Of a similarly biased tone is the incident representing a dragoon (after he has left the army) being thrashed by an Irish peasant for "prowling" round the house of an Irish girl.

Directed by Fred O'Donovan for the Film Company of Ireland
From the stage play *The Homes of Tipperary* by James Kirkham
Produced by James M. Sullivan

Cast:

Mat "The Thrasher" Donovan
Arthur O'Connor
Nora Lahy
Phil Lahy, her father
Pender
Billy Heffernan
Father O'Carroll
Barney Broderick
Maurice Kearney
Henry Lowe
Sir Garrett Butler
Mary Kearney
Bessie Morris
Mrs Kearney
Nellie Donovan
Honor Lahy
Peg Brady
Mick Brian
Mrs Brian
the Brians' son

Brian Magowan
Fred O'Donovan
Kathleen Murphy
Arthur Shields
J. M. Carre
Breffni O'Rourke
Valentine Roberts
Patrick O'Donnell
Dermot O'Dowd
George T. Larchett
Charles Power
Nora Clancy
Alyce Keating
Peggy Casey
Sheila Rooney
Brenda Bourke
Maira Breffni
Donal Sullivan
Katherine Doran
Cyril Cusack

A Photo-Play Unique National Interest.	IRELAND'S GREAT SUPER FILM	Depicting the Joys and Sorrows of the '48 period
KNOCKNAGOW		
AT THE		
Don't Miss seeing the screen Version at Kirkham's World Famous Story.	Empire Theatre DUBLIN For the Week commencing	Portrayed by Irish Artists Produced by Film Co. Ireland
Monday, April 22nd, 1918		

BRITISH SILENT FILM FESTIVAL SYMPOSIUM 2016
Thursday 28th April 5.10pm in the Lucas Lecture Theatre

MAISIE'S MARRIAGE **(Walter Summers/Alexander Butler, 1923)**



**'A FILM FOR ALL THINKING MEN AND WOMEN TO WHOM PURITY IS
TRUTH, AND TRUTH IS PURITY**
AN EARNEST STORY DEALING IN AN OUTSPOKEN WAY WITH THE VITAL TOPIC
OF RACIAL PROGRESS WHICH AFFECTS DIRECTLY EVERY PERSON IN THE
LAND – THE IDEALIST, THE HEARD-HEADED POLITICIAN – IN FACT, EVERYONE
WHO WISHES TO SEE THE ENGLAND OF THE FUTURE COMPOSED OF A
HEALTHY, HAPPY POPULATION.

OUT OF THIS VITAL MATERIAL THE AUTHORS HAVE CONCEIVED A STORY
THAT ONLY THAT OFT REPEATED EXPRESSION 'A HUMAN DOCUMENT' CAN
DESCRIBE – AND WHOSE NAKED TRUTHS GRIP THE HEART WITH TERRIBLE
FORCE'

(from the Press Book)

Cast

**Maisie Burrows
Dick Reading
Mrs. Burrows
Henry Burrows
Mrs Reading
Mr Sterling
Mrs Sterling**

**Lilian Hall-Davis
Rex Davis
Sydney Fairbrother
Roger Livesey
Mary Brough
Bert Darley
Gladys Harvey**

**Directed by
From the book *Married Love* by
Written by
Produced by
NAPOLEON FILMS**

**Alexander Buttler
Marie Stopes
Walter Summers
GB Samuelson**

'It seems a pity to have associated this human and pleasantly sentimental domestic drama with a work of entirely different calibre, by giving the film the same title as that of a well-known biological treatise. The film will disappoint those who may be led to anticipate frank revelation of several 'mysteries', whereas the title may conceivably create a false impression and deter many from enjoying an innocuous entertainment which they would otherwise have been glad enough to see.

All that has been attempted by Dr Marie Stopes and Walter Summers, who are jointly responsible for the story, is to contrast the unhappiness of a large, poor family with the bliss of a small, well-to-do family, in advocacy of the practice of birth control as a means to prosperity and happiness. No effort is, or obviously could have been, made to render the film a medium of sex instruction, to which in fact no direct reference is made save in a short, prettily symbolical scene, showing the benefit derived by a rose tree from the use of a pruning knife.'

