

Evaluating the importance of the Crown Film Unit, 1940 – 1952

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Abstract

The Crown Film Unit (CFU) was the British Government's principal in-house film production facility during the years 1940 to 1952. Over this period it produced around 225 films of different types and lengths ranging from short five minute Public Information Films to feature length cinema exhibited pictures. A very few of the latter, such as *Target for Tonight* (1941) or *Fires Were Started* (1943) have become iconic representations of both the bomber offensive and the Blitz during the Second World War. Although these films only represented a very small percentage of the CFU's entire catalogue they have, in the main, dominated academic discourse about the Unit. This research has sought to explore the full production canon of the CFU and, in particular, to examine its importance and legacy. In doing so it has also engaged with the debates about the role of film propaganda especially as it impacted upon the self-image and morale of the British people during and after the War. It also examines the role and position of the Unit in the development and history of the Documentary Movement.

To achieve these research aims the Crown Film Unit is first situated in its historical context and the influences of its predecessors over the previous forty or so years are examined. Subsequently a new classification paradigm is developed which allows the films themselves to be reviewed according to theme. Locating each of the films in a particular dynamic framework enables them to be evaluated from the appropriate social, economic, political or military perspectives. The films are also considered in the context of their reception which, in the case of the CFU was not just cinematic exhibition but also a substantial non-theatrical audience watching, not only in the UK, but across the world. The penultimate chapter examines the legacy of the CFU demonstrating that it had an important impact upon British and overseas feature film making in the 1950s, but it also made a currently undervalued contribution to the subsequent development of both Public Information, training, advertising and instructional films.

The research concludes that although perhaps still best described as a Documentary Film Unit the role of the CFU was far more nuanced.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this research project has been longer and more tortuous than I originally anticipated. The reasons for the delay were many and complex sometimes outside of my control and sometimes, regrettably, within.

The result of nearly two decade of research, admittedly not consistent, have meant that many people have been involved and I have received support, encouragement and help from a variety of people in many institutions and organisations for which a blanket thank you is inadequate but is, for reasons of brevity, a necessity.

There are, however, some individuals who must be identified and thanked for their contribution because, without them, it would never have been completed. It is impossible to quantify the importance and value of their support so, in chronological order, rather than anything else, I wish to place on record my sincere gratitude for the help, support and enthusiasm I have received.

The seed of the idea for the project was planted by the late Frank 'Jonah' Jones, cameraman of the Crown Film Unit. It was established as a viable project by the late Prof John Ramsden of Queen Mary, University of London. Its early development was in the hands of Dr Mark Glancy, also of Queen Mary, University of London. After a long hibernation it was revived by Prof Karen Randell, now of the University of Bedfordshire, and brought to fruition by Drs Mark Aldridge and Claire Hines of Southampton Solent University.

Any project such as this which has had a lengthy gestation period requires the help and support of close family members. In this I have been extremely, perhaps exceptionally, fortunate. From my late father, James, I hope I have inherited his objectivity and analytical skills and from my mother, Kathleen, the enthusiasm and love of history. However, the person I have to thank most profoundly is my wife, Mo. Without her support both in this project and in my life generally I am sure I would have abandoned it ages ago.

It is therefore with both love and thanks that this project is dedicated to her.

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Preface

A Personal Perspective

My interest in the Crown Film Unit (CFU) came about as a result of a coincidence of two themes, one in my academic life and the other in my personal life. I have always been interested in the role played by the visual media. During my Post-Graduate Education course at the University of Leicester in 1971 my Special Study was on the educational role of film and television. My supervisor for this project was the late Prof James Halloran, at the newly opened Centre for Mass Communication Studies. It always seemed to me strange that, at that time, visual images were as often as not rejected or at least relegated to a very subordinate role by many historians. As Christopher Roads had written in the *Journal of Archivists* in 1965;

I feel the value and use of film as historical evidence can be appreciated only if the prospective user has a broad grasp of the circumstances surrounding its creation, preservation and accessibility, and therefore, its relationship with other classes of records... Film is an awkward, inconvenient, expensive, vulnerable and inaccessible medium (p.183).

However, even before the digitisation of images and the development of on-line streaming, the existing visual record appeared to me to be as equally a valid source requiring, of course, the same degree of caution and qualification as to provenance as any written material. History is essentially a record of human events in the past and, for more than a century now that record has existed on film and more recently on videotape, disk and microchip. This particular perspective was endorsed during my Master's course at Queen Mary College, University of London where my supervisor the late Prof John Ramsden introduced his students to such seminal film works as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). I now understand that at the time this was seen as both quite subversive by the senior management of the Department of History at Queen Mary and contrary to departmental policy. It is difficult to believe, forty years later, that there is not

a history course from GCSE to Post-Graduate level which does not include at least a reference to Riefenstahl's film when discussing Nazi Germany. The moving visual image gave reality, however vicarious, to events and personalities.

This academic interest coincided with a piece of family history which began my interest in the CFU in particular. My wife's uncle was Frank (Jonah) Jones who, along with H. E. 'Chick' Fowle and Fred Gamage, was a senior cameraman at the CFU. Before his premature death in 1973 Frank would regularly regale family gatherings with tales of the early years of the film industry especially, in his view, its contribution to the war effort. Occasionally his younger sister Iris (my mother in law), had been included in visits to studios and locations where she met some of the luminaries of the time such as Humphrey Jennings, Harry Watt and Jack Holmes. Frank's descriptions were often graphic and not altogether complimentary. Indeed, Nora Lee, another former CFU employee recalled him as a 'somewhat argumentative character'.¹ Those were certainly pioneering days, especially given the bulky nature of the equipment which was often secured hazardously to such positions as a locomotive's buffer bar as in *Night Mail* (1936) or in *Close Quarters* (1943) when Jonah created a 'rig' above a submarine's conning tower. The resulting shot as the vessel dives and water pours over the casing has reappeared in almost every other film featuring a submarine, from *Above Us the Waves* (1955), through *Das Boot* (1985) to *Down Periscope* (1996). The shot is even more impressive when it is realised that Jonah could not swim. It will be a minor theme of this study to recall those cinematic techniques used in, especially, the CFU wartime productions, which appeared and were later developed by commercial cinema during the 1950s and later. Inevitably, the historian in me or maybe just a natural inquisitiveness caused me to read up about the CFU. Surprisingly, although much has been written about the more famous films and film-makers which will be referred to below, there was very little about the development of the Unit, the film themes and almost nothing on its eventual demise or legacy.

¹ Nora Lee's description of Jonah Jones – telephone interview February 2000.

1. Introduction

Following the General Election of 25 October 1951, one of the first actions of the new Conservative administration was to close down the Government's main film production facility, the Crown Film Unit (CFU). Twelve years of film making were dismissed in a Central Office of Information (COI) circular which was both brutal and to the point, 'The Crown Film Unit will be disbanded and the mobile projection service abolished. There will be no more home theatrical distribution and narrow limits placed on home film production' (TNA: COI 352, 29 January 1952). The Unit's political executioner John Boyd-Carpenter, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, later managed to spare it a couple of lines in his autobiography, commenting;

The CFU made, at Government expense, beautiful films often of high artistic merit. They were also films which no commercial producer would make because they would not pay. So, regrettably, I came to the conclusion that this was not a necessary function of Government (1980, p.100).

In 1952 Boyd-Carpenter had disregarded the fact that these 'beautiful films' had only recently been endorsed internationally by the award of the Oscar for the Best Documentary (Feature) Film for *Daybreak in Udi*; a film about modernisation in Nigeria. The CFU had produced about 225 films between 1940 and 1952, ranging from short animations to feature length movies. A very few of these, such as *Target for Tonight* (1941) and *Fires Were Started* (1943) have become almost iconic representations of firstly, the bomber offensive against Germany and secondly, the Blitz on London. These films were directed respectively by Harry Watt and Humphrey Jennings, both regarded as key figures within the British Documentary Movement. Indeed the roll call of the CFU includes many who either were, or went on to become, highly successful in the British film and television industries, for example John Grierson, J. B. (Jack) Holmes, Pat Jackson, Philip Leacock, Jack Lee, John Mortimer and many more. Another one of these luminaries, Basil Wright, later explained the

success (and eventual decline) of the CFU and other documentary units in terms of a major art movement.

You start by being wild men, then you become established, and then you become old fashioned. Just like the French impressionists were first of all regarded as raving lunatics, then they were popular, and then they became old-fashioned although their effect is seen to this day on railway posters and hoardings and that sort of thing (Sussex, 1975, p.175).

As might be expected the most vocal opponents of the closure of the CFU were those with a vested interest in the continuation of the Unit. As early as 14 January, 1952 Ralph Nunn May, the CFU General Manager, had written to R. A. Butler, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, making a desperate plea to avert the strongly trailed execution,

There are, alas few things of which it can be truly said that Britain has the best in the world. The CFU has an unchallengeable position as the best short film unit in the world. In war it proved itself a vital weapon; and in peace a skilful and adaptable instrument making films of many different kinds for almost every department; making them all well; and not only doing a thoroughly practical and useful job, but winning awards the world over for the quality of the films – in itself no bad thing for British prestige (TNA: Treasury GS 49/019A).

In a similar vein Roger Manvell of the British Film Academy who, in a letter to *The Times* on 18 July 1952 wrote of a recent visit to the USA, 'everywhere I went I was asked why the famous CFU had been closed down. This it was implied, was a great blow to British prestige, especially at a time when the maintenance of our prestige matters greatly to America'.

Despite the appeal to patriotism and national interest, which were common threads in the arguments used by many of the opponents of closure, the words fell upon deaf ears. More concerted opposition was to be expected from the trades unions involved in the CFU as a letter again to *The Times*, dated 22 January 1952, from George Elvin, General Secretary of the Association of Cinematograph and Allied Technicians (ACT) and also indirectly addressed to Butler warned, 'we do not know whether there is any truth in the rumours that

the Government intends to make certain economies leading to decreased production by the various film units with which it is concerned.....We would strongly oppose any steps'. However, such opposition failed to convince the Government to reverse its verdict.

Although the decision to close the CFU generated a substantial amount of opposition at the time, it was perhaps fitting that its obituary was eloquently summarised by Sir Stephen Tallents in the *Kinematograph Weekly*, the trade journal of the cinema owners. Tallents had been Secretary of the Empire Marketing Board between 1926 and 1933 and had not only recruited John Grierson but also, with him, introduced and developed the idea of using documentary films to support the Board's objectives. Out of the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit (EMBFU) came the General Post Office Film Unit (GPOFU) which later became the Crown Film Unit (CFU). Tallents emphasised that the importance of the CFU was that it was not just a film production house but an important training facility and a model upon which 'several national organisations have modelled their units, amongst them the Canadian National Film Board, which was established with the assistance and advice of John Grierson' (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 January 1952).

However, much of the opposition to the closure of the CFU came from a relatively small, if vocal, group of interested individuals like Tallents who tended to play down the fact that most of the Unit's output were not feature length cinema exhibited films but rather short public informational films (PIFs) of between five and twenty minutes, sponsored either by the Ministry of Information (Mol) or, after the Second World War, by particular Government Departments through the Central Office of Information. Topics ranged widely from *Malta GC* (1943), a film celebrating the heroic defence of the island in the face of massive aerial bombardment, to *Breeding for Milk* (1947) a specialist film for those in the dairy industry and *Festival in London* (1951) which, unsurprisingly, commemorated the Festival of Britain. These films were shown extensively both on the commercial cinema exhibition circuits but also equally widely through non-theatrical venues such as military bases, factory canteens, church and village halls and even in the West African bush.

Consequently, millions of people in the UK and also overseas in both colonies and independent countries saw CFU productions. As Tallents explained, not only was the CFU a major production unit of international reputation but it also fostered eminent film directors and others including cameramen, sound and ancillary technicians who became the backbone of much of the British film and later television industries of the 1950s and 1960s.

Outlining an Argument – Restoring Crown?

In order to achieve the predominantly revisionist intentions of this project it will be necessary to address three fundamental, if overlapping, research questions. Firstly, what films did the CFU produce between 1940 and 1952? By identifying and re-examining as many of the production catalogue that are still available to access it should be possible to ascertain whether there are any common characteristics in CFU films. Such a review will also facilitate a classification of each film's content which in turn will enable both categorisation and a recognition whether a particular theme was transformed as the context of its production changed.

Secondly, how did the CFU respond to the changing political, economic, military and social circumstances during its lifetime? As the Government's principal film production facility during the years 1940 to 1952 its establishment was a function of a variety of historical and other factors. Thus the importance of its predecessors from the First World War and the 1930s helped shape its initial structure, personnel and attitude to such issues as propaganda. As the 1940s progressed the changing national and international circumstances impacted upon the organisation, its approach to film making and the contemporary perception of its importance.

Thirdly, what was the legacy of the CFU? Inevitably, on its closure in 1952 those working for the Unit sought employment elsewhere taking with them the values and techniques learned. How far this influenced the development of British and overseas film making of all types from commercial cinema to public information films in the 1950s and 1960s will be investigated. A further aspect of its legacy will relate to film reception both in the UK and elsewhere and whether it can be demonstrated that the CFU films are valuable historical

artefacts which give an insight into the British way of life between 1940 and 1952.

By addressing these questions, and the supplementaries they engender, the project will achieve the overall aim of rehabilitating the role and importance of the CFU in academic discourse.

As will be seen below a great deal has been written about aspects of the CFU but this has usually been of the cherry picking variety as the Unit has, as yet, to be considered in its entirety. Those who have approached the films from an auteur perspective, such as Brian Winston (1999), have perhaps unsurprisingly concentrated on the major feature length films. Yet, Humphrey Jennings, probably the CFU's most famous director, not only directed *Silent Village* (1943) but also *Defeated People* (1946); producer Ian Dalrymple not only produced *Fires Were Started* (1943) but a year earlier *Builders* (1942), cameraman Jonah Jones not only shot *Target for Tonight* (1941) but also *Children's Charter* (1945) for example. A small group of people, admittedly a fluctuating membership, produced a variety of films from 1940 until 1952 but there has, as yet, been no attempt to consider the Unit as a whole. There has only been a limited academic discourse on the Crown Film Unit and, as previously stated, this has usually been restricted to the more famous feature films, even when examined in the contexts of propaganda or national identity. A critical review of the Unit and its complete production canon informed by original archival research is thus timely and the primary purpose behind this study.

As has been described above, the furore caused by the closure announcement in 1952 is evidence that it was regarded contemporaneously as an important production house not only in terms of the dissemination of Government policies, but also one with an international reputation as an Oscar winner and model upon which others such as, especially, those film units in colonies like Jamaica and Malaya were configured. Yet subsequently its reputation seems to have suffered and its importance and successes mostly ignored. Perhaps this was because the majority of the CFU productions were not major feature films directed by famous individuals but shorts, often with unattractive titles, and

were therefore regarded as undeserving of academic study. Perhaps too, even though the Unit was clearly an important part of the British Documentary Movement, its instrumental and sometimes propagandist output was thought unworthy.

Consequently the study will endeavour to place the Unit within its historical, political, social and filmic contexts. It will be especially concerned with explaining why, in the 1940s and early 1950s the Unit had developed a substantial national as well as international reputation. As far as reception is concerned it will consider whether its output contributed to the British morale and self-image not only during wartime but also in the subsequent, and less well studied, post-war years of austerity. Thus it can reasonably be expected to make a contribution to the debates about national and cultural identity in wartime as discussed by such authors as Frances Thorpe and Nicholas Pronay (1980), Jeffrey Richards (1987), S. O. Rose, (2003), James Chapman (2005) and Jeremy Havardi (2014).

The study will also seek to contribute to the examination of the role of film and image in wartime propaganda (Karine Hildenbrand & Gérard Hugues, 2008) and Public Information Films (Andrew Spicer, 2003). It will also assist in determining the influence of the CFU on the development of the British films of the 1950s and early 1960s including, for example, war films (John Ramsden, 1998 or Christine Geraghty, 2000) but also other genres and approaches. Finally, as much of the CFU's output could be, and has been, described as documentary, the research will reflect upon the Unit's place in the development of the British Documentary Movement (Aitken, 2006; Chapman, 2015).

Overall this research seeks to explore the valuable and overlooked film canon of the Crown Film Unit to assess its importance both as a film production facility but also as a significant and under-utilised resource for the study of wartime and immediate post-war Britain.

A Review of Sources

It is perhaps a little surprising given that the Crown Film Unit was the British Government's own film production facility during the turbulent war-time and immediate post-war worlds that it has, as yet, failed to substantially trouble academic discourse. Although the recently published BFI collection of essays on the *GPO Film Unit* (Scott Anthony & James Mansell, 2011) does provide some valuable information and discussion about the CFU's immediate predecessor, including biographical chapters on the major directors and the development of film technology, other than a somewhat incongruous chapter on Jennings' *Silent Village*, it effectively concludes in 1940. The BFI's failure to address the CFU is doubly perplexing as, not only did the CFU employ many ex-GPOFU individuals who were, or became, household names, but the follow up volume *Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain* (2010) by Patrick Russell and James Piers Taylor also has little on the Crown Film Unit.

It is certainly true that in the biographies or autobiographies of John Grierson (1966, 1978, 1979, 1990, 2000), Laurie Lee (2000, 2014) and even John Mortimer (1982, 2005) to name a few, the CFU made cameo appearances but, in the main, it was seen as either transitory or, at best, marginally transformative. Mortimer, for example, a young scriptwriter who was exempted military service on health grounds, was somewhat scathing in his retrospective account of the films; 'though efficient at showing the herring fleet putting out to sea, or bombers rising into the air to the accompaniment of symphonic music by Vaughan Williams, they were poor at dealing with human motives and dilemmas' (*New Statesman*, 4 May 1979, p.6). This judgement at thirty five years distance does not seem to reflect that of the Unit's contemporary reviewers as will be seen.

There is, however, one contemporary text that does address the CFU and other production houses' films. The Dartington Hall Trustees sponsored a survey which was eventually published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the

Arts Enquiry and entitled *The Factual Film* (1947).² Essentially this was a review of documentaries and documentary-type films produced during the Second World War. It is valuable in that it not only reviewed the essential themes covered but also looked at the distribution and exhibition of these films. It definitely confirms that there was a ready audience for them as, 'in the ordinary cinema over 25 million attendances are being recorded each week' (*The Factual Film*, 1947, p.151). Indeed its conclusions were quite upbeat and optimistic as it argued that 'the success of the Mol's non-theatrical film service during the war [in particular] and the development of film for educational, social and cultural purposes shows an increasing interest in the wider use of film' (*The Factual Film*, 1947, p.153).

Yet within four years the newly elected Conservative Government had announced the dissolution of the CFU and this engendered perhaps the most disputatious and widely circulated of all the published material. Much of this appeared inevitably in the trade and popular press in the early 1950s. The speed and apparent remorselessness of the decision to close the CFU did cause some shock and, as such, claims that it was a political vendetta.³ As the *Manchester Guardian* reported on 30 January 1952,

Mr J A Boyd-Carpenter, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, amplifying the Chancellor's statement that expenditure on Government information services in 1952-3 would be reduced by at least £1.2m below the 1951-2 figure, [announced] that production of the films by the Central Office of Information would cease.

This announcement not only terminated the activities of the Crown Film Unit but also closed its new studios at Beaconsfield and ended the exhibition of Central Office of Information Films through the use of mobile cinema vans. At the

² Dartington Hall, near Totnes, Devon, was the headquarters of a charitable trust which specialised in, amongst other things, investigating and supporting the arts.

³ Many Conservative politicians were hostile to the whole idea of Government information services as, for example, Duff Cooper (the wartime Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and subsequently Ambassador to France) was quoted as saying 'I believe the truth of the matter to be that there is no place in the British scheme of Government for a Ministry of Information' (McLaine, 1979, p.280).

stroke of a pen, a dozen years of film production on behalf of the Government was ended. As has been seen the opposition to the closure did not just come from the documentarists themselves but also included representatives of the relevant trades unions and others on the left of British politics. Perhaps surprisingly there was even some reservation from the commercial sector of the industry, not natural opponents of a Conservative Government. The wartime agreements made with the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA) and the Kinematograph Renters Society (KRS) had continued beyond 1945. These arrangements permitted the free distribution of twelve official short films and 30 trailers a year on commercial circuits, giving access to some 4,700 cinemas. It has been estimated that 'one short could be seen by as many as six million, and it was theoretically possible for the 'flashes' to be shown 47,000 times over a three-week period' (Wildy, 1988, p.195). The exhibitors were thus assured of something 'new' and free for their programmes and this also enabled the Government to spread appropriate informational messages. Although by 1951 many cinema owners and managers had become less than sympathetic towards these Government film shorts, their trade journal the *Kinematograph Weekly* reacted to the closure of the CFU with some reservations;

The curtailment of film making for Government Departments could be a serious blow for our members, but we hope to be given credit for taking the broader view. It would be extremely dangerous to our economic survival and to our position as a first class Power to deprive the nation of the essential means for expressing and interpreting our political, social and industrial objectives throughout the world (14 February, 1952).

Overall, however, it was probably fortunate for the Government that any significant outcry against closure of the CFU was swiftly muted by worry over the health and subsequent death of King George VI which effectively relegated concern over Government film making in the news agenda. Apart from this brief flurry of contemporary disquiet about the closure, which is more fully addressed in Alan Harding (2004), it is perhaps surprising that there is so little in current or recent literature which deals comprehensively with the Crown Film Unit in its entirety. What does exist normally addresses the CFU as more or less peripheral to the main topic and thus tends to fall within a number of related

categories which are subsequently reviewed in more detail below:- individual film monographs, film history and especially that of the Documentary Movement, biographies and autobiographies of CFU staff, and film and propaganda.

Unsurprisingly the most complete and tangible records of the Crown Film Unit are the films themselves. During the twelve years of its existence about 225 films of varying lengths, topics and quality were produced. (A fuller description and analysis of the films can be found in Chapters Three and Four.) The vast majority of these films are archived and available through either the BFI or the Imperial War Museum.⁴ Many have also recently found their way on to *YouTube* and other free access internet sites having been uploaded from a variety of sources. Yet despite this fairly ready availability and the fact that the original screenings of many of the short films had formed regular parts of individual cinema programmes, and that also there was a flourishing non-theatrical exhibition circuit, both of which guaranteed a substantial contemporary audience, very little has been written about the films from the perspective of either historical or film analysis.

Of course there are notable exceptions to this and these tend, generally, to fall into two categories; either individual film monographs or, more frequently, as part of film histories which are usually thematically or chronologically titled. In the former category Kenneth Short's (1997) *RAF Bomber Command: Target for Tonight*, which was a review of Watt's 1941 film, neatly encapsulated some of the key features of subsequent CFU productions examined later in this research.

Target for Tonight must be judged, in its own right and in its own time; applying those criteria, *Target for Tonight* was a fine piece of moviemaking by a very talented filmmaker... What Watt achieved in 1941 figuratively blew away audiences and critics alike with the realism of his camerawork and his unmatched skill in leading non-professional actors to authentic performances, immeasurably enhanced by the skilled

⁴ See Appendices 2 and 4 for individual film's BFI and National Archive reference numbers.

cutting of Stewart McAlister. And yet the film was still largely artifice; *Target for Tonight* was not the real thing, including the compression of an eighteen-hour period into forty-eight to fifty minutes. It was still 'Lights, Camera, Action!' in a cut-open Wellington fuselage on a sound-stage at Denham Studios (Short, 1997, p.200).

As will be discussed in Chapter Five much of the contemporary success of the CFU's feature films was attributed to their realism and authenticity. However, as Short observed a great deal of the production was traditional film craft and deception.

Short's review was followed a few years later by Brian Winston's 1999 BFI study of Jennings' *Fires were Started* which stands out as an exemplar of an in-depth analysis of a particular CFU film. Along very similar lines Adrian Smith focussed on another Jennings film, *Heart of Britain* (1941), in 2003. His and Winston's approach differ slightly from Short in that the films are primarily vehicles for examining the methods and ideas of the director, Humphrey Jennings. Smith, for example, considered Jennings' depiction of the working class asking;

Did *Heart of Britain* simply confirm the prejudices of Jennings' fiercest critics on the left, not least those admirers of John Grierson grouped around the *Documentary News Letter* who lambasted the supposedly naive, romanticised, sentimentalist view of a 'mass observation lad'? ...Jennings' view of a class from which, for all his good intentions, he remained so detached [was probably influenced by] trudging the rubble-strewn streets of Coventry or the East End (2003, p.135).

Indeed in his later wartime CFU films Jennings continued to present 'ordinary' people as idealistic and heroic as, for example, the miners in *Silent Village*, the firemen in *Fires were Started* and Goronwy and Bill, respectively the miner and train driver, in *A Diary for Timothy* (1945).

This director-focussed approach has been adopted elsewhere in the occasional review of individual CFU productions which have appeared in a variety of collected works. So in this category, John Hartley's chapter on Jennings' *Silent Village*, a homage to those Czech citizens massacred by the Nazis at Lidice

emerged, somewhat bizarrely, in *Beautiful Things in Popular Culture* (McKee, 2007).

However, discussion of the films produced by the CFU appear most frequently in those texts which can be described as histories of film and these also usually fall also into two distinctive, but inevitably, overlapping categories. In both cases the authors' choices of films tend to be limited to a few of the more famous feature-length productions. In the former category, CFU films feature significantly in books concerning the Documentary Movement whereas the latter would include those about films, both contemporary and later, concerning the Second World War.

The post-war academic reflection on the importance of the British Documentary Movement commenced in some senses with the work of Elizabeth Sussex who, in 1975, published *The Rise and Fall of the British Documentary*. Sussex made substantial use of the reminiscences of many of the individuals who played an important part in both the British Documentary Movement and the CFU in particular. For example, she quoted the May 1943 resignation letter of Ian Dalrymple, the CFU Executive Producer, who clearly identified the uneasy relationship between the Unit and the cinema owners, 'the commercial exploitation of our films [was] exposed to the mercy of the whims and waggles of private distribution, with the result that the same old artificial conditions are created to prevent the producer covering his costs' (1975, p.151). Indeed it was a common complaint from Alberto Cavalcanti to John Grierson and beyond that Government-employed documentary film makers would be far better remunerated in the private sector. Grierson also made an early appearance in Sussex's book which to some extent may be seen as something of a response to Grierson's own 1946 book *On Documentary* which had been reprinted in 1969. As far as the Documentary Movement was concerned it is hardly surprising that Grierson should have pride of place given that he credited himself with inventing the term 'documentary'.

I suppose I coined the word in the sense that I wasn't aware of it being used by anybody else. I mean to talk about documentary film was new, and I know I was surprised when I went to Paris in 1927 and found them

talking about “films documentaires” ... When I used the word ‘documentary’ of Bob Flaherty’s *Moana*, I used it as an adjective. Then I got to using it as a noun, ‘the documentary’ (Quoted in Sussex, 1975, p.3).

Certainly, as one of the architects of the Movement, Grierson was a powerful influence on many of the CFU directors and indeed, was himself the CFU’s Controller of Films from 1948 -1950. Although a great deal has been written subsequently about Grierson and the Documentary Movement (Ellis, 1984, 2005; Swann, 1989; Aitken 1993, 1998) any study of the CFU should identify those elements which formed the intellectual and production ethos that underpinned much of the output of the Unit. There can be no doubt that Grierson’s somewhat catholic and eclectic approach to film making struck a particular chord amongst a group of generally middle and upper class independent film makers during the 1930s. Grierson’s film *Drifters* (Empire Marketing Board Film Unit, 1929) was generally accepted as the seminal work of the British Documentary Movement combining, as it does, American influences (Robert Flaherty’s 1922 film *Nanook of the North* for example), with the cutting techniques of Sergei Eisenstein and his own social imperative.⁵ Although there was a convergence of opportunity and personality, according to the histories of the Movement, Grierson’s importance to the development of the Crown Film Unit lay not only in his own productions but also in the areas of the training and recognition of talent, the identification and exploitation of alternative distribution means and finally, in the proselytising of the Documentary Movement to which many in the CFU professed adherence.

Much of the eventual success of the Documentary Movement and, by implication the CFU, was owed to Grierson’s skill as a publicist. He wrote prolifically, founding such journals as *Cinema Quarterly* and *World Film News*, and was a regular contributor to debates in both the national press and trade journals such as the *Kinematograph Weekly*. Such was his post-war clarion call in support of the CFU and the value of documentaries as he wrote,

⁵ See Paul Swann (1989), pp.30–36 for a fuller examination of Grierson’s role in the development of documentary.

We have, in short, to realise the part we [the documentary producers such as the CFU] shall be required to play in giving men the kind of mind and spirit that will bring the world to order. This involves a new measure of understanding and a will to use the medium more directly than we have done in the past' (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 December, 1945, p.63).

Despite this it is probably true to say that, like the Documentary Movement itself, his influence was essentially metropolitan and intellectual rather than widespread and popular. According to Jack Ellis and Betsy McLane,

It [the Documentary Movement] had prestige among the educated classes and fit [sic] in with the thirties' ideas about art in relation to society. A movement with trained and skilled workers, it offered a distinct style as well as purpose and innovations in form and technique that are arguably Britain's most important contribution to the development of the motion picture (2005, p.105).

Grierson's success was to define the nature and role of the documentary which was he said, 'the creative treatment of actuality' (Grierson, 1933, p.8).

Newsreels, on the other hand, were essentially visual newspapers which, although capable of being editorialised, tended to be two-dimensional and, unlike much of the documentary output, lacked the narrative framework and exploitation of commercial cinematographic techniques.

Subsequently film historians have returned every decade or so to review the British Documentary Film Movement. At the end of the 1980s Paul Swann produced his history of the same name and this included a thoughtful section on the CFU (1989, pp.157-165) although here he made a number of claims which might be questioned. In particular, Swann asserted that 'the Crown Film Unit's predilection for feature length films portraying the heroic British people at war steered it away from films dealing with social issues and, particularly, specific problems caused by the war' (1989, p.164). This could be easily challenged by a review of the variety of both themes and duration of Crown's film portfolio and will be more fully examined in this study in Chapters Three and Four.

A decade later Ian Aitken consolidated the existing state of scholarship regarding the British Documentary with his edited collection, *The Documentary Film Movement – An Anthology* (1998). Certainly his description of the institutional and organisational features of the Documentary Movement were neatly encapsulated as a

set of affiliated, often loosely connected organisations, concerned primarily with film production and film distribution, but with also the questions of public education and corporate publicity production..... The mode of (film) production was craft, rather than mass production-based and had little connection with the commercial film industry (1998, p.9).

Although an excellent review its range and scope means that occasionally it does contain a number of generalised contentions which could be reconsidered. For example, Aitken assured the reader that the ‘one significant fact connecting [the documentarists] is that they were old enough to have been directly affected by two of the most important radicalising events of the first half of the twentieth century; the Great War and the General Strike’ (1998, p.7). There is nothing especially wrong with this assertion although it does significantly omit to mention the Great Depression or the Spanish Civil War both of which were also radicalising events (Peter Miles & Malcolm Smith 2013, Tom Buchanan 1997, Paul Preston 1978, David Archibald 2005). The present study will certainly seek to rectify or qualify such claims made in respect of the CFU.

Furthermore given that the Crown Film Unit produced films during the 1940s it is hardly surprising that it should feature both in general film histories as well as those directly concerned with the Second World War. Certainly books by Frances Thorpe and Nicholas Pronay (1980), Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards (1986, 1994 and 2007) have contributed significantly both to the scholarship and understanding about cinema and film in wartime. However the CFU’s appearance again tends to be limited as in *Britain Can Take it* (Aldgate and Richards, 1986) the representative films chosen were *Fires Were Started* and *Western Approaches* (1944). As far as more general film histories are concerned the CFU is barely a footnote. So Neil Rattigan in Wheeler Winston

Dixon's *Reviewing British Cinema 1902-1992* discussed the 1955 film *Dam Busters* and briefly mentioned that it can be seen as a linear descendant of the CFU's *Target for Tonight* (1994, p.149). In a more restricted time frame Charles Drazin published in 1998 *The Finest Years; British Cinema of the 1940s*. As the title suggests this was a comprehensive review of film production and reception during the decade. Again, as might be reasonably expected, a great deal of the text was given over to those commercially produced feature films which were deemed box office successes, such as *Henry V* (1944) and *Brief Encounter* (1945). However, this is one of the few texts which included a substantial section on films produced by the CFU although, as with other authors, there was a tendency to review from a director-focussed perspective rather than from a thematic or contextual approach. For example, John Watt's contribution to film making was summed up as his 'importance to the British Cinema lay far more in his ability to inspire others with the cause of realism in his own films, which are on the whole rather crude' (Drazin, 1998, p.142). Watt was, of course, the director of the critically acclaimed *Target for Tonight*. Watt's film also featured in an earlier review of wartime cinema in Clive Coultass's *British Feature Films of the Second World War* (1984) but, as the title suggests, the discussion of the CFU's output was quite limited. Some years later in 2001 Simon Mackenzie's *British War Films 1939 – 1945* was essentially a review of successful commercial films produced during the war, such as *In Which We Serve* (1942). The same omission of the CFU is generally true of the varying texts and articles written subsequently about British films in wartime, such as Robert Murphy (2005). Even those authors who have reviewed the British War Films produced in the 1950s (such as Geraghty, 2000 or Ramsden, 1998) only give scant recognition to the work of the CFU as precursor.

As has already been mentioned, the biographies and autobiographies of those employed or interacting with the CFU can be fertile sources of information. There are biographies of the key personnel and these seem to have been published on a regular basis. The latest Grierson biography was by Jack Ellis in 2000 and that of Humphrey Jennings by Philip Logan in 2011, and no doubt others will be in preparation. Indeed of all the CFU directors Jennings does appear to generate a significant academic discourse, as the recent spat in the

Journal of British Cinema and Television demonstrates. This commenced with a review of documentary films by Martin Stollery in 2013 and was followed by a riposte from Brian Winston (2014) a couple of issues later and subsequently a rejoinder by Scott Anthony and Patrick Russell (2014). Winston had been defending the more traditional periodisation of British documentary which essentially views the post-war years, especially after 1951, as one of decline. Stollery, Anthony and Russell take a much more nuanced perspective on the supposed decline. No doubt this debate will continue over the next few years. Of course those with a less high profile or more limited contact with the Crown Film Unit tend to have either fewer biographies or autobiographies and often the Unit is dismissed in a few sentences or paragraphs. Certainly the autobiographies of Basil Wright (1976) or Pat Jackson (1999) show some insight both into the production of films and the workings of the Unit. However, for some important participants in the development of the Unit, such as Sir Kenneth Clark who was the Ministry of Information's Head of the Film Division in 1939, his film role warranted only a small flippancy aside. He regarded his appointment as inexplicable and went on to explain it in his autobiography *The Other Half*, '[as] commonly attributed to the fact that in those days films were spoken of as "pictures" and I was believed to be an authority on pictures' (1977, p.10). Clark was, of course, Director of the National Gallery and Surveyor of the King's Pictures. Other biographies can be quite obscure and appear to be rarely accessed. Representative of this category would be Cally Trench's (2012) brief but obviously heartfelt online tribute to her father, Terry Trench, who worked for the CFU as both a director and editor. Amongst a long list of documentary films up until his death in 1975 Trench's CFU credits included editing *The True Story of Lili Marlene* (1944) and *This was Japan* (1945) and directing *The Way from Germany* (1946). According to his daughter his work was characterised by the realisation that, as most cinema audiences see a film only once, 'no editor should be pleased with a film which, however ingenious, is not clearly understood and does not make an emotional impact first time' (Trench, 2012).

Trench's observations, like those found in many of the relevant biographies and autobiographies, provide substantial information about the individual concerned

but also sometimes about the workings of the CFU itself. It is still possible to hear some of the reminiscences of CFU employees as a few have been recorded as part of the BECTU (Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union) History Project, and are available through the BFI's Reuben Library. Occasionally, of course, the self-justification aspect of the recollections successfully camouflaged the reality, but normally this can be filtered to provide snippets of information about the operation of the Crown Film Unit. For example, in her BECTU interview in 1994, Nora Lee revealed that the development of shooting scripts and the careful consideration of camera angles was often determined by the need to be economical with film stock which was in short supply during the war years.