THE BIOSCOPE 16/10/1923, p.61.

For further reading, see Annette Kuhn, 'The Married Love Affair' in *Screen*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1986, pp. 5-21.



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FOR ADULTS ONLY

WHAT'S IN A NAME P
The Original Title of our Film cannot be used by order of the Home Office.
SO

????? (CAN YOU GUESS?)
will be shown as

MAISIE'S MARRIAGE

A Film for all thinking MEN and WOMEN to whom PURITY is TRUTH and TRUTH is PURITY.

THIS FILM IS SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN by
DR. MARIE STOPES
In Collaboration with CAPT. W. SUMMERS

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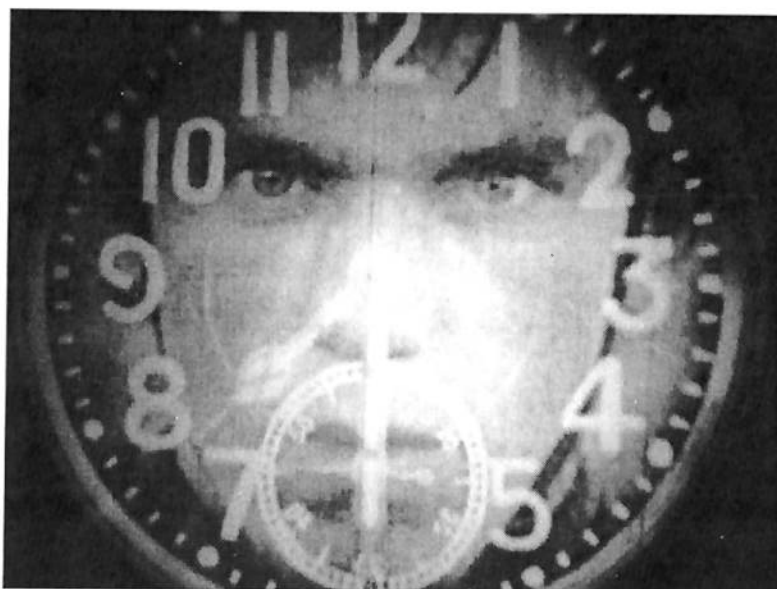
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The Management Reserve the Right to Refuse Admission, and to Alter Programmes

20th, Wellington S.W. Picture, London and London

BRITISH SILENT FILM FESTIVAL SYMPOSIUM 2016
Thursday 28th April 7.15pm in the Lucas Lecture Theatre

THE SOMME **(M.A. Wetherell, 1927)**



'A tremendous experience awaits all those film-goers who will see the new British war-record film *The Somme*... It is a magnificent pictorial recapitulation of the unforgettable struggles, successes, and the great heroism of the British troops in that long "push" of the years 1916 and 1917. When the picture was shown privately yesterday morning, it spell bound the audience. It stirred them profoundly, and it brought before them alike the monstrosity of war and the unending honour we owe to the men who faced and finally brought within sight of its end, that ghastly nightmare... It cannot be considered beside the ordinary film and it most emphatically cannot be viewed without deep emotion. Nothing like it for intensity has been seen before'

IRIS BARRY, *Daily Mail* 2/9/1927, p. 9.

Featuring T.W.H. Veale VC

Directed by M.A. Wetherell

Photographed by Sydney Blythe

Assisted by Frederick Young

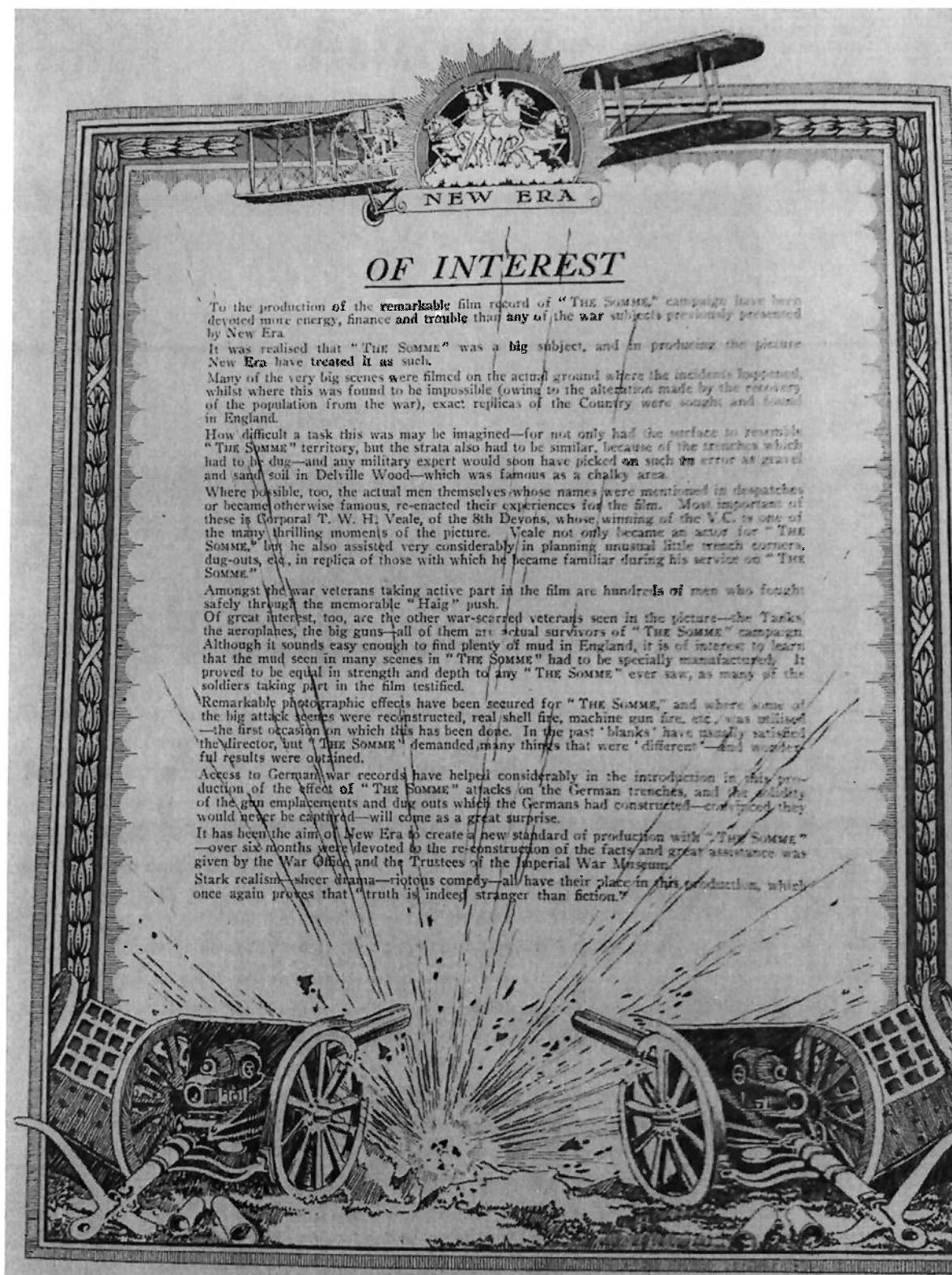
Literary Advisor Boyd Cable

Edited by Geoffrey Barkas

Produced by E. Gordon Craig
For NEW ERA FILMS

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From the Press Book held in the Bill Douglas Centre, University of Exeter

FRIDAY 29th April 2016

Nash Lecture Theatre (K2.31)