Despite the difficulties of film making any examination of the CFU must also consider the nature of film exhibition and audiences in the 1940s as this underpins the argument that these films have a significant importance for the study of wartime and post-war Britain. Unlike the more conventional commercial film studios which essentially provided films for commercial cinema, the CFU's exhibition outlets were many and varied. There was a thriving non-theatrical exhibition circuit in which CFU films were loaned, normally free of charge, to almost any organisation which had access to a 16mm film projector and associated sound equipment. Others were literally taken onto the street corners of Britain by a fleet of cinema vans operated by the Ministry of Information. So, as will be seen, films were distributed and shown in factory canteens and village halls to audiences which ranged from the war workers, the Salvation Army to Boy Scouts. As more men and women were conscripted into the forces the films were shown in NAAFI's (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) both in the UK and wherever British forces were fighting.

Although the majority of CFU films fell into the short category of between five and twenty minutes in length its productions also included films of feature length like, the already mentioned, *Target for Tonight* or *Western Approaches*, which were exhibited as main attractions on the commercial cinema circuits. The cinemas themselves ranged from the massive 2000+ seater 'picture palaces' such as the Odeons which had been built in many city centres during the 1930s, to the mid-range, often independent houses, such as The Regent in

Portsmouth which has been studied in depth by Sue Harper (2004 and 2006). Finally, there were the very small cinemas, often in rural situations, with seating for a hundred or so people. These types of cinema are just about recognisable in the early part of the twenty-first century but the newsreel cinema which, in the 1940s, was often to be found in most city centres, often in railways stations such as Baker Street (a major London Underground interchange), have almost entirely disappeared. The newsreel cinema was an American import of the early 1930s and concentrated on regular repeated, normally hour long shows of, unsurprisingly, newsreels but also increasingly animated cartoons and travelogues. Normally the newsreel theatres were tied to one of the main newsreel producers such as Pathé or Movietone. However, during wartime, Ministry of Information (MoI) shorts, including CFU produced ones, were also inserted into their daily programmes.

As CFU productions were commissioned by Government and were exhibited regularly in various ways to a national audience there has been an almost inevitable categorisation of them in the literature as propaganda films. While watching today, normally on television or increasingly digitised through the Internet, a CFU production from the 1940s with its cosy stereotypes and worthy storylines there is sometimes an uncomfortable feeling that this really is propaganda dressed up as documentary. It is by no means as brutal or blatant as *Triumph of the Will* (1934) but the films could possibly fit at the opposite end of the same continuum. This impression is hardly surprising as after all the CFU was an organ of government directly responsible to the MoI. Indeed, Sir Kenneth Clark, the unlikely Head of the Films Division of the MoI, was an early and passionate advocate for the role film could play, announcing to *Kinematograph Weekly* that;

no film is good propaganda unless it gives entertainment. A bad film transfers boredom to the cause it advocates. Secondly, it must be realised that the essence of successful propaganda is that people should not be aware of it. If you make people 'think' propaganda their resistance to it is increased' (11 January 1940).

This observation was made despite the reluctance of many in Government to become actively engaged in something as nefarious as propaganda, and this perspective was quite deeply ingrained. The *Official History of the Second World War* does not include a volume on the Mol and even the ancillary volume on *Morale* by Col J.H.A. Sparrow (1949) referred almost entirely to morale within the armed forces rather than that of the civilian population. It was not until some thirty years after the conflict that Ian McLaine (1979) published *Ministry of Morale*, his study on the Mol which in turn seemed to spawn a number of journal articles and books over the next twenty or so years which began to use the word “propaganda” in their titles. The apparent acceptance of the term enabled film historians and others to reflect and examine film production and distribution within a new context. Thus, for example, T. J. Hollins in 1981 examined the use of film in his *English History Review* article, ‘The Conservative Party and Film Propaganda between the Wars’ and a few years later Tom Wildy looked at the post-war situation in his *From Mol to COI – Publicity and Propaganda in Britain, 1945-51* (1986). Books published on this topic range from Nicholas Pronay and D. Spring’s *Propaganda, Politics and Film* in 1982, through William Crofts’ 1989 *Coercion or Persuasion, Propaganda in Britain after 1945* culminating at the end of the millennium with James Chapman’s 1998 *The British at War, Cinema, State and Propaganda* and Nicholas Reeve’s 1999 *The Power of Film Propaganda, Myth or Reality?* Thus over a period of twenty or so years what had been avoided previously had become conventional so that recent studies of the films sponsored by Mol, and its later iteration, the Central Office of Information have been generally ascribed to the ‘propaganda’ category. Reeves (1999), for example, entitled his chapter on the CFU and other productions, ‘Official Propaganda in Britain during the Second World War’, and by 2007 Jo Fox was able to conflate into the same conceptual idea what would have seemed inimical forty years before as *Film Propaganda in Britain and Nazi Germany: World War II Cinema*. However, before accepting these assumptions it is worthwhile to review exactly what ‘propaganda’ can and does mean in the context of the films produced by the Mol and later the COI.

Trotsky's description of cinema and film as 'the best instrument of propaganda' (cited in Taylor, R., 1998, p.16) has been echoed by politicians of every particular persuasion almost from the beginning of film. Film is able to communicate a visual message to a mass audience in a way which does not require the mediation of literacy. Visual images and simple story lines could, for the first time, be transmitted to large groups of people in a single event. Not only was this medium extremely powerful but the very novelty engaged audiences in an unsophisticated and uncritical manner. Although film and cinema were well over forty years old by the time that the Crown Film Unit was created much of this early enthusiasm for the moving picture was still evident in cinema and non-theatrical exhibitions in Britain. The apparent power of the medium and the potential passivity of the audience inevitably drew those who wished to utilise it for purposes other than entertainment.

Predictably perhaps, although there are propaganda studies of many nations, much of this work has concentrated upon reworking themes within the Nazi and Soviet systems.⁶ Consequently, it is often difficult to employ the term 'propaganda' without being aware of its pejorative connotations. Indeed its negative and insidious associations were aptly reinforced as early as 1933 by Josef Goebbels, who required of propaganda the achievement of the following aim: 'It is not enough to reconcile people more or less to our regime, to move them towards a position of neutrality towards us, we want rather to work on people until they are addicted to us' (cited in Reeves, 1999, p.88). More recently, with the work of David Welch (1994) and others, propaganda has been placed on a scale of advocacy which Governments and institutions have adopted for centuries; 'Throughout history the governors have always attempted to influence the way the governed see the world. Propaganda is not simply what the other side does, while one's own side concentrates on "information" or "publicity"' (Welch, 1999, p.24).

⁶ See for example Mariel Grant (1994) *Propaganda and the Role of the State in Interwar Britain*, or Philp Taylor, (1999) *British propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy*, or George Roeder (1993) *The Censored War, American Visual Experience during World War II* or Judith Proud (1995) *Children and Propaganda in France: il etait une fois...*

The origins of the term propaganda lie with the creation in 1622, by Pope Gregory XV of the 'Congregatio de Propaganda Fide', the Congregation for Propagating the Faith. In response to both the spread of the Reformation and the conquest of the New World this was a committee of cardinals charged with the responsibility of overseeing the spread of Catholicism and the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in non-Catholic countries. Indeed the Latin root *propagare* conveys a sense of both propagation and spreading. According to Welch,

the first official propagandist institute was a body charged with improving the dissemination of a group of religious dogmas. The word "propaganda" came to be applied to any organisation set up to spread a doctrine; then it was applied to the doctrine itself which was being spread; and lastly to the methods employed in the dissemination' (1999, p.25).

In many senses the impact and influence of these propaganda messages is symbiotic with the development of the media which carry them. Although there were examples of printed pamphlets and newsletters proselytising political and religious ideas during the English Civil War it was only with the spread of general literacy on the one hand and steam and electric printing presses on the other that both the vehicle and the audience existed for mass persuasion. The 'public' and public opinion began to be seen as phenomena capable of being manipulated.

Thus the utilisation of the media, and especially the visual media whether at the extreme end of advocacy in propaganda or merely mundane advertising at the other, has generated an academic study with its own literature and language. A major debate in this area has revolved around the manner in which 'ideas' and especially 'propaganda' are transmitted to the public or audience. Although there are number of competing theories the three principal ones are the 'Hypodermic Needle' or 'Magic Bullet' (Lasswell, 1927); secondly, the 'Two Step Flow Theory' (Katz and Lazerfeld, 1955) and finally, 'The Diffusion of Innovations Theory' (Rogers, 1995). In the first case it was suggested that the mass media, and especially the visual media such as film and television, can influence a large group of people directly and uniformly by 'shooting' or

'injecting' them with messages designed to trigger required responses. In many ways this was the assumption that lay behind much of the propaganda efforts in wartime Germany and the Soviet Union. The audience was perceived to be passive and, providing that there were no alternative sources of information, they would end up believing and accepting what was 'injected' into them. The 'Two Step Flow Theory' is slightly more sophisticated in that it postulates that certain individuals within society are opinion formers or opinion leaders and it is these people who need to be 'targeted'. This approach has been adopted frequently by the advertising industry in its attempts to sectionalise and classify markets. Products are therefore often promoted with celebrity endorsement to encourage sales within particular groups in society. There is less evidence that this approach has been taken to 'spin' political ideas and opinions through the productions of the Crown Film Unit, however celebrities, such as the Crazy Gang, Bernard Miles and others do occasionally appear in reassuring rather than actively indoctrinating roles. The more complex 'Diffusions of Innovation Theory' argues that although opinion formers are important in the spread of ideas and innovations there are social and psychological factors which predispose individuals to accepting or rejecting a particular view or commodity. Amongst these factors would be the terminal level of education for example or perhaps the perceived need for the change. The theory identifies five 'adopter' categories 1) innovators, 2) early adopters, 3) early majority, 4) late majority and 5) laggards. Although it might be conceivable to review Nazi propaganda activity in Germany from the 1920s onwards on the basis of this perspective it is outside the scope of this study. However, within the Crown Film Unit and other MoI and COI productions it is possible to identify recurring themes which could be interpreted as either reinforcement of ideas and opinions or as addressing slightly different audiences who may be examples of the adopter categories.

It is certainly plausible that some of the output of the Crown Film Unit fell into the category of 'propaganda films' as it was, after all, a Government organisation producing films which, especially after 1946, were normally sponsored by a particular Government department. As will be seen many of the CFU films did seek to persuade, encourage, and reinforce as well as to provide entertainment and information and, as such, contributed to that large number of

short films commissioned by the Government in its various guises both during and after the war.⁷ The adoption of a case study approach will indeed examine whether there was any evidence to be found of the insidious or grotesque ‘selling the message’ during the lifetime of the CFU. Furthermore the research will also assess the legacy of the Unit in a number of areas but, in respect of this particular issue, it will investigate whether or not the CFU made any significant contribution to those key aspects of successful propaganda; public morale as described by Robert MacKay (2002) and to the concept of British nationhood as recently discussed by James Chapman (2005, 2013 and 2015).

Methodology

The diversity of the resources for this study, including films and written archive material as well as interview records and contemporary correspondence, alongside the decision to utilise case studies as exemplars would suggest that this research should adopt a mixed methodological approach. This in itself raises a couple of basic philosophical questions about the research strategy. Firstly, there has always been a debate about the respective values of qualitative and quantitative approaches and each perspective is supported by a large and complex literature (Davies, 2007, p.10). Unfortunately the proliferation of the literature has resulted in a lack of clear consensus regarding appropriate definitions. This is often compounded by the frequent interchangeability of terms such as method, design, approach, paradigm and perspective thus making comparison and analysis problematic. However, this lack of consistency could be an advantage as, argues Egon Guba ‘it is important to leave terms in a problematic limbo, because it is then possible to reshape them as our understanding of the many implications improves. Having the terms not cast in stone is intellectually useful’ (1990, p.17). Secondly, given the nature of the evidence available it would indicate that methodologically this research fits into an interpretivist approach which, according to Richard Pring, ‘seeks to understand the world from the perspective of the participant, or to

⁷ For a brief contextualising review of short films in the 1940s see Andrew Spicer’s *Extending people’s minds for a brief time every day: the wartime propaganda short in the Journal of Media Practice* (2003, Issue 4, No. 2, pp.105-122)

understand a set of ideas from within the evolving tradition of which they are part' (2000, p.56). Indeed as the researcher is at the heart of the process, especially in the selection of the case studies, the interpretation of the evidence is as much a result of personal factors and values as the evidence itself.

Given the distance in time even the interpretivist approach is constrained by the availability or authenticity of the evidence. Of course at the core of this research are the films themselves but these are historical artefacts liable to decay and are often highly flammable. Consequently, unless an archive has taken the time and trouble to record them onto a safer and longer lasting medium or kept them in a dry environment there is a high probability that the film will have been lost or damaged irretrievably. Many duplicates of Crown and other contemporary films have already been lost often having been destroyed, sometimes deliberately in the past, in an attempt to recover the silver content from the film stock. This means that the availability for viewing of a particular film will depend upon a number of, seemingly, random variables; principally whether it has been lodged within an archive such as the British Film Institute (BFI) or the Imperial War Museum (IWM) and whether it is in a safe condition to be viewed. Understandably the archives are reluctant both to hazard a researcher reviewing a fire risk film or, perhaps also, to pay for its safe duplication when demand to see it is minimal.

Those relatively few, often feature length films directed by one of the more famous CFU personnel such as Humphrey Jennings or Harry Watt, have often been made available to other platforms such as television or, more recently, through the internet and have, effectively, been given both a wider audience and have been saved for future generations to appreciate. This, unfortunately, cannot be said about the majority of the CFU productions which have languished, usually unseen, for well over half a century. Most of these films exist in the BFI and IWM archives and these, along with a small number of often specialist films available in a variety of collections such as, for example, Jennings' *Spring Offensive* (1940) which is in the University of East Anglia's Film Archive, have been reviewed by the researcher over a number of years and these form the filmic record for this research.

An annoying practical complication exists to confound research into the CFU in that it is sometimes surprisingly difficult to confirm a particular film's production provenance. Indeed the research quite early on established that the listings held by both the BFI and the Imperial War Museum are neither comprehensive nor entirely accurate. Even a contemporary catalogue, such as that of the trade journal, *Cine-Technician* (Nov-Dec 1952, p.143) has errors. In these circumstances it was decided to include in the research films in which either the appearance of the Crown Film Unit name or logo in the introductory credits or, exceptionally when it is absent, the direct mention of its production in the documentary record. However, even these basic criteria have raised anomalies, especially in the early months of Crown and also again in its later years. As the GPOFU morphed into the CFU films already in production were sometimes prefaced by the Crown name or logo and sometimes by that of the GPOFU. Some films such as *Men of the Lightship* (1940) have no production acknowledgements other than the ubiquitous Mol Films credit. At the other extreme, confusingly *Christmas Under Fire* (1941) has both GPOFU and CFU logos. In order to accommodate these inconsistencies this research incorporates, where it can reasonably be ascertained, those films which were completed after the GPOFU became directly under Mol control in April 1940 but before it formally became the CFU on 1 January 1941. Similarly, by the later years of the CFU even the Crown logo was inadequate as evidence of production as the imprimatur had been expropriated by the Central Office of Information for its own use. Where some doubt may still exist as to provenance this is mentioned in Appendices 1 and 3. Even when a film may be safely verified as having been produced by the CFU it was often the case that the credits omit mention of the director or production staff. This, of course, does reduce the opportunities for differentiating or analysing films on the basis of the production personnel.

The absence of any form of production credit was especially true of the brief 60-90 second trailers or 'flashes' which were a regular part of cinema programming in the 1940s and continued well into the subsequent decade. In wartime they addressed such issues as preventing waste or encouraging salvage collections or recruitment to various nationally important roles such as

telephonists or hospital domestics. In the post-war era Public Information Film 'flash' topics have included road safety or, bizarrely, encouraged people to volunteer for agricultural 'holidays' to bring in the potato harvest. Some of these would have been produced by the CFU but this form of PIF did not normally identify the production company and were, in wartime, prefaced only by the Mol logo. This uncertain authenticity is further compounded as the documentary record about wartime and post-war 'flashes' is neither exhaustive nor complete. In these circumstances the very short 60-90 second films have been excluded from this study, although should appropriate records and a sufficient number of extant and viewable films be discovered in future then, no doubt, they would be a suitable topic for research.

Therefore the selection of films in this study has been determined essentially by the survival and safe availability of the films themselves. Appendices 1 and 3 include descriptions of those films identified as being produced by the CFU firstly during the war and latterly in the post-war years. They also describe, where appropriate and possible, which films were issued in different versions, usually length, such as, for example, Jennings' 1944 films about the second London Blitz, *Eighty Days* (14 minutes) and *V1* (8 minutes). Some films were retitled, normally to appeal to overseas audiences, thus Jackson's *Western Approaches* became *The Raider*, when distributed in the USA. The Appendices further clearly indicate which films were available for viewing by the researcher along with those that were not.⁸

Not only is the filmic record of the CFU incomplete so too is the associated documentation. As has been indicated above there is a significant canon of published material which provides an important element of secondary evidence for the study. The main archival source for the CFU is the National Archive at Kew and those documents relating to the CFU are to be found principally in the INF1, 6 or 12 classifications. However, many other relevant documents are not only located in other INF sections but across the whole range of Government Department records. The location of the relevant documents are clearly

⁸ Some films were started in production, such as *Escort Carriers* (1944), but never completed or released and these, as far as possible, have been omitted from the study.

indicated in the text, normally prefaced by the abbreviation TNA (The National Archive). Other documentary evidence of direct relevance to the CFU exists in a number of University and related libraries and has been consulted in support of this research. In this category would be the Grierson Archive in Stirling, the Conservative Party Archive at the Bodleian, Oxford and Mass Observation at Sussex. As far as contemporary journals are concerned the BFI Library is well stocked with trade journals such as the *Kinematograph Weekly* or specialist film ones such as the *Documentary News Letter*. Newspaper and relevant magazines were available through the British Library at Colindale, although this has recently transferred to Wetherby, West Yorkshire. Local newspapers, such as the *Yorkshire Post*, supplied some non-metropolitan evidence for regional critical review and audience response. University Library collections have provided much secondary and occasionally primary research materials, although ease of access is often determined by the transparency and effectiveness of the overall indexing systems. I have spent many long and often fruitless hours rummaging around in the Libraries of the Universities of London (Senate House), Queen Mary, Royal Holloway, Southampton, Solent, Surrey and Winchester, although this tedium was occasionally dramatically relieved by the discovery of some vital nugget of information. Other artefacts were found elsewhere, frequently quite randomly, cinema posters, comments by local history societies or parish magazines, often these are reported recollections which, of course, have to be considered cautiously given the problems associated with historical ethnographical research. In this respect Janet Staiger has reviewed these issues comprehensively in her 2005 book, *Media Reception Studies*. She adapted the findings of the famous 1920 Hawthorne Management Study⁹ to the media environment by identifying '[the] problems with investigating audiences and fans, including the power differential between

⁹ The term was coined in 1950 by Henry A. Landsberger when analysing earlier experiments from 1924–32 at the Hawthorne Works (a Western Electric factory outside Chicago). The Hawthorne Works had commissioned a study to see if their workers would become more productive in higher or lower levels of light. The workers' productivity seemed to improve when changes were made, and slumped when the study ended. It was suggested that the productivity gain occurred as a result of the motivational effect on the workers of the interest being shown in them.

ethnographers and their subjects and more specific matters such as leading audiences and interviewees toward answers that the interviewers require' (2005, p.14).

Sadly most of the active participants in Crown have now passed away. As mentioned in the personal perspective in the Preface the initial idea was generated from discussions with Jonah Jones and his immediate family. Conversations were also had with Nora Lee back in 2000 and with Humphrey Jennings' daughter, Mary-Lou. These are all, of course, anecdotal but they provide an important impression of what it was like to be part of the CFU. These personal reflections give background colour to the research providing assertions and assumptions which can be challenged or confirmed by other source material.

The lengthy gestation of this project occurred during a period when the theoretical underpinning to such a study was in a state of some flux. Initially it had been conceived as, essentially, an historical study which 'told the story' of the Crown Film Unit recognising it as an important organisation within the development and history of the British cinema and film industry at a significant time in national history and this still remains an important goal. However, given the conceptual transformation in film history studies over recent years it would be difficult now to construct the study without taking cognisance of the intellectual changes which have occurred.

These developments have been admirably summarised in James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper's book *The New Film History* (2007). As far as the CFU is concerned their analysis situates most of the early published works on the Unit (as mentioned in the Literature section above) clearly in either the auteur or textual analysis branches of film history, and certainly these approaches still feature in this study. However, they have gone on to argue that the analytical framework of what they refer to as New Film History is far more complex and is concerned as much with the importance of the context in which the film was both created and exhibited as with its direction and content. As they explain;

films are shaped and determined by a combination of historical processes (including, but not limited to, economic constraints, industrial practices, studio production strategies and relationships with external bodies such as official agencies, funding councils and censors) and individual agency (representing the creative and cultural competence of their art directors, composers, costume designers, directors, editors, producers, stars, writers, etc.) (Chapman, Glancy and Harper, 2007, p.6).

Chapman has further argued that New Film History has extended the more traditional debate about whether films provided an accurate historical representation to one which considers more thoughtfully the political and social context which underpins them. This, in turn, impacts upon the 'extent to which popular cinema contributes to the discourse of nationhood and national identity' (Chapman, 2007, p.65). This latter point is especially important to the study of the CFU as not only did the Unit produce feature length films¹⁰ which are frequently referred to in histories both popular and academic but also in television shows and documentaries. For example, a recent BBC documentary *Operation Jericho* (first broadcast by BBC 2 on 29 October 2011) used footage from the CFU's *Target for Tonight* (1941). If it can be reasonably assumed that CFU feature films contributed towards the debate on nationhood and national identity by constructing and reconstructing significant moments in the nation's history then surely those myriad CFU shorts presented as an integral part of almost every cinema programme from 1940 until 1952 provided an unconscious underpinning to the contemporary appreciation of that national identity. Indeed if CFU feature films such as *Target for Tonight* (1941) provided key and stark prompts in bolstering the ideas surrounding British nationhood, the many shorts were more subliminal, a wallpaper of moods and situations which reinforced and strengthened the overall sense of national identity both during and immediately after the war.

¹⁰ The BFI has defined 'feature length films' as those over 40 minutes duration. The number of CFU feature films are clearly outlined in Appendices 1, 3 and 5.

This perspective can be examined more thoroughly utilising the perspectives recently developed by Reception Studies. Harper's work on audience reception and response which, according to *The New Film History* places the 'film text at the nexus of a complex and dynamic set of relationships between producers and consumers' (2007, p.7) has been very important in determining an appropriate methodological approach for this aspect of the study. Harper has extended and anglicised the approaches adopted earlier by Janet Staiger (1992) and later by Barbara Klinger (1994) and has emphasised the importance of audience response and reaction in evaluating the context and, perhaps, success of a particular film. The nature of the individual audience member's response was, of course, complicated by a variety of social, cultural and immediate factors, such as the purpose of attending the cinema, reaction to posters and reviews and many other things. Some contemporary reactions to the CFU films are available in newspaper, journal and other miscellaneous sources, however there are others which are essentially recollections made decades later and published in a variety of periodicals. These latter sources combined with interviews with the rapidly diminishing demographic of those who remember going to the cinema in the 1940s present problems from a strictly ethnographical perspective. Staiger has emphasised these difficulties in her discussions of Memory Research. For example, she cautions care and discretion for reception researchers 'because we often come upon diaries and autobiographical statements and thus need to be alert to how people string together personal event memories' (Staiger, 2005, p.192). Consequently the analytical approach adopted for this study will be situated within a general interpretivist and chronological perspective but will utilise concepts and approaches from a variety of academic disciplines including history, the social sciences, cultural studies and film theory.

Chapter Structure

In order to examine the CFU in the context outlined above the research will be presented and discussed in the chapters as briefly set out below.

The second chapter, considers that the CFU owed much both to the particular circumstances of its creation and also to the various developments in film and

public information management which preceded it. This chapter adopts an essentially chronological perspective reviewing the early use of film in providing images of conflict to argue that the value of the medium to Governments was eventually recognised. The experiences of the Boer War were further developed during the First World War when the Government created a department responsible for the management of public information. By 1917 the Ministry of Information had established a fairly sophisticated system which both commissioned and distributed rudimentary Public Information Films. The War also hastened improvements in film and cinema technologies which, in turn, helped foster the creation of the Documentary Movement which under John Grierson and others became a significant part of the UK film industry in the late 1920s and 1930s. The power and influence of the documentary type film was early recognised by both the commercial and public sector. Indeed the CFU was in direct line of succession from both the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit (EMBFU) and the General Post Office Film Unit (GPOFU). With the declaration of war in September 1939 the Government reverted to many of the organisational structures of the previous conflict, one of which was the Ministry of Information. The Ministry in turn created a Films Division responsible for, amongst other things, the production and distribution of PIFs. It was decided that when war began the GPOFU would increasingly come the control of the Mol and that Unit was later renamed the Crown Film Unit.

The third chapter provides a thematic examination of the Crown Film Unit's wartime productions. Between 1940 and the end of the war the CFU produced over sixty films amongst which were some of its most famous productions such as Humphrey Jennings' *Listen to Britain* (1942) or *A Diary for Timothy* (1945). The chapter commences with a discussion of the most appropriate analytical and classification approach for examining the CFU films. Subsequently it identifies five discrete themes namely; Anti-German/Hitting Back, Reassurance/Appeal to Patriotism, Participation in the War Effort, Looking Forward to Peace and No Obvious Category. By allocating the sixty or so films within these categories and by adopting a case study approach it is possible to examine the films, place them in the context of the changing war environment and suggest reasons for their importance.

Chapter Four reviews the themes of the CFU's post-war productions, 1946-1952. Although there has been far less academic discussion about its post-war films the CFU did in fact produce around 160 films from 1946 until its closure in the spring of 1952. These were not only produced under the difficult post-war conditions of austerity but also within a new administrative framework as the Ministry of Information was replaced by the less politically influential Central Office of Information. This chapter adopts the same methodological approach as its predecessor identifying nine different categories namely: Unfinished Business, New Jerusalem, Technological Change, Social Change, Colonies, Sector Specific Films, Financial Problems, Red Menace and Education and Public Relations. The films clearly reflected the changing national priorities and the international environment.

The fifth chapter examines the contexts in which CFU films were exhibited and then seeks to assess how they were received by the wide range of audiences across the world. It commences by reviewing a number of theoretical models involving reception theory and the various modes of exhibition, notably theatrical and non-theatrical. Audience and critical responses to the films are examined by reference to contemporary reviews and other evidence. The films themselves were often enthusiastically endorsed at the time because of their 'realism' and 'authenticity' and these concepts are explored.

The legacy of the Crown Film Unit is then explored in the sixth chapter as the closure of the CFU in 1952 did not, of course, mean the end of the Government's involvement in film production and especially the Public Information Film. Indeed up until its closure in December 2011 the Central Office of Information had been responsible to commissioning and distributing PIFs which addressed a variety of topics. These ranged from *The Green Cross Code* (1975-1990) about road safety, through the never screened *Protect and Survive* (1976) which was designed to be shown on television when the threat of nuclear war became imminent, to the 1987 *Don't Die of Ignorance* in response to the Aids epidemic. Crown's legacy was apparent not only in the type and structure of these films but often also in the personnel. Some ex-CFU employees continued their work in the private sector producing PIFs, others moved into the commercial feature film industry, others later moved into

broadcast television. Internationally too, its approach and organisational structure was copied in a number of other, normally Empire and Commonwealth, nations.

It further examines the emphasis placed by the wartime CFU in developing and maintaining a national mythology of a united nation putting aside class and other divisions in the face of a determined foe was frequently carried forward into post-war feature films. Usually these were representations of actual or fictional wartime events and heroics. However, others films addressed contemporary issues which had already been raised by the CFU. So, for example, juvenile delinquency was featured in the CFU short *Children on Trial* (1946) a topic later developed in the feature film *Blue Lamp* (1950). The chapter includes a case study exemplifying the legacy. The worry about attack from the air dominated British Government thinking from the 1930s onwards and this was unsurprisingly magnified after 1940. This concern was reflected in contemporary CFU films and was continued onward in Government PIFs in style and structure well into the 1960s.

Finally, the conclusion summarises the legacy and achievements of the Crown Film Unit. It also examines this in the context of the termination of the Unit in 1952 and discusses whether this closure was a reasonable political decision but also whether this might have implications as to why the CFU has been essentially ignored in most subsequent film histories over the next six decades. Of course the CFU did not exist in isolation either during or after the Second World War but overall the research concludes that the CFU not only played an important role in maintaining public morale during the Second World War but that also during the post-war period, although heavily circumscribed by the difficulty in initiating projects, it provided a valuable and effective means by which the Government could communicate with the general public. It also offers a suggestion for a new paradigm by which the CFU's overall contribution could be examined and assessed.

2. Government use of Film: The Antecedents of the Crown Film Unit

The creation of the Crown Film Unit was by no means a foregone conclusion and this chapter examines those elements and circumstances which influenced both its establishment and eventual production role. Although the films produced by the CFU between 1940 and 1952 remain distinctly situated in their own time, they are inevitably also products of what preceded them. In particular this included the experience of both the production and reception of films in earlier conflicts, the attitude of Government towards the uses of film and the experiences and development of those individuals who directed and produced the CFU output, mainly those linked to the Documentary Movement. These themes wax and wane in importance and are frequently symbiotic during the first half of the twentieth century, but it is possible to discern key influences in the build up to the founding of the CFU and in its eventual production canon. This chapter therefore establishes the background and early expectations of the role of the CFU thus enabling subsequent chapters to situate, investigate and analyse the films themselves in their appropriate historical and filmic contexts.

The Boer War and the early use of film

The popular reputation of the CFU rests primarily upon its wartime productions amongst which were included quasi-factual records of events, such as *Lofoten* (1941), but these approaches to the use of film in war had earlier precedents. Indeed the Boer War (1899-1902) had seen the production of the first films which purported to show realistic scenes of a current conflict on the screen. This was achievable as, by the turn of the century, film technology had reached the stage where a short film, normally one to two minutes, could be shot and presented for exhibition. As Stephen Bottomore (2007) has described these shorts were often included amongst a variety of media, lantern slides, and photographs and so on as part of patriotic shows in local venues.¹¹ These

¹¹ There is a comprehensive discussion of music halls during the Boer War in Chapter One of Stephen Attridge's (1993) *The Soldier in Late Victorian Britain: Images and Ambiguities*.

shows ranged from the traditional variety bills of the music halls to the lecture given by a local worthy. In one sense the inclusion of the factual shorts in variety shows predicated the CFU view, epitomised by Grierson in that

[the] contact with reality lies, as we know, in using the medium, with every disciplined effort possible, as intensively and imaginatively as possible, and on as wide a scale as possible, in both aiding the public enlightenment and, through the great images of creative action of which our medium is capable, firing the public will (1947, p.5).

In other words, no matter how worthy the content a film still had to have entertainment and audience appeal.

These short films produced at the very beginning of the twentieth century seem to have been essentially private and local arrangements rather than Government sponsorship as later with the CFU. Some films of military preparations and manoeuvres were shot by intrepid cameramen working for commercial companies who were embedded with the troops in South Africa.¹² Sadly however, according to Luke McKernan, 'no [combat] film from this period is known to survive' (1999, p.2). In order to provide for domestic audiences then 'other companies filmed only troops departing or returning to Britain, or resorted to 'fake' recreations of battlefield scenes' (McKernan, 1999, p.2).

The majority of the films released during the Boer War were therefore not those of actual combat but rather, like the CFU forty years later, domestically oriented productions. At the turn of the century these films frequently had a narrow or parochial feel as they addressed the needs of local audiences keen to see relatives marching away or returning from the war. The Mitchell and Kenyon (M&K) archive, for example, includes some twenty films of this kind, featuring ten volunteer regiments. According to Stephen Bottomore 'of the 120 towns

¹² According to Luke McKernan, 'eight British commercial cameramen are known to have filmed in South Africa during the Boer War; William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson for the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, Walter Calverley Beevor and Sydney Melsom (there are doubts over his identity) for Robert Paul, John Benett-Stanford, Edgar Hyman and Joe Rosenthal for the Warwick Trading Company, all filmed in the period up to the fall of Pretoria in June 1900. Sydney Goldman, Rosenthal's replacement, and C. Rider Noble remained to film the later stages of the war' (1999, p.2).

and cities surveyed for the M&K filmography in the period between 1900 and 1902, every exhibition associated with this company listed a Boer War themed title' (2007, p.6). The local focus was evident in such titles as *The Bradford Artillery in Camp at Morecombe* (1902) which, unsurprisingly, was exhibited in the Bradford area. Indeed the titles of the films themselves tended to be brief descriptions of content, after all the duration rarely exceeded two minutes, rather than titles in the modern sense. Other examples of this would be *The Coldstream Guards embarking on the Troopship 'Gascon'* (October, 1899) or *Gordon Highlanders in Ladysmith* (1900). Vanessa Toulmin (2005) has made a detailed study of the short films of the Boer War and has identified a number of genres including; troops on exercises and at manoeuvres, tableaux of army life, soldiers departing and returning and the 'celebrities' – famous leaders and commanders. The Boer War was the first conflict in which the British citizen at home would see moving images of both British commanders and also of the enemy, enabling them more easily to identify with, or become hostile to, respective friend and foe. *The Arrival and Reception of Lord Roberts at Capetown* (1900) or *Cronje's surrender to Lord Roberts* (1900) were brief, one minute length examples of this type of film.

The positive audience response to these short newsreel type films as reported by Bottomore (2007, p.4) appeared to have encouraged some entrepreneurs to produce films purporting to show military action in South Africa. Examples of these from the Mitchell and Kenyon archive include the *Dispatch Bearer* and *Shelling the Red Cross* both produced in 1900 and, as certainly the latter film title suggested, they were intended to reinforce a public perception of the iniquity of the Boers. In this short film a Red Cross nurse was shown tending the wounded in a hospital tent, supposedly in South Africa. A Boer guerrilla then throws a grenade into the tent and the film concluded with the wounded being rescued from the tent, although amongst their number was the Red Cross nurse. Although the falsification of military action shots might be explained in part by the vulnerability of the cameraman with his bulky

equipment on the battlefield the practice did continue into the 1940s.¹³ Although these early Boer War films had some of the features of those produced forty years later by the CFU these films were neither funded nor authorised by anyone in the Government. Cinema in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century was essentially, in both production and exhibition terms, a private enterprise. Although the Boer War lasted for some two and a half years and demonstrated that there was an appetite amongst the populace for material which purported to be factual representations of the conflict there was little contemporary evidence of the direct interest from the Government as to the potential value of film.

The Experience of the First World War

It was not until 1914, with another altogether more colossal and proximate conflict, that the possibilities of film were considered and harnessed to the British war effort. Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (1995) and Nicholas Reeves (1986 and 1999) have written extensively about the Government's approach towards the relatively new medium and its uses in the propaganda battle against the Central Powers. This conversion to the political value of film had been quite slow in its development and, according to Nicholas Hiley (1995, p.161) was probably a reflection of the class-based attitudes of those in Government and this may also explain the lack of much official interest during the South African conflict. He explained that before and during the First World War cinema-going was essentially a working class activity with little intrinsic attractions to the middle and upper classes. Moreover,

for working class patrons the cinema was not so much a place for watching films as a comfortable venue in which they were greeted warmly by the proprietor and enjoyed a novel experience of being in public space which they could dominate and control. Many simply

¹³ A joint AFPU(Army Film and Photographic Unit)/CFU production entitled *Wavell's 30000* (1941), for example, which was supposed to be a record of the battle against the Italians in North Africa in 1941 had a scene of an infantry attack which was characterised by the enthusiastic and occasionally comedic antics of those undertaking the roles of casualties.

bought tickets in order to meet their friends, to sit in their favourite seats, and to enjoy the sensation of being an audience, whilst others hoped to find in the darkness and privacy that which they could not enjoy at home (Hiley, 1995, p.161).

The slightly subversive atmosphere and role played by the new cinemas, of which there were 5,400 in 1915 (Hiley, 1995, p.162), caused some anxiety in Government circles. These cinemas were accommodating a mass audience so that by January 1917 weekly attendances had reached some 21 million (Hiley, 1995, p.162). Inevitably this figure included multiple attendances by some individuals but it remains a spectacular concentration of the population in particular places. These venues were increasingly seen by Government alternatively as opportunities for publicity or propaganda, places to be controlled and, inevitably, as major sources of revenue for the Exchequer.