TIME	SESSION	ROOM
9.00-9.20am	REGISTRATION	SCR
9.20-9.30	Welcome and Housekeeping announcements	K2.31
9.30-11.00	1918 AND ALL THAT	
9.30-9.50	1. Ellen Cheshire – Charlie Chaplin in the British Press	
9.50-10.10	2. Lucie Dutton – The Life Story of David Lloyd George: New Findings from the Archives	
10.10-10.30	3. Gerry Turvey – Doing the Economics: A Post-War British Company Takes on the American Market	
10.30-10.50	4. Charles Barr – British Silent Cinema: How Does Ireland Fit In?	
11.00- 11.30	COFFEE	K0.16
11.30-1.00	IN THE AUDITORIUM	K2.31
11.30-11.50	5. Stephen McBurney – Arrested Beginnings of Colour Cinema in Inverness	
11.50-12.10	6. George Barker – On Smells in the Auditorium	
12.10-12.30	7. Mara Arts – The Royal Family on the London Screens	
12.30-12.50	8. Nyasha Sibanda – Directing The Kingsway Cinema (Birmingham), 1927	
1pm-2pm	LUNCH	
2.00-3.30	1920s BRITISH CINEMA	K2.31
2.00-2.20	9. Esther Harper – Women Jockeys: From Films to Fact?	
2.20-2.40	10. Henry K Miller – In Northcliffe Jail: Iris Barry, Film Journalist	
2.40-3.00	11. Rachel Moseley – ‘Picturing Cornwall’ in early Promotional and Amateur films	
3.00-3.20	12. Amy Sargeant – Boarding House Blues	
3.30-4.00	COFFEE	K0.16
4.00-6.00	PRE-SOUND AND SOUND	K2.31
4.00-4.20	13. Joe Evans – The Depiction of Sound in Animated Film from the Silent Era	
4.20-4.40	14. Julie Brown – Listening at the ‘Silent’ Cinema	
4.40-5.00	15. Geoff Brown – Al Jolson, <i>The Singing Fool</i> and the advance of the talkies in Britain)	
5.00-5.20	16. Laraine Porter – ‘The Americanisation of England’	
5.20- 5.40	17. Rebecca Harrison – All Quiet on the Home Front: Child Evacuees and a Silent Cinema Revival in the Second World War	
5.40-6.00	18. CLOSING REMARKS	

9.20am – 11am – 1918 AND ALL THAT

ELLEN CHESHIRE – Charlie Chaplin in the British Press

The British Silent Film Symposium is taking place in April 2016, just over 100 years earlier British stage comedian who had made his fame and fortune in Hollywood, Charlie Chaplin, signed a contract with Mutual which made him one of the most famous and highest paid actors in the world. This signing was reported throughout the world.

In this paper 'Charlie Chaplin in the British Press' Ellen Cheshire will look at how this signing and the subsequent stories regarding his involvement with the First World War were reported.

Using press cuttings from Chaplin's own scrapbooks and other archival material including contracts and letters Cheshire will trace Chaplin's humbling origins in Victorian England to his worldwide fame. There will be particular attention paid to how his rising career was reported in the British press and will culminate in an examination of how he was portrayed in the press one hundred years ago.

LUCIE DUTTON - *The Life Story of David Lloyd George (1918)*: New findings from the archives

The suppression of Maurice Elvey's biographical film of the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, in 1918 has been considered a mystery of British cinema since the film was rediscovered in the possession of Lord Tenby (Lloyd George's grandson) in 1994. This paper will argue that the suppression of the film is not mysterious at all - given the timing of the production and its proximity to the end of the Great War and the December 1918 General Election, it would have been more surprising had it been released for exhibition. That is not to say that there is no mystery surrounding the film - there is. Who financed it? How much influence did Lloyd George and his family have over the scenario? How "official" was it? Which government departments played a role in getting this ambitious project off the ground? And what is the significance of a positive review of Maurice Elvey's 1917 *Dombey and Son* in the *Daily Express*? New discoveries from a variety of archives have been pieced together into a network of connections that, overall, will aid our understanding of how this extraordinary film came to be made.

GERRY TURVEY – Doing the Economics: A Post-War British Production Company Takes on the American Market – Only To Loose!

In June 1918, Edward Godal became the new Managing Director of the British and Colonial production company – an enterprise whose fortunes he proposed to revive by addressing the American market. First, he analysed the relative market sizes, production costs and possible incomes for British and US producers. Then he suggested America would only take British pictures if they were "in many respects similar to their own" – edited and titled for America and with stories and production values to which they were accustomed. At B&C, therefore, he decided to increase production expenditure and bring in US personnel to design, photograph and direct. So, five American or American-experienced directors worked on the nine films the company produced in 1919-20. Further, these films were 'star' vehicles for attractive female leads with some success on stage and screen, especially in the States. The films' 'social portraiture' was moved up-market, placing an emphasis on glamour and stylishness in women's costuming and offering sumptuous upper-class sets. This strategy gave some initial success in America, only to be followed by diminishing returns as the succession of journeymen directors turned out increasingly disappointing pictures.

CHARLES BARR – British Silent Cinema: How does Ireland fit in? As we are reminded by current centenary events, Ireland did not achieve even a degree of political independence from Britain until several years after the Easter Rising of 1916. Yet Ireland's drive for Home Rule had already inspired a more distinctive and purposeful form of national cinema than either Wales or Scotland. This paper uses the feature film *Knocknagow*, produced by the Film Company of Ireland in 1918, to focus on some issues surrounding the challengingly liminal status of early Irish cinema: notably the contrasting ways the film was received and marketed in Ireland, Britain and the US, and the later career paths of some of its key participants.

11.30 am – 1pm – IN THE AUDITORIUM

STEPHEN McBURNEY – Arrested Beginnings of Colour Cinema in Inverness: Moral Panics and the Serpentine Dance of Sanger's Travelling Circus

During the earliest cinematograph exhibitions across Britain, the *Serpentine Dance* was unique for its intricately hand-painted colours imitating the lights of its theatrical antecedent. The popularity of the original stage routine transcended social classes, lauded as a morally intact and poetic expression of modernity. Yet, these connotations were not upheld across the various interpretations of the dance; especially in the case of *Sanger's Travelling Circus*, which gained notoriety for performing it within a den of lions. Sanger's troupe were the only ones to present the dance in Inverness, making it a fascinating microcosm to explore how intermedial contexts influenced early film screenings.

Research on *Serpentine Dance* films hitherto centred upon their aesthetics and positive reception, and the beginnings of Invernessian cinema have been neglected in favour of metropolitan case studies. Inverness's position as a gateway to the Highlands, and its designation as its capital, encouraged a distinct identity at odds with the rest of Scotland and Britain. Through analysis of fin-de-siècle Invernessian newspapers, this paper will delineate a clash in moral values between local entertainments and the circus's serpentine dance. As Inverness's "cinematograph man", John MacKenzie sided with the town's moral guardians, thus ensuring local cinema remained a black-and-white phenomenon.

GEORGE BARKER – On Smells in the Auditorium

I propose a twenty minute presentation that looks at the conditions and parameters of existence of shifting odours within British cinematic exhibition spaces in the allotted silent period from 1895-1930. I will excavate accounts from rowdy, boozy and smoky music halls, to deodorized and perfumed picture palaces, to the eventual intrusion of popcorn odours in auditoriums and other spaces of exhibition including the Woodhouse Empire, the New Egyptian, and the Bijou amongst others. In doing so I hope to present olfactory knowledge - which is not often considered a component of the cinematic experience - as having viable implications on the cultural status of British cinema within this period. My theoretical framework will be taken from the theoretical Spatial Turn and New Cinematic History of Richard Maltby, and is further informed by the thesis I am currently writing on the value of odour presentation and preservation in the workflow of film archivists.

MARA ARTS – The Royal Family on the London screens

This paper explores the link between the Royal Family and London cinemas in the 1920s, with a particular focus on how the monarchy used film to strengthen the capital's imperial identity. The British Royal Family has been connected with the British film industry since the filming of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897. This relationship continued throughout the silent era, with members of the British Royal Family being subject of films, as well as consumers of, and advocates for, the British film industry. The Prince of Wales is a key figure in this analysis, as his tours of the Empire were screened in cinemas across London and he himself visited cinemas for charitable screenings. As subjects and consumers of film, the Royal Family built cinema-related activities into their public lives. Which events, places and films did they choose to link themselves to? What was the significance of the King's first public visit to a cinema to see the war documentary *Zeebrugge*, in 1924? This paper argues that the interaction between the Royal Family and silent cinema was crucial to strengthening the national identity in the politically tumultuous interwar period.