It was realised quite early on in the war that the cinema offered significant advantages in propagandising the Government's message. This was because, as Mr T. L. Gilmour of the Department of Information in his evidence to the Cabinet Committee on Overlapping in the Production and Distribution of Propaganda in the autumn of 1917 reflected;

There is a further advantage which the Cinema has over the newspaper as an agent for influencing public opinion. The Tory, the Liberal, the Labour man, the Socialist, buys for the most part one newspaper – naturally that which is most in sympathy with his pre-conceived views – and is daily confirmed in his devotion to the political creed he has adopted. At the cinema theatre the Tory, Liberal, Labour man and Socialist must sit side by side and see the same thing presented in the same way, and insensibly their views are affected by what they see (TNA: CAB 27/17).

In order to exploit this perceived advantage the very first British official film of the First World War, the forerunner of all later CFU productions, was the Wellington House production *Britain Prepared* (produced by Charles Urban), which was premiered on 29 December 1915 at the Empire Music Hall in London. Wellington House was the home and *nom de guerre* of the War

Propaganda Bureau, a semi-secret organisation set up by the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith in 1914 with the initial responsibility of 'influencing public opinion abroad' (Reeves, 1999, p.20). However, Wellington House's venture into film making was also released for domestic audiences, mainly at the insistence of the cinema proprietors who were anxious for something appropriate to exhibit. The result was a somewhat slow and repetitious film of 'exceptional length' (MacKenzie, 2001, p.7). At over three hours, *Britain Prepared* was a series of essentially separate sections which ranged from *Training the New Army* -cheery non-slackers undergo PT, drill and bayonet practice, mounting and sabre drill for cavalry (Reel 1) to the manufacture of munitions and royal visit to Vickers (Reel 8) (IWM catalogue 500). The film did however incorporate some of the values that were to remain constant in British propaganda and documentary films for the next thirty or so years. In particular it was maintained that as much as possible of the footage shot should be authentic, representing the actuality. Perhaps as a result of not only its authenticity but also its novelty *Britain Prepared* seems to have been well received by domestic audiences, having been shown in over 100 cinemas in the major cities in Britain by the summer of 1916. According to Reeves the film 'attracted enthusiastic acclaim from all sides' (1993, p.480). Overseas as well it was applauded as the British Ambassador to Bucharest noted in a memorandum to the Foreign Office arguing that such films supporting the war effort should be 'real British war films, as distinct from faked war dramas' (Reeves, 1999, p.23).

Unfortunately technological difficulties, not least the cumbersome camera equipment and the assiduity of military intelligence, restricted the opportunities for taking action shots on the Western Front or elsewhere in the early part of the War. Thus, *Britain Prepared* is essentially a catalogue of shots of military and naval training and munitions manufacture. Subsequent productions over the next few months tended to be similar, if not in duration then at least in content, much to the increasing displeasure of both audiences and cinema proprietors. The trade journal *Cinema* had as early as January 1916 commented that official films were no less than 'a fraud on the long-suffering British cinema-going public' (cited in Reeves, 1999, p.25). However, all this was

to change on 21 August 1916 with the release of *Battle of the Somme*. This 75 minute film included footage shot by Geoffrey Malins and J.B. McDowell of the preparations, the artillery bombardment and the initial assault of the battle which commenced on 1 July.¹⁴ According to Reeves, 'for an official propaganda film, its extended sequences of the physical devastation of war, the battlefield landscape, the prisoners of war, the wounded and, above all else, the footage of the dead, construct a remarkable and remarkably powerful representation of the war on the Western Front' (1997, p.7). It was certainly a box office success as it has been estimated by Hiley (1995) that *Battle of the Somme* was seen by over 20 million people in the six weeks after release. Although perhaps this owed more to familial interest in the actions of Kitchener's volunteer army than to the film's intrinsic artistic merits.

Over the next few months similar battlefield 'spectaculars', most notably *The Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks* (January 1917) and *The German Retreat and the Battle of Arras* (June 1917) were released to a country hungry to see the evidence of the progress of the War about which they could read regularly in their newspapers. A feature which seems to have resonance in the mid-1940s is that audiences appear to have become quickly satiated by the diet of lengthy battlefield action-based newsreel films. As Reeves has argued,

It is the financial data that perhaps reveals the extent of the propagandists' failure most clearly. In the first three months of their exhibition, *Battle of the Somme* and *Battle of the Ancre* grossed £65,000; in the eighteen months from January 1917 to June 1918, the total income achieved by all official films amounted to the princely sum of just £70,023. That figure looks small enough in itself, but given that it includes the £35,000 earned by *The Battle of the Ancre*, the failure of the later official films becomes all too clear (1986, p.29).

¹⁴ Geoffrey Malins (1886-1940) was probably the more famous of the two wartime photographers. He published his memoirs in 1920 as *How I Filmed the War*. These are remarkable for Malin's redrafting his role in the war as he never once mentions his colleague, McDowell.

Another characteristic of First World War propaganda films, which was reflected during the Second World War, was the frequent inclusion of members of the Royal Family. In the CFU's *Listen to Britain* (1942) for example, the Queen is shown listening to a Dame Myra Hess concert. The monarchy as a focus of patriotism made its first appearance during the First World War in *The King visits his Armies in the Great Advance* which went on release in October 1916. Its portrayal of the monarch in a less formal environment reviewing the troops in France seems to have been well received by audiences. Indeed, according to Reeves (1993, p.472), the spectacular success of the film was exemplified by it achieving an almost unheard of eighty-six simultaneous screenings on the London cinema circuit. *The King visits his Armies in the Great Advance* also appears in some way to have endorsed and legitimised the 'volunteer' army whose relatives made up the vast majority of the cinema audiences in Britain. Towards the end of the War the shadowy hand of Wellington House behind propaganda film production was replaced by a more official, if no less secretive, Department of Information (DoI) in February 1917, which a year later metamorphosed into the Ministry of Information (MoI). However, as Prime Minister Lloyd George placed the MoI under the leadership of Canadian press baron Lord Beaverbrook, there was little chance of it retaining its somewhat reclusive profile.

Beaverbrook's opinion, according to A. J. P. Taylor (1972, p.145), that propaganda was 'the popular arm of diplomacy' did nothing to endear him to other members of the War Cabinet and the Establishment who tended to regard it as something of a black art and demeaning to a British gentleman. Taylor's (1972, pp.137-152) descriptions of these internal battles in 1918 bear repetition but are beyond the scope of this study. It was during this latter period that the government, through the auspices of the National War Aims Committee (NWAC), decided to produce a full-length propaganda feature film to address issues such as domestic war-weariness and growing industrial unrest. The *National Film* (1918) was a misbegotten adventure from the very beginning. A lengthy production schedule, associated problems including a fire which destroyed much of the film stock, meant that by the time the film was finished, so was the war, and it was never released.

At the same time the Government was producing these somewhat worthy films extolling the prowess of the nation under arms with stirring images of tanks moving into battle it was not averse to using the medium in an often much more mundane way. It had been very much a reluctant conversion to the value of the cinema in promoting a message as, in his evidence to the Cabinet Committee on the Overlapping of Production and Distribution of Propaganda in 1917 Mr T.L. Gilmour of the Department of Information, reminded the Committee members that,

when war broke out the Cinema was universally regarded as an instrument for the amusement of the masses: the educated classes thought of the 'pictures' as responsible for turning romantic shopboys [sic] into juvenile highwaymen, as a sort of moving edition of the 'penny dreadful' (TNA: CAB 27/17 Oct/Nov 1917).

Ironically, amongst those converted in Britain to the value of the cinema was the press baron Lord Northcliffe who observed in September 1917;

As a newspaper man I hate to confess it, but the motion picture is doing more for the Allied cause than any other means of thought transmission. Not everyone reads the newspaper, and those that do forget what they have read, but no one can forget what he has actually seen (TNA: CAB 27/17 Oct/Nov 1917).

The advantage of film as a means of supporting and communicating a particular message have already been discussed in Chapter One but the practical application of the theory was only slowly appreciated by individual Government Departments. The realisation was especially important as one of the consequences of the stresses and strains of what had become a total war encompassing all aspects of economy and society had resulted in an increasingly dirigiste approach to public policy. By 1918, however, in what became very much a model for what occurred two decades later, a discrete Government Department, the Ministry of Information (Moi) was given the responsibility for commissioning short, silent films for general exhibition to the British public, exhorting them to, amongst other things, save bones which,

apparently, could be made into fertiliser, glue and even explosives (*Old Mother Hubbard*, 1918).

These film tags, so called as they were one or two minute features 'tagged' on to the end of the main film in the cinema, were essentially some of the earliest Public Information films (PIFs) produced and exhibited throughout the UK and, later, the Empire. Perhaps surprisingly, to date little has been written about these early film shorts. However, it would appear that in May 1917, in order to give both the films a degree of conformity and also to maximise their audience potential the Government, through the War Office, reached an agreement with the Topical Film Company to produce these short films and to 'tag' them on the end of the bi-weekly cinema newsreel, also produced by Topical. This arrangement, however, only lasted a brief time as in October of that year Topical was bought out by the Government and it became, like the CFU, twenty years or so later, effectively the Government's own film production unit. Reminiscent also of Crown it was eventually situated in the Ministry of Information, becoming one of Lord Beaverbrook's first actions as Minister in May 1918 (TNA: INF 2/4 *Publicity During the Great War*, 26 October, 1943).

Many of these short film tags have disappeared but a sufficient number survive to enable a brief comparison with those PIFs later produced by the CFU. Before the involvement of the MoI each individual Government department had used film, or not, as often determined by the attitude of the Minister or senior civil servants to the medium. Occasionally, as in the time of the Boer War, individual commercial companies produced their own patriotic offerings. In 1917 the Cartoon Company produced a five minute short entitled *John Bull's Animated Sketchbook, No 15*. As the title suggest it was an animated humorous piece drawn on screen by 'our famous artist' and was a somewhat simplistic propaganda piece caricaturing the Germans in a short series of sketches. For example, three comic-book German troops with bent and battered pickelhauben sheepishly moved across the screen from right to left then returning clutching three gas meters; behind them the artist revealed that Berlin announced 'last night we gained three metres'. The humour may have dated somewhat but the final sketch is interesting as it included a cartoon Charlie Chaplin destroying a Zeppelin. Chaplin, along with George Robey

another famous contemporary music hall and screen performer, often appeared in either cartoon form or live action in a number of these early tags. This utilisation of popular entertainers in such propaganda films was, of course, repeated in the Second World War with, for example, the inclusion of the Crazy Gang's Flanagan and Allen singing *Underneath the Arches* in Humphrey Jennings's 1942 CFU film, *Listen to Britain*.

Inevitably a comparison between the short films produced by the Mol in 1918 and the much larger portfolio of Crown Films between 1940 and 1952 is made more difficult by both the different demands and pressures and the dramatic improvements in film technology but it is still possible to discern some similarities, especially in content, and link them with later CFU productions. These may be examined more easily under the following headings:-

- Morale/General Reinforcement

Although the First World War had been progressing for well over three years before the Mol's Cinematograph Department took over the commissioning and production of films it was still not certain that the Allies would prevail. The long years of stalemate on the Western Front and the terrible toll in casualties meant that the Government wished to remind the domestic audience of the reasons for the conflict. Thus an example of this approach was *John Bull's Animated Sketchbook, No 15* which has already been mentioned above. As far as the CFU was concerned one of the first films in this category, *Christmas Under Fire* (1941) reinforced both why Britain was fighting Germany and the sheer awfulness of the Nazis in bombing civilians. Perhaps more interesting in this particular category was *The Woman's Portion* (1918) a moralistic tale of the wife of an enlisted soldier who would prefer him to have been killed on the battlefield rather than suffer the shame of his desertion from duty. There is little in the CFU catalogue which can be said to directly compare with *The Woman's Portion*, although the small cameo storyline was an approach which was frequently adopted. An example of this would be Crown's 1941 film *The Pilot is Safe* which, as the title suggests, was a reconstruction of the rescue of a pilot shot down in the English Channel.

- Savings and the post-war world

A key Government message in the latter stages of the First World War was to encourage the population to save more to help to fund the war effort. As such War Bonds and War Savings Certificates were issued and a number of PIFs were produced which encouraged their purchase. Some of these not only emphasised that the money would be used to 'rid the world of Huns' (*Simple Simon*, 1918), but also that after a five year investment period there would be a significant return [£1 for 15/7d (78p) saved] which would enable individuals to purchase houses and their appropriate contents (*Jack and Jill*, 1918). Although there was nothing produced by Crown during wartime directly encouraging the civilian population to save there are a number of films which, by 1944, were beginning to focus upon what would happen after the conflict, so for example, that year *The New School* looks at the implication of the new Butler Education Act.¹⁵ After the Second World War with the increasingly dire economic situation Crown did, however, produce films such as *Pop Goes the Weasel* (1948) which sought to explain the crisis and encouraged hard work and thrift. Perhaps a more surprising contrast between those early tags and the later CFU films was in the suggested post-war treatment of the Germans. In *The Leopard's Spots* (1918) the film links rape and violence in Belgium with the post-war Germans attempting to sell goods to the UK, the obvious but crude message being that Germany must suffer for its part in the war and this could be achieved by embargoing their future exports. By 1944, however, the message contained in the Crown productions is much more sophisticated. In *The True Story of Lili*

¹⁵ The 1944 Education Act (The Butler Act) was described by Kenneth Morgan (1984, p.174) as 'a kind of educational Beveridge'. Essentially it introduced free secondary education for all for the first time and in doing so raised the school leaving age to 15. At the age of 11 pupils would take a selection examination (the 11+) and depending upon the result would be allocated a place at a Grammar School (for the academic and University bound) or Secondary Modern School (for those who expected to leave school at 15 and enter the job market); in a few areas of the country there was a third option, the Technical School for those who had both academic and technical potential. The Act enshrined the control of education in the hands of the Local Authorities although the Government, through the Ministry of Education, would direct strategy and overall policy. The Act had no impact upon those who attended private education in the, perversely named, Public Schools.

Marlene (1944) and more obviously in *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) Crown director Humphrey Jennings was far more conciliatory, asking rhetorically of Tim for example, about the future of Beethoven's great music.¹⁶ It was clear that the legacy of the treatment of Germany at Versailles in 1919, as predicted by *The Leopard's Spots*, was not to be repeated after the Second World War.

- Handy Hints and National Advice

A more obvious comparison between the 1918 productions and those films produced during, and immediately after, the Second World War was in the area of domestic advice to the civilian population mostly, although not entirely, about reducing the amount of waste. *Father and Lather* (1918) was a salutary tale advising men not to leave the cake of soap in water while shaving as this, apparently, caused it to deteriorate quickly. Similarly *The Secret* (1918) and *Give 'Em Beans* (1918) were short films about preparing meals; the first about the substitution of grated potato for suet, the latter is self-explanatory. Although during the 1940s these short handy domestic hints tended to be produced by film companies other than Crown, advisory films for the farming industry, for example, bear comparison. Thus, the 1950 CFU production *Insect Pests in Food* directly echoes the earlier *Cure for Potato Blight* (1918) in its emphasis on spreading the message to farmers about expanding domestic food production by controlling pests and blights.

By the end of the First World War film had certainly become a significant part of the Government's communication strategy. According to Reeves 'at least 240 films were released during the years in which (Britain's official film-makers) were at work and, in addition, between May 1917 and the end of the war a further 152 issues of the bi-weekly official newsreel were produced' (1993 p.465). Even though the MoI's 1918 film production catalogue was unsophisticated and limited, the fact that the Ministry was responsible for and used film in variety of contexts provided an administrative and operational

¹⁶ *Appassionata*, Sonata in F Minor, Opus 57, 1st Movement.

template for what was to happen when Britain and Germany once more went to war in 1939.

It is also probably fair to say that another major factor underpinning the Government's approach to film and, especially, audiences during wartime was one of control. In both world wars their attitude was primarily prompted by a desire to ensure that nothing was screened which would either compromise national security or induce demoralisation both in the UK and abroad. Indeed as a Mr Brooke-Wilkinson later reported to the Enquiry on Publicity during the Great War;

Early in 1915, Mr Bedford and I were invited to attend a conference at the War Office, when we were informed that the total prohibition of the export of films from this country was under serious consideration. Apparently, there were many reasons for this course of action, one being the possibility of improper communication and messages being sent abroad, another was due to the receipt of information that the films were being exhibited abroad which was detrimental to the State, and were causing reports to the effect that our new armies were inefficient and worthless (TNA: INF 4/2 *Publicity during the Great War*, 26 October 1943).

Domestically the administrative and legislative foundations for control had been laid as early as 1909 with the Cinematograph Act that prohibited the exhibition of film except in licensed premises. In addition to this, three years later the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) was established with the role of giving initial guidance as to the 'suitability' of films released commercially in the UK. Although the BBFC was supposedly an autonomous body the government retained a powerful influence, as the Home Office was responsible for the appointment of the President. While the BBFC issued 'Certificates', exhibition licences were granted primarily by Local Authorities in England or Wales and the conditions imposed by them tended to be very parochial.

However, the censorship of newsreels and putative documentaries tended to be at the production rather than at the exhibition ends of the process. In moves that vividly anticipated the confusion and restrictions of the first weeks of the

Second World War, the Army and Navy excluded all journalists from the front until May 1915. This was undoubtedly an unnecessary action as Douglas Haig later observed, 'the correspondents have played up splendidly' (quoted in Bourne, 1989, p.208). In other words they were putting a far more optimistic spin on their stories than perhaps the Field Marshal could have reasonably expected. As far as film cameramen were concerned, forays to the front were always conducted in the company of intelligence officers who 'vetted' the location and shots. Indeed, it is highly probable that this unwanted companionship may have saved the lives of a number of cameramen as the professional soldiers were more likely to identify safer areas within a battle zone for an operator to set up his bulky and highly visible equipment.

By November 1918 the British Government had recognised that, at a time of national emergency, the cinema had advantages both as a vehicle of propaganda and a ready source of revenue through the introduction in May 1916 of a tax on cinema admissions.¹⁷ However, peace brought its own problems for the relationship between the government and the cinema and film industry.

Protection and Political Influence – the Inter-War Years

An unexpected consequence of the War had been the increasing popularity of films produced in the United States. The use of 'exotic' locations and aggressive marketing combined to create fairly widespread concern about the imminent demise of the domestic industry and, consequently of the British way of life. In one of the first protectionist measures, which pre-dated the economic collapse of 1929, the Government introduced the 1927 Cinematographic Films Act, the purpose of which was to protect the British Film industry by introducing a quota system. The Act provided that in the first year renters had to offer at least 7.5% of British made films in their catalogues and the exhibitors were required to screen at least 5% of these films within their programmes. These

¹⁷ An Entertainment Tax was introduced in May 1916 which imposed, according to the exhibitors, a fairly swingeing ½d on cinema tickets up to 2d and, for the more expensive 6d seats, a 1d tax. As the numbers are very small it is difficult to give a modern, post-decimalisation comparison. However, in percentage terms the tax on the first ticket was 25% and on the second, more expensive one, 12.5%.

quotas were to be raised in stages up to 20% by 1936. There is some debate about the importance of Cinematographic Act and its influence on the British industry. Paul Swann has stated that 'many British films were 'quota quickies'; films made as cheaply as the law would allow, to be displayed so that renters and exhibitors could fulfil their legal obligations to show British films. These films were often shown when cinemas were empty; when they were full they would be given programmes consisting of American feature films' (1989, p.10). Not only were these 'quota quickies' fairly dire in terms of production values but they did not include films 'which depicted mainly news and current events, natural scenery, industrial and manufacturing processes and scientific films' (Dickinson and Street, 1985, p.12) which were actually excluded from the terms of the Cinematographic Act. Consequently, the commercial exhibitors frequently ignored what was not compulsory and so the early documentary filmmakers, many who later worked for the CFU were at an additional disadvantage, as their products seemed to fall outside the limited 'safety nets' of the quotas.

By the early 1920s there was an appreciation that the cinema and film in general had some impact upon audiences and their attitudes. It was impossible to quantify the nature of the influence but such opinions contrast quite dramatically with those expressed by the Establishment a decade or so before. Indeed the Conservative Party in particular seemed anxious to exploit the opportunities which film provided for political propaganda. An early proponent was Joseph Ball (Chief Publicity Officer 1927-9 and subsequently Head of Research until 1939).¹⁸ In many senses this was a reaction to the implications

¹⁸ Sir (George) Joseph Ball (1885-1961) Intelligence officer, party administrator and businessman. On the outbreak of the First World War he joined MI5 and remained in the service until 1927. He was persuaded by J C C Davidson (later Viscount Davidson), Chairman of the Conservative Party, to join the party organisation as director of publicity. Davidson said of him 'he is undoubtedly tough and has looked after his own interests... On the other hand he is steeped in the Service tradition, and has had as much experience as anyone I know of the seamy side of life' (*DNB* 1961-71 p68). From 1944-42 Ball reverted to his earlier profession as an intelligence officer and served as Deputy Chairman of the Security Executive. He was however a quintessential eminence grise, and his influence on affairs cannot be measured by the brevity of the printed references to him. (Blake, R. 'Ball, Sir (George) Joseph (1885-1961)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30564>, accessed 14 July 2008]

of the new mass electorate, following the 1918 and 1928 Representation of the People Acts. Ball foresaw that, although not yet dead, the days of the outdoor political orator and the town hall meeting where generally the 'converted' were gathered were numbered. Means had to be found of addressing the new electorate near or where they congregated. Direct exhibition within the commercial cinema was precluded by both cost and the fact that the owners were reluctant to exhibit films of an overtly partisan nature, however, the cinema-going habit could be exploited by the introduction of non-theatrical display, notably using cinema vans; the impact of which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

By the middle of the 1930s then it was fairly clear that a substantial section of the Establishment had become convinced of the efficacy of film as a medium for political propaganda. Unfortunately, this influence presupposed the availability of good quality films which would be suitable for propaganda purposes from either a partisan or national perspective. However, the importance of these developments as far as the CFU was concerned was not only in the endorsement of film as a propaganda device but the success of the non-theatrical circuit in the exhibition of films. During and after the Second World War the MoI and later the COI maintained a large film lending library to exploit the various and varied venues for the exhibition of CFU and similar films. Although both the medium and the mechanisms of distribution and exhibition had been developing during the interwar period, it was to be the productions of what came to be known as the Documentary Movement which proved, in the long term, to be influential in the CFU's catalogue and importance.

Grierson and the Documentary Movement

Although a great deal has been written about John Grierson and the Documentary Movement (Aitken (1992); Barnouw (1993); Winston (1995) and indeed Grierson himself in 1946) it is important to identify those aspects which formed the intellectual and production ethos that underpinned much of the output of the Crown Film Unit. There can be no doubt that Grierson's somewhat

catholic and eclectic approach to film making struck a particular chord amongst a group of generally middle and upper class independent film makers during the 1930s. His film *Drifters* (1929) is generally accepted as the seminal work of the Movement combining, as it does, American influences, Robert Flaherty *Nanook of the North* 1922 for example, the cutting techniques of Sergei Eisenstein and his own social imperative. It is probable that this film would not have been made, or at least not have achieved such wide distribution, had it not coincided with the Government's slowly evolving change of attitude towards Protectionism and its corollary Imperial Preference. Although out and out Protectionism had been rejected at the General Election of 1923 Baldwin's Conservative Government was anxious to prepare popular opinion for moves in that direction. Thus in May 1926 the Empire Marketing Board was established under the auspices of the Dominion Office to foster pro-Imperial and consequently pro-Protection viewpoints. To advertise the cause the Board created a film production group of which Grierson was the Assistant Films Officer. The Empire Marketing Board Film Unit's (EMBFU) role was to generate sympathetic documentary films and these covered a range of topics encouraging the populace to buy British or Empire goods. This approach could be seen in such films as *O'er Hill and Dale* (1932) about sheep farming in Scotland, or *Cargo from Jamaica* (1933) which extolled colonial sugar.

Although there was this coincidence of opportunity and personality, Grierson's importance to the development of the Crown Film Unit lay not only in his own productions, which were quite limited, but rather in the areas of the training and recognition of talent, the identification and exploitation of alternative distribution means and finally, in the proselytising of the Documentary Movement to which later many in the CFU professed adherence. At the EMBFU he attracted a group of filmmakers who were to become synonymous with the Documentary Movement and later, in some cases, with the CFU. Thus Grierson was, in some ways, responsible for 'releasing' or at least developing the talent of such men as Edgar Anstey, Arthur Elton, Stuart Legg, and perhaps more famously, Paul Rotha and Basil Wright. Subsequently as Films Officer at the GPO Film Unit, a later recruit, Alberto Cavalcanti described the almost corporate approach adopted by Grierson in that 'the working conditions were similar to medieval

artisanship: the work was collective, the films of each were discussed' (Quoted in Lovell & Hillier, 1974, p.15). In this somewhat hothouse environment all aspects of film making were debated and dissected, from the technical considerations involved in editing, to the social and aesthetic philosophies that underpinned their productions. As will be seen it was an approach which continued in the Crown Film Unit.

During the early days of the Documentary Movement filmmakers laboured under a double disadvantage which made their productions less attractive to the exhibitors of the commercial cinema. Firstly, by the mid-1920s, cinema audiences were beginning to expect a certain similarity in daily programme schedules. Thus, the 'normal' show would consist of one main feature film supported by another minor or 'B' movie. This in itself left little time available for more than a few advertisements and a short newsreel. Even if the distributors and exhibitors had shown some enthusiasm for documentary films, which they patently did not, there was very little time in a standard show for these films to be exhibited. Indeed, many commercial exhibitors were especially hostile to the genre. According to Swann, 'exhibitors and renters developed an entrenched hostility towards the Griersonian documentary film...It was generally felt within the trade that cinema audiences did not want serious information films when they went to the cinema' (1989, p.15). Indeed this prejudice was to be evident to a greater or lesser extent, with the exception of the first two or three years of the Second World War, throughout the history of the Crown Film Unit.

Secondly, what further hampered the commercial distribution of the early documentaries was that many were silent films and, certainly by 1932, exhibitors and audiences in Britain expected the whole show to be dominated by 'talkies'. Appreciating this conundrum Grierson set out to identify alternative venues where commercial pressures would be less critical in determining the audience. As such he encouraged the development of non-theatrical exhibition, and so EMBFU films were made available to schools, cooperative societies and trades unions, and film societies and so on. In fact anywhere that had access to a film projector, could be darkened successfully and could accommodate an audience was considered to be suitable. Indeed, the weekly 'film show' of Government sponsored 'shorts' was a regular feature of school timetables until

well into the 1960s. Consequently this approach, along with that of Joseph Ball's cinema vans were direct precursors to the non-theatrical exhibition which was a key feature of much of the CFU output during and after the Second World War.

Finally, much of the eventual success of the Documentary Movement and, by implication, the CFU was owed to Grierson's skill as a publicist. He wrote prolifically, founding such journals as *Cinema Quarterly* and *World Film News*, and was a regular contributor to debates in both the national press and trade journals such as the *Kinematograph Weekly*. It was certainly the case that Grierson's championing of the British film industry and his belief in the influence of the documentary as a genre resonated with the Government's desire in the 1930s to protect the industry and later, in the 1940s, to propagandise. Although Grierson may have defined the genre, the early productions of the CFU were entirely the work of his acolytes.

The GPO Film Unit and Preparations for War

Grierson's self-publicity appears to have paid significant dividends as, on the dissolution of the Empire Marketing Board in 1933, the Unit was transferred in almost its entirety to the General Post Office (GPO). As with the First World War tag films, the new Public Relations Officer at the GPO, Sir Stephen Tallents, appreciated the role that PIFs could, and indeed would, play in the publicising of such semi-commercial activities as the National Savings Scheme, which operated directly out of local Post Offices. Indeed, according to Swann, 'the Post Office spent more on publicity, advertising and public relations than any other Government body during the 1930s....the London Passenger Transport Board was the only comparable [although regional] entity in Britain at the time' (1989, p.53).

Tallents' justification of the work of the GPOFU revolved around not only the communication of information but also its importance in promoting morale, initially amongst postal workers, although there were obvious wider implications which became clearer as the GPOFU morphed into the CFU in 1940. According to him the films could 'develop among the Post Office staff a better understanding of the department's scattered activities, and to encourage them

to feel that their work is worthily represented to the public' (Swann, 1989, p.56). This particular philosophy, with its orientation towards the 'ordinary' citizen and concern for his/her morale again has strong resonance with the approach taken by the CFU in the next decade. The Government response in 1934 was not unsympathetic, however, it did 'clip the wings' of the GPOFU, by insisting that all future projects which were not directly commissioned by the Post Office had to be cleared with Treasury beforehand. Although this might have restricted some development it was also clear that Government appreciated the need for an effective 'in house' film production unit.

The apparent favouring of the GPOFU became even more evident as war became more likely. Not only did it have preferential access to government contracts but its facilities were being improved at the taxpayer's expense. For example, early in 1939, the Treasury authorised the purchase of a state of the art sound system, an RCA Photophone. It is, of course, possible to argue that this was a prudent measure given the general international climate of the time, but to other documentarists this was just an example of Government partisanship in favour of the GPOFU.¹⁹

However, many of these other documentarists, such as Edgar Anstey with the Shell Film Unit or Paul Rotha at Strand Films, were also developing theatrical as well as non-theatrical exhibition opportunities which were to become such an important feature of CFU film distribution in both wartime and post-war years and are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. Without significant Government support other short film units sought sponsorship which was often either to be in the form of advertising films or documentary 'type' films for semi-public bodies.²⁰ In the former case sponsors tended to be as diverse as Imperial Airways, the Gas Companies, and perhaps most famously Shell Petroleum. In the latter the National Council for Social Service and the Land Settlement Association sponsored films that were more likely to be shown in non-theatrical settings. An obvious example of this category would be Edgar

¹⁹ Swann (1989, p.83-86)) describes these antagonisms in more depth.

²⁰ Some of these Units are identified and discussed in Appendix 7: Contemporary Short Film Production Companies.

Anstey's 1936 Pathé Production *Housing Problems* which although praised by the Ministry of Health and critically acclaimed was actually financed by concerned philanthropists at Rowntrees, Sanderson Wallpapers and the International Bath Association.²¹

Meanwhile, the deteriorating international situation in the late 1930s had focused Government attention on what might be the future for the domestic film and cinema industries in the event of a major conflict. As early as October 1935 a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence had been established to determine guidelines for the dissemination of official news and propaganda in the event of war. Engendered both by the experiences of the First World War and the probable need to communicate with British citizens on the Home Front as well as to publicise the British cause overseas, it recommended the re-establishment of a Ministry of Information. It was also acknowledged that film had become an important medium of communication and its role in any future conflict needed to be addressed. To prepare for this eventuality the responsibility was given to Sir Stephen Tallents who had, of course, significant sympathy with the documentarists, having been involved with the Film Units of both the Empire Marketing Board and the General Post Office. Ironically, film itself had reinforced fears about the possible course of a future war. Alexander Korda's *Things to Come* (1936) appeared to have played a very influential role in predicting in fiction what happened in actuality in Spain and elsewhere in subsequent years.²² Unfortunately, Tallents' lack of success in convincing Whitehall to utilise the potential of film combined with his somewhat prickly personality led to his leaving his position soon after the Munich Settlement of September 1938. It was, however, soon realised that this agreement was merely a temporary respite in the drift towards war and increasingly the Government began to put into place plans for a probable conflict with Nazi Germany. Amongst these was the belated recognition of Tallents' suggestion

²¹ For a more detailed discussion and analysis of *Housing Problems*, see Geoffrey Crothall, 'Images of Regeneration - film propaganda and the British slum clearance campaign, 1933 - 1938' in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol 19, No 3 1999, pp 339-358.

²² See Anthony Aldgate (1979) *Cinema and History; British Newsreels and the Spanish Civil War* for a full discussion.

that the services of a reputable and successful film production facility were likely to be needed. As has been seen above the GPOFU had been treated preferentially during the previous few years and was therefore the ideal candidate and, despite some reluctance from its parent organisation, it was designated the official film production unit in the event of war.²³ Thus in September 1939 the Unit and its costs, if not initially management control, were transferred directly to the Mol as part of the putative Films Division (TNA: INF1/460).

The GPOFU in the first year of the Second World War

The GPOFU entered the Second World War with both a reasonably successful production team and a number of films, across a range of topics, which had had some critical success. Although many reflected the activities of the sponsor, such as *Night Mail* (1936) and *Wires Go Underground* (1938) others such as *Coal Face* (1935) or Jennings' *Spare Time* (1939) addressed diverse topics. Although the GPOFU was technically able to deliver films from the beginning of the war substantial confusion existed in its new parent Ministry. These months have been well chronicled by Ian McLaine (1979) and it is worth reviewing the major developments as they affected the Films Division in particular. According to James Chapman much of this turmoil was the result of the inadequate political direction caused, initially, by 'the appointment of a Minister who sat in the House of Lords [who] was unable to answer criticisms made of his Department in the Commons. Lord Macmillan, a Tory peer and distinguished judge was completely ineffectual' (1998, p.18). Indeed the first few months of the Mol's war were characterised by a series of what can only be described as unmitigated disasters. One of the most famous was the poster which announced 'Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution, Will Bring Us Victory'. As Angus Calder somewhat pithily observed 'most working class people thought that "resolution" meant something you made at New Year. But, beyond that, people asked, who was the mysterious "us" to whom "your"

²³ See Mariel Grant (1994) *Propaganda and the Role of the State in Inter-War Britain* for a review of the somewhat tortuous pre-war negotiations for the establishment and responsibilities of the Ministry of Information.

efforts would bring triumph? Fat men in the city of London, humourless bureaucrats in Whitehall, the bosses, the generals...' (1969, p.71). This semantic confusion caused the posters to be rapidly withdrawn. Mass Observation noted, as early as October 1939, that 'the source of all Government publicity, the Mol, is almost universally discredited in the eyes of the masses...The position of under-information and lack of steady instructional flow in which the masses place confidence is therefore exceedingly serious' (Quoted in Chapman, 1998, p.19).

The part played by the Films Division itself during this period was hardly inspiring. Joseph Ball, the senior Conservative Party Central Office official who had pioneered cinema vans, became its first head in August 1939. However, the organisational and operational priorities for film propaganda had not been determined effectively and Ball spent much of his time attempting to devise such policies. Unlike Tallents, Ball does not seem to have been particularly sympathetic to the GPOFU, preferring instead that propaganda films should be produced by the commercial sector because these would be seen to be independent and less subject to Government direction. As he wrote in the Films Division General Plan of Operation in September, 'we shall be reaching readymade worldwide audiences with films produced by the trade for commercial purposes...and which will therefore, not be suspected of being propaganda films at all' (TNA: INF 1/94 Mol). Korda's *The Lion Has Wings* (1939) which although made in twelve days without 'official' sanction epitomised this approach.²⁴ Cutting together both actual flying footage with studio based actors Korda also pre-empted some of the styles of the later CFU productions. Although, its cosy dialogue, rigid class distinctions and naïve combat scenes made it somewhat incongruous when the Blitzkrieg started in April 1940. However, by the end of 1939 it appeared to most observers that very little had been achieved by the official Films Division and, at the turn of the year, Ball was replaced by an individual perhaps more intellectually and aesthetically in tune with film as an art form. However, the appointment of Sir

²⁴ See Kenneth Short (1997) *Screening the Propaganda of British Air Power: From "R.A.F." (1935) to the "Lion Has Wings" (1939)* for a fuller discussion of the film.

Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery and Surveyor of the King's Pictures, as Head of the Films Division was also symbolic of the amateurish manner in which propaganda, and films in particular, were viewed by the Government. It certainly shocked the *Kinematograph Weekly*, which commented,

It is a cause of wonderment to this tall, quietly spoken, cultured man of art, that he should suddenly be uprooted from the colourful warmth of the National Gallery and translated to the cold cloisters and austere dignity of the Senate House of London University to direct Britain's film effort (11 January 1940).

Despite his self-proclaimed lack of expertise Clark did recognise that there was a need to define and formalise what roles film could play in the propaganda campaign both against Nazi Germany and, domestically, by raising morale. At the end of January 1940 he presented a paper to the Co-ordinating Committee of the Mol in which he identified three basic roles for film – 'What Britain is Fighting For', 'How Britain Fights' and finally, 'The Need for Sacrifice if the War is to be Won' (TNA: INF 1/867). He was certainly a passionate advocate for the role film could play as has already been seen from his observations in the *Kinematograph Weekly* quoted earlier in this research. However, this was tempered by a similar perception to many others in the governing class which had changed very little since the previous war. This was that propaganda and those mechanisms associated with it were essentially 'un-British'. This sensitivity might have been exacerbated in early 1940 as it is possible that some of the 'documentarist' advocates of propaganda had damaged their case at this time by open admiration for the works of Soviet filmmakers such as Eisenstein and Pudovkin which were not entirely popular in the anti-Soviet atmosphere following the Non-Aggression Pact and the Russo-Finnish war.

During the first few months of the war the Mol commissioned, in the main, short PIFs or 'informationals' such as the 1940 Ealing production of *Now You're Talking* which was received by the *Kinematograph Weekly* (28 March 1940) with the understated, 'Let us hope that the Ministry's [Mol] aim of producing 30 short films a year will be on subjects other than gossip!' Such criticism of the

Films Division in the early spring of 1940 reflected the general perception of the inadequacies of the Mol itself. Some of this criticism was also levelled at the GPOFU although, in the main, the problems seemed to have been primarily those of organisation and control. Thus, for example, prioritisation was an issue as the Unit was also still producing films for the GPO while concurrently being made available to the Mol for commissions. This caused some concern in the Treasury about how costs, in particular, were allocated. As a result it was decided that the Unit would be transferred totally to the Mol on 1 April 1940 and would become the Government's own film production facility. As the *Documentary News Letter* later reported this meant that 'the Ministry will become the supply section of any department or semi-official organisation which wishes to make a film' (Vol 9, August, 1940, pp.4-5).

However, despite the resignation of Sir Kenneth Clark and his replacement by Jack Beddington,²⁵ who at least had some experience of film making, the Treasury in particular was having continuing doubts about the value of a Government controlled production unit. In July 1940, the Select Committee on National Expenditure was concerned about both the cost and relevance of the 28 films which had been completed by the Films Division since the War had commenced. As such it recommended the establishment of an enquiry, chaired by a Mr Boxall, a Gaumont British executive from Denham Studios, to make recommendations for the future of Government sponsored film making. (TNA: INF 1/81) Fortunately for the Film Division and eventually the CFU, the public perception of the role of film had already begun a dramatic shift as a result of the Dunkirk Evacuation and the potential threat of invasion.

From GPOFU to CFU

The whole wartime environment changed quite dramatically in the early summer of 1940 with the collapse of the Allied western front and the subsequent retreat and evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). Britain was now isolated on the western edge of Europe facing a victorious Nazi war machine while, at home, Chamberlain resigned on 10 May 1940 to be

²⁵ As Director of Publicity for the Shell Group during the late 1930s Beddington was responsible for the production of the famous Shell 'informationals'.

replaced by a Coalition Government led by Winston Churchill. In the chaos which ensued with the threat of a German invasion looming it was perhaps predictable that the general public sought out news and information. As early as 16 May the *Kinematograph Weekly* headline was 'Newsreels are now top of the Programme'. In these dramatic days it was also unsurprising that the Select Committee's Boxall Enquiry was very sympathetic to the Films Division as here was an obvious and immediate vehicle by which Government could propagandise the British cause. It would be interesting to speculate, however, if the Phoney War had continued throughout the summer would the Select Committee have made more of the Division's underlying problems? Certainly some of Boxall's criticisms were pretty damning and, from a production perspective, almost incredible. For example, the Films Division had contravened musical performing rights. 'It is important to obtain clearance from any performer giving the producer all rights in respect of his or her performance', wrote Boxall (TNA: INF 1/81). 'This is necessary under the Musical Performers Protection Act of 1925. Not a single clearance has been obtained in respect of any of the films produced up to date'. Similarly, the GPOFU's production facilities at Blackheath themselves were woefully inadequate.

I was appalled at the conditions under which the Unit work. There is one small stage and three cutting rooms all of which are too small for their purpose. These rooms are badly equipped and with obsolete equipment. There is no storage space, and timber and other goods are stacked in corridors, on the staircase and elsewhere. There is one room on the ground floor for the carpenter's shop which also serves as the main Electricity Switch Room - a combination almost unheard of. This room is typical of the entire place.... (TNA: INF 1/81).

Not only were legal obligations ignored and production conditions appalling but there were major operational inadequacies. In the pre-production phase normal access to a film library was impossible as 'no records are maintained at the moment, with the result that a search of all tins is made before obtaining the desired stock shot' (TNA: INF 1/81). However, perhaps the most telling factor in this catalogue of problems in what was obviously a very amateurish operation

was the cost it imposed upon production. Boxall calculated that the cost per foot of film for the GPOFU was a staggering £2.9s.4d [£2.47] compared with commercial sector's 18s.2d [91p] (TNA: INF 1/81). Put very simply, and given the restrictions on availability of film stock, from the very start the GPOFU and its successor the CFU were over two and half times more expensive than the average costs of their commercial competitors. In fact, it was this cost differential which remained throughout the history of the CFU and was eventually a major factor in its ultimate demise. Despite this catalogue of problems and potential difficulties Boxall felt constrained to recommend that 'the Film Unit should continue as an independent unit, not in competition with the film industry but as ancillary to the industry.' However, he did add a caveat that 'the continuance of the film unit [is] subject to it operating in a first class studio' (TNA: INF 1/81).

Even though they had not had access to 'first class' facilities the GPOFU staff had not been entirely idle during the first year of the Second World War. In the absence of any really coherent instructions from the MoI, Cavalcanti sent the film makers,

out onto the streets of London to film the preparations that were being made for the onset of war; the digging of trenches in the parks, barrage balloons lumbering up into the sky, children crowding the concourses of stations as they waited to be evacuated. There was no script, no production plan, no official sanction, it was a spontaneous act which would result in the 1939 film, *The First Days* (Drazin, 2007, p.120).

Other GPOFU staff were engaged on a variety of projects during this period. Cameramen Jonah Jones, for example, went to Dover during the very early days of the Battle of Britain and set up his camera on Shakespeare Cliff. A keen amateur ornithologist, he had apparently pioneered a pan and tilt method of following birds in flight - no mean feat given the size and weight of the camera. This particular skill was put to another use in filming a Luftwaffe attack on a small convoy in the Straits of Dover and the subsequent arrival of the RAF. The gentle glide of a burning twin-engine German aircraft, possibly a Messerschmitt 110, into the Channel has now become a stock shot for any film

or television programme on the air war (Interview with Irene Jones, widow, 3 August 2005). This footage became part of *Front Line* (1940) which was a short film about how Dover was coping with being the closest British town to Nazi occupied Europe.

It might have been the lack of real objectives or the possible outcome of what was likely to have been a critical report which encouraged Cavalcanti, the senior producer, to seek employment elsewhere. In August 1940, he joined Michael Balcon at Ealing Studios where he took charge of the new 'shorts' department. Consequently a replacement had to be found at very short notice for a job which probably would not have existed for very long had Boxall been more critical. Having met with Harry Watt and Jack Holmes, the two senior Directors at the GPOFU, Ian Dalrymple was enticed away from the features sector of the commercial industry. It was, by any measure, a remarkable event, more so given that at £900 per annum, Dalrymple took a significant salary cut, and was employed initially on a weekly basis, so unsure were the Mol of retaining the Film Unit. It was one of Dalrymple's first acts to write to Mr Gaines, Deputy Director General of the Mol, suggesting that, in the light of the Boxall Report, a reorganised and re-energised film unit should 'be styled the Crown Unit and that the Crown emblem be retained from the present [GPOFU] mark' (TNA: INF1/81). It was eventually agreed that the new name should be the Crown Film Unit and, although not formally coming into effect until 1 January 1941, the new Unit began using the logo and name from November of the previous year (TNA: INF1/81).

The Crown Film Unit was thus a product of the variety of influences and factors that have been examined in this chapter. History, to some extent, also determined the manner in which the Government initially conceived the role of the Unit and how its films would be exhibited. The CFU inevitably incorporated its inheritance and Government expectations into its productions but its eventual influence and success rested primarily upon adapting these to the exigencies of war and the consequent economic and social turmoil and these will be examined in the succeeding chapters.

3. A Thematic Examination of the Crown Film Unit's Wartime Productions, 1940 - 1945

At the heart of any discussion about the importance of the Crown Film Unit should be the films themselves, and the CFU produced about 225 of varying lengths and embracing a multitude of topics (See Appendices 1 & 3). The following two chapters will examine these films from both a textual and a contextual perspective. This will determine that the films displayed a number of important themes which illustrated not only the contemporary and changing anxieties of the British Government but also, in turn, echoed the concerns of the cinema-going public. As such they reflected and, to some extent created, the attitudes and images of Britain in the 1940s which have coalesced into that folklore that underpins many Britons' perceptions of national identity. This latter point will be evaluated from a more detailed reception perspective in Chapter Five. This research which, for the first time, examines the full canon of Crown Film Unit productions will also reveal not only the changing historical and filmic contexts but their importance as an under-utilised resource in understanding Britain in the years from 1940 to 1952.

The following study of the principal themes of the CFU productions has been divided into two discrete, but overlapping, chapters. The first will address those films produced and exhibited during wartime, and the second those from the period 1946 to 1952. This division is not artificial as, of course, the first chapter is necessarily concerned with war and national emergency and the second a period of reconstruction, austerity and putative peace. Furthermore, the political landscape of the UK changed in 1945 with a Coalition Government giving way to a majority elected Labour Administration. Consequent to this change was a modification to the way that the Unit operated. During wartime the CFU had been part of the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and had significant opportunities to initiate films, whereas after the closure of the Mol in 1946 and its replacement by the downgraded Central Office of Information (COI) the Unit was constrained to producing films which had been commissioned (and paid for) by different Government departments. In the post-war era it was required to pitch for these commissions whereas beforehand it had either been responding

to requests or initiating film ideas from within its own rather tight group of directors and producers with far less concern about budgetary constraints.

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, by the late 1930s it had become clear to almost everyone in the Government if not the whole of Britain that war with Germany, if not inevitable, was highly likely. This being the case the Government considered it essential that it should be able to disseminate its messages, policies and requirements in the face of the emergency in the most effective and efficient way. Although, as Ian McLaine (1979, p.12) has noted wireless, posters and newspapers would play a part the cinema, with its massive audience, provided an invaluable channel of communications.

The cinema in return, in the form of the Cinema Exhibitors Association (CEA) early appreciated the public's desire for information in a period of anxiety and were prepared to enter into an agreement with the MoI. Negotiated by Jack Beddington of the Films Division the exhibitors' journal, *Kinematograph Weekly* reported on 5 September, 1940 that '5 minutes of each programme in every kinema [was] freely given to the screening of the propaganda films'. However, this does not seem to have been as altruistic as it might originally have appeared. The CEA was also anxious to prevent the further development of non-theatrical exhibition which, of course, had the potential for removing customers and profit. Consequently they vociferously, if unsuccessfully, opposed both the introduction of more mobile cinema vans and also the development of military camp cinemas. As will be seen in Chapter Five, the audiences who were not confined to viewing films in a commercial cinema comprised an increasing market for CFU productions and, as such, it could be argued that the Unit had an important influence on the film industry. It anticipated the myriad of small companies, like Anvil, which were to become the stalwarts of short film productions for discrete and specialist audiences.

However, the 1940 arrangement was one of a number between the Government and the CEA over the next decade which gave the Government, through the MoI, access to the nation's cinema screens during the national emergency. Although some of these MoI short films were produced by a variety of independent companies such as Strand or Realist (See Appendix 7) others

were CFU films. The sudden increase in short film production which the war had engendered created a need to classify or categorise these films for both the theatrical and non-theatrical markets. At a functional level categorising the 'type' of film enabled both potential exhibitor and audience to assess its value and appeal.

The commercial sector tended, in the main, to receive its information about individual films from the trade papers such as the *Kinematograph Weekly*. Every week it provided descriptions and technical details of the latest releases.²⁶ However, for the organisers of one of the myriad venues, such as the local NAAFI's or film clubs, where there was non-theatrical exhibition of films it was important to have some idea of the nature and running time of each film before making a request for its loan from either the Central Film Library or one of the Mol's Regional Film Libraries. Given the rapid increase in the number of films produced in the early months of the war, and especially the demand from the non-theatrical sector, the Mol began to produce a regular catalogue. In order to facilitate ordering the catalogue was divided into sections. For example in late 1941 the Central Film Library catalogue categorised its available films under the following headings; 'The Fighting Forces, Civil Defence, The British Empire, Labour and Armaments, Food Front, Health and Education, Salvage, Savings and Thrift' (TNA: HO/186/1456).

The variety of topics addressed by the CFU between 1940 and 1946 initially require that this chapter reviews the existing classification systems, both contemporary and subsequent, and will then suggest an alternative approach

²⁶ For example, the *Kinematograph Weekly* 14 January 1943 announced the release in its *New Films at a Glance* section of: - *BBC Brains Trust* – novelty featurette, highly entertaining record of the BBC's most popular feature, *Lenin in October* – brilliant reconstruction of the ten days that shook the world, *Casablanca* – Spectacular, breath taking and intriguing romantic melodrama with colourful background. Story exciting and appealing, characterisation brilliant, thrills big and *Old Mother Riley, Detective* – Fruity, good humoured low-life comedy with a Black market background (p.21). Furthermore it reinforced in its *Reviews for Showmen* section, 'Casablanca – Points of Appeal Intriguing eventful, exciting and suspenseful story, brilliant characterisation, colourful atmosphere, irresistible romantic angle, breath taking and spectacular climax neat and polished humorous relief, topicality, great title and greater star values' (p.22).

which can incorporate all of the various different productions. Having done this the CFU's wartime output will be categorised and the themes will be exemplified by case studies of films which include those which are already famous as well those which have yet to be studied in any depth. The chapter will further examine the films as reflections of the dynamic and changing context of the wartime situation in which they were produced and as providing a useful evidence for an understanding of Britain in the 1940s.

Classification Approaches

The very process of the classification of films tends to obscure not only their multi-faceted purposes, as Frances Thorpe and Nicholas Pronay (1980) have acknowledged, but it also often fails to recognise those often subtle changes in narrative and image which reflect wider and developing political, social and economic issues. Within any categorisation there is an inherent dynamic which reflects both contemporary concerns and, because the CFU was essentially the mouthpiece of Government, the policy initiatives of the day. Unfortunately, given the technologies available in the 1940s, the time delay between conception and actual exhibition through either commercial or non-theatrical circuits did mean that occasionally what was intended as a means of addressing a particular topic was overtaken by events. For example, Humphrey Jennings' *A Diary for Timothy* was not given a general release until early 1946; and then its message had been dissipated substantially by the changing international and economic climate occasioned, principally, by the sudden ending of the war in the East following the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

There are a number of practical issues which also serve to further complicate classification. The dating of the films themselves was often quite arbitrary. Sometimes films were completed but not released for a number of months or indeed years. For instance a CFU film about the Special Operations Executive (SOE) *School for Danger*, was completed in 1945 but not put forward for general exhibition until late in 1946. Perhaps of less importance from a thematic perspective was the fact that the CFU's use of stock shots was often quite catholic. Jennings, for example, used the shots of Dame Myra Hess

playing in a National Gallery classical concert in *Listen to Britain* (1942) and, again in *Diary for Timothy*. It was also not uncommon for longer feature films to be cut and re-edited for either the non-theatrical or overseas markets. Thus *Close Quarters* (1943), Jack Lee's 75 minute feature film about life aboard a British submarine on a North Sea patrol was subsequently released a few weeks later in a shorter version entitled *Up Periscope!* (1944). Despite these very real reservations it is nevertheless possible to review the wartime output of the CFU and identify a number of key and developing topics. Although these film themes obviously endorsed Government policies there was also a strong element in them echoing the concerns of the general public. The images and storylines shown helped to create or at least reinforce a national narrative of the experience of the wartime years which was subsequently played back in many of the British feature war films of the 1950s such as *The Wooden Horse* (1950), directed by ex-CFU man Jack Lee, or *Appointment in London* (1952) directed by another ex-CFU man, Philip Leacock. This particularly legacy is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. For the purposes of this study the 'war years' have been extended to include films premiered or released throughout 1945 as their production would have usually commenced well before hostilities ceased.

The Key Wartime Themes

The themes which feature in any film, especially those in a documentary format, are almost always bound to reflect those priorities of the time and often those which chime with the concerns of the contemporary audience. According to Nicholas Reeves, 'even the most mundane film [which presented a view of wartime Britain which corresponded closely with the views of the audience] was tolerated, while the very best (*Listen to Britain*) provoked factory audiences to stamp and clap their approval' (1999, p.172).

Furthermore, during a major international crisis such as the Second World War the ebb and flow of the themes tended to mirror the progress of the conflict itself. It has long been held in the field of media and cultural studies that individuals move into the arena of news and factual reporting when they are

directly affected by the issues.²⁷ Similarly films, especially those sponsored by the Government, tended to emphasise those topics about which the general public were most concerned and about which the Government wished to influence opinion. Of the 60 or so CFU films that were produced and exhibited between 1940 and 1945 it is possible to identify a number of recurring themes which reappear in a variety of forms over the period. It was also hardly surprising, given the fact that most of the personnel were the same, that the few films produced by the GPOFU before early summer 1940, but before the MoI had full oversight, were similar in themes and production values to their successors. For example, *Squadron 992* (1940) was a story about a barrage balloon unit which explained the importance of one of the less glamorous but important roles in air defence and as such reflected the themes in *Ferry Pilot* (1942). Also in 1940 the GPOFU produced *Factory Front* which emphasised the significance of wartime munitions production and to which the CFU returned over the next few years in films such as *Worker's [sic] Weekend* (1943). The principal difference between those films produced in late 1939 and early 1940 was that, compared with the CFU films made later, they lacked any sense of urgency or real threat.

Needless to say within particular CFU films subjects were often interwoven and overlapping but the majority did exhibit the principal characteristics of one or other of themes outlined below. Similarly, within these topics there were subtle changes which appeared to be both responses to developments in the progress of the war and to the audiences' perception of them. There are, of course, other possible ways of categorising these films and some of the alternatives are discussed in more detail in Appendix 6. However, for the purpose of this research the following classifications have been adopted and are explained below.

1. Anti-German/Hitting back: Less than a quarter of a century after the Armistice in 1918 Britain was involved in another major conflict with

²⁷ See for example the work of Stuart Hall as in, for example, S. Hall, 'The Television Discourse - Encoding and Decoding' in Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan, (1997), *Studies in Culture – an Introductory Reader*, pp.28–34.

Germany and it was hardly surprising that an early and significant theme of Government policy was to reinforce hostility towards the Germans. Initially this tended to be fairly crude and mirrored to some extent the anti-Hun propaganda of the First World War. The approach taken in early CFU films, such as *Men of the Lightship* (1940) really carried the theme on from films like *The Leopard's Spots* (1918) (as outlined in Chapter Two) with its debauched and vicious soldiery now updated to include the heartless Luftwaffe. However, as the war progressed and the evidence of actual Nazi brutality was revealed the films were able to indulge in a frequent, but perhaps very understandable, demand for revenge. Consequently these films were primarily concerned with exploiting and developing anti-German feeling and supporting all efforts at hitting back at the enemy.

2. Reassurance/Appeal to patriotism: A principal purpose of any Government propaganda during a modern war is to reassure the civilian population that its sacrifices are not in vain and that these are being shared across the community. Indeed Reeves argues that this approach was the very 'essence of the Mol's propaganda strategy', and that, 'the people of Britain deserved to be treated as intelligent and sophisticated democratic citizens' (1999, p.169). Collective deprivations and dangers were important in that they developed and solidified the self-image of a British nation in which all classes were united in their stoic resistance to the enemy. This interpretation of the 'myth' of the Blitz has been challenged by the works of Angus Calder (1991) and later Malcolm Smith (2000) who have argued, for example, that essentially the many social class divisions which existed before the war continued throughout and that far from being a unifying feature the bombing and blackout provided ideal circumstances for robbery and violence as East End gangster, 'Mad' Frankie Fraser, frequently testified as, for example, in *Bad Boys of the Blitz: Revealed* (2005). However, the contemporary British film industry and especially productions which were directly sponsored by the Government tended to reinforce the basic ideas and assumptions underpinning the perspective of a nation united against the foe. This type of film was also often distributed overseas

not only within the Empire/Commonwealth and the USA but also to non-aligned countries as a way of demonstrating British resistance.

3. Participation in the war effort: The Second World War was a total war which required the active participation and commitment to the war effort of all citizens, whatever their occupation, to enable it to be pursued effectively. Often, by cinematic standards, these jobs and roles were less than glamorous and some films were devised to emphasise the importance of the 'support' services, both civilian and military, in assisting those actively engaged in combat.
4. Looking forward to peace: The British Government realised early in the war, especially after the destruction caused by the Blitz raids, that the populace might be heartened by considering what would happen to their lives if, and it became quite quickly when, final victory was achieved. There was an obvious and immediate focus on rebuilding to replace bomb damaged buildings. However, reconstruction here was not only meant in material terms but also social, economic and educational improvements. This amalgamation of many post-war hopes and expectations is examined more thoroughly in, for example, Paul Addison's *Road to 1945* (1994) as already mentioned in Chapter One.
5. No obvious category: Within any film classification there inevitably exist a number of productions that defy categorisation. Even during a period of major national emergency the CFU found at least one opportunity to indulge individual or departmental whims.

The films situated in the above categories were produced and exhibited against the background of the dramatic events of the Second World War. The volume of literature narrating and explaining the progress of the War from both a domestic and international perspective is, to say the least, enormous. However, to contextualise the films it would be proper to briefly relate the principal events as they would have impinged upon the life and consciousness of the average British citizen between the spring of 1940, from when the Crown Film Unit was effectively operational, and the end of 1945.

Within days of the transfer of the GPOFU to full MoI control the Phoney War or Sitzkrieg on the Western Front ended dramatically, and with it, for filmmakers and the public alike, any comparisons with the events and films of the First World War. After the collapse of the Anglo-French forces and subsequently the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from Dunkirk at the end of May and early June 1940, the British had to endure over two years of almost unremitting anguish in terms of the threat of invasion, the destruction caused by the bombing of major cities and communication networks and the privations resulting from the depredations of the German submarine fleet. These domestic problems were unalleviated by any major success of arms in any of the international theatres in which British and Empire troops were fighting. Although the entrance of the United States into the war following the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 might have signalled eventual victory to some, the actual effective impact of American forces on the war in the European theatre would not be felt until 1943.

However, with the German defeats at Stalingrad and El Alamein during the winter of 1942-3 and the containment of Japanese expansion in the Far East the threat of defeat receded dramatically and filmmakers could contemplate the possibilities of life after the conflict. Inevitably the collapse of Nazi Germany in May 1945 and the subsequent speedy surrender of Japan in August that year after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki meant that the new challenges of peacetime had to be faced by both the public and filmmakers alike.

The full listing of the CFU wartime films and their allocation into particular classifications can be found in Appendix 1. Inevitably there are a few films that defy specific classification and which could easily be allocated to one or other of the categories. In these circumstances allocation has been made on the basis of the most obvious theme. Therefore the production percentage noted after each sub-heading should only be regarded as indicative of the balance between categories rather than having any particular statistical value.

Anti-German/Hitting Back Films (32%)

One of the first films which demonstrated all the principal characteristics of this category was, as mentioned above, *Men of the Lightship* (1940). At first sight this might seem an unusual choice as it was the last film produced by Alberto Cavalcanti prior to his departure from the GPO Film Unit and the Mol's complete takeover of the GPOFU. However, the official listing of CFU productions held by the BFI records the film as being one of the first CFU productions. Indeed the production commenced in February but was not completed until the end of July 1940. The final prints were eventually distributed in the late summer of 1940 prefaced, perhaps surprisingly, by neither the CFU nor GPO logos. The film itself purports to be a reconstruction of a real event and as such there were echoes of some of the anti-German propaganda stories which were circulated during the First World War, such as the scenes of rapine and murder in Belgium as depicted in the 1918 film *A Leopard's Spots*. It contrasted quite dramatically with the slightly earlier GPOFU reconstruction film *Squadron 992* (1940) which related the story of an unsuccessful German air raid upon the Forth Bridge area and the deployment of a balloon barrage; the whole tenor of which was quite light-hearted and reminiscent of a sports commentary. On the other hand, the plot of *Men of the Lightship* revolved around an attack upon a Trinity House lightship which, according to the voiceover, for 'over three hundred years has never been regarded as a target'. Even Louis XIV had forbidden attacking such vessels as he was 'making war on the English not on humanity' (INF 6/353). The film introduced a fairly stereotypical set of English maritime characters aboard Lightship 61 at East Dudgeon off the Norfolk coast including the, perhaps inevitable, comedy figure, Lofty, who was introduced to the audience throwing slops into the wind with the predictable humorous results. This idyllic life was suddenly shattered as an attack by German bombers (looking suspiciously like British Bristol Blenheims) forced the crew, including the elderly, wounded skipper to abandon ship. To emphasise the perfidy of the 'Hun' the crew were then machine gunned in their lifeboat, and the final shot of them was of their bodies washed up on shore, presumably, the following day. The message of fortitude in the face of infamy was reinforced as, apparently two days later,

another lightship was towed out to the East Dudgeon site and the audience reminded that the 'Nazis must be stopped, we can and we will stop them!' (TNA: INF 6/353).

The propaganda value of this and later films were enhanced by sympathetic distribution in the United States and is more fully discussed in Chapter Five. However, in the case of *Men of the Lightship* a contemporary CFU internal note described how

Alfred Hitchcock was approached by MOI to cut and recommentate [sic] the film in order to enhance its chances of theatrical distribution on the American market. Hitchcock agreed and received a mute lavender,²⁸ sound effects tracks (nine reels in all). The re-edited version was distributed by 20th Century Fox for a period of five years from 25/3/41 (TNA: INF 6/353).

The participation of such a well-known director as Hitchcock in the post-production process of the film for the American market did demonstrate that the CFU certainly had strong links to mainstream cinema but remained throughout its existence separate from it. However, as far as *Men of the Lightship* was concerned its general message was unsubtle; the Germans were by nature barbaric and failed to observe the 'rules of war' and therefore had to be defeated in order for 'civilised' life to continue. It was a perspective which chimed very well with the poster images of the 'rape of Belgium' circulated during the early years of the First World War.²⁹ The film also had all the hallmarks of many of the later wartime documentaries. It purported to be a documentary reconstruction of a real historical event. The characterisation was based upon apparently real people pursuing fairly mundane jobs and whose lives were transformed by the impact of a war which had been thrust upon them, and this was very much in line with the developing self-image of the British as a nation plunged unwillingly into war and having to make the ultimate

²⁸ Lavender: A positive copy of a film printed on lavender coloured stock, from which duplicate negatives can be made.

²⁹ See, for example, the work of David Welch (1999).

sacrifice in the face of a barbaric enemy who either did not play by, or perhaps even understand, the rules of the game.

It was all very well to be on the receiving end of German attacks and to accept them stoically as in *Men of the Lightship*, but it was also important that British citizens and, by implication, those that supported the British cause overseas in the United States and elsewhere, realised that offensive action against the Nazis was being taken. The importance of the 'hitting back' aspect of this current theme was increasingly magnified after the expulsion of British troops from Norway and France in spring and early summer of 1940 and the subsequent beginning of the 'Blitz' on British cities later in the year.³⁰ Indeed, aside from the occasional naval engagement, the only tangible way of inflicting significant damage upon the enemy was by air. In this vein one of the most successful of the CFU's early productions, both at home and overseas, was *Target for Tonight* (1941). The images of aerial bombardment portrayed in this film were to become seminal in that they have been repeated in many subsequent productions about Second World War bombing campaigns from *The Dam Busters* (1955) through *Mosquito Squadron* (1968) to *Catch-22* (1970) and beyond.

In *Target for Tonight* the story of the exploits of Wellington bomber 'F-Freddie' developed the bombing theme of *The Lion has Wings* (1939) but its cast of actual RAF aircrew endowed the film with both an aura of credibility and authenticity which in part might explain its box office success. Looked at with the benefit of hindsight *Target for Tonight* exhibited a level of naivety which was far less apparent a year or so later in a similar documentary *Coastal Command* (1942) which tracked the operational events of a Sunderland flying boat, 'T-Tommy'. In Watt's *Target for Tonight* photographic reconnaissance had identified a 'real peach of a target' and the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) agreed to divert some of the bombers preparing to attack the docks and barracks near the Kiel Canal to the mythical 'Freihausen' marshalling yards which, the audience was told, was on the Rhine about 15 miles north of

³⁰ See the work of Angus Calder (1992) or, for an individual city example, Anthony Brode (1997) *The Southampton Blitz*.

Freiburg, in the Black Forest. Although the raid on the Kiel Canal can hardly have been in reality a diversionary attack, given that it was some 450 miles further north, it was signalling that the target was well inside Germany, and so bombs would be falling on German soil and in obvious retribution for the Blitz. The take-off sequence built tension in the film as each aircraft powered up its engines and requested permission to take off and this was accompanied by stirring martial music. Compared to later films of the American bombing campaign against Germany, such as Henry King's *Twelve O'Clock High* (1949), there was no evidence of formation flying. Although the fact that each aircraft attacked alone was hardly surprising given the inherent difficulties of close flying in the dark.

Target for Tonight used 'real' RAF personnel not only in the crew of F-Freddie but also from the AOC down to the armourers. Despite this element of authenticity they frequently came across as somewhat valiant amateurs. The dialogue, for example, remained both unmilitary and a little stilted. There was no evidence of radio protocol, the skipper blithely announcing to the crew as they enter enemy territory, 'Hello everybody, let me know if you see something!' Similarly, after successfully dropping their bombs on the target, which was shown as from ground level with locomotives and wagons being blown up, the aircraft was subjected to anti-aircraft fire. *Target for Tonight* was one of the earliest films to refer to this by the German abbreviation Flak as before the traditional British expression for this weapon was Ack-Ack.³¹ During the course of this action the wireless operator was injured and consequent interaction between skipper and crew member demonstrated significant contemporary sang-froid. 'Wireless Operator has copped it!', 'Badly?', 'No, only in the leg'. Following the high point of the actual bombing and anti-aircraft fire the tension was maintained during the return journey by engine problems and the film cutting back to the airfield where there was much concern about the lateness of F-Freddie. Despite the fog, the shot up radio and the mechanical problems, the audience can hardly have been surprised to see the Wellington F-Freddie

³¹ Ack – early radio phonetic for 'a'; hence anti-aircraft, A-A or Ack-Ack. The use of the German word Flak, itself an abbreviation of the word Fliegerabwehrkanonen (Anti-Aircraft Artillery). Flak was increasingly used, especially by the USAAF's 8th Air Force from 1942 onwards.

lumber in to touch down. The film concluded with the normal post-raid debriefing with the Intelligence Officer congratulating the crew and suggesting, 'How about some bacon and eggs?' Despite its essential simplicity of narrative the film carried a very powerful message which had already been signposted to the audience by an initial visual dedication which emphasised the importance of the Royal Air Force in demonstrating Britain's 'Strength'.³²

The film title itself was only agreed some two weeks before eventual release on 25 July 1941 changing from *Night Bomber* to the more evocative *Target for Tonight* and on release it was almost universally acclaimed. The editor of the *Daily Express*, writing to Sidney Bernstein, the Deputy Director of the MoI's Films Division, commented that, 'I saw *Target for Tonight* today. It is a truly magnificent film, and the *Daily Express* if anything, underplayed it. Just the same I think, after seeing the paper this morning, it would only be right and proper if we were to change the title from the *Daily Express* to 'Crown Film Unit Gazette' (INF 1/210). Even the *Express's* proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook, was equally captivated, also writing to Bernstein, '*Target for Tonight* is a picture which must move and interest audiences not only in this country, but wherever it is shown. It gives an impression of the courage and determination of the bomber crews which can never be effaced' (INF 1/210, 31 July 1941). Sadly, the majority of F-Freddie's crew would not bask long in all of the adulation for, as Nicholas Cull observed, 'none survived long enough to see it' (1995, p.138). However, Flight Lieutenant Percy Pickard who played Squadron Leader Dickson in the film would survive at least until February 1944 when he was killed in his Mosquito fighter-bomber returning from leading the famous Operation Jericho attack on Amiens prison which secured the escape of captured French Resistance fighters.³³

Target for Tonight to some extent set the bar as far as feature length CFU productions were concerned. As will be seen later in Chapter Five it was a critical success both in the UK and, perhaps as crucial, in the United States. As

³² *Target for Tonight* – in this dedication the word Strength has the S both capitalised and emboldened.

³³ For more detail of the raid see J.P.Ducellier, (2010) *The Amiens Raid: Secrets Revealed*.

such it was important in establishing the reputation of the Unit as a key producer of films which encouraged morale and supported the British war effort. It was also significant as one of the first British films which addressed the reality of the bombing campaign against Germany and was a key reference for future feature films of this genre such as the ones mentioned above and later *The Memphis Belle* (1990) and is discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

Some of the other famous CFU feature films could also be appropriately situated in the anti-German/Hitting Back category. *Coastal Command* (1942) addressed the anti-submarine campaigns of the Battle of the Atlantic whereas, *Close Quarters* (1943) looked at submarine warfare from a British perspective. Indeed films which demonstrated that the battle was being taken to the Germans, and later the Japanese, continued until the war ceased.³⁴ Thus, shorts such as *By Sea and Land* (1944) which looked at the role of the Royal Marines in the battle for Normandy or, the last of this type, *Broad Fourteens* (1945) actually released after the war had ended but describing the role played by motor torpedo boats in the English Channel, all emphasised attacking the enemy.

As far as the anti-German aspect of this theme is concerned there was a certain ambivalence which seemed to enter the productions around 1943. Jennings' *Silent Village* (1943) was a powerful condemnation of Nazi atrocities. It commemorated the massacre of Lidice (in the then Czechoslovakia) in 1942 by transposing the events to a Welsh mining village. Yet, the following year in *The True Story of Lili Marlene* (1944) Jennings certainly retained the evil Nazi perspective by emphasising the brutal treatment and incarceration of the song's original singer Lale Andersen.

She had originally made her name on the Berlin and Munich nightclub circuits before the war. However, even though her song about the girl waiting by the barrack gate was extremely popular with the Wehrmacht its non-martial sentiments and her own friendship with Jewish artists such as Rolf

³⁴ The CFU did not produce many films on the conflict in the Far East, *Jungle Mariners* (1945) was one of the few exceptions.

Liebermann³⁵ brought her to the attention of the Nazi authorities and she was gaoled and, even on release after nine months, was not allowed to sing *Lili Marlene*.

In contrast, in the second half of the film Jennings appears far more sympathetic to the ordinary German soldiers, especially those of the Afrika Korps who had adopted *Lili Marlene* as an unofficial corps anthem. The song itself was, in turn, embraced by their enemies in North Africa, the British Desert Rats. This film certainly seemed to have endorsed or at least reinforced the conventional and popular view that the Desert War was the most chivalric of the entire conflict.³⁶ Perhaps it was that by 1944 the Afrika Korps had been defeated, Italy had been invaded and the second front in Europe had opened with the D-Day invasion and Jennings felt able to appreciate the common experiences of the soldiers on both sides in North Africa.

Reassurance/Appeal to Patriotism (26%)

Whereas the war in the desert had often been fought in an unforgiving and hostile environment with consequently few civilian casualties or massive destruction of towns and cities, the war elsewhere was marked by substantial collateral damage. The Second World War was a total war which required, or at least, involved whole populations irrespective of age, gender or ethnicity and, as such, Governments on both sides sought to both reassure and mobilise their citizens by the use of film propaganda. Indeed the obverse of *Hitting Back* was the Reassurance of the home population and this category made up almost the same proportion of CFU productions. This, in itself, indicates the contemporary importance the Government gave to reassuring the civilian population in the face of dire news and, especially, attack from the air.

Such reassurance was especially important for the Government early on in the war as, following the evacuation of Dunkirk and the Luftwaffe's failure to destroy the RAF in the Battle of Britain, the Germans turned to mainly night

³⁵ Rolf Liebermann (1910-1999). Jewish musician who worked in pre-war Budapest and Vienna. One feature of his music was to incorporate jazz themes into more classical forms.