NYASHA SIBANDA – Directing The Kingsway Cinema, 1927

The Kingsway Cinema in King's Heath, Birmingham, opened in 1925 as a super cinema to serve a localised, habitually attending audience. It showed second-run screenings at low prices, and handily out-performed its only local competitor the Ideal. The minute book of the Directors of the Kingsway Theatre Company reveal a striking and unique picture of what the running of such an establishment entailed, and the considerations made by its Board of Directors. Previous business records for cinemas have been instrumental in the furthering of study into cinemagoing and programming practices (see Poole 1987, Harper 2004 and 2006, Jeacle 2009, James 2013), and their rarity highlights the clear value they hold for researchers in the present. The particular

characteristics of the records from the Kingsway, namely their detailed minutes of monthly board meetings, allow for yet another perspective on the operation and function of local cinemas. This paper aims to examine a single year in granular detail. 1927 was a year where the cinema seemed to defy the grim forecasts of the depressed economy, where cinema musicians variously rebel and excel, and where the expansionist ambitions of its Directors were tested amidst the threat of competition. I intend to largely let the records speak for themselves, whilst situating them within the context of the pre-Quota British film exhibition industry. By exploring the richness of this dataset, a more specific and particular picture of the life of late-silent period exhibition might be illuminated.

2pm – 3.30pm – 1920s BRITISH CINEMA

ESTHER HARPER – Women Jockeys: From Films to Fact?

In 1923, Betty Tanner became the first woman to ride in the Newmarket Town Plate, the oldest horse race in Britain. The film actress Marjorie Benson was so enthused by the idea, that she made plans to ride in the race as well, only to have her hopes dashed by a rule which stipulated that it was only open to residents of Newmarket. Within less than ten years, the Town Plate became *the* race for women jockeys at a time when the ruling bodies of horse racing refused to grant women licences. This paper explores the overlap between horse racing in Britain, and the sport as depicted in British silent films.

Although young women had briefly worked as 'stable lads' during the War, horse racing remained a male domain. Fictional racing films, however, presented a tantalising alternate world in which women could be jockeys and trainers. With Epsom as a backdrop, and real-life racehorses galloping on screen, horse racing and filmmaking intertwined. This paper pieces together the evidence that Violet Hopson and Walter West's racing pictures normalised new roles for women in the sport, and may have helped to spark the four-decade-long fight for women to be recognised as jockeys and racehorse trainers.

HENRY K. MILLER – In Northcliffe Jail: Iris Barry, Film Journalist

Now the subject of her own biography, as well as a number of scholarly essays, Iris Barry would appear to be a well-known figure, 'one of the first intellectuals to treat film as an art form', as the biography's blurb has it, who inhabited 'a demimonde of Bloomsbury figures', and was one of the prime movers behind the Film Society. All this is true, but her rather less fashionable role as a working journalist for the Northcliffe press has been downplayed; and it was this that occupied most of her time in the second half of the 1920s, when she was published almost every day. As Barry once wrote, the rise of newspaper criticism in British papers had less to do with the intellectual current represented by the Film Society, and more to do with the papers' engagement in the cause of the Quota. The *Daily Mail*, which hired Barry before the Film Society's first performance, was strongly in favour. This talk looks at how Barry, personally negative about the prospects for British cinema, negotiated her designated role as a champion of the Quota; and, conversely, how she championed the cause of art cinema on a seemingly unlikely platform.