³⁶ See John Bierman and Colin Smith, (2003) *El Alamein: War without Hate*. Penguin, London, for a full discussion of this regional conflict.

attacks on towns and cities. The British and particularly the metropolitan dwellers' experiences of the Blitz tended to suggest that although blast damage from high explosive was quite significant, the smaller incendiary devices, which were dropped in their thousands, caused major fires devastating whole areas. The creation of firestorms caused by the rapid temperature rise over a large area essentially 'sucking in' air and debris from the surrounding areas became, of course, a feature of the later area bombing of German cities such as Hamburg, Cologne and Dresden. However, apart from isolated examples of firestorms in London during the first 'Blitz' (September 1940- May 1941) the general impression was that despite substantial damage to property and infrastructure civilian casualties remained relatively low. It has been estimated that throughout the whole war some 30,000 Londoners were killed, perhaps half the civilian deaths recorded for the whole of the UK (Cmd 6832, 1946).

Consequently it was quite reasonable in 1941 for J.B. Holmes and Jack Lee of the Crown Film Unit to focus *Ordinary People* on the London Blitz. Its expression on screen had to portray a fair approximation of the experiences of those who had suffered the bombing in order to confer the film with a degree of authenticity. Indeed using 'normal' people rather than actors became a feature of CFU productions and this is emphasised in the opening shot of *Ordinary People* which has the strap line 'To the future historian – this film was played by ordinary people of London'. One important aspect of this film was its use of stereotypes to reinforce both its message and, perhaps viewed retrospectively, the commonly held view of the stoicism of Londoners under fire. Some versions of the film had a short introduction by the Australian Premier, Sir Robert Menzies, who emphasised that Londoners were regularly suffering the 'senseless and indiscriminate bombing of the half-civilised Hun' which, of course, harks back to the traditional anti-German sentiments of the First World War and earlier CFU films such as *Men of the Lightship* (1940).

However, in *Ordinary People* the film opens, and indeed closes, with scenes of an anti-aircraft balloon barrage between which it focusses on a day in the lives of seven ordinary Londoners who were united by their nightly occupation of one particular deep air raid shelter. It early established its London credentials by shots of the Thames and also of the Tower of London through which the time

frame is also created. In this early scene a soldier was shown at the Tower blowing 'Reveille' on his bugle and towards the end of the film there was a similar shot, but this time the bugler is sounding 'Sunset', the Army's traditional call for the end of the working day. The eight key characters were essentially stereotypes, to demonstrate, amongst other things, that traditional class barriers had been reduced, if not entirely, abolished. They were all subject to the same bombing and thus there was a message within the film that aerial bombardment was no respecter of social status. This 'we're all in this together' approach of *Ordinary People* set a precedent repeated in other, perhaps more famous CFU films such as Jennings' *A Diary for Timothy*. In *Ordinary People* the main characters which reflect the various social classes were:-

'Tiny' – the inevitably corpulent taxi driver

Mr & Mrs Payne – the housewife and the factory worker who was also an Air Raid Warden, thus allowing for a wider perspective of somebody engaged in war work and 'doing their bit'

Miss Ryan – the Bourne and Hollingsworth shop girl who was also a member of the store Fire Squad

Frank - the GPO telephone engineer who was always shown with his 'mate', Dougie

An unnamed Judge – perhaps not so 'ordinary' but representing that normal administrative and legal life continued

Mr Saxby – the local vicar who, in some scenes, provided the 'conduit' which often connected the various individuals

By counter-posing their activities during the day the film was able to emphasise a number of features of wartime living in London. The key message, of course, was that despite regular air raids not only did life go on as near to normal as possible but that the war required adaptation and accommodation. This can be seen in the continuation of the court, removed to the basement, on the one hand and a mere short hiatus in the shopping at Bourne and Hollingsworth during a raid on the other. There were also a number of lower key messages which were essentially about both stoicism and mutual support. Mrs Payne, the

housewife returning to her bomb damaged house refused to contemplate moving to a safer area explaining that it 'would take more than this [a glass and plaster strewn kitchen] to get me out of my home!' Mrs Payne was also on hand to provide tea and sympathy as well as spaces in the air raid shelter for the bombed out couple, Mrs Finch and her daughter, Doris, from across the road. The neighbourliness might sound a little forced but again the emphasis was on the need for mutual help and support.

Whether consciously or not the film also displayed a certain sang-froid in the face of the enemy air raid. After the warning is sounded many refused to go to the shelter. 'Tiny', the cabby, merely dons his tin helmet it was, 'after all', he said, 'his lucky day', as do all the men in the munitions factory. Perhaps, most bizarre of all was the short scene with Frank and Dougie, the GPO telephone engineers, who were engaged in repairing cables within a bombed out building. Frank threw himself on the ground on hearing the whistle of descending bombs and, after the detonation, called after Dougie who ambled into shot advising that he was not hurt as he had his 'fingers crossed!' The fairly obvious message of *Ordinary People* was that, although the aerial bombardment was destructive of property, most people would survive and the bombs could be largely ignored in many circumstances.

The recognition in this film that the damage to property would be far greater and casualties far fewer contrasted almost diametrically with that of earlier Government films such as, *If War Should Come/Do it Now* (GPOFU 1939). However, the actual survival of the vast majority of Londoners despite days or rather nights, of protracted bombing, contrary to what had been originally expected, contributed to a widely held perception about the Blitz. This attitude which had been introduced in the cinema as early as December 1940 with Jennings's *London Can Take It!* (later retitled as *Britain Can Take It!*) was reinforced in such films as *Ordinary People* and persisted beyond the mini-Blitz in the late summer and autumn of 1944 when the city was regularly attacked from air again, although this time with Hitler's Revenge weapons, the V1s and

V2s.³⁷ Indeed, the survivability of the vast majority in the face of aerial bombardment persisted as a feature of most official films until the 1960s when there was a general realisation that the hydrogen bomb had not only devastating destructive power but also generated lethal doses of radiation.³⁸

Ordinary People has a significant resonance with the research aims of this study. It was one of the few contemporary films about the Blitz which addressed some of its social impacts. It was therefore a valuable historical resource and to some extent shaped the British self-perception of a national, classless and somewhat humorous response to the bombing. The commercial companies in Britain produced very little contemporary or near-contemporary films which had the Blitz as the main backdrop. The obvious exception to this was *The Bells Go Down* (1943) starring Tommy Trinder and James Mason. This was released almost simultaneously with Jennings' CFU production *Fires Were Started* and essentially dealt with the same thing, the fire service response to the bombing. Elsewhere commercial feature length films utilised the Blitz as a means for enabling a romantic encounter, such as *The Lamp Still Burns* (1943) or to progress the narrative as in the deaths of Chief Petty Officer Hardy's (Bernard Miles) wife and mother-in-law in *In Which We Serve* (1942). Although the accuracy of *Ordinary People's* representation of a nation united against a common foe has been challenged by historians since the event, notably Angus Calder (1991) in *Myth of the Blitz* and refined later by Robert Mackay (2002) and Juliet Gardiner (2010), this interesting debate is really beyond the scope of this particular study.

Even after the German attack on Russia in the summer of 1941 and the lessening of both the aerial onslaught and the possibility of invasion, the Government still thought it necessary appeal to its citizens' patriotism. Indeed,

³⁷ The V1 (Vergeltungswaffen 1 or Revenge weapon 1) was a small pilotless jet bomb launched from 'ski-ramps' in France and the Low Countries. Once their fuel was exhausted they plunged to earth and exploded on impact. Even more frightening were the much larger V2s which were ballistic missiles. Being supersonic meant that there was no preliminary warning of engine noise before detonation.

³⁸ See Chapter Six for a fuller discussion of the impact of aerial attack.

the subsequent de facto alliance between Britain and the Soviet Union engendered a relatively short-lived but enthusiastic championing of Stalin and the Red Army. An example of this would be the CFU film *The Tale of Two Cities* (1942) which in this case were London and Moscow. It was a short seven minute film which also exemplified a particular type of CFU production, essentially an edit by John Monck of various newsreels and stock shots bound together by a narration. The authenticity of such a film would be substantiated by a commentary from an expert in the field which, in the case of *The Tale of Two Cities*, was the Wing Commander leading the RAF Wing (probably 151 Wing) which operated a small number of Hawker Hurricanes in Russia at the time in support of the Red Air Force.

The film was fundamentally a direct comparison between the two cities. So there were shots of balloon barrages and listening posts in both the UK and USSR. The commentary emphasised that those in Moscow learned from the London Blitz experience so 'Moscow was prepared'. In a contemporary and very pro-Russian review, fellow documentarist Edgar Anstey, made the observation in *The Spectator* that

the Russian scenes show Moscow's citizens equalling the fortitude of the Londoners, and the similarities are so close that it is not always possible to decide in which city the camera is located. No doubt it was part of the purpose of the film to stress this unity in courage of the anti-Nazi front (5 April 1942, p.11).

Indeed there were common scenes of relatively cheerful people chatting, singing and sleeping in underground railway stations to avoid the bombing and the principal difference between Britain and Russia seemed to be the ornateness of the Moscow Metro.

This film was important as an example of the surprising reversal of sentiment which developed in Britain in the aftermath of the German invasion in July 1941. The Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939 and the Winter War in Finland (November 1939 – March 1940) had exacerbated anti-Bolshevik feeling in the UK. With the Blitzkrieg assault of Operation Barbarossa there was almost a complete volte-face as things Russian suddenly became highly popular. Much

of this was, of course, both mawkish and, as subsequently revealed in later years, quite naïve. Even in April 1942 when *The Tale of Two Cities* was released its sentiments were wildly optimistic. The siege of Leningrad was not to be lifted for nearly another two years and the battle of Stalingrad was still six months in the future. However, the contemporary importance of this film was that it emphasised other civilians were suffering and that both populations could 'take it'. The short film concluded with a, now traditional, scene of tanks rumbling through Red Square and the exhortation that Churchill and Stalin were 'Defenders of Freedom, Avengers of Humanity!' As will be seen this was a standpoint which was fairly short-lived as wartime enthusiasm for Stalin and the Red Army became post-war fear and hostility.

As might be expected in wartime, one aspect of the British Government's policy was to reassure the population that 'we're all in this together' and to emphasise patriotism and many other CFU films can be categorised this way. Appendix 1 reveals that the vast majority of this type of film were produced and exhibited in the early years of the war when there had been little good military news and the civilian population was suffering from the depredations caused by both the German Luftwaffe and the U-Boat attrition of the Atlantic convoys. Sometimes these films were addressed directly to the British audience such as *India Marches* (1941), which looked at the military contribution from the sub-continent, in this case 15th Punjab Regiment; *Letter from Ulster* (1943) about American military training in the province, and *United Nations* (1942) which extolled the fact that Britain was no longer alone in its fight but was now a part of a global military alliance. The *United Nations* was also one of the first CFU productions to use colour film. Other films appear to not only have an intention of reassuring a domestic audience but also appealing to a worldwide audience that Britain and the British could and would 'take it'. So Jennings' *The Heart of Britain* (March 1941), *Words for Battle* (May 1941) and *Listen to Britain* (April 1942) with their stirring evocations of Britain past and present were aimed at both domestic and overseas audiences.

Participation in the War effort (21%)

The previous section's films were concerned about reassuring the civilian population that their sufferings had to be endured but these transcended social class and other divisions so that the entire population was all in it together. However, there was another category of films that encouraged and applauded those citizens who, although not in the armed forces, were working to assist the war effort or were, in the parlance of the times, 'doing their bit'. As might be expected the opportunities for such employment and activity during wartime were immense and consequently the films produced by the CFU reflected a variety of employment and situations.

An early example of this genre was *Venture Adventure* (1941), a seven minute short which was essentially a recruiting vehicle for the newly formed Air Training Corps (ATC). Indeed the film's somewhat ungrammatical title was derived from the ATC's motto. According to the film the Corps not only provided an introduction to all things aviation for those boys who wanted eventually to join the RAF but was suitable for all the 'healthy, virile and contented youth of Britain' [sic]. Although there were obvious militaristic elements, including the uniforms and marching, the film was anxious to give the impression that with fitness training and personal discipline the ATC was more akin to a boys club. It was therefore not just a recruitment vehicle for the RAF but also a sound preparation for adulthood. The overall impression the film gave was of happy teenage camaraderie which was demonstrated in the concluding shot of cheerful boys singing the Corps song, 'We are the ATC!'

Also in this category, but of a much longer duration at 30 minutes, and following the CFU pattern of utilising 'real' people in a drama documentary format, was Pat Jackson's *Ferry Pilot* (1942) which told the story of two pilots of 15 Ferry Pool of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA).³⁹ To confer additional authenticity one of the pilots shown in the film would have been reasonably recognisable to contemporary audiences as Jim Mollison, a famous Scottish aviator of the 1930s, but perhaps more widely known then as the husband of the even more

³⁹ Popularly known as 'Ancient and Tattered Airmen'.

famous aviatrix, Amy Johnson.⁴⁰ The ATA consisted of civilian pilots, often too old or infirm and definitely not suitable for combat flying but who were employed to deliver all types of aircraft from factories or repair shops to the operational or training squadrons of the RAF, Coastal Command or Fleet Air Arm. The pilots were recruited from across the globe and, probably in an effort to recognise the USA as a new ally, one of the ferry pilots in this film was an American.

The film followed a day in the operational cycle of an ATA Unit which had a pool of 50 ferry pilots. It opened with the Commanding Officer allocating tasks to the various pilots who were then flown by their Avro Anson 'taxi' to pick up their aeroplanes, mostly from factories, and fly them to their required destinations. The storyline focussed upon two pilots, an elderly Briton Thompson and his younger American colleague, Talbot. Throughout the film the American made complimentary remarks about the British countryside, British aircraft and even a British balloon barrage, all interlaced with standard Americanisms such as 'Gee, whizz' and 'back home in Alabama'.

Half way through the film the narrative was somewhat surprisingly interrupted by two apparently unconnected insertions. Firstly, the two pilots, before picking up aircraft to deliver, were introduced to two women pilots from another Ferry pool. This would seem to be a device to explain and applaud the role that women ferry pilots, such as Amy Johnson, played in the ATA. Cutaways to women pilots climbing aboard another air taxi and then others flying off in single engine planes served to emphasise the contribution that women were making in wartime, even in this fairly esoteric role. Secondly, and perhaps more difficult to explain, was that the film had a three minute section in the middle which was entirely of a single Spitfire flown, it was said, by a test pilot. The aircraft performed a series of stunts and manoeuvres, including rolls, loops, controlled stalls and a large amount of inverted flying. It did give Talbot the opportunity to declare, 'Gee, he really knows his stuff!' but beyond

⁴⁰ There is an irony here which would have probably not been lost on the contemporary audience. Amy Johnson had also been a member of the ATA and had died the year earlier when the plane she was ferrying crashed into the Thames estuary.

entertainment, spectacle and the eulogy to man and machine the purpose behind the section is unclear.

After these sequences the film resumed its storyline and the two pilots picked up a repaired Armstrong Whitworth Whitley bomber and, following a discussion on the aircraft's various foibles, it was shown taking off with Thomson at the controls and Talbot sitting behind reading an American comic. Unfortunately they had taken off too soon to be warned of an impending German raid on a town across which they had to fly. The audience was also reminded that, for security reasons, the aircraft had to maintain radio silence. There followed a section showing the Whitley flying over (presumably) England while cheerful farmers looked up from their task of harvesting wheat, all this against a light musical background. This was counterpointed by not only martial Germanic music but shots of German Heinkel bombers heading towards their target. The bombers were protected by Messerschmitt ME 110 fighters and there was a studio shot of a suitably arrogant pilot who noticed the lone Whitley flying on oblivious to the potential danger. As the Luftwaffe pilot dived to line up his target his observer was able to utter those words so beloved of British films and comics; 'Achtung Schpitfeuer!' The German was driven off and was last seen in flames, spiralling down to crash. Despite all this nearby action neither Thompson nor Talbot saw anything and their aircraft continued on to land at its home aerodrome. The last scene has the two pilots chatting with the CO discussing the following day's schedule. All of this went to demonstrate that the ATA performed an important task and were of the war, if not directly in the war.

Ferry Pilot has many of the hallmarks associated with CFU drama documentary productions. Its authenticity was confirmed by the use of 'real' people performing the same roles they did in their daily lives. Newsreel or stock shots not only from the UK but also, in this case, from German sources was interspersed to both add tension but also emphasise realism. By 1942 many in the cinema audience would have, if not seen, then certainly heard the asynchronous throbbing roar of the German bombers' engines so pictures of British bombers decked out with crosses on their wings (cf: *Men of the Lightship*) would have probably been regarded unfavourably. Although the director seems to have given much attention to ensuring that the German

planes were real and even the studio-based German pilot wore a Luftwaffe flying suit he was less punctilious regarding the continuity of other stock shots. The Whitley took off and landed in an obviously winter countryside, the trees were bare, the sky dour and yet the cutaways to the happy farmers supposedly watching the aircraft were enjoying the balmy weather at the height of summer.

Films such as *Ferry Pilot* and even *Venture Adventure* imparted important messages to cinema audiences. There were many roles in wartime which, although neither glamorous nor high in the public consciousness, were essential for the successful prosecution of the war. Such films as these either reminded people of this fact or were designed to inspire recruitment into these roles. In the case of *Venture Adventure* it not only encouraged boys to see the ATC as preparation to become a pilot in the RAF but it also reminded them that there were range of other essential jobs which were not necessarily flying ones. Further CFU films in this particular category included *The Pilot is Safe* (1941) about the Air-Sea Rescue service, *Merchant Seamen* (1941) about the important role the merchant marine played in getting supplies to the UK, a theme which was repeated a year or so later with *We Sail at Midnight* (1942). Both films along with the later, and more famous *Western Approaches* (1944), acknowledged the terrible losses inflicted during the Atlantic convoy runs. However, probably the most well-known of the CFU productions in this category would be Humphrey Jennings' *Fires Were Started* which was the slightly shorter version at 63 minutes of the originally titled *I was a Fireman*, which ran out at 74 minutes. As has already been noted earlier in this study a very few CFU films tend to dominate academic discussion and these particular films fall readily into this category. Therefore this research certainly acknowledges their importance as part of the canon of CFU productions but a detailed examination of them here is somewhat unnecessary as key aspects of the films have already been comprehensively researched, discussed and published by Brian Winston in his 1999 study for the BFI entitled *Fires were Started*.

Looking Forward to Peace (19%)

Although the bombings, the depredations, the rationing and the austerity of wartime generated an environment in which the Government, through the CFU, encouraged British citizens to accept that such was the price that had to be paid to defeat the Axis Powers it was soon realised that consideration also had to be given to the post-war shape and direction of British society and economy. There was a perceived concern that the public would not accept a return to the status quo ante especially as the experiences of the failures to build 'Homes for Heroes' and the Great Depression were fresh in the minds of citizens.

According to Peter Hennessy, 'from 1943 people began to show a willingness to itemise what was wrong with British society and to suggest ways of putting it right' (1992, p.78). Once the danger of invasion seemed to have passed and the Axis powers were on the retreat British citizens were increasingly focussed on post-war improvements in terms of, usually, more state intervention and better social services. In this they were encouraged not only by the actions of the wartime Coalition such as the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1942 or legislative changes like the 1944 Butler Education Act but also by the endorsement of expectations for the future as displayed in a number of Government sponsored Crown Film Unit productions.

A very early example of this category was Pat Jackson's *Builders*, an 8 minute short which was released in 1942. One of the apparently unexpected aspects of the Blitz was that the damage to property was greater than anticipated whereas loss of life was, fortunately, far less. It has already been noted that for the duration of the war some 30,000 Londoners were killed (Cmd 6832, 1946) yet in London alone over one million homes were destroyed or severely damaged (University of Portsmouth, 2013). Consequently this, alongside the dramatic increase in military building from coastal defences to aerodromes to barracks, meant an upsurge in the demand for construction workers of all types. What was particularly interesting in respect of this category was that Jackson's short film balanced immediate wartime needs with the expectations of a post-war world where builders would turn their hands to erecting schools and hospitals.

As with many CFU productions the 'actors' were builders themselves but where this film differed slightly is that it was essentially a dialogue between the unseen narrator, John Hilton, and those on screen. Indeed the first line in the film was the narrator's 'Hello, Bob' to which the on-screen builder, looking up from his task, responded, 'Hello Guv!' There then followed a conversation in which the builder, somewhat half-heartedly, offered critiques of the conditions and problems facing the contemporary industry. The life was apparently quite harsh and the workers often lived in on-site huts as they moved from job to job. The narrator, unsurprisingly, gently chided and in response pointed out the importance of the work being done. 'You may not be involved in mortal combat' but 'you are building the striking power of the nation'. From the newly constructed factories came weapons, ammunition, planes and so forth. As in other CFU productions stock shots were used to emphasise and prove these accomplishments. In a further acknowledgement of the sudden reversal of public opinion in respect of Russia, the narrator observed that some of these weapons would be finding their way to the Red Army.

Most types of building workers were covered under the *Schedule of Reserved Occupations* (Cmd 5936, 1939) and could be directed from site to site.⁴¹ This was hardly a glamorous existence and it was probable that the overall intention behind the film was to boost the morale of the construction workforce as being the 'unsung heroes' of the war effort.

However, this film not only informed the audience that the construction workers were doing 'their bit' but concluded with a section on the future. The narrator announced that after the war the money currently being used to build ordnance factories and the like should be used for more peaceful endeavours. He went on to challenge the pre-war economic system, arguing that after the war it 'should be different and better'. For example, he looked forward to an industry which had far 'less cut-throat competition'. By 1942 the central direction of the economy for war purposes had been generally accepted and there was, as this

⁴¹ In 1939 when the threat of war became inescapable the Government introduced conscription through the Military Training Act. Some occupations, coal miners, railwayman, construction workers and so forth were considered essential for the prosecution of the war and their jobs were exempt from conscription and were designated reserved occupations.

film exemplified, an assumption that this could and should be carried forward to peacetime for the benefit of the entire community.

However, within two years the whole war environment had changed and the advance of the Allied armies on the western front confirmed to many people that the war was winding its way slowly towards its end and that consideration ought to be given to the shape, structure and priorities of the new post-war world. It was in this atmosphere that CFU Director, Humphrey Jennings, conceived the idea which eventually became *A Diary for Timothy*. It is clear from the initial treatment of *A Diary for Timothy* that he was aware that 'the world and this island are at the end of an epoch' (TNA: INF6/1917). Although the film was eventually released just after the war ended, at the time of production it was assumed that the fighting would continue a great deal longer and for this reason in particular this film has been included in this category as one of the last of its type.

The result was a film unusual both in its concept, a diary which addressed a baby, and its production which went ahead without any form of script. CFU producer Basil Wright agreed to the shooting being done 'off the cuff' and allocated a sum of £300 for the initial research. Having decided that a baby was to be the hero of the film Jennings spent the summer of 1944 casting around for a mother whose baby was due in early September on, or about, the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the war. Fortunately for Jennings, friends had put him in touch with the chief obstetrician of Oxford, who in turn suggested that he contact the Queen Mary's Nursing Home at Eynsham, near Oxford, which provided confinement facilities for the wives of non-commissioned servicemen. From Jennings' perspective this was an ideal location being relatively easily accessible from both London and the CFU studios at Pinewood.

Doubly fortunate, Timothy James Jenkins, the son of a soldier serving in the Middle East was delivered on 3 September 1944. According to Betty Jenkins, Tim's mother, she only became aware that a film was being made,

when a thin artistic-looking young man came in and strode about the room looking at us from all angles. After a while, he turned to a woman I

got to know as his production assistant, 'Well, I'm satisfied, Di,⁴² if you are', he said. Then he left. He was quite abrupt' (Purcell, 1995, p.20).

It was observed in the production notes 'somehow it never occurred to Humphrey that it [the baby] might be a girl' (TNA: INF6/1917). Tim's early days, after the nursing home, were spent in the Rectory of Nuffield Church, near Henley in Oxfordshire where his grandfather was the local vicar. This further presented Jennings with not only some interesting footage but also the ability to later make comment upon Tim's 'comfortable' upbringing in rural England.

The film focused on Tim's first few months of life, from the 'tragedy of Arnhem to the hopes of San Francisco' (TNA: INF6/1917), and his development was intertwined and reflected in the lives of four adults who represented different but enduring characteristics of Britain at that time. The miner, Goronwy Jones, whose dirty and dangerous occupation combined with the dour and depressing Rhondda village of Ynysbwl personified traditional labour as well as providing interesting visual images and contrasts. Perhaps socially and economically at the opposite end of the scale Alan Bloom was an East Anglian farmer, author and film maker. Of the four adult 'heroes' Bloom was the only one who was already a minor celebrity in 1944. He had not only bought a derelict fenland farm and drained and reclaimed the land but he had filmed it as *Reclamation* (1943) in order to show others how it could be done. Whereas the filming of both Jones and Bloom posed little technical difficulties for Fred Gamage, the CFU cameraman, Jennings' third character was Bill Perry, a crack freight train driver for the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS). Gamage had to arrange to place a brake van directly behind the locomotive tender to house Jennings and the production crew while he and his camera were precariously perched on a platform on the tender itself. According to one interpretation of the script Bill was the one who united the others in the war effort by 'carrying the miner's coal, the farmer's crops and the fighting man's ammunition' (Purcell, 1995, p.20).

⁴² Diana Pine was Jennings' production assistant on this film.

Although one of Jennings' themes was that all of these men were heroes in their own way, his last character was actually a decorated airman. Flying Officer Peter Roper was a Typhoon pilot who had been shot down over France just after D-Day, sustaining a badly broken right leg. His real life adventures included being assisted by a French farmer and the local doctor, capture by the Germans and eventual release by the invading Allied troops. He was evacuated back to the UK and Jennings was able to film his physical and mental rehabilitation at the RAF Hospital in Loughborough. Unfortunately little is known about his background but, interestingly, Peter Roper was the only character in the film who was always referred to by his full name, including his surname; whereas everybody else was always addressed informally. What this actually signified remains a mystery.

The film was essentially constructed retrospectively by weaving in the four adult story lines with the background of the progress of the war and juxtaposing these to Tim's early life and development. The actual script for the film was written by E. M. Forster and was narrated by Michael Redgrave. It seems that Forster was enticed by Basil Wright to view a rough edit of Jennings' work and to create a commentary. Although it does seem that he had reservations about the project from the very beginning admitting, 'I don't trust my own judgement over films – I am either hypersensitive or obtuse – but I felt sympathetic to the general idea, and admired the sensitive details' (Lago and Furbank, 1983, p.212). His suggestions for changes appear to have been rejected but the final cut was moulded as much by his words as by Jennings' visualisation.

The film itself falls into three distinct, but unequal sections each of which was characterised by its own particular images and atmosphere but linked by the everyday requirements of a baby growing up. As such it moved from perhaps exaggerated optimism to disappointment to final realisation that the end of the war in Europe was imminent. So the introductory section covers the period from Tim's birth on the anniversary of the outbreak of the war until the news broke of the defeat and retreat from Arnhem at the end of September 1944. This was followed by a fairly depressing section in which direness of the weather was reflected in the problems facing the major adult characters and the obvious resilience of the Germans on the Western Front, culminating in the Ardennes

offensive in December 1944. The turning point of both the film and, by implication the war came on Christmas Day from when it was possible to appreciate a deeper concern about the transition from peace to war and the major changes war had caused. These were sometimes expressed openly and directly; while at other times remained implicit. For example, Alan Bloom, the farmer who combined tradition with new technologies observed, 'If it hadn't been for the war, I don't suppose we would have done it'. No doubt Bloom was echoing the views of many in his evident appreciation that the war had been, and would continue to be, an agent of massive change in all areas of society.

In the film the essential dynamism of the events and times were focussed around the central character of Tim. The birth of a baby is in itself a dynamic event as well as a tangible commitment to the future – a symbol of hope. So, the film asserted early on that the four major characters, and by implication all those involved, were fighting 'for you, Tim, and all the other babies'. The final shot of the film was a close up of Tim's face appearing out of the flames which have transformed from the fires of destruction to those of a Victory bonfire continued this theme. Here the hope for the future was rising phoenix-like from the carnage of war. A more cynical observer might also interpret this sequence as one in which danger still existed and society, personified by Tim, had just managed to escape from the fires this time. Similar images of renewal and renaissance appeared in the film after the Christmas and New Year festivities. Not only does this manifest itself in the somewhat crass pictures of growing plants and to a lesser extent in the building of 'pre-fabs' but more dramatically in the physical recovery from injury of both Goronwy and Peter Roper. Having been damaged by the war the two are seen undertaking physiotherapy and subsequently returning to their original occupations.

Concern about the transition from war to peace revealed itself in a number of other themes, both ethical and pragmatic, which run through the film. The imminent defeat of Germany brought into sharp focus the structure and nature of the post-war world. Given five years of war and the concomitant anti-Nazi and anti-German propaganda the post-war treatment of the German people raised important ethical questions. This issue is neatly conflated into one of the sequences and images which Jennings had used in one of his previous films,

Listen to Britain. The visual references in both films to the 'revival' of the Arts may have been slightly exaggerated but it did present an opportunity to address an obvious post-war concern. In both films Dame Myra Hess (a renowned classical concert pianist) performed before enraptured audiences. However by 1945 it now enabled the narrator, Michael Redgrave, to observe 'Did you like the music the lady was playing, Tim? Some of us think that it's the greatest music in the world, but it's German music.⁴³ That's something you'll have to think over'. Thus the difficult question of how Germany and the Germans would be treated in the post-war world was raised. Indeed, the transition from demonising a nation to dealing with a defeated and traumatised people would be an inevitable consequence of an Allied victory. Indeed, the closer to eventual victory in a historical sense, the more the film began to examine some of the conundrums likely to face a post-war Britain.

Thus, a radio announcer succinctly outlined the Yalta agreements (February 1945) while a child choir sang its praises to the 'the Red Army and the Glorious Fighting Forces of the United Nations'. Broadcasts of the successes of Stalin and the Red Army on the Eastern Front in the latter part of the film did not anticipate in any way the breakdown of trust between the Allies which was already a feature of the relationship between the Big Three, Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill, well before the final storming of Berlin. However, it is probable that for most people in Britain the nature of the domestic economy, of society and of the dominant political ethic was more important than the actual structure and organisation of a post-war Europe.

This concern for the post-war social and economic structure was referred to very early in Forster's commentary as Tim's 'comfortable' birth and situation was contrasted not just with similar children in wartime Holland and Poland but also with those in the 'slums of Glasgow and Liverpool'. Indeed, unlike some of the earlier CFU productions which tended to emphasise, if not the 'classless' nature of the home front then at least an easy relationship of mutual respect between the classes, *A Diary for Timothy* did illustrate class divisions and

⁴³ Beethoven's *Appassionata*, *Sonata in F Minor*, *Opus 57*, *1st Movement*.

distinctions with the strong implications that without a common enemy these may return to their pre-war state.

This concern was articulated by Goronwy, the Welsh miner and obvious representative of organised labour. In the only 'dream sequence' in the film, his younger self wandered the mountains above a pit village, contemplating a former peace in 1918 which was followed by depression, unemployment and another World War. It raised the obvious question, 'must this happen again?' There was an implied expectation that it must not and that workers such as Goronwy were entitled to better and more secure working conditions and better welfare services. This perspective was voiced in the next sequence by the contemporary Goronwy outlining to his wife a catalogue of achievements that had been made in the coal industry since the war began – 'an ambulance service, hospitals, canteens and pithead baths, so nothing can stop us after this war!' This, combined with a less than oblique reference earlier in the film to 'cutting coal like this for over 500 years' was consistent with Jennings' support for the miners and assumption that nationalisation would be beneficial for them and the country.

However, it would seem that mere social and economic improvements after the war would be deemed inadequate if they were not matched by political and ethical considerations. There was a significant emphasis on the return to political freedom and liberty which peace would bring, but this in turn meant obligations and responsibilities. The narrator intoned somewhat sombrely, 'Part of your bother, Tim, will be growing up free'. Indeed it was the dangers of that particular freedom which seemed to exercise Jennings and Forster. Life would continue to be dangerous and the film did emphasise that peace would not mean an end to industrial accidents and the like. However, it would also mean that that eventually Tim and, by implication everybody else, would soon have 'the right to choose, the right to criticise and the right to grumble'. So peace brought uncertainties and dangers which ironically contrasted with the wartime experience of regulations and direction in all areas of life. The ethical and moralistic dimension of the film was emphasised in an almost plaintive plea to Tim at the very end. 'What are you going to say about it, what are you going to do about it?' Tim is presented with a dramatic choice, 'Are you going to have

greed for money and power as they have done in the past ousting decency from the world? Or are you going to make the world a different place, you and the other babies?’

As such *A Diary for Timothy* was an important CFU film as it represented a nation on the cusp of change. It was an effective exposition of the concerns of the time; as the war was ending, there was a need to reflect, take stock and ponder as to what would be the shape of the post-war world. Although, along with Goronwy, Jennings and Forster were obviously concerned about the post-war political, social and economic structures, at the end of the film they seemed more worried about the ethical and moral behaviour of the post-1945 generation. The tragedy, of course, was that their film was exhibited when that post-war world was a reality. Britain in the late 1940s and 50s was a mere shadow of what they had hoped for in the film. This was doubly tragic as the other British film of note being premiered that week in November 1945 was, unfortunately for Jennings and the CFU, the Oscar nominated *Brief Encounter*.

Between the exhibition of *Builders* and *A Diary for Timothy* the CFU produced an increasing number of films which considered the shape of the post-war world. Most of these lacked the introspection and thoughtfulness of *A Diary for Timothy* and were much more direct in their endorsement of the potential opportunities that peace might provide. For example, *Children's Charter* (1945), was a straightforward explanation of Government Education policy and the implications, in particular, of the 1944 Butler Education Act. This, according to the film, would 'give all our children an equal and fair start in life, and one of its most important sections gives every child the right to free secondary education' (TNA: INF6/363). It would be provided in a new selective system in which children would be chosen at the age of eleven to attend, usually, a Modern school which would lead to employment and apprenticeships or, for the more academic child, a Grammar school.

Sisal (1945), on the other hand, was essentially a film which reviewed the growing and processing of the cactus-like plant in the East African colony of Tanganyika (now Tanzania). It explained its importance to rope production which in turn supported the war effort. Although in one sense this film could

easily be situated in the War Effort category as it clearly demonstrated the efforts being made in one of Britain's colonies, however, it concluded with a short section which looked forward to the 'increasing prosperity which peace will bring' when we can all look forward to sisal being used, not for towing or mooring ropes but 'sacks, string, doormats, glamorous summer hats and even the dartboard in the local pub'.

By 1945 and the general eager expectation of imminent peace some CFU films became almost excessively optimistic. *Transatlantic Airport*, for example, has a feel-good storyline about a British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) flight to and from Canada bringing essential medication for the sick son of a very British, stiff upper lipped, Mr Brown. The film followed the flight crew in their briefing and eventually their safe return to Prestwick with the necessary drugs. By using this life saving journey as an exemplar the narrator went on to argue that 'flying will be the biggest factor in stopping future wars'. So increasing transcontinental and, presumably, trans-European flights would enable the peoples of the world to get to know one another and, by doing so, reduce the need, or at least desire, to resort to war. The irony that mankind's hope for the future rested on aviation at a time in history when war had been prosecuted by air attack as in the Blitz or Hiroshima, seemed to have been lost on director, Michael Gordon.

Miscellaneous (3%)

It was hardly surprising that the vast majority of the films produced by the CFU between 1940 and 1945 were dominated by the impact of the Second World War. However, despite this, there was at least one film which defied obvious classification. *Myra Hess* was released to the non-theatrical circuit in the summer of 1945. Dame Myra Hess was a famous classical pianist responsible, with Sir Alan Clark, for starting a series of popular lunchtime concerts at the National Gallery that continued throughout the war. Dame Myra had featured in Humphrey Jennings' films, *Listen to Britain* and *A Diary for Timothy* in both of which there were short clips of her playing Mozart⁴⁴ and Beethoven at the

⁴⁴ Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 17 in G major, K 453.

National Gallery concerts. The rushes for the latter eventually became this short film featured Beethoven's *Appassionata, Sonata in F Minor, Opus 57, 1st Movement* and must have lain in the CFU archive as, in 1945, film editor John Trumper re-edited it to show the entire performance. The film was essentially an edit of four camera angles of Dame Myra playing, without commentary or introduction, and has some of the hallmarks of an early music video. It appears that the film did not have commercial exhibition but was made available to the non-theatrical circuit. It is therefore perhaps best regarded as something of a personal tribute by Trumper to a magnificent pianist who helped raise the profile of classical music in Britain, during the Second World War.

James Chapman concluded his *The British at War* with

The images of the of the British at war presented through the cinema were powerful and dramatic means of constructing the people as united in their common struggle, but in the last analysis those images were perhaps just a heightened version of reality (1998, p.254).

A review of all the CFU films produced during wartime certainly corresponds with the main tenor of Chapman's conclusion, however, it would also suggest there was a much more complex film response to both the conflict and to the development of a commonly accepted national identity. When the range of CFU short productions are taken into account it is possible to identify an assortment of themes within that all-encompassing concept of 'national sprit' but also that these themes were fluid and changed over time to reflect alterations in policies, perceptions and anxieties.

The films being produced by the CFU when the war ended in the summer of 1945 were substantially different from those when the Unit was created in 1940. Gone were the blunt anti-German messages and appeal to endurance in the face of adversity to be replaced by those which looked forward to the post-war world with more or less optimism. A major factor in the importance of the CFU both at the time and retrospectively was that through its films it is possible to discern not only the changing priorities of the Government but also the shifting concerns and anxieties of the general population. Thus the CFU, with its cinema and non-theatrical audience of millions, provided an important

confirmation of the policies and attitudes of the time. It was a constant monitor and reflector in a time of immense challenge and change and its films revealed this not only in the UK but, as will be seen in Chapter Five, in the wider world.

One of the principal features which made CFU productions appear to be representative of the prevailing 'national spirit' was that they often purported to be more or more or less authentic representations of a real situation. Certainly the Unit often went to some lengths to film people in their natural job roles or environment. Sometimes this was enhanced by a respected narrator to confer a degree of authority or perhaps, honesty, in the productions. This ranged from famous actors such as Laurence Olivier in *Words for Battle* (1940) or, as has been seen, Michael Redgrave in *A Diary for Timothy*. Sometimes the apparent authenticity of a film was boosted by a commentary from one of the participants as, for example, a Wing Commander in *The Tale of Two Cities* or the ordinariness of residents of Cwmgiedd, a Welsh mining village, in Jennings' *Silent Village* representing the victims of Lidice. This desire for a form of authenticity was not only apparent in the choice of performers but often also in the actual shooting of the films. Locations were chosen to be as realistic as possible and, in wartime, these had additional perils. While shooting the convoy scenes in Pat Jackson's *Western Approaches* (1944), three merchant ships were torpedoed and sunk. If a film required shots of the enemy it was increasingly likely that the Unit would use captured or acquired footage as in *Ferry Pilot* (1942).

A review of the canon of the wartime productions of the CFU demonstrates that its films reflected something of the national mood as well as the Government's priorities at the time and as such it is an important, if neglected, aspect of wartime history. However, whether this apparent congruence of the productions of the Government's principal film mouthpiece and the population at large would survive the entirely different world after 1945 will be examined in the next chapter.

4. Post-War Production Themes, 1946 - 1952

The end of the Second World War removed a key focus for both Government policy and, by implication, for CFU productions. The primary emphasis was no longer the winning of the war but rather addressing the multiplicity of problems which peace had brought. Although the vast majority of the CFU's films (70%) were produced after the end of the war these have tended to be dismissed by film historians and commentators. Even quite recent reviews of post-war British films have given the CFU short shrift. For example, Neil Rattigan, wrote in 2001 that 'before it [the CFU] went, it must be noted, it did make a considerable number of post-war films; standard histories of either the British cinema or documentary film fail to note a single one as being of any real significance' (p.252). This chapter will show that such dismissive comments fail to recognise the range, variety and importance of CFU productions up until its eventual closure in the spring of 1952. The diversity of the topics prepared for screening by the CFU in the immediate post-war years addressing the needs of an assortment of sponsors for differing purposes and audiences, demonstrated that post-war the Unit had increasingly become a multi-functional film production facility. As such this chapter will demonstrate that these films not only reflected the changing priorities of the British Government and people in the immediate post-war years but also they are an undervalued historical resource.

VE Day (5 May 1945) had been followed more quickly than anticipated by VJ day (6 August) and between these two events Britain had rejected its wartime leader Winston Churchill and elected, by landslide, Clement Attlee's Labour administration. The end of six years of a conflict which had mobilised Britons across all social classes and regions was both anti-climactic and confusing. At all levels of society there was the obvious question 'and now what?' Although historians have disagreed as to the extent of the overall change that had occurred between 1939 and 1945 it was undeniable that pre-war organisations and structures had changed to accommodate wartime demands but it was unclear whether returning to an ante-bellum status would suffice in the political,

social and economic circumstances that existed both nationally and internationally after 1945.⁴⁵

This confusion extended to the CFU as, during the summer of 1945, it was uncertain to those in the Unit whether or not it would continue in existence. According to Robert Fraser, the Director General of the Central Office of Information (COI), in his first annual report, '[the CFU's] internal self-confidence was shaken by the prolonged uncertainty about its future' (TNA: INF 12/1584). Had they but known, the post-war prospects for the Unit had already been the subject of speculation. Responding to the Barlow Report on the future of the Mol⁴⁶ (April 1944) Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken, was reported as saying,

it was [his] view that the Ministry of Information should disappear immediately on the termination of hostilities with Germany: that the publicity activities undertaken by the Mol on behalf of other Government Departments should revert to those Departments.....We strongly recommend that certain of the activities and techniques which have developed for war needs should be permanently retained even if their scale has to be somewhat reduced..... The Films Division is concerned both with production and with distribution...On the assumption that the flow of Government commissions to private production companies for documentary films is sufficiently steady to keep those companies in efficient production, *it may not be strictly necessary for the Government to maintain its own production unit in peacetime*, [my italics] but there are obvious advantages in so doing. It would be helpful to have some

⁴⁵ See for example Arthur Marwick (1974) who argued that the war generated huge changes whereas earlier Henry Pelling (1970) was far less certain.

⁴⁶ Sir Alan Barlow of the Treasury was the Chairman of the group asked, in 1944, to examine the role of the Ministry of Information as part of the overall review of the Machinery of Government to ensure its fitness for the post-war world. For more information see J.M. Lee, (1977) *Reviewing the Machinery of Government, 1942-1952*.

organisation capable of securing effective distribution (TNA: INF 1/941 p.2).

The election of a Labour Government in 1945 did not minimise the debate about the future of both Government information services or the continued existence of the CFU. Tom Wildy (1986) and Mariel Grant (1999) have both described the somewhat tortuous twists and turns as the Government grappled firstly with the information demands of a wartime economy and then with the equally difficult post-war problems of, especially, austerity and the growing threat from the Soviet Union. There was also a widespread conceptual concern about Government control of the distribution of information which was neatly encapsulated by Herbert Morrison, the new Lord President of the Council, who wrote in September, 1945;

The machinery of publicity which was suitable for war is, however, in a variety of ways, unsuitable for peace. In war, issues are simplified, controversy is in the background and even undisguised Government propaganda is recognized to have its place. In peace the task of a Government publicity service is more difficult and delicate, and in the domestic field its primary function must be to convey to the public the facts, pleasant or unpleasant, which are necessary for the understanding of 'operative' Government policy (TNA: CAB 78/37).

In essence it highlighted the conundrum, addressed in more detail in Chapter One, which has faced democratic governments since the development of the mass media and a literate electorate, which is 'when does the provision of information by the Government become partisan propaganda?' This debate continues to the present day with discussions of what is often euphemistically known as 'information management'.⁴⁷ However, in the context of 1945 it was decided that the wartime success of the MoI in coordinating Government information should continue, if in a reduced and truncated fashion. So one of the principles agreed by the Cabinet was that,

⁴⁷ Recent blatant examples of 'information management' range from Margaret Thatcher's 1985 desire to remove the 'oxygen of publicity from [IRA] terrorists' to news management during the two Iraq conflicts (Newton, 2013).

There should be machinery for the co-ordination of both overseas and home publicity, so that the different Departments concerned with overseas publicity present a 'common line', which where necessary, is related to home publicity, and so that, as far as possible, publicity at home is consistent and overlapping and conflicts are avoided (TNA: CAB 134/306).

As Bracken had earlier surmised, the MoI was indeed disbanded and its role effectively downgraded to a non-ministerial department, akin to that of the Stationery Office. The new organisation, which commenced operation in April 1946 was the Central Office of Information (COI) and, now without a Minister, came under the purview of the Lord President of the Council, who at that time was Herbert Morrison. Thus, as part of this arrangement, the CFU continued as the Government's own film production facility, although essentially now producing films for Departmental sponsors rather than on its own initiative. In particular it had to carry out one of the principal functions of the new COI 'to maintain liaison with all departments on their publicity requirements and to keep them apprised of new developments in publicity techniques' (Grant, 1999, p.63).

Although this new arrangement introduced some constraints which are outlined more fully below the CFU's staff interpreted their role fairly liberally. They were, after all, the Government's experts in the cinematic field and, despite subsequent dismissive comments such as that of Rattigan above, were able to use their technical skills to produce films which bear sound comparison with those more famous ones produced during wartime. The award of an Oscar in 1950 for *Daybreak in Udi* was some tangible evidence that the CFU did, indeed, produce films of 'real significance' in the post-war years.

Themes in Post-War Films

As in the previous chapter the categorisation of the films produced by the CFU clarified, illustrated and tracked changes in those issues which were of contemporary concern both for the Government and to a greater or lesser extent the civilian population. Victory in 1945 had created a much more diverse national and international environment than that of wartime, priorities shifted

and developed according to a range of stimuli. This thesis has contended that CFU productions tended to reflect changing perspectives, however, the delay between pitch and exhibition meant that the immediate publicity needs of Government were met by cinema 'flashes'⁴⁸ or the more traditional poster or newspaper advertisements, rather than shorts or longer films. The requirement for the CFU to pitch for and produce films acceptable to particular Government Departments also contributed to delays and confusion as was early noted by the *Kinematograph Weekly*,

The COI is more in the nature of an agency. The COI does not, in the main, originate film ideas itself; it passes on the desires of other Government departments and arranges for the production of pictures rather as a broker.

This inevitably means delay. If the Ministry of Health wants a picture about diphtheria, it follows that there need to be consultations not only between the COI and the producer, but also with the COI back to the Ministry of Health. The job becomes a triangle not a straight line. This is unavoidable, and it means that the pictures take longer in the planning stages (9 October 1947).

Despite these difficulties many of these films not only reflected the important issues of the day but some were of exceptional quality and became archetypes for many later public information and similar films.

As in the case of the wartime productions discussed in the previous chapter a particular film might reasonably be allocated to more than one theme or category. However, the principal criterion for assignment has been a judgement as to the key or primary focus of a particular film and these are listed in Appendix 3. Sometimes, even though the film is extant and the departmental sponsor known, its allocation to a category is difficult especially when there is no documentary evidence explaining either the purpose behind the film or the nature and response of any audience. An example of this would be Jack Holmes' 1949 film *The People at Number 19*. This 25 minute film was longer

⁴⁸ Very similar in purpose to the First World War film 'tags'.

than a normal cinema short but, unusually for CFU non-feature films, was classified by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) as Certificate A [Adult]; thus deemed unsuitable for children unless accompanied by an adult.

The People at Number 19 was a melodrama sponsored by the Ministry of Health. The topic of the film was not evident from its title and neither did the first few minutes provide any enlightenment as they merely showed a conversation over the kitchen table between Ken (Desmond Carrington) and his mother-in-law (Margery Fleeson) in which eventually his wife's pregnancy was revealed. His wife, Joan (Tilisa Page), then entered the room in an obvious state of high anxiety having just returned from a visit to the doctor. On the mother-in-law withdrawing there followed a scene of confrontation and recrimination as Joan revealed that she had been diagnosed with syphilis. There was an initial assumption that her husband had been guilty of infecting her, although this was contradicted by his announcement that he had been tested on leaving the Army. The unstated implication of this, of course, was that he must have believed that he had previously exposed himself to potential infection. Subsequently Joan confessed that, in Ken's absence during the war, she had a one night stand with somebody who, she now appreciated, must have been suffering from syphilis. The consequent heated discussion revealed popular concerns about the foetus's health but Joan had been reassured that, with treatment, all would be well. The final shot of Ken leaving the house to seek new accommodation initially in high dudgeon was tempered by him relenting and encouraging Joan to accompany him. This somewhat anticlimactic conclusion does not accord with the dramatic warnings about the dangers of venereal disease which had been a major feature of the wartime and immediate post-war years.⁴⁹ Here was a film which did not moralise about the disease and was not a warning about syphilis and its potential dreadful side effects. It was instead a rather sympathetic and empathetic observation of a domestic situation which must have faced a number of the parents of the boomer generation. Was this a film for general public information or for

⁴⁹ For discussions on the incidence and impact of venereal disease in the UK during and immediately after the Second World War see Adrian Bingham (2005), or Roger Davidson and Lesley Hall (2001).

particular audiences such as medical and social workers? Although ascription to one or other of the categories is problematic on current evidence, on balance it would probably be best to situate it within the more general public education grouping.

The following categorisations have therefore been based upon what evidence is available although this, in most cases, is inadequate for more than a reasonable heuristic allocation. However, there were a small number of films produced by the CFU in the post-war years which deliberately addressed multiple topics. The CFU contributed to two cinemagazines,⁵⁰ which were short ten or fifteen minute length films containing different items of interest for either a specialist or general audience. The Unit produced the first half dozen *Mining Reviews* (1947-1948) which were intended for colliery and mining community audiences explaining issues and developments around such themes as nationalisation, mechanisation and safety. The other cinemazine series produced by the CFU was *This is Britain...* which had been created originally by Merlin Films at the request of the Board of Trade principally for overseas distribution. Merlin produced thirty six of these magazine shows from 1946 but was unable to continue after 1949 and the final fifteen were made by the CFU, the series being finally discontinued by the new Conservative Government in 1952. The CFU did amend the content of these short films away from random short interest items to a style and content more akin to its tradition. Most of the CFU's *This is Britain* films addressed a particular theme; for example, *This is Britain*, Number 43 is sub-headed *Health* (1950) and contained brief items on cold and influenza research, syringe manufacture and artificial limbs.

However, the vast majority of CFU productions tended to focus on one major topic although, of course, there were often minor sub-themes evident as well. The themes outlined below arise from both a review of the films themselves and an appreciation of the context in which they were produced. For a more detailed discussion of the political, social, economic and historical environment of the immediate post-war years in Britain that underpin these categories it is

⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion and explanation of cinemagazines see Emily Crosby and Linda Kaye, (2008). *Projecting Britain: The Guide to British Cinemagazines*.

possible to refer to a variety of texts including those by Paul Addison (1994), Peter Calvocoressi (1978), William Crofts (1989), Peter Hennessey (1992) and Kenneth Morgan (1984).

1. Financial Problems: Unfortunately, although one of the Big Three victorious nations, the economic cost of the Second World War to Britain was enormous.⁵¹ In essence the Government was faced with a series of severe economic and financial issues associated with rebuilding exports on the basis of often painfully decrepit and outdated industries, a series of foreign exchange crises and, to cap it all, one of the worst winters in living memory in 1947. For the general public the fruits of victory were continued rationing, shortages and exhortations to work harder to not only improve the balance of payments but also because 'Extra effort now means better living sooner' (Crofts, 1989, p.153).
2. Unfinished Business: The victory in Europe in May of 1945 did not, of course, end British concern or involvement with Germany. There were many practical issues encompassing the Allied occupation of Germany. Britain had become responsible for all aspects of administration in north-west Germany, including such major cities as Hamburg, Cologne and Dusseldorf. Not only was this a significant and continuing drain on resources but it also raised ethical questions about the treatment of a defeated enemy.
3. New Jerusalem:⁵² From quite early on during the Second World War the Coalition Government, and especially its Labour Party component, was concerned with the potential social, political and economic character of the post-war world. As has been seen a number of CFU films had already been

⁵¹ A good summary of the causes, consequences and events of the immediate post-war years can be found in Alec Cairncross's (1985) *Years of Recovery – British Economic Policy 1945-1951*.

⁵² In his speech to the 1951 Labour Party Conference in Scarborough introducing the party's manifesto for the forthcoming election Attlee concluded his resumé of the Government's achievements with some lines from William Blake's *And did those feet in ancient time*, more popularly known as *Jerusalem*. Subsequently many authors and commentators from Vernon Bogdanor, (2010) *From New Jerusalem to New Labour: British Prime Ministers from Attlee to Blair* to David Kynaston, (2007) *Austerity Britain: Tales of a New Jerusalem* have used the term to describe both the intentions and achievements of the post-war Labour Government. I have therefore continued the device.

released envisaging a post-war world, amongst their number were *Builders* (1942) and *Transatlantic Airport* (1945) which were also discussed in the previous chapter. Clement Attlee's landslide victory at the General Election of 1945 was, in no short measure, a result of the electorate demanding that wartime sacrifices should be repaid by significant improvements in living and working conditions in Britain. Accommodating these raised expectations in the face of severe financial constraints and was a feature of a number of CFU films.

4. Technological Change: The wartime years had seen dramatic advances in science, engineering and medicine, all of which had contributed to the defeat of the Axis Powers. The recent exhibition at the London Science Museum, *Churchill's Scientists* (23 January 2015 to 1 March 2016) demonstrated quite comprehensively the range of wartime scientific advances in, for example, molecular genetics, robotics or nuclear power. Such developments would be applied rapidly to the peacetime world resulting in changes in both technologies and the consequent employment opportunities.
5. Social Change: Almost as obvious as, and perhaps more profound than, the technological changes were those wrought at a societal level. From the basic demographics of the nation to the expectations of the different social classes the war had a significant impact. Even at a basic nutritional level the war had been a major influence so, according to Harold Smith, 'especially for the lower income groups the wartime diet was superior to that before 1939 and contributed to the improved health of the population after 1942. People ate more vegetables, less sugar and fatty meat and ate dark bread from which less of the vitamin content had been removed by milling' (1996, p.7). Similar improvements were also noted by Smith in such areas as health, and especially maternal and infant health, education and social welfare.
6. Colonies: At the end of the Second World War Britain still remained a major colonial power. Defeats by Japan in the Far East, including the fall of Singapore in February 1942 and the later invasion of Burma may have

dened the myth of imperial invincibility and indeed subsequently weakened any desire to remain in control of the Indian sub-continent, but this still left Britain with a large number of sub-Saharan African colonies as well as those in the West Indies, South East Asia and Polynesia. These colonies in particular also retained an important role in providing Britain with raw materials for various industrial processes.⁵³

7. Red Menace: The comradeship of the wartime allies, Britain, USA and USSR did not long survive VE Day as the division and occupation of Germany revived the old hostilities between what was essentially Western Capitalism and Soviet Communism. Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech was made at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri in March 1946 and eloquently described the contemporary situation and, indeed, one which was to pertain for nearly the next half century. By 1951, a new Cold War had already created a number of potential flashpoints such as the Berlin Blockade (1948-1949), the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960) and the Korean War (1950-1953) any one of which could have easily morphed into a more general international conflict.
8. Public Education and Information: Given the many problems that the country faced in the immediate post-war years the Government used the opportunity of the continuing agreement with the Cinema Exhibitors Association to produce films which addressed a variety of issues, such as the regular seasonal concerns of *Christmas is Coming* (1951), a short animated film for the General Post Office (GPO) reminding people to post early for Christmas. Others extolled the beauties of Britain, like *Rhondda and Wye* (1947) which looked at the contrasting landscapes along the two rivers, for national or international audiences.
9. Specialist Audiences: As the CFU was recognised as the Government's principal film making facility it was hardly surprising that it was

⁵³ David Goldsworthy (1971), *Colonial Issues in British Politics – from 'colonial development' to 'wind of change'* provides a comprehensive and thoughtful explanation of Britain's relationship with the colonies up until the early 1960s.

commissioned to produce films which were needed by individual Government Departments. This was particularly the case with training or recruitment films, often with a security aspects, such as *Fire's the Enemy* (1951) which encouraged people to join the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS). Other films were designed and created for discrete audiences such as the farming industry, for which the film *Breeding for Milk* (1947) was conceived. As the title suggested this film dealt with issues specific to those farmers managing dairy herds.

As in the previous chapter the full listing of the CFU post-war films and their allocation into particular classifications can be found in Appendix 3. Also the same caveats about specific classification and distribution within categories apply. Despite the economic difficulties and the constraints of sponsors' often conflicting demands the CFU continued to produce films which often interpreted the original briefs in a creative and thoughtful manner. These eventually became exemplars for short films and, especially, Public Information Films in the 1950s and beyond.

Financial Problems (4%)

Although the CFU produced a large number of films which addressed a variety of topics in the post-war period the context which almost always underpinned them, and which frequently surfaced, was the parlous state of the British economy. Although these issues relating to austerity regularly appeared in many films there were only a few which directly addressed the economic and financial crises. Some of these films lauded the export achievements of particular industries which, in turn, would improve the nation's balance of payments. The 1951 short, *Over to You*, for example, was sponsored by the Economic Information Unit (EIU) and described how British hosiery manufacturers were introducing new technologies, principally from the United States, to improve productivity. Other films in this category were more obviously targeted at improving the nation's understanding of the financial problems. The title of the 1949 short *Dollars and Sense*, also sponsored by the EIU, was fairly self-explanatory and was a review of the balance of payments

crisis and the subsequent need to devalue the pound against the dollar in September 1949.

At a more basic level *Pop Goes the Weasel* (1948) was a slightly tongue in cheek explanation of how income tax was spent and was introduced on screen with the unsettling quotation from Tacitus, 'Britons are a people who cheerfully comply with taxation'.⁵⁴ The short ten minute film, sponsored by the Treasury, was a conversation between a Scottish park keeper and a curmudgeonly individual who complained about the level of income tax. Taking him to task the park keeper explained with both diagrams and the use of coins how the Government spent the money. The film was an important reminder to the audience that, although the war had been over for a number of years, the country was still paying for it. According to the park keeper, of every one pound raised in income tax, 9s [45p], went to pay off war debts. The war had been very expensive and the example of one artillery shell costing £2.10s [£2.50] was given with the overall cost of the war estimated at £162 per second. Despite this debt burden some of the income tax revenue [7s 9d or about 38p] was allocated to post-war reconstruction of homes, schools, hospitals and many other areas including 2s 4d [12p] which subsidised food prices. Although the viewer was certainly subjected to a welter of financial statistics in a very short span of time the key message was that the Government's social welfare projects were being introduced but at a restricted pace as Britain's war debt still accounted for a significant proportion of national spending.

The same year the CFU produced a feature length film on a similar topic, *A Yank Comes Back* (1949). The Yank in question was Burgess Meredith, perhaps better known to later British television audiences as The Penguin in the 1960s series *Batman* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1966-1968). The 'Comes Back' aspect referred to the fact that Meredith had previously made, and starred in, the wartime film *Welcome to Britain* (1943). William Crofts believed that this connection would mean that 'the British public would be deceived into thinking that the film [*A Yank Comes Back*] was made for audiences in the US'

⁵⁴ The original quotation can be found in Tacitus's *Life of Agricola; With an account of the Situation, Climate and People of Britain* Publishers in English, various since 1763.

(1989, p.60). Nonetheless, this is probably unlikely as the original *Welcome to Britain* was made for, and seen almost exclusively by, US military personnel deployed to the UK. However, Meredith did provide an entertaining vehicle by which the Government could explain its achievements in the context of severe financial constraints. As the title indicated the film purports to be the story of a GI returning to, and travelling around, Britain and discovering what had happened since the end of the war. Using stock shot footage from earlier CFU productions (INF 6/406) such as *Listen to Britain* (1942) and *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) the impression of a traveller visiting all parts of Britain was created by the artifice of a breathless couple of cameraman who regularly discussed on screen where they either were supposed to be or where they were off to imminently. The message of the film was conveyed by informal interviews between Meredith and assorted representatives of various sections of British society – miners, steelworkers, housewives, farmers and so forth. Unfortunately, according to Crofts, ‘the real people were given lines to recite and became embarrassingly artificial in doing so’ (1989, p.61). The film did attempt to address the concerns about rationing and other privations as well as to emphasise those post-war successes in science and engineering, such as the ultimately ill-fated Brabazon aircraft or atomic fission. However, when discussing less obviously filmic achievements as improvements in coal and steel production the inclusion of the dry statistics did not make especially riveting viewing. Meredith’s concluding statement to camera sums up the intentions of the film, which was sponsored by the Economic Information Unit.

Well, this is very difficult, because the way I see it, you’ve had a bad war, a total war, which has cost you so much in blood and pounds that you should have collapsed afterwards, but you haven’t. It hasn’t even got you down or hasn’t got you confused. It’s got a lot of other people down and confused, but it certainly hasn’t got you, and that’s fooled the experts. And I get the impression that maybe you’ll never be as rich as you were, I don’t know, but what you have is going to be enjoyed by more people than it used to, and to me, that’s a brave new world, I don’t know anybody else that is doing it as well. That’s not the kind of thing you can put down on film. In the first place, you see, so few people

would believe you and none of the British would, not even if the script was written by Shakespeare and polished up by Walt Whitman, because it doesn't make sense that this old lion should have gotten out of his sick bed, but he has, whether you know it or not, I could hear him all the time I was walking round Britain, I could hear him stretching and practicing his vocal chords, and licking his wounds and any minute now the world is going to hear him get up on his haunches and roar like hell and rush straight at the camera (TNA: INF 6/400).

Meredith's final observation following his hurried screen journey around post-war Britain might have been well-intentioned but it does not appear to have been very successful. Writing to the Director General of the COI in 1949 about the in-house production of films Ronald Tritton, latterly Publicity Officer at the War Office but at that time Head of the COI Films Division, commented that 'the[ir] record is simply ghastly – false and feeble and fumbling start after start, wasted money, strained tempers, horribly wasted effort and talent, and on a few films that have been completed *Cumberland* and *Yank* total distribution flops' (TNA: INF 12/542).

Although the state of the post-war British economy was the major determinant of policy convincing the public through the cinema screen that austerity and deprivation had to continue well into peacetime proved to be a difficult objective to achieve despite the talents of the filmmakers of the CFU.

Unfinished Business (5%)

Another theme which continued throughout the immediate post-war years was the future of Germany. Indeed as soon as the war in Europe had ended the CFU dispatched a film crew along with director, Humphrey Jennings, to make a film about conditions in Germany under occupation. *A Defeated People* (1946) was one of Jennings' last films for the CFU. It was a thoughtful and reflective production which addressed directly many of the emotions surrounding the defeat of the Nazis. The film commenced with shots of devastated cities bombed into acres of ruins against which voices over are quite vengeful, declaiming that 'they' started the war so 'they' should be made to suffer and

pay. The narration, by William Hartnell,⁵⁵ actually stated that ‘a lot of Germany is dead’. Moving from the enormity of physical destruction the film showed the effects that it had upon the people. This included the visually dramatic problem of the DPs (displaced persons) scanning often pathetic messages attached to doors and lamp-posts, seeking news of missing relatives. As the narrator observed, ‘thirty million out of a population of nearly seventy million are seeking someone’. People were also shown existing in the cellars of bombed out buildings but, as Hartnell explained, the people still had a will to live, and represented ‘the indomitable spirit of Germany’. From this point onward the film increasingly explained to the audience that, although victorious, the Allies could not afford to ‘live next door to a diseased neighbour’. This meant that the military government had a responsibility to encourage the Germans to put their own house in order. Ironically the film went on to identify that one of the most severe problems facing Germany in 1945-46 was actually caused by the Allied post-war settlement itself. The French demand for coal reparations had meant that much German coal was exported and very little was therefore available for the production of steel.⁵⁶ Without steel, of course, there were extreme difficulties in any form of reconstruction. What the solution was to this was left in the air by Jennings. However, the medium of film with its widespread national exhibition did enable a complex problem to be placed within the public domain. Probably of greater concern to a British audience than the economic travails of Germany was the condition and future behaviour of the German people. Here too the film seemed initially to be quite hostile to the average German citizen. In a food rationed Britain the fact that the Germans were existing on half the calorific intake of those in the UK was no doubt seen as poetic justice. Similarly, the physical treatment of the German population by the British occupation forces was shown on screen to be quite robust. There was, for example, a scene on a railway platform where an elderly German was

⁵⁵ William Hartnell (1908 – 1975) was perhaps best known to British television audiences as the first *Dr Who*. However, before then he had a substantial film and later television career ranging from *Brighton Rock* (1947) to *The Army Game* (ITV 1957–1961).

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the post-war European iron and steel industries see John Gillingham, (1991) *Coal, Steel and the Re-birth of Europe, 1945-55*.

manhandled by British military police. Having made the point that the German population was suffering as a result of the war they caused Jennings counterpoints this with the observation that 'we cannot afford to let them stew in their own juice'. There was an almost elemental fear that a renascent Germany would mean a revived Nazi Party. The film emphasised the on-going and forceful policy of denazification. To demonstrate this point Jennings introduced a small cameo in which an archetypal Nazi, resplendent in full leather coat, was shown being interrogated by a British army officer and curtly returned to the prison stockade. Denazification required that children were educated in a propaganda free environment, the police acted as representatives of the population and that judges administered the law free from political pressure. Jennings made all of these points in sequence both visually and through the narration. The film ended, with perhaps a nod in the direction of his *Listen to Britain*, with a group of children dancing in a circle. However, in *Listen to Britain* the children are counterpointed against shots of a British armoured convoy; in *A Defeated People* they are balanced against a group of judges, swearing to uphold justice without fear or favour. In the first instance the future has to be guaranteed by military force, in the second, it is with impartial law and order. Overall the film took the understandable viewpoint of many British citizens who no doubt desired retribution against Germany and yet turned it into a more thoughtful and reflective piece which argued that it was in Britain's self-interest that Germany should be rebuilt. Jennings had, in a very difficult post-war environment, demonstrated some common humanity. The film, echoing this, concluded that the real guarantee for the future was that the Germans would 'grow up sane and Christian, respecting truth and justice'.

The concern about the state and future of Germany was to continue through the rest of the decade. The trials at Nuremburg would have been a regular reminder of the horrors inflicted on the peoples of Europe by the Nazi regime. This, and the fact that Britain maintained a large occupation Army in Germany, meant the unfinished business theme regularly appeared in CFU and other shorts and, as such, they are important in that they both reflected British public opinion but sought also to influence it by emphasising the need to rehabilitate Germany and the Germans; an issue which became more pressing as the

putative Cold War developed in the later 1940s. Other films in the Unfinished Business category would be *The Way from Germany* (1946) about displaced person's camps, or *KRO Germany* (1948) about the problems faced by a Kreis Resident Officer, the Allied Control Commission's local, normally military, administrator.

Also very much in the vein of German rehabilitation was the 1948 CFU short, *Trained to Serve*. In this ten minute CFU film those being trained were the police. Commencing with a brief history of the police in Germany the film made the point that they had been regarded primarily as the servants of the state. Latterly, of course, it was the Nazi state when, effectively, the police became a feared organ of the Nazi party. As had been shown to the British public in countless newspapers, newsreels and films such as *A Defeated People* (1946) discussed above, the war had left Germany in a state of total chaos. Part of the rehabilitation and reconstruction process was to implement an effective law and order regime. The responsibility for this, in the British Sector, was in the hands of the Public Safety Officer. His role, as the film goes on to show, was to train the German police imbuing in them the ideology that they were the servants not the masters of the people. Again reflecting some of the issues in earlier films in this category, a critical aspect of this retraining was to ensure that those with a Nazi past could not be recruited to the post-war ranks. This was especially important as a key role of the new German police was to identify and arrest those who had, quite recently, committed war crimes. The film also addressed those criminal activities which would have been readily recognised in the UK as they were often features of a dislocated society and shattered economy. As in post-war Britain, German society faced concerns about the black market, juvenile delinquency and prostitution. The film determinedly pointed out that these were being tackled and, in the context of the latter transgression, women police officers had been recruited and trained for the first time and were shown in the film dealing with girls on the street. Unsurprisingly given the brief ten minute duration of the film it tended to be both superficial, glossing over the issues quite quickly but also perhaps a little self-congratulatory. In the British Sector it averred everyone is entitled to a fair hearing and trial and it concluded, a touch sanctimoniously, 'we have given the German police a good start'. The

inclusion of this CFU film amongst those given regular theatrical exhibition under the CEA agreement indicated that, even three years after the war had ended, there was sufficient concern or interest in what was happening in occupied Germany. Like the previously discussed financial problems facing the country the impact of the recent war was an ever present thread in British policy making and this was reflected in the films produced for the COI.

New Jerusalem (12%)

The Second World War itself was also a key factor which influenced domestic politics in the immediate post-war years. The Labour Party manifesto produced for the 1945 General Election was entitled *Let Us face the Future*, but it had an even more telling subtitle *Victory in War must be followed by a Prosperous Peace* (Labour Party, 1945). The underlying message of the document was that the domestic post-war settlement had to be a repayment for wartime sacrifices. The Labour leader, Clement Attlee, initially had some doubts about using the COI to extol the changes the Government were making and expected to make. As Mariel Grant (1999, p.61) has noted he and 'his [Labour] colleagues were certainly anxious lest they open themselves to allegations of creating a state-funded mechanism for the dissemination of party political propaganda'. However, these concerns were put aside as the new Government rapidly appreciated the value of film, especially in promoting both Government initiatives and ideas. Sometimes, of course, the intention behind a film did not actually meet the expectation when it arrived on the cinema screen.

One of the best examples of a well-intentioned, but ultimately unfortunate, screen experience was Jennings' last production for the CFU. *The Cumberland Story* (1948) was supposed to be a sympathetic endorsement of the Government's policy of nationalising the coal mining industry. The introductory credits immediately identified the goal of the film which had,

been made with the collaboration of the United Steel Companies and the NUM [National Union of Mineworkers]. It is the story of the pioneering efforts in the reorganisation of the British Coalfields during and after the war and is played by the actual people concerned, particularly James

Adam Nimmo, a Mining Engineer and Tom Stephenson, the Cumberland Miners' Trade Union Leader (TNA: INF6/385).

The idea underpinning the film was a comparison between the old, uncaring owners of the pits and the new collaborative regime implemented as a result of nationalisation. In order to emphasise the differences Jennings related on screen the tragedy of the Lady Pit disaster in 1837. A shaft had been driven under the sea off the Cumbrian coast in order to access a particular seam. Jennings adopted an historical reconstruction approach and, as the narration somewhat pedantically went on to explain;

His [the Pit Manager] proceedings were deprecated by everyone conversant with the collieries, and a number of pit men left the work through dread of the consequences. Warning was given of approaching danger by heavy falls of roof, accompanied by currents of salt water, but the Manager silenced all fears with asseverations [sic] of safety.

The matters stood still until 28 July 1837, when the whole neighbourhood was appalled by the breaking in of the sea. A few pitmen escaped by groping their way through the day hole, but 36 men and boys, with as many horses, together with expensive underground stock, were irrecoverably destroyed, the water having filled the whole of the extensive workings in a few short hours (TNA: INF6/385).

Although the dramatic inrush of water into the mine workings was a powerful reminder that mining was, and indeed remained, a dangerous occupation the reason why Jennings chose to exemplify this with a more than century old disaster is somewhat unclear. There was much more clarity in the context of the future of the industry for as the narrator pointed out;

During the war we carried out experiments which changed the whole atmosphere here and gave us new methods of work to meet underground conditions. In the past, the battles with coal owners tended to divide the miner from mining engineer. Our experiments have shown that the miner himself can become a modern craftsman and he must become one (TNA: INF6/385).

Nationalisation and the collaboration between the engineers and the pitmen would, according to the film, not only result in less fractious industrial relations, but improved output and hence better wages. Much of this would be achieved, unsurprisingly, by greater mechanisation. Thus the latter half of the film described the cutting of a new seam, this time based on collaboration and the introduction of new machinery. Jennings makes much of the new 'Duckbill' coal cutter and the audience was made aware of the fact as the pit engineer addressed a miner, 'Now Harrison, this cutter's going to be your toy. The main difference between this and an ordinary long wall cutter is in the haulage gear. You have two drums here, each independently driven by its own set of planetaries...' (TNA: INF6/385).