RACHEL MOSELEY – 'Picturing Cornwall: The Construction of Place-Image in Early Promotional and Amateur Films'

The production of Cornwall as a visitor destination and as an object of the tourist gaze (Urry, 2002, 2011) has a long history, one which is entangled with the development of artist colonies like Newlyn, the advent of railway (and later, car) travel and the development of moving image technologies. The now entrenched filmic imagining of Cornwall as a distant, even foreign, picturesque coastal location where one might find a 'view', can be traced to its inception in early films promoting the Great Western Railway's 'Holiday Line' such as *Scenes in the Cornish Riviera* (Charles Urban Trading Company, 1904), through newsreels and travelogues such as *Coves and Caves* (Claude Friese-Greene, 1925). This paper explores the construction of Cornwall's place-image (Shields, 1991) in these early industrial and promotional films in order to contrast it with the construction of place produced in amateur film and home movies from within Cornwall, such as those of the Major Gill and Newton Kennedy Collections of the South West Film and Television Archive. Such 'insider' film-making produces Cornwall from an immersed viewpoint which eschews the emptying out of the county to the romantic coastal periphery typical of 'outsider' perspectives, picturing it as a place of diverse, historically and culturally specific locales, traditions and industries beyond tourism.

AMY SARGEANT – Boarding House Blues

The proposed paper will discuss the Boarding House as setting and trope, in film and literature, during the silent period. It will cover, for instance, *Patricia Brent, Spinster* (1919), *Not for Sale* (1924) and *The Vagabond Queen* (1929), looking forward to the 1930s with *Sunshine Susie* (1931) and the thespian entourage of *The Good Companions* (1933), to the 1940s with *The October Man* (1947) and *London Belongs to Me* (1948), even to the upcoming BBC TV spin-off from *Brooklyn* (set in the 1950s). Patrick Hamilton, it will suggest, is the pre-eminent figure in Boarding House

literature, from *Craven House* to *Slaves of Solitude*.

4pm – 6pm – PRE-SOUND AND SOUND

JOE EVANS - The Depiction of Sound in Animated Film from the Silent Era

I propose a 15-minute illustrated paper exploring the depiction of sound in animation from the silent era through the visual language of comic strips.

The use of onomatopoeic phrases, action lines and exclamation marks as well as other visual cues such as flashing explosions and exaggerated dust clouds, provided a sense of sound in a soundless world.

My paper will discuss devices used to illustrate sound effects in two examples of silent animation. These will be the British Jerry the Troublesome Tyke cartoon 'His Birthday' from 1925 and the American Fleischer Brother's 1923 Out of the Inkwell cartoon 'False Alarm' featuring Koko the Clown. I will explain the relative conservatism and economy of style in British animation compared to the high-energy American equivalent.

Finally, I will demonstrate how these elements, incorporated to represent absent sound effects, evolved to become an intrinsic part of the visual language of animation and continued to survive beyond the introduction of synchronised sound.

JULIE BROWN – Listening at the 'Silent' Cinema: Towards an Understanding

It has long been suggested that films have changed the way we listen, but cinema's contribution to broader cultures of listening has only recently started to receive serious academic attention. This paper will reflect upon how people listened to film performances during the so-called 'silent' or 'mute' cinema era. Trade papers and other industry sources are key means for attempting to excavate ways in which exhibitors treated the silence of the actual moving pictures; they also allow us to trace modes of listener entrainment promulgated by the film industry. In a less systematic way, they, in tandem with other types of sources, including the films themselves, can also help us to piece together and come to an understanding of the ways in which audiences listened. Michel Chion's identification of a 'discontinuity of listening' in the silent cinema provides my way into the topic. In this paper I will highlight a number of approaches to film performance and the types of listening they implied, and suggest that listening at the silent cinema relied heavily on a certain autonomy of the senses primed by emergent recording technologies.

GEOFF BROWN - Al Jolson, *The Singing Fool*, and the Advance of the Talkies in Britain

Highbrow observers shrivelled in disdain: "a display of emotionalism which it is embarrassing to watch" (Robert Herring); "a horrible tang of putrefaction" (Aldous Huxley). But to most British audiences in 1928/29, Al Jolson's Vitaphone features, and especially *The Singing Fool*, brought something new in entertainment, received with both cheers and tears. By April 1929, over two and a half million people in Britain had queued up in 22 theatres wired for sound to see and hear Jolson sing *Sonny Boy* in a film that, mawkish or not, finally convinced wavering industry magnates that Britain had to begin making talking features of their own. Using clips and contemporary documentation, this paper will explore specific British ramifications of the "Jolson effect" on British film production and exhibition – from the country's ongoing war over the spread of American slang and popular culture, through the talkies' music copyright problems (spotlighted by Billy Merson's court case over Jolson's use of his song *The Spaniard That Blighted My Life*), to the British industry's timid response to producing musical features of its own.