Unfortunately, this somewhat stilted and technical dialogue combined with the detailed description of the sinking of a new shaft, albeit in the collaborative environment of a newly nationalised industry, was not popular with audiences. Indeed *The Cumberland Story*, while it was reduced from five to four reels for eventual theatrical distribution, still cost £58,000 but by 1949 had only received 450 bookings with overall receipts of £1600 (TNA: INF6/385).

Although, on release, the film received a few favourable notices as, for example, Dilys Powell writing in *The Sunday Times* that '[the film] does indeed give the comfortable Southerner a notion of the Northern miner's dangers and difficulties' (8 February 1948), most contemporaries and subsequent reviewers have been less sympathetic. Harry Watt, also a CFU director, speaking to Elizabeth Sussex in the mid-1970s, complained;

People were tired and just wanted to forget the war. That's why I still can't understand why in God's name they started to make - and spent a fortune on making - a film about a mining disaster, at the end of the war, when we'd had dying and killing for six years. It seems to me a madness. I've no idea why they did it, but I imagine that was one of the big coffin nails [for the CFU] (1975, p.169).

More recent biographers of Jennings have been even more critical as, for example, Jackson (2004) concluded 'it was the most boring long film Jennings

ever made, and by far the most flawed... [It] is best left to rest, unwatched, in the obscurity of film reference books' (pp.313-315).

Perhaps the film was doomed from the start as, in a horrible example of life imitating art, the release date was delayed until 1948 as on 21 August 1947 the William Pit disaster occurred. A massive underground explosion in the mine near Whitehaven, Cumbria, less than 10 miles from the events described by Jennings, killed 104 miners. Although undoubtedly a terrible tragedy the delay triggered a decision which fatally undermined the film. Originally Jennings had been asked by the Ministry of Fuel and Power to produce a film on the 1945 Reid Report for a limited and specialist mining audience.⁵⁷ When Hugh Gaitskell replaced Emanuel Shinwell as Minister of Fuel and Power in October 1947, he changed the brief, requesting a film for much wider theatrical distribution about the reorganisation of the mining industry and the problems involved (TNA: INF6/385). As most of the shooting had already been done any changes had to be completed at the editing stage. So, in one sense, political interference was in part responsible for Jennings's last and perhaps least successful CFU film.

Despite the pressures of post-war austerity the Government still managed to commission films which both celebrated what had been achieved and looked forward to a brighter future. One of the last in this vein was the 1950 film *From the Ground Up*. This film emphasised the Government's achievements by placing them in the context of the future life expectations of the children of Britain. The film commenced with some children in school discussing with their teacher what jobs they wanted to do and these, of course, reflected their perceptions of the future. The film was sponsored by the Economic Information

⁵⁷ *Coal Mining: Report of the Technical Advisory Committee* (The Reid Committee), Cmnd 6610 1945. The committee consisted of 7 members, all mining engineers with experience in the management of collieries. The recommendations of the Committee were divided into methods of working coal, including mechanisation, underground transport, health and safety including ventilation, lighting and power supply, shaft winding, colliery layouts, machinery maintenance, training for new entrants, education in the form of explanations by management of new methods and further education at suitable venues to offer advancement in management, and labour relations.

Unit as a letter from the Unit's H.I. Kinchin on 25 January 1949 to J.D. Forman of the COI Film Division explained;

I now write formally to ask for the assistance of the COI for the production of a one-reel theatrical film on 'Capital Investment' ...at a cost not exceeding £4500... The purpose of this film is to explain as simply and fully as possible the importance to British industry of the national capital investment policy... We feel that this film is of the utmost importance because of the vital necessity for the greatest possible number of people to understand the full implications of the policy and the essential part of the present programme has to play in economic recovery (TNA: INF 6/1338).

The short twelve minute film went on to extol the successes of the Government in such diverse area as in agriculture, coal, steel and engineering but also in the construction of cities, houses, hospitals, schools and offices. All this was achieved, as the film reminded the audience, because 'we're investing one-fifth of all our resources – the equivalent of nearly one day in every working week – in the making of a new Britain for our children and ourselves. We're rebuilding, modernising, and expanding the whole vast productive machine by which we live' (TNA: INF 6/1338).

The other important message behind the film was that these developments were an important investment in the future and that the sacrifices of post-war austerity would be reaped by future generations, as the last comment in the film pithily pointed out; 'it's worth denying ourselves now to assure for ourselves and our children a future powerful and plentiful; a country good to live in, good to work in. That's why we're building today – from the ground up' (TNA: INF 6/1338).

As other Governments have discovered to their electoral cost, having worthy intentions and investing for the future does not always convince the voters. Indeed such sentiments expressed on film did not seem to make them particularly palatable after five years of austerity for, as a review in *The Scotsman* (4 August 1950) observed, 'both of them [*From the Ground Up* and *Magic Touch*] present their subjects with the accent on the "prosperity around

the corner" philosophy; neither, as they discuss progress made in this country since the end of the war, present anything new'.

Technological Changes (14%)

What was new and often made good cinema viewing in the immediate post-war years were the developments across a wide range of scientific and engineering projects. Certainly the pressures of the Second World War had stimulated many significant technical changes, not all of which were necessarily directly military in application. Indeed many of the CFU post-war productions included sections which applauded the introduction of new technologies. As has been previously mentioned in *The Cumberland Story* (1948) Jennings not only addressed the economic and organisational post-war changes in the mining industries, he also mentioned the availability of new equipment, in that case the somewhat bizarrely named 'Duckbill' seam cutter.

However, there were a number of CFU films which concentrated upon specific improvements and their applications and these were directed towards general rather than specialist audiences. Despite its unsympathetic review in *The Scotsman* noted above, *The Magic Touch* (1950) gave the filmmakers of the CFU an opportunity to not only explain some of the 'new science' but also enabled them to contextualise it in terms of post-war austerity and financial constraint. This short, ten minute, PIF was sponsored by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) which, as the name suggests, was responsible for the organisation, development and encouragement of scientific and industrial research and the dissemination of its results. Some research organisations founded by the Department had functions defined in terms of a field of science or technology such as the Chemical Research Laboratory, the National Engineering Laboratory and the Hydraulics Research Station. *The Magic Touch*, however, was about those advances in science which were helping the balance of payments by making the best use of the natural resources of both the UK and its colonies. The film illustrated in rapid succession such novel scientific marvels as seaweed harvested to make medical gauze, swabs and toothpaste; petroleum distilled to make detergents, and magnesium for the aircraft industry extracted from seawater. *The Magic*

Touch with its plethora of white coats and laboratories certainly added to the canon of films featuring the scientist as hero and such long term influences will be further discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

Much more visually dramatic in the immediate post-war years, of course, were the developments in aviation. On the one hand there was the rapidly expanding commercial market which was represented by the CFU in films such as *London Airport* (1949) on the growth of Heathrow or *The Story of the Bristol Brabazon* (1951), the ultimately ill-fated giant transatlantic airliner. Perhaps more filmic, however, was the new aviation propulsion unit, the jet engine. This single technological advance generated a number of CFU films such as *Faster than Sound* (1949) or *Eagles of the Fleet* (1951). Also in this category the title of the 1950 CFU film *The Wonder Jet* gave a fair indication as to both the content and approach to the topic. This film was perhaps most notable in that it included the inventor of the jet engine, Frank Whittle, in an acting role. The somewhat hyperbolic tenor of the production was set at the beginning with the opening words, 'a marvel of this century of marvels, with its flaming breath....' As young children watched the sky the narrator continued, 'the streaking silver which bespeaks tomorrow'. The film went on to present the development of the jet engine as an example of the British pioneering spirit. Whittle appeared, as his younger self, filing a patent and working in his laboratory in Lutterworth. After the war, in which towards the end jets had been involved in combat, Whittle's invention became a major research area based, primarily at the National Gas Turbine Establishment (NGTE) in Farnborough, Hampshire. The film suggested that this research was 'shattering the limits of the piston age' as there appeared substantial opportunities for the use of jet propulsion in everything from railway locomotives to naval vessels. However, most of all it was in the air that the jet was becoming preeminent. Shots of De Havilland Vampire jets streaking across the sky were cut with film of Whittle, then as an RAF Air Commodore, emphasising that the future lay with the further development of the jet engine. Indeed in a nod in the direction of Britain's export and balance of payments problems the film assumed that overseas licensing and production agreements would have a significant impact. Thus British science and engineering would help rescue the country from austerity as it had, it was argued, during the

recent war. Sadly this optimism proved illusory as other nations acquired the technologies independently and were able to develop their own industries.⁵⁸

Despite this *The Wonder Jet* reflected a contemporary national enthusiasm for aviation and the jet in particular and even established filmmakers such as David Lean encouraged this mood with his film, *The Sound Barrier* (1952), which also covered the development of the jet engine in a feature film approach. Aviation had become a spectator sport whether in the cinema or, as Michael Paris observed, at a display; 'In 1948, the Farnborough Air Show, the major showcase for the British aeronautical industry was opened to the public and thousands travelled to Hampshire to enjoy the elaborate high speed flying displays and marvel at the latest developments of British aviation' (2005, p.66).

As far as the new technologies were concerned the CFU was producing films which both lauded British scientific achievements as well as reflecting those contemporary passions for science and the scientist.

Social Change (7%)

Perhaps less filmic but by no means less dramatic were those changes which had occurred in British society since 1939. Forty years ago Arthur Marwick (1974, p.11) proposed a useful analytical framework for the examination of the social impact of war by breaking it down into four constituent parts, 'its destructive aspects, its test aspects, its participative aspects and its psychological aspects'. Historians have argued about the extent to which the Second World War changed British society but it is undeniable that there were social changes and these were recognised by the CFU filmmakers and their sponsors in the immediate post-war years.

Although difficult to allocate to one of Marwick's categories, a post-war social phenomenon which had perhaps been unanticipated was the perceived rise in road accidents and the CFU, along with other PIF companies, produced a number of films which addressed this issue. Amongst the earliest of these was the 1946 short, *It Might be You*, the title of which emphasised the perceived

⁵⁸ See David Edgerton, (1996) *Science, Technology and the British Industrial 'Decline', 1870-1970* for a comprehensive discussion.

seriousness of the problem. The film exhibited a typical CFU two part structure of firstly factual presentation then illustration by dramatic reconstruction which, depending on the film, was sometimes inverted. In *It Might be You* the audience was given the cold facts of the issue, in this case by Peter Cushing in hospital doctor role, who advised the audience that up to 20 people per night were being killed on the roads and that most of these accidents were caused by carelessness. He went on state that one out of every six people would become a casualty of some sort of road accident and encouraged the audience to follow the Highway Code. The message of the film was subsequently reinforced in the second half by a very short and somewhat ponderous drama, starring Alfie Bass, which showed the build up to a fatal accident between a car, cyclists and pedestrians. Although the CFU produced other road safety-type films such as *Mr Jones takes the Air* (1946), *Worth the Risk?* (1948) or *The Golden Rule* (1950), and these were given widespread theatrical and non-theatrical distribution to schools and so forth, the actual casualties of road accidents in the immediate post-war years were less than they had been in wartime. Of course many of these had occurred during the blackout but in 1938, the last full year of peace, there had been 6648 deaths on the road and some 233,000 overall casualties (Keep and Rutherford, 2013). Despite the somewhat cataclysmic tone of the immediate post-war CFU road safety films the annual pre-war death total was not reached until 1960 and the overall casualty rate, slightly earlier, in 1954. Perhaps these films were either an over-reaction to the problem or they just reflected contemporary popular concern?

Another aspect of considerable social concern both during and immediately after the Second World War and easily situated in Marwick's test category was the manner in which children, especially those orphaned or from deprived family backgrounds, were cared for. Pre-war much of this had been undertaken by religious or voluntary organisations, but the inevitable patchwork of provision was quite unsatisfactory. Children had often suffered significantly during the war with the dislocations of evacuation and other family disruptions such as the death of a parent. The disruption of wartime prompted renewed concern about children's education and welfare which engendered legislation such as the 1944 Butler Education Act and also the 1946 Curtis Report (*The Care of*

Children Committee Report, Cmnd. 6922) and the subsequent 1948 Children's Act which required local authorities to oversee the welfare of children. The importance of the CFU films in this category was that they both echoed the concern of the public and Government about children's welfare but also they advertised and promoted the new provisions. Much of this was, of course, inextricably linked to the changes in social welfare structures as proposed by Beveridge in 1942 and had become, as has been seen in the previous chapter, a recurrent theme in CFU and other company PIFs. The importance of children as an investment and commitment to the future, especially in wartime, could be seen in earlier CFU films such as *The Children's Charter* (1945) which had outlined the changes to the educational system. However, post-war CFU films attempted to address the issue of children from both paternalistic and supportive perspectives. As far as the former was concerned there was an early appreciation that the war might have disrupted traditional social mores leading to a rise in juvenile delinquency, which has been fully discussed by Kate Bradley (2012). The film *Children on Trial* (1946) showed how the Approved School (Borstal) system addressed the problem of young delinquents turning them from crime into model citizens. Such behaviour was not, of course, limited to Britain and it was the dislocation caused by the war in Germany, which was examined in the 1948 Crown film *Children of the Ruins*.

The other perspective which underpinned a number of CFU productions in this area were the improvements being made in the provision for deprived and orphaned children that had been highlighted by Curtis. Some films, such as the short thirteen minute *Caring for Children* (1949), sponsored by the Central Youth Employment Executive, were essentially exercises in careers guidance for those wishing to work with children. For those girls such as Pamela Dean, the film's lead, who had to reject both nursing and teaching as they required 'too many qualifications', nursery nursing provided an appropriate alternative occupation. This, despite the fact, as reported by the narrator, that days in the nursery 'revolve around food and lavatories'. Other films, such as *A Family Affair* (1950) made much more direct appeals to support children. This twelve minute short commenced with shots of happy children playing in the summer countryside in, according to the narrator, 'the endless sunny afternoons'. This

was quickly replaced by images of the 'bleak memories of childhood' as described by Charles Dickens. Childhood could, the film explained, mean 'despair, abuse and abandonment'. The 1948 Children's Act had required local authorities to provide for children who were orphaned or whose parents were incapable of supporting them. The film announced that all Local Authorities now had a Children's Boarding Out Officer whose responsibility was to find homes for the estimated '1000 babies' and even more youngsters. The strongly emotive message was that children needed someone to look after them and provide them with 'the simple joys of childhood'. This was represented by a brief visual reference to a Scottish couple who had fostered six children and retained strong links with them even after they had become adults. The film concluded with the impassioned plea that children 'remember the days when sunlight falls on them' but there were still many waiting for a home.

Colonies (11%)

Although there was a Colonial Film Unit (1939-1955) which worked directly for the Colonial Office the CFU still produced films about the Colonies in the post-war years. In fact both Units worked quite closely together and many of the Colonial Film Unit productions were edited and completed in the CFU studios.⁵⁹ The Colonies which featured most, but not exclusively, in CFU films tended to be those in West Africa, the Caribbean and South East Asia and the types of film fell normally into three topic areas; the Colonies as sources of raw materials and markets for British goods, the improvements in welfare provision and latterly, as the Cold War developed, the need to fight Communist infiltration and aggression. The audiences for these particular films (more fully discussed in Chapter Five) were not only those within Britain through both theatrical and non-theatrical exhibition but also those in the colonies themselves.

Cocoa from Nigeria (1949) was one of a number of short films, such as the previously discussed *Sisal* (1945) or *Tea from Nyasaland* (1946) in which the titles succinctly summarised the content and were primarily designed to remind audiences of the importance of the resources of the colonies, especially at a

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion of the role and films of the Colonial Film Unit refer to articles by Rosaleen Smyth (1979, 1988, 1992).

time of financial austerity. This film also demonstrated another two of the key CFU approaches to PIFs which could be seen in many other titles across a variety of topics. Firstly, the subject is directly personalised with an individual or family representing the topic under examination and secondly, other contemporary issues or policies are introduced as supplementary to, but supportive of, the main theme.

Cocoa from Nigeria commenced with shots of cocoa farmer, Lawani and his son and another worker picking and shelling the pods to extract the beans. The rest of the process was explained, from fermentation to packing, to eventual transport to the dockside in Lagos and loading onto a freighter bound for the USA. However, in this short ten minute film, sponsored by the Colonial Office, the benefits of cooperative farming, transportation and marketing were also encouraged as was an appreciation, less directly, that sales from within the sterling area would benefit the balance of payments.

The second type of colonial films were those that reported on the social and economic developments that had occurred as a result of British governance. It is probably fair to say, however, that the post-war Labour Government was less imperialistic but rather regarded these improvements as necessary pre-conditions for eventual independence. Perhaps the most famous of this type of film was the Oscar winning *Daybreak at Udi* (1949) which was also made for the Colonial Office. This 40 minute conventional drama documentary described the introduction of modern medical techniques and how these often clashed with and eventually supplanted traditional practices. The film commenced with shots of native village elders discussing something in their local language which was then swiftly contrasted with shots of two teachers, modern westernised Nigerians, speaking in English. The main focus of the film was on the building of a maternity hospital, under the direction of the local British District Officer, E.R. Chadwick, who played himself in the film. Chadwick persuaded the locals to collaborate with him with the interesting encouragement, 'Don't you want your children to benefit from civilisation?' Despite some local opposition, led by a tribal elder named Eze, the maternity hospital was built with local voluntary labour and was then staffed with a British-trained midwife. The hostility of some of the local tribesmen was further

shown as they attempted to intimidate the midwife who responded somewhat vigorously by pouring boiling water over the head of a masked intruder trying to climb through a hospital window. The eventual triumph of the British 'civilising mission' was demonstrated by the successful birth of a healthy child.

Subsequently this event was celebrated locally with music and dancing and the advancement of 'civilisation' was confirmed by the village deciding to build a road which according to the soundtrack 'goes for who knows how far'? Thus the primacy of the civilising mission was substantiated and the metaphorical daybreak realised.

The film was awarded British Academy Film Award in 1949 and the following year the Oscar for Best Documentary (Feature) Film in 1950 and was received with very positive reviews both in Britain and overseas. *The New York Times* wrote on 2 June 1950, 'actually the people of Umanu were the first to build a maternity hospital and cast out the witch doctors. When the village of Udi decided to follow suit, the Crown Film Unit organized a script and rushed out technicians from London to record the proceedings'.

Unfortunately, *The New York Times's* statement was factually incorrect as, like some of the films discussed in the previous chapter, *Daybreak in Udi* was another CFU film which was less than authentic. The National Archive records show that the CFU did indeed provide funds for the building of a maternity hospital in the Udi District. There was an agreement, dated 16 November 1948, between the CFU and the village of Agu Obu Owa in south east Nigeria, about 18 kilometres from Umana, of which the main clause stated; 'it has been agreed that the village of Agu Obu Owa will build a maternity home under the direction of the CFU in the period of not more than three months. The CFU will provide all the materials absolutely free and will also pay the wages of the carpenters and bricklayers employed on this work' (TNA: INF 6/403).

Certainly the villagers succeeded in acquiring a maternity hospital, the building of which was filmed for the documentary. However, almost all the dramatic scenes, were conceived and produced and filmed in British studios. The National Archive records (INF 6/403) contain the employment contracts of the black actors, all recruited from London theatrical agencies. For example, the

teachers James and Iruka were played by Cedric Connor and Pauline Henriques, and the doughty midwife by Doreen Renner. As far as the Oscar awarding committee was concerned dramatic realism had triumphed, if perhaps unknowingly, over authenticity.

There were also a number of other CFU productions that extolled the value of the relationship between the colonies and the UK. *Fight For Life* (1946) was a film about improvements in cattle husbandry in the Gold Coast [Ghana] or *El Dorado* (1951) was about development in British Guiana [Guyana] which contrasted old industries, such as sugar cane, with the new bauxite mines and processing plants. CFU films often addressed a number of themes within the context of a particular topic, such as the British economy's need for cheap natural resources as in *Cocoa from Nigeria*. These films are of historical importance as they not only revealed significant issues of great concern to the British Government but they further demonstrated the change in the international climate with the development of the Cold War. Even in films ostensibly about the colonies, and especially in south east Asia such as *Voices of Malaya* (1948), the key message was not just about the production of rubber but also the potential disruption caused by what were then known as Communist 'bandits'.

Red Menace (3%)

The comradeship of wartime allies, along with the pro-Russian sentiment of such films as *Tale of Two Cities* (1942), did not long survive VE Day as the division and occupation of Germany had revived the old hostilities. As international tension intensified in the later 1940s CFU films increasingly reflected a much more overtly anti-communist message. Whereas in *Voices of Malaya* the predations of the communist 'bandits' were somewhat subordinated to the main theme of a confident multi-cultural society producing rubber for the British market, three years later *Alien Orders* (1951) was completely focussed on a full-scale terrorist insurgency, then known as the 'Malayan Emergency'. Indeed, the title of the film clearly indicated the perspective which was taken.

The original sponsor for *Alien Orders* was the War Office which had written to the Crown Film Unit on 26 June 1950, 'It is requested that you prepare a one

reel film entitled *Operations in Malaya* to be taken from the surplus Army travelogue material filmed by the CFU' (TNA: INF 6/996). Although Army sponsorship was replaced by that of the Foreign and Colonial Offices over the next few months the intention behind the film remained, 'Communism has cut at the heart of Malaya. The mines and plantations, her very life blood, are being destroyed by a highly organised, resourceful and ruthless enemy. The film shows how alien orders are being resisted, countered and brought to nought' (TNA: INF 6/996).

Alien Orders was essentially a film created over a short period of time out of footage from a variety of sources including the Malayan Film Unit and even BBC television (TNA: INF 6/996). The film itself opened with shots of Singapore, 'the teeming crossroads of the world's trade' and obviously, from a British perspective, a key strategic outpost. More so because, in those three years Malaya had become a 'severely troubled continent' and yet it was still the source of three-quarters of the world's rubber and one-third of its tin (TNA: INF 6/996).

Compared with its predecessor *Voices of Malaya*, although this film still acknowledged the multi-ethnic composition of society in Malaya, it was very direct about the violence. The murder of a leading Chinese politician was the catalyst for the Governor, Malcolm MacDonald, to be shown encouraging 'all the races to fight militant Communism.' The rest of the film outlined the actions taken to contain the 'infection', as defeating the Communists was deemed necessary for all races in Malaya to prosper. The short sixteen minute film moved from shots of police trying to 'sift' the innocent from the guilty, to the drilling of a volunteer 'Home Guard', to the introduction of over 50,000 British troops, including Gurkhas, who would fight the terrorists in the Malayan jungles. The film concluded with shots of captured Communist bandits with the exhortation, 'This is the enemy. The men who wear the red star [are] preaching the creed of despair'.

Although conflicts in faraway places appeared regularly on British cinema screens in the late 1940s and early 1950s there was an increasing fear, not just of Communist infiltration, but of an all-out nuclear exchange. This potential

catastrophe became a major focus of public concern in Britain up until almost the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.⁶⁰ This anxiety was clearly manifested in the 1951 film *The Waking Point*, which was ostensibly a recruitment vehicle for the Civil Defence Corps. This eighteen minute film had a bleak, pessimistic message which, along with some of the narrative and camera shots could easily place it in the 'noir' category. Indeed, the metaphorical darkness was emphasised as the film began in a cinema auditorium where a newsreel was shown featuring Communist-inspired violence across the world in places as diverse as Berlin and Korea. From the very beginning of *The Waking Point*, the audience was unambiguously conditioned to accept the contention that another war was not just possible but highly likely. As Gwen Mercer, the wife of the key character in the film later said, '[we] should enjoy what time we have left'.

The narrative of the film followed the slow conversion of Joe Mercer (John Slater), an ex-wartime Civil Defence worker who, following a domestic accident in which his child was rescued by the local Civil Defence volunteers, eventually re-enlisted and became a full-time trainer. The key message of the film was delivered by adopting the traditional artifice of the dream sequence. Joe, exhausted after a day's training at the Civil Defence College at Easingwold, North Yorkshire, fell asleep prior to supper. He was awakened by one of the instructors telling him to get on the bus and return to his area, as war had broken out. The chaotic situation was reinforced by a brief set of shots including a Control Room with multiple telephonists and a WRVS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service) ambulance driver. Back at his base Joe was confronted by a large group of citizens all demanding to join the Civil Defence Corps. His colleague verbalised the principal message of the film in that he wished they 'had come when there was still time'. However, there was to be no time as the sirens sounded, people rushed to the shelters, children were bundled from the streets into houses and the Civil Defence workers reached for their tin helmets. Joe, outside, looked into the distance and the screen became a gigantic flash presaging a nuclear explosion. At this point, he is awakened

⁶⁰ For more information see Peter Hennessy (2002), *Secret State: Whitehall and the Cold War* or Tony Shaw (2001), *British Cinema and the Cold War*.

from his dream by a colleague. Walking to the window and drawing back the curtains he saw that life, well, mini-golf on the lawn at Easingwold, went on as normal. Directly to camera in the final shot he intoned, 'It hasn't happened – there's still time!'

The Waking Point was one of the bleakest films ever produced by the CFU but it is significant in that it reflected the Government's concern about the international situation and consequently the need to recruit and train a large number of civilians in rescue techniques. The film was also one of the CFU's internationally recognised productions, winning the award for the Best Civil Defense Film at the 1952 Cleveland Film Festival against strong US opposition which included the famous *Duck and Cover* (1951). It reflected a widespread public concern about the possibility, if not probability, of a nuclear attack and pre-empted similar public information films over the next decade or so which will be further addressed in Chapter Six.

Public Education and Information (22%)

Much easier to explain to the public than the vagaries of economics and the balance of payments and usually more cinematically interesting were those aspects of public policy which impinged overtly on the daily lives of British citizens or provided some diverting information or vicarious experience. As might be expected this category included a wide variety of topics, some of which have persisted in the PIF repertoire up to the present day.

Amongst these recurring themes over the last six or seven decades has been concern about the toll taken by road traffic accidents as has been discussed earlier in *It Might be You*, however, other regular topics have been as diverse as Cyril Fletcher's *Postman's Nightmare* (1948), one of the Post Office's annual pleas to post early for Christmas, or various health warnings. In the latter case the CFU produced a number of films which were essentially health advisory PIFs. In 1949 *His Fighting Chance* explained in a reassuring manner what treatments were available for poliomyelitis and, in a similar fashion, one of the later productions was *Surprise Attack* (1951). This latter film was sponsored by the Ministry of Health with the obvious intention of encouraging parents to have their children vaccinated against smallpox. It was a cautionary tale of a small

girl who had contracted smallpox possibly, the film implied, from a rag doll bought in a local market. As smallpox was a notifiable disease the doctor, played by John le Mesurier, was required to advise all the local parents prompting a rush for vaccination. The film reported that there were eleven cases of smallpox of which four children died. The initial victim, having been incarcerated in a local isolation hospital survived but was scarred for life. The film concluded with actual shots of the dreadful disfigurement caused by the disease and emphasising that it was essential that children should be vaccinated. The film's final message, which had interesting prescience, was that as international air travel increased so the likelihood of the spread of diseases not, or no longer, endemic to Britain would occur.

At a far less intense end of the production spectrum were films such as *Football* (1951) which was a short, descriptive piece about the 1949 FA Cup Final in which Billy Wright's Wolverhampton Wanderers defeated Leicester City, 3 – 1, or *Love of Books* (1951) which reviewed the history of printing and book production. Although some of these films in this category appear somewhat idiosyncratic others were produced to meet a particular perceived need. So, *Local Newspapers* (1952) was actually sponsored by the Colonial and Foreign Offices as a means of introducing the concept of a locally-based free press to those living in the colonies. The production and distribution of the *Newbury Weekly News* was the newspaper used as the exemplar in this film. The film's introduction exaggerated the isolation of Newbury as the opening shots are of a bus which, having trundled through country lanes eventually reached the market square in Newbury. There, within the offices of the local newspaper, the lives of the citizens were reflected on a weekly basis by reporters who had responsibility for such things as local sport, music and drama and 'news of interest to women'. The newspaper was also shown to have an important role in ensuring that justice was done as it described fully and accurately the proceedings of the local courts. The local newspaper then not only reflected and reported on life in the whole district but, in doing so, it was an essential part of British democracy. A free press was, of course, an aspect of democracy that the Labour Government wished to export to and instil into the colonies and *Local Newspaper* was a vehicle commissioned to that end.

Specialist Audiences (22%)

Although a large proportion of the CFU's post-war output was designed for both general theatrical or non-theatrical release through the Central Film Library a significant number of films were produced for particular and specialist audiences. The Ministry of Fuel and Power, for example, had a regular contract with the CFU to produce some of the monthly *Mining Reviews* (1947 and 1948) which dealt with developments in the industry and were designed for pit workers or those with significant knowledge of mining. Indeed, the newly nationalised industries did take advantage of the opportunities offered by the CFU through the Central Office of Information. In particular, the railway industry regarded the cinema as an ideal vehicle through which employment opportunities could be advertised. *The Railwaymen* (1946) approached the issue from a fairly traditional perspective, introducing the audience through references both to the historical development of the railways and to the emotional attraction of youth when the '[locomotive] driver was the hero of our boyhood'. There then followed a comprehensive catalogue of potential job opportunities available on the railways with some indication of the wage levels which could be expected. For example, a signaller would be paid £4.10s [£4.50] per week for a daily eight hour shift, with the possibility in rural areas, so the film explained, of a tied cottage and garden nearby. The number of jobs discussed and explained ranged from those on the trains, driver, fireman and guard, to those on the stations, stationmaster, booking office clerk and porter, to those in the goods yard and trackside including platelayers and shunters. The film appeared to present a fairly realistic impression of the jobs and did not shy away from explaining that many roles were dirty and potentially dangerous. It concluded, with an obvious reflection upon what happened during the 1930s, that the railway industry was 'hard work but steady work with a good record for employment'. However, at some 21 minutes long it was obviously considered to be slightly too long for its potential audience as it was re-edited and re-released a year later in a shortened version at fifteen minutes under the new title, *Along the Line* (1947).

The CFU also produced films which were both more esoteric and for highly specialist audiences, either restricted by their particular role or profession or

because the topic was deemed to be security sensitive. In the former category films such as *Patent Ductus Arteriosus* which was produced for the Ministry of Health in 1948 with the intention of advising doctors and other medical professionals about a congenital heart disorder very occasionally found in new born babies. The following year, in a similar exercise in professional education and publicity, *Early Diagnosis of Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis* was the means by which the Ministry of Health responded to a potential polio epidemic.

In a significantly different, but specialist, context the CFU also produced training films for the armed forces. *Minesweeping*, a 21 minute film made for the Admiralty in 1946, presented a range of strategies available for the discovery and elimination of naval mines which, following the war's end, remained a danger to shipping. The film showed Royal Navy vessels deploying Oropesa floats dealing with horned or contact mines as well as other means for detecting and disposing those with acoustic or magnetic triggers. The film went on to show the training of Naval Officers in mine detection and destruction at the Naval School of Mines, HMS Lochinvar, on the Firth of Forth, Scotland which, according to the film, used the latest modern training aids, in this case, a slide projector. Similarly *Aircraft Recognition* (1947), as the title suggested, was designed to train Army personnel to recognise and report effectively aircraft types. The other films in this category which are recorded in Appendix 3 are as diverse and varied as are the sponsoring departments. From *Steps of the Ballet* (1948), sponsored by the British Council, to *The People's Palace* (1952) an introduction to Hampton Court Palace, sponsored by the Colonial Office, were all grist to the CFU's mill.

Up until its closure in early 1952 the Crown Film Unit continued to produce films of quality, as the award of the Oscar in 1950 acknowledged. The Unit did labour under substantial difficulties during the post-war years. Budgetary constraints restricted some cinematic opportunities and this was often made doubly problematic for the CFU as not only were film sponsors anxious to retain budgetary control but also, occasionally, creative direction as well. This sometimes manifested itself in a quite hostile approach to the film makers. In 1948 in a note to the COI over the transfer of books, periodicals and publications from the British Council, an unnamed British Council commentator

questioned the need for film not only on a cost basis but also on a lack of editorial control.

Once the shooting script has been agreed, a film is entirely in the hands of the technical production unit until a rough cut is produced. Alterations can then be suggested and made, but only in most cases, at considerable additional expense (and, of course, two different directors may easily make two quite different films out of the same script). The next stage is the finished product, which can only be accepted or rejected (TNA: BW 2/381).

It is unlikely that these objections were confined to the British Council but despite these attitudes the CFU produced a wide range of films in the immediate post-war years which subsequently became exemplars for many of the PIFs and similar in the 1950s and 1960s. They addressed very diverse subject matters, as this chapter has identified, and not only provided a valuable insight into the changing attitudes of the British Government but also reflected the concerns of the ordinary British citizen. The productions themselves were no doubt informed by their context but, for the audience both contemporary and subsequent, they also gave context which is examined in the next chapter.

5. Exhibition and Audiences for Crown Film Unit Films

The Crown Film Unit consists of a dozen or so young enthusiasts. They wear red ties and they talk a lot. Largely for these two reasons they are deeply suspect [sic] by authority. (*Daily Express*, 25 September 1941)

Despite the occasional clashes with authority⁶¹ the CFU produced Government sponsored films that, as the previous two chapters have discussed, reflected the historical context in which they were produced. However, no less important was the manner in which they were exhibited and the nature of their reception. Audience endorsement would confirm the value of the films as reasonably accurate representations of Britain in the 1940s. Therefore, this chapter examines the framework in which these CFU films were exhibited and then seeks to assess how they were received by a wide range of audiences across the world. Although at this distance in time such evaluations are inevitably fraught with difficulty a diverse literature exists which supports and establishes frameworks of analysis for the understanding of how films in the past can be judged.

At a basic level films and studios are often judged on financial success; whether the box office receipts adequately cover the cost of production. For example, the key criticism levelled at Kevin Costner's *Waterworld* (1995), irrespective of any artistic merit or subsequent income from miscellaneous sources, was its massive initial financial losses. The importance of the balance sheet in determining success or failure in the film world has been addressed by Mark Glancy (1992, 1995) in respect, in particular, of the studio system in the USA. Unfortunately the application of the profit and loss principle to the Crown Film Unit would be doomed to failure both as the Unit's costs were customarily paid directly by central Government and, most importantly, the films were normally distributed free to exhibitors.

Similarly an appreciation of an audience's response to a film, especially one viewed half a century or more ago, is complicated by the duality of the cinema-

⁶¹ An early example would be the arrest of Jonah Jones in autumn 1939 on suspicion of being a Fifth Columnist. He had been scoping camera angles and positions near the Forth Bridge, Queensferry, Scotland for a film which was later released as *Squadron 992*.

going experience. This was perhaps best summarised by Roland Barthes in his essay *Leaving the Movie Theatre*:

By letting oneself be fascinated twice over, by the image and its surroundings, as if I had two bodies at the same time: a narcissistic body which gazes, lost in the engulfing mirror (or the screen), and a perverse body, ready to fetishise not the image but precisely what exceeds it; the texture of sound, the space, the darkness, the obscure mass of other bodies, the beam of light, entering the theatre and leaving (1986, p.349).

In other words the film viewing experience for the audience is both an emotional or intellectual engagement as well as a significant social event. Recently Ian Christie (2012) has edited a compilation of essays all attempting to unravel the complexities of the cinema audience. Unfortunately with minor exceptions, such as the discussion of early British cinema audiences by Nicholas Hiley (2012), the focus of the many analyses tends towards the feature length film. This in itself is problematic for a discussion of the CFU as most of its productions were 'shorts' which were supplementary to the main feature and had obviously less time to create an impression or were created for a particular specialist audience.

Elsewhere, Janet Staiger has written much on the impact of film on the audience and this is most comprehensively explained in her *Media Reception Studies* (2005). Although once again Staiger's work does not really identify a coherent analytical framework which could be used to evaluate the myriad reception contexts of the CFU films of the 1940s, however it does recognise a set of factors which cannot be ignored in the current study and, of these, power and memory are probably the most critical. Referring to the work of Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton (1948) and later Cecilia von Feilitzen (1998) Staiger noted that the influence of the media can be 'so overwhelming as both to insist on their influence but also to fascinate' (2005, p.18), but all the time it is important to be reminded that 'it is not power per se that mattered, but in whose hands that power resides' (2005, p.38). In the case of the CFU it was a Government organisation which therefore answered directly to the Government. However, as has been seen, the CFU had much more autonomy

to initiate and develop films during wartime than later, after 1945, when essentially it had to respond directly to the specific requirements of sponsoring Government Departments.

Inevitably too when addressing any historical event or issue, especially one such as a film showing where there is a possibility of it being experienced by many, then the individual as well as the collective memory has to be treated cautiously. 'This is particularly important for reception researchers,' Staiger writes, 'because we often come across diaries and autobiographical statements and need to be alert to how people string together personal event memories' (2005, p.192). This ethnographical aspect requires even further vigilance as retrospection does not necessarily deliver an accurate narrative or coherent analysis. Indeed the variety and complexity of the CFU films between 1940 and 1952 make an intelligible and coherent account of reception quite difficult. It is perhaps possible to suggest that government film agencies in other countries provide a suitable comparison. Indeed, superficially Ufa (Universum Film – Aktien Gesellschaft) has some similarities to the CFU being, after 1937, the principal film production unit of the Nazi German State.⁶² Ufa was responsible for such famous films as *Dr Mabuse* (1922 & 1933), *Die Nibelungen (The Nibelungs)* (1924), *Faust* (1926) and *Der blaue Engel (The Blue Angel)* (1930) as well as a host of 'perennial potboilers for quick consumption. In addition to this were ballroom fantasies, heavyweight Teutonic dramas and "sophisticated comedies" (German style), operettas and orgies of disaster, Marlene Dietrich and also (a little later) Kristina Söderbaum' (Kreimeier, 1999, p.5). However, it was not only in length of operation nor in the breadth of productions that the CFU differed from Ufa but, perhaps more importantly, it was much smaller, did not produce large scale and large budget feature films nor did it become as subject to central direction and control as Ufa was under Josef Goebbels' Nazi Propaganda Ministry (RVMP or Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda).

⁶² Klaus Kreimeier's *The Ufa Story* (1999) is a comprehensive and thoughtful account of this major European film production house from 1917-1945.

Applying any specific framework of analysis to the reception of the productions of the Crown Film Unit is fraught with difficulties for the reasons outlined above. A key distinction between the films and their audiences was that some were released onto the commercial cinema circuits and others went primarily for non-theatrical exhibition. However, there were occasions when films were distributed by both methods, although this was usually sequential in nature. Ralph Elton's CFU fifteen minute *Worker's Weekend*, for example, was introduced into the cinema circuit in October 1943 and then available for non-theatrical exhibition a month later.⁶³ Those films which had been seen by cinema audiences were routinely later available through the Ministry (later Central Office) of Information Film Library for non-theatrical exhibition. Even this fairly elementary method of distinguishing between films and their reception on the basis of exhibition was heavily nuanced in a number of ways as will be seen.

Non-Theatrical Exhibition

During the decade or so before the war the non-theatrical circuit had been developing apace and sponsors such as the General Post Office and Empire Marketing Board and others maintained libraries for the, usually free, distribution of normally 16mm films, to interested agencies and organisations. This form of exhibition was rapidly expanded and centrally coordinated when war commenced. For the purposes of this study non-theatrical exhibition describes those myriad venues in which CFU and other MoI films were shown to a range of people. The non-theatrical audience, according to *The Factual Film*, was composed 'generally of people gathered together for study or discussion, but not primarily for entertainment' (1947, p.12). In line with the characteristics of this particular audience the COI Film Library classified its non-theatrical lending policy in 1946 as follows: 'The Library does not lend films for showing in ordinary programmes at public cinemas; nor for any shows for which an admission fee is charged; nor for inclusion in shows of an advertising nature' (TNA: INF 12/677 November 1946).

⁶³ *Documentary News Letter*, 1944, No. 2, p.18.

The following year it categorised the types of organisation which borrowed, free of charge, from the COI Film Library (TNA: INF 12/279 1947) and this supports the essentially non-commercial aspect of this type of exhibition:-

1 September 1946 – 17 April 1947 Categories of borrowers by %

a. Schools, Colleges, etc.	28.8
b. Churches, Missions	14.7
c. Forces, including ATC (Air Training Corps)	3.2
d. Central Government departments	5.0
e. Local Authorities, excluding educational	3.5
f. Hospitals, Red Cross	3.0
g. Film Societies	2.6
h. Film Companies	0.7
i. Factories and Commercial firms	6.4
j. Private individuals	8.1
k. Social Bodies, including Scouts, Guides, Miners' Welfare, etc.	12.8
l. Educational Organisations WEA, Cooperative Societies, Literary Societies	11.0

This classification could be further refined in terms of the medium of exhibition, the audience and, in a limited manner, whether the showing occurred in wartime or in the period from 1946 to 1952.

Mobile Cinema Vans and the 'Celluloid Circus'

Although some commercial companies and public utilities had developed a pre-war means of distribution of essentially public information films, it was the use of film as a political propaganda medium which was a major factor in the arrival of a new type of mobile cinema, which was not confined to a darkened factory canteen or scout hut.⁶⁴ As the name suggests these were vans (See Figs 1, 2, 3 & 4) equipped with projection and usually sound facilities, which could be set up almost anywhere as the power was often produced by a mobile generator.

⁶⁴ Zoe Druick, (2012) has a fuller discussion of the use of cinema vans both in the UK and overseas.

In a television and internet age it is worthwhile recalling both the impact of seeing moving pictures close to home or work (Fig.1) and, indeed, that in much reduced numbers the cinema van lasted until well into the 1960s in the UK. Although a proportion of the non-theatrical exhibition of CFU films occurred in places where projection equipment already existed much would have been shown by means of a cinema van.



Fig. 1.

A specially adapted roving van was used to show health films throughout Bermondsey. Photo: Southwark Local History Library and Archive



Fig. 2.

A Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) daylight cinema van which supported, amongst other things, the post-war Road Safety campaigns.

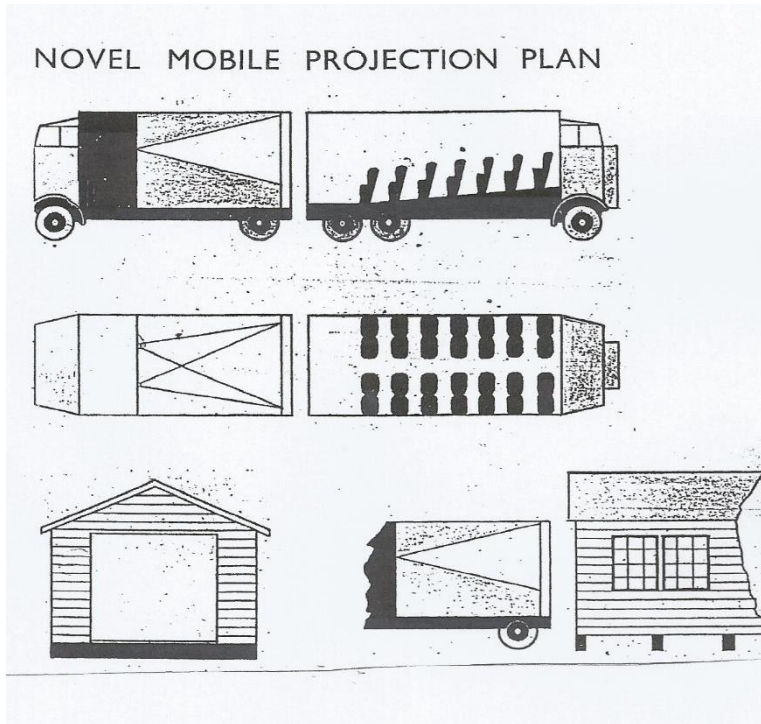


Fig. 3.

Novel Mobile Cinema van

Kinematograph Weekly (10 July 1941) published this schematic for a cinema van to be used by the Army to present shows in isolated barracks and anti-aircraft batteries. The van can either be used with another truck providing the seating or, it was suggested, removing the end from a barrack hut to enable the audience to sit in the dry. The basic structure and functioning of the cinema vans remained essentially the same from the 1920s until the early 1960s in the UK and is still used in remote parts of the world to this day.



Fig. 4.

A Conservative Party Mobile Cinema Van.

As has been noted in Chapter Two the mobile cinema van was pioneered principally by the Conservative Party which had been anxious to exploit the opportunities film provided for political propaganda. Their value in this context was confirmed in a post-war internal party memorandum by Mr D. Clarke, Secretary to the Conservative and Unionist Film Association (CUFA) on its transformation into the more directly named Film Propaganda Committee. On 17 October 1945 he wrote;

Before the war the Association operated 12 public daylight cinema vans and also made available to the constituencies public address equipment, loud speaker vans and similar facilities. It was charged with the responsibility for producing propaganda films, many of which were made by its own unit [British Films Ltd formed in 1930, see Fig 4]... It maintained contact with newsreels for arranging interviews for Party Leaders and similar purposes.

The future Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, was obviously impressed by the use of cinema vans confiding to his diary as early as 1931,

It is very remarkable how they can get publicity when meetings fail. During the LCC [London County Council] elections on two nights when large halls were booked and good speakers brought down, only 50 people turned up. On these same two nights speakers going round with the vans reckoned they addressed audiences amounting in the aggregate to over 3000 each night! (Quoted in Hollins, 1981, p.322)

Thus when war broke out cinema vans seemed to the MoI to be an appropriate method of exhibiting those short public information films produced by the CFU and other companies in support of the war effort. Indeed in a somewhat incestuous manner, just after the war, the CFU film *Shown by Request* (1946) described the role, purpose and function of the MoI/COI Films Division in wartime and, by implication, in the immediate post-war reconstruction drive. As the soundtrack described it,

People had to be kept informed, many of them had to be trained quickly to do new jobs. When the scheme began there were 50 of these vans. Each of them could carry films, a screen, a projector and sometimes a

portable generator. For the films had to be taken to their audiences – to wherever people happened to be gathered together in the upheaval of war’ (TNA: INF 6/382, 1946).

Even after the war the mobile projection vans continued in service as a memorandum to the Cabinet noted in October 1950 that the COI had over 80 vans in England and Wales and a further fifteen in Scotland and in 1949-50 they were responsible for over 43,000 shows reaching an audience of over 3,500,000 (TNA: CAB 124/85).

In September 1941, the *Documentary News Letter* had already colourfully described the operation as the ‘Celluloid Circus’;

It is a business of one night stands and then on to the next village next day. Sometime it will be a ‘midnight matinee’ between shifts at an armaments factory; sometimes it will be a ‘fit up’ in a barn for a group of new agricultural workers...in the afternoons the mobile units keep engagements with Women’s Institutes and Townswomen’s Guilds to show films about food and wartime housewifery and in the mornings shows are given to children at schools with special films about the Empire, our Allies and life in Britain...Town social clubs, adult educational groups and church societies all have their visits from the Mol’s units, see films about the war, discuss problems raised and learn how to adjust themselves to wartime life (TNA: HO 186/1456).

The mobile cinema vans were organised into fleets across twelve regions in the UK and the local Mol Regional Film Officer had the responsibility of coordinating their allocation and scheduling in accordance with local needs and requests. In addition to this the Film Officer was also expected to arrange showings for specialist audiences in local cinemas, but outside normal opening hours. As the *Documentary Newsletter* further explained;

On a Sunday afternoon you may find ARP (Air Raid Precautions) workers going to the local cinema where they will see films of special interest to them; or you may find on a Wednesday morning that your local cinema has opened up with a programme of films of special

interest to women, so they can learn something more of wartime housekeeping (TNA: HO 186/1456).

The speed by which this system was implemented nationally and the size of audiences which viewed the myriad of Mol sponsored films was quite impressive.

Table 1: Mol Film Audiences 1940 - 1944

Details	September 1940-1941	September 1943-1944
Mobile vans	50	150
No of shows	20,688	67,000
Total Audience	3,130,374	11,500,000
Average Audience	150	170
Shows arranged in cinemas	573	1700
Total Audience	331,557	1,000,000
Average Audience	646	550
Estimated Total Audience	3,461,904	12,500,000

Adapted from *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 December, 1944 p.29.

Although it is impossible to discriminate between actual CFU films and others produced by such documentary companies as Realist or Strand in the figures above, a significant proportion would have been those released under the Crown logo. This assumption can be supported using the annual film release data which was published in the same cinema renter's journal the *Kinematograph Weekly*. Although by no means comprehensive or complete in its listings it is indicative of the balance of non-theatrical production companies. For example, in 1945 according to the *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1946, of the 60 films released for non-theatrical exhibition 15 (25%) were clearly identified as CFU productions. The summer of 1945 also marked the ending of the war and the election of a majority Labour Government. It might

have been thought that with the coming of peace and a new administration facing tough economic decisions there would be a real appetite for reducing the production or distribution of public information films. In fact as Herbert Morrison, the new Lord President of the Council, declared to the Cinema Exhibitors Association (CEA) in the autumn of 1946 that,

[although] he appreciated the ordinary desire that the lot of propaganda would come to an end with the war, it is still necessary to disseminate information in regard of the major operation which was involved in the transition from war-time to peace-time conditions (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 December 1946 p.7).

The mobile van with its projector or the utilisation of the local cinema to show non-theatrical productions were not the only ways for public information films to reach their audiences. Many institutions and groups had their own, normally, 16 mm projectors and at their request, films were sent to them by post, free of charge, from the Central Film Library. Indeed it was estimated by the *Kinematograph Weekly* (28 December 1944) that the respective audiences for Central Film Library despatches between September 1940 and September 1941 was 2,200,000 and this had increased to over 7,000,000, for the year ending September 1944. Although the journal did not explain how the audience numbers were determined it is clear that a large number of people were viewing MoI sponsored films at non-theatrical venues. Combining the three published non-theatrical exhibition methods for the latter date resulted in an audience of around 20 million which, even with the inevitable multiple viewing, was quite substantial. It also clearly demonstrated that not only did the CFU and other MoI sponsored film production companies have a significant impact upon the way people in the 1940s viewed films with the creation of a large number of non-commercial cinema venues, but also that many millions watched CFU films even though, at the time, they perhaps may not always have recognised the production company.

To a large extent the success of non-theatrical exhibition was a result of an effective storage and distribution system. This was controlled from the MoI (later COI) Film Library which itself had developed out of the old Imperial

Institute Film Library. It was a significant operation which required the storage, despatch and return administration of a large number of films. In 1946-47, for example, the Library held 1221 film titles and had despatched 81,550 prints (TNA: INF 12/279, 1947). As the years progressed the pressure on storage and demand caused increasing concern to such an extent that, in order to prevent demand outstripping supply, senior officers in the COI's Films Division circulated the following instruction to the Library and Regional Officers on 25 July 1949:

It is already evident that the demands which will be made on the CFL during the coming winter will be too great to be handled and that, as last winter, a limit will have to be placed on the number of applications to borrow which can be accepted. The ceiling was fixed last year at 11,000 titles per month – with certain exceptions – all applications which are received after the limit had been reached were turned down (TNA: INF 12/677).

Not only was there a demand for the films but they appear to have been well received as a selection of letters of appreciation sent by a very diverse range of organisations in 1941 indicated. The Film Library had letters from, amongst others, the YMCA (Farnborough Branch), The Institution of the Rubber Industry, The Institution of Electrical Engineers, Dickie, Paterson & Riddick Bacon Curers of Ayr, The Borough of Erith, The Lincoln Cooperative Society, The Southall and District Spotters Club, The National Savings Movement, The Southwell Diocesan Association for Moral Welfare, and 2nd Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Home Guard (INF 17/33 1941).

The value and importance of these films were summed up in a letter from the Chaplain at RAF Hereford, dated 25 April, 1941, in which he wrote,

It has always been a real help to me personally to give the men something of interest on Sunday evenings as this camp is some way from the town and there are always many who cannot leave camp because of duties. With the longer evenings and putting forward the clock, I have decided to stop these evening showings during the

summer, but I shall hope to start again in the autumn (TNA: INF 17/33 1941).

The Library received a similar endorsement ten days later from Michael Sherwell (Films Organiser), Friends' Ambulance Unit, London Hospital, Whitechapel who thanked the Library for the loan of the films adding, 'I wish, at the end of the winter season of film shows in the East End shelters given by the Friends' Ambulance Unit, to thank you very much for the assistance you have given through the loan of the films for these shows' (TNA: INF 17/33 1941).

Other Domestic Non-theatrical Exhibition settings

An assessment of the reception of CFU films is further complicated as there were at least two other domestic non-theatrical exhibition settings which were of importance during both wartime and the post-war period. These were films produced by the CFU but commissioned for specialist audiences of either a civilian or a military nature.

Amongst the former were the Ministry of Fuel and Power's [later National Coal Board, NCB] *Mining Reviews* (1947-1948). However, one of the most important of these specialist films, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was produced for the medical profession and had the somewhat unprepossessing title, *Early Diagnosis of Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis*. Since the introduction of the Salk vaccine in the mid-1950s and the eradication of polio from Europe (*Guardian*, 22 June 2002) it is perhaps difficult to appreciate the anxiety generated by what was then popularly referred to as infantile paralysis, an infectious disease which, as the name suggests, affected predominantly children and young adults. The late 1940s were characterised across the western world by a sudden increase in the numbers being diagnosed, so in 1950 nearly 8000 children in England were identified with the disease which, irrespective of the consequent disability, had a mortality rate of around 15%. (Public Health England, 2012). As the *Daily Mirror* pointed out in a piece in opposition to the closure of the CFU in 1952,

Remember the polio scare a couple of years ago? The figures at one time were very frightening. Every doctor and every laboratory was mobilised to attack the disease... The film Unit at Beaconsfield finished

[the film] in four weeks. Immediately afterwards the COI's hundred mobile projectors throughout Britain were showing the film in hospitals and clinics and surgeries

This is what the Ministry of Health said about it yesterday "The film was a great help in the early diagnosis of the disease. It was shown to hundreds of doctors and nurses when the information in it was vital in the campaign against the disease" (*Daily Mirror*, 5 February, 1952).

Whereas most CFU films were for general release and a few for particular professions or, as in the case of *Early Diagnosis of Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis* or the earlier *Patent Ductus Arteriosus* (1948), about a congenital disorder of the heart in children, were to meet specific urgent needs, a few others had a very restricted and even top secret audience. As Ronald Bedford inimitably explained in a *Daily Mirror* article entitled 'Why an MI5 Man watches Miss Pine';

The films show stage-by-stage developments of Britain's top-secret harnessing of the atom and the perfection of 3000 mile an hour rockets among them.

Green-eyed, brown-haired Miss (Diana) Pine, 5ft 4in tall and in her early thirties is the director of the special Crown Film Unit producing them.

Yet when I asked to see one, so that I could see how your money and mine was being spent, I was told, "Certainly not. No such permission can be granted!" (16 February 1950).

These secret films, such as *Harwell Assembly* (1950) which dealt with a new atomic reactor process, appear to have been sponsored by the various Armed Services and related ministries and were designed to be shown to selected audiences with significant security clearance credentials. Despite his apparent pique at the slight this obviously did not extend to Mr Bedford and consequently both reception and, indeed, complete identification of these CFU films remains almost impossible to discover.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ *Harwell Assembly* was not added to the open access COI Library until 1958. This coincided with the meeting of Soviet, US and UK experts in Geneva to discuss the implications of

Slightly easier to discuss are those films which, although classified, were more generally available to the military. These films were often inserted into film shows which were given in a variety of military environments and venues from the more traditional NAAFI canteen to the troopship or base camp on active service. The extent of the NAAFI operation was quite significant. According to a 1943 report on 'Entertainment for the Forces' (TNA: T161/1163) the NAAFI controlled 132 garrison theatres and camp halls. It also provided and maintained 117 mobile cinema vans and, during 1943, had been responsible for 48,913 film shows to an audience of 27,212,405. The importance of films to troops both overseas and being deployed there was officially recognised. In 1949 the notes of a meeting between the War Office and the Army Kinema Corporation reported that,

a large number of passengers, especially in outward-bound troopships consist of youths who have previously led a sheltered and parochial life. Posting overseas and the radical changes it involved comes as a great shock to them and at the start they tend to be very homesick. It's more than necessary to soften the break and to provide many of the facilities as possible which they are used to at home (TNA: WO 32/12553).

These facilities, of course, incorporated regular film programmes which, apart from the main feature, 'normally include a travel short, an interest short, a cartoon and a newsreel' (TNA: WO 32/12553). Even as late as 1951 the *Kinematograph Weekly* was reporting that '16 million went to Army kinemas ⁶⁶ and that the Army Kinema Corporation has 32 film libraries and some 1800 film projectors which are used and are fully maintained' (3 May 1951, p.10).

Films were also produced for specific units and sections of the military. Many were inevitably produced by the respective service film units but were often edited and finished at the Crown studios, others were direct CFU productions. In this latter category films such as the self-explanatory entitled *Introduction to Aircraft Recognition* (1947) was produced for the Royal Observer Corps or

atmospheric nuclear tests and paved the way for subsequent test ban treaties. Who watched the film over the previous seven years remains a mystery.

⁶⁶ Obviously multiple attendances.

Minesweeping (1947) for the Royal Navy. These films were incorporated as a compulsory part of a military training schedule and any assessment of their reception is intrinsically bound up with reactions to the training as a whole.

The Crown Film Unit was producing films during the period of the slow post-war revival of television broadcasts and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a few productions found their way onto television screens. At 1530hrs on 10 October 1950, for example, the BBC broadcast the CFU film *Making Engines* (1950) which was one of the *Is This the Job for Me?* series and described heavy engineering employment opportunities in a tractor factory (BBC Genome Project). Given that the number of television licences in 1950 barely exceeded 350,000 the actual audience was probably quite small, although the potential for such school-oriented programming would become clearer over the next few years.⁶⁷

Overseas Non-Theatrical Distribution

A much larger non-theatrical audience for CFU films than the British military were those living overseas and the Mol had a department which organised distribution and, according to *The Factual Film* covered,

the Dominions and Colonies, the Americas, the Middle East, China and the neutral countries. In the Middle East distribution has been handled through the Ministry's Cairo office and in the United States through the British Information Services, in most of the countries it has been handled through British embassies and consulates (1947, p.15).

Films were regarded as an essential part of propagandising the British cause during the war and projecting soft power and influence thereafter. In order to support this the Foreign Office distributed CFU and other films with significant largesse. In December 1946 a report prepared for the Foreign Office listed the most recent showings. These included;

⁶⁷ For more information on the development of children's television see David Oswell, (2002), *Television, Childhood and the Home: A History of the Making of the Child Television Audience in Britain*.

- a. Argentina – 400 non-theatrical shows given during October to an audience totalling 200,000
- b. Australia Average of 50,000 children each Saturday morning,
- c. France - Film Officer reports for November 516 feature bookings and 1977 shorts bookings
- d. Italy – over 100,000 people at non-theatrical showings in October
- e. Mexico – over 2000 nontheatrical shows were given during October to over 1,000,000 audience. Besides the Department of Education which has 12 mobile vans with 16mm projectors, many other societies and clubs collaborate in showing COI films (TNA: INF 12/129).

Those films selected for non-Anglophone countries were normally dubbed into the local language before distribution through Foreign Office channels. It is, of course, difficult to estimate the size of this overseas audience, however, in April 1951, following discussions with overseas representatives the COI argued that it exceeded 100,000,000 annually (TNA: INF 12/129). This was probably an overestimate but nonetheless it does indicate that COI, and hence CFU films, were viewed by a substantial audience overseas.

It must also be remembered that, for the lifetime of the CFU, Britain was an imperial power with significant colonial responsibilities. Consequently the non-theatrical distribution and exhibition mechanism, along with occasional theatrical releases, were seen by both the wartime Coalition and the subsequent Labour administration as an important vehicle by which national policy and propaganda could be disseminated on both colonial and also international stages. According to Valerie Bloomfield (1977) the films made for the colonies during wartime were created to tell the 'British story', whereas when the war ended it was rather to make the colonies better known to the British public. Although, inevitably, many of those films were made by the CFU's partner in the Mol's Films Division, the Colonial Film Unit and had such worthy titles as *Empire at Work* (1940) or *Our Indian Soldiers* (1942) others were produced directly by the CFU. Some of these, such as *Story of Omolo*

(1946), *Sisal* (1945) and *The Eighth Plague* (1945) were specially re-edited into silent versions in order to be more readily suitable to the limited projection equipment in sub-Saharan Africa (TNA: INF 12/127 1948). Rosaleen Smyth's 1992 study of the Colonial Film Unit made occasional reference to its Film Division partner, the CFU, but outlined comprehensively the issues involved with film making, distribution and exhibition in, mainly, colonial West and East Africa. Using the evidence from the 1944 *Mass Education in African Society Report* (TNA: BW 90/58) Smyth observed,

the great popularity of films and acknowledged that they were the most popular and powerful of all visual aids...The report also recommended that documentary films be used to extend the horizons of villagers and help them adjust to 'changing political, economic and social conditions'. Films could explain new types of organisations like trade unions and cooperatives and new techniques and processes like crop rotation, sanitation and brick kilns (1992, pp.163-4).

As was seen in the previous chapter the CFU not only produced films which had an educational value, as here outlined by Smyth, but also films which reflected contemporary colonial concerns, especially after the war. One particular anxiety was the rise of insurgency, especially in South East Asia, and *Voices of Malaya* (1948) for example with its strong anti-communist message would have been an important weapon in the local colonial propaganda armoury.

Over the dozen or so years after 1940 countless millions gathered in front of hastily erected cinema screens in factory canteens, village halls, in the bush in West Africa or maybe in front of the many cinema vans in military bases, car parks and on street corners to be informed, instructed and maybe even entertained by CFU films. That this was appreciated is shown by the positive response of many organisers via letter and report. What the audiences themselves thought is less clear and, at this distance in time, more difficult to ascertain. Many local histories and personal reflections of life in the 1940s mention regular village hall cinema shows but, apart from the occasional main feature, particular films especially PIFs are ignored. A typical illustration of this

would be the recollections of the villagers of Cumnor, Oxfordshire, recorded by John Hanson in 1992. They recalled that ‘by the end of the war there was a cinema every Monday night in the village hall, with a newsreel, film and a serial called *The Scarlet Man*. It was run by Mr Hopkins of Cowley, who also made black and white silent films of weddings, which could be shown the next Monday night’.

Similarly the villagers of Kingston Bagpuize, Berkshire, remembered for the Local History Society that

Mr Kirby used to come to the old village hall in Longworth twice a week, Wednesdays and Saturdays. In the end he used to put reserved on our seats because we were always there but when the hop-pickers came you couldn’t get a seat. It wasn’t fair. That’s how we got to see all the films. When the Americans were here we had films on a Sunday where Rimes Close is now. We used to see all the films –there wasn’t anything else to do. We used to pay about 1/- [One shilling now 5p] (n.d.).

Unsurprisingly there is more evidence as to audience and reception in the other main distribution avenue for CFU films, that of the commercial and theatrical exhibition circuit, but the extent of the contemporary non-theatrical audience validated the historical importance of the CFU.

Commercial and Theatrical Exhibition

In 1940s Britain, according to Leo Enticknap,

the vast majority of cinemas programmed their films as double-features in three hour slots; which meant that a typical performance consisting of two films, each lasting an hour to ninety minutes. A current newsreel lasting about seven and a half minutes and a selection of advertising films and trailers (2013, p.207).

The introduction of the compulsory short into the daily cinema programme alongside other CFU productions provoked a variety of responses. Early on in the war the *Kinematograph Weekly* explained to its readers;

Fifteen years ago the critic who extolled a documentary picture was regarded by the showman as something of a crank. And the showman’s

estimate of the British entertainment public was instinctively right in so far as the word 'educational' was concerned. Audiences resent being instructed or preached at, they plank [sic] their money down to be amused (1 August 1940).

This commercial versus artistic merit debate⁶⁸ may have softened briefly during the war but as early as January 1945 it had raised its head again. Under the banner 'Why Documentaries Fail', Sub Lieut. Tom Massicks, RNVR, delivered a fairly vitriolic piece in the renters' journal.

When the 'masterpiece of dramatic realism' wearing the box office hat of a smash hit at the premiere houses comes to the little kinemas of the industrial cities; the little kinemas' box offices take precious little money that week.

Call it 'escapism' if you will; but they demand of a feature film that it should amuse or entertain. Entertainment in this sense occasionally involves 'having a good cry'. If the programme fails to amuse or entertain, but tries to educate or elevate in the pretence of entertaining, they are resentful. They feel that they have been tricked, and they take good care to warn their friends to stay away that week (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 January 1945, p.90).

Implicit in this is the paradox in assessing the reception of CFU films in that critical contemporary success did not always appear to translate into box office receipts.

Initially the cinema owners seemed to have had high expectations of the Government documentary shorts as, in January 1940, the *Kinematograph Weekly* was able to divulge in an exclusive to its readers under the banner headline 'Government to Sponsor its Own Films, We are able to reveal today the sensational and exclusive news that the Government itself intends to foster British films by producing FEATURES AND DOCUMENTARIES [sic], (11 January 1940, p.1). The operational details of what eventually became the Five

⁶⁸ This of course, pre-dated the days of mass media with polemics such as John Ruskin's *Political Economy of Art* (1868). However the tension between commercial success and critical acclaim has long been a feature of film commentaries.

Minute Agreement were later detailed in a Mol memorandum written by Russell Ferguson of the Films Division in November 1940. He explained,

An arrangement has just been concluded by the Mol whereby a series of twelve 5 minute films for miscellaneous propaganda purposes shall be shown in the theatres of the country at a rate of one per week, each film appearing simultaneously in 1,000 cinemas. Broadly speaking each film will be shown for a week in the first run houses, thereafter a week in the second run houses, thereafter for a week in the third run houses and by the end of the fourth week the film will have covered most of the 4,000 cinemas in the country (TNA: INF 6/205).

These Mol shorts, many of which were produced by the CFU, were therefore effectively guaranteed national exhibition, if not always a sympathetic audience. However, although the arrangements outlined by Ferguson above appeared comprehensive there was, at least, one major drawback from a cinema owner's perspective. In the context of the weekly short rather than a more normally distributed feature film, according to a Mass Observation Report; 'The exhibitors have apparently no foreknowledge of the nature of the Mol film which they will receive for showing the next week until they take it out of the box on the Monday morning of the showing' (22 February 1941).

This meant that the short could neither be advertised in advance as part of the weekly programme nor could a decision be taken as to the film's suitability for inclusion in the daily schedule until it had already been shown. Unfortunately too, the problems associated with producing a high quality film on a regular weekly basis resulted in many complaints and the agreement being modified in 1942 to one 15 minute film every month, a policy which continued into the post-war period.

A further potential constraint on exhibition during wartime, as before, was the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), which was ably, if occasionally eccentrically, supported by municipal Watch Committees. A flavour of the random approach of the guardians of local morality can be seen by the response to various horror films in 1936. According to Tom Johnson,

The Hands of Orlac (1935) was banned by the Northampton Watch Committee on 2 March. Individual horror movies would be banned by individual authorities with regularity throughout the year. *The Raven* (1935) was next to go when the local censor in Rotherham refused its exhibition (1997, p.130).

The advent of war now meant that films not only had to conform to contemporary and local morals and mores but also to security requirements. Thus any film which appeared on British cinema screens, and by implication any British film which appeared abroad, could, 'only do so if it had secured the approval of the British Government, and in so far as the specific official body responsible was concerned, this meant the Ministry of Information' (Taylor, P.M., 1988, p.7).

During wartime then, the domestic commercial exhibition circuit was required to show essentially three types of CFU productions. Firstly, there was the sixty or ninety second trailer, essentially a PIF and usually in support of some Government initiative such as National Savings, War on Waste and so forth. Secondly, there were the five and fifteen minute shorts which normally addressed a current issue or concern. In this category would be films such as the previously mentioned *Lofoten* (1941) a five minute film⁶⁹ which described a much-needed, if minor, military success or the fifteen minute *The Children's Charter* (1945) about the implications of the previous year's Butler Education Act. Finally, there were the feature-length films, often drama documentaries which were for general release and expected to be the A, or at least B picture in double-feature programmes. In this category were the more famous CFU productions such as *Target for Tonight* (1941) about the beginnings of the bombing campaign against Germany, *Silent Village* (1943) Jennings's homage to the victims of the Lidice massacre translated to a Welsh mining village, and *Western Approaches* (1944) which brought home the horrors of a U-Boat attack and the subsequent days adrift in a lifeboat in the Atlantic.

⁶⁹ Actual running times tended to vary within 5 to nearly 8 minutes. See Appendices 1 and 3 for more exact timings.

With the ending of the war in 1945 and the abolition of the Ministry of Information and its replacement the next year by the Central Office of Information the Film Division and the CFU lost the opportunity to initiate film production and subsequently all CFU films were sponsored by individual Government Ministries and Departments. Despite this change in organisational structure the new Labour Government continued the short film exhibition arrangements. The cinema owners, however, appeared to be somewhat ambivalent about this requirement. On the one hand there were obviously those who appreciated that Government information films as produced by the CFU could be valuable in the immediate post-war reconstruction drive. So in November 1945 the *Kinematograph Weekly* could advise its readers;

There is still an emergency in this country and exhibitors can help by showing those short films which carry the right propaganda message. It is up to us as good citizens to help the Government in its reconstruction work to the limit of our ability (29 November, p.8).

However, the key words in the previous quotation seems to have been 'right propaganda' as, within a week of publication, local branches of the Cinema Exhibitors' Association (CEA) requested that 'Rehabilitation films must not carry propaganda' (Leeds CEA reported in the *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 December, 1945, p.33) and, by the turn of the year (3 January 1946), were suggesting that individual exhibitors should determine the political content of any Government film which, needless to say, proved to be a fruitless expectation. It is probably sufficient to observe that the post-war relationship between the Government and the commercial film exhibitors was somewhat strained. This was not entirely down to the quality or content of CFU productions but rather to the renters' desire to reduce or abolish the Entertainment Tax, and also by the 1947 attempt to impose a 75% import duty on American films which disrupted film programmes in Britain.⁷⁰ Despite this the short film agreement was amended and reconfirmed in 1947 as was noted in a Cabinet minute:

⁷⁰ See Ian Jarvie (1986) for a discussion of this Anglo-American dispute.

An arrangement has been made by the COI and the CEA whereby the members of the latter organisation show one 10 minute film made by the COI every month throughout the country... This enables us to have 12 films a year shown in over 3000 cinemas, which is a far wider distribution than any normal commercial film could ever get (TNA: Cab 124/1005, File No. 1421/7).

Therefore both MoI and, later COI films, many of which were produced by Crown, had an open access to the commercial cinema circuits from 1940 right through to 1951 when the agreement was terminated by the CEA. The importance of the CFU in this context can be clearly demonstrated as in the year previous nine out of eleven films released under the scheme were Crown productions. (See below)

Table 2. COI Productions for CEA Scheme in 1950

Month	Film Title	Production Company
January	<i>The Wonder Jet</i>	CFU
February	<i>First Line of Defence</i>	Not credited but not CFU - Cartoon about the role of the RAF.
March	<i>It Need Not Happen</i>	CFU
April	<i>Spotlight on the Colonies</i>	CFU
May	<i>Help Yourself</i>	Public Relations Films - Burglary prevention.
June	<i>Into the Blue</i>	CFU
July	<i>The Magic Touch</i>	CFU
August	<i>From the Ground Up</i>	CFU
September	<i>Men of the World</i>	CFU
October	<i>Eagles of the Fleet</i>	CFU
November	<i>Explorers of the Deep</i>	CFU

Source: (TNA: CAB 124/85)

Public response to these shorts seems to have been generally positive in the early years of the war. A Mass Observation Report from July 1941 records that

'people's opinion of Mol films is very considerably higher than their general opinion of Government advertising' (*Mol Films No 779*). It goes on to describe that the twenty three films mentioned by the Mass Observation reporters were produced by four different film units and the ratio of praise to criticism was significantly higher for the CFU. The actual figures being

Crown	4.2:1
D&P (Denham & Pinewood)	0.6:1
Ealing	1.0:1
Strand	1.0:1

In other words people in this, albeit limited, sample were four times more positive about CFU productions than its closest rival. Also, of course, in line with Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese's *Uncertainty Reduction Theory* (1975), at a time of great anxiety people sought out information to give meaning and understanding to their personal situations and, in this context, the cinema, and CFU, was a natural magnet. Also by the outbreak of war the British people had certainly developed the cinema-going habit. It was, according to *The Factual Film* for 25 million people,

a once a week habit. A warm comfortable and at times palatial building with gaudily impressive decorations and, in some cases, cafes and restaurants. It has an obvious attraction for people in search of warmth and company, people who are uncertain how to spend an afternoon or evening, who want to get out of the rain or the cold