Geoff Brown

De Montfort University

Chief Researcher, "British Silent Cinema and the Transition to Sound 1927-1933" (AHRC-funded project)

LARAINÉ PORTER: 'The Americanisation of England': Anti-American sentiment and the arrival of the 'Talkies' in Britain

The arrival of synchronised sound films in Britain between 1928 and 1930 gave rise to a considerable amount of anti-American sentiment despite the fact that Hollywood films had dominated the British box office since WWI and Hollywood silent films were intrinsic to popular culture and entertainment in Britain. However, it was with the arrival of the 'Talkies' – two Al Jolson

vehicles *The Jazz Singer* (1927), but more emphatically with the extremely popular, *The Singing Fool* (1928), that anti-American sentiment and moral panics started to manifest themselves in local and national press; among critics, journalists and intellectuals as well as from within the wider professional, cinema and business communities.

The coming of sound also curtailed some longstanding production relationships and distribution deals with Europe, especially Germany and France, as dubbing dialogue was not yet considered. Britain was felt to be the embattled frontier of the American invasion of Europe – the gateway to European colonisation. Anti-Americanism manifest in a range of sentiments that often sought to denounce American culture whilst calling for British subjects; history, heritage, established actors and authors, to step up to the mark, produce films and prevent British culture being obliterated. A major concern was the adulteration of the English language along with diverse and random fears such as the deleterious influence on schoolboys emulating American slang, the potential adoption of American talkie sweatshop working conditions and the ill-treatment of animals by Hollywood as manifest in early sound films such as "The Barkies" where dogs were allegedly forced to 'talk' under duress.

Further to concerns about the swamping of British, or more specifically 'English' culture, British technology and industry was also felt to be under threat. Nascent British 'talkie' technology, with its own smaller-scale patented inventions for combining image and sound, was all but subsumed by the Napoleonic tactics of big American companies like Western Electric.

This presentation will examine the nature of these moral, economic and cultural panics on local and national levels and in relation to all aspects of the industry, from business, and new technology to the perceived negative influences of American films themselves. Using a range of archival sources including newspapers, trade press and professional association reports and accounts, it will investigate how British national identity was considered under threat, not by silent Hollywood films but by new 'talking films' emanating from an inferior and populist culture. It will investigate how these panics ultimately gave voice to some deep-seated anxieties around race and racism (against Jazz, popular and Black music), class and the democratisation of popular American culture and a declining confidence in British manufacturing, technology and business along with the British film industry.

REBECCA HARRISON - All Quiet on the Home Front: Child Evacuees and a Silent Cinema Revival in the Second World War

This paper explores silent film screenings for child evacuees in the Second World War.

Responding to the conference call for proposals on 'British Silent Cinema and the Transition to Sound,' the paper moves beyond the designated 1895-1930 period. However, in doing so, I recuperate a history of silent cinema that has so far been overlooked in scholarship. My research reveals how, between 1939 and 1944, government and local authorities recognised cinema's importance in the lives of urban children. As such, councils set up and funded rural film shows to encourage evacuee children to remain in the safety of the countryside. However, equipped with only old, borrowed, and amateur equipment, local projectionists screened silent, rather than sound, films. Thus young cinemagoers accustomed to 'talkies' and Technicolor in Britain's picture palaces were treated to Chaplin, *Our Gang*, *Popeye* and other silent films from the 20s and 30s in schoolrooms, abbeys, village halls and community centres.

The paper draws on the daily press, government records, and, where possible, the films played for the evacuees' entertainment. With no reported musical accompaniments at remote screenings in isolated villages (which took place from Kent to Wales and Devon to the Highlands), the shows were likely more 'silent' than in earlier, professionally run cinemas. And yet, far from representing a dreary return to the past, silent films offered children excitement and a connection to the modern, urban metropolis. I argue that for a significant number of Britain's young population, the silent era did not 'end' in the late 1920s, but rather began in 1939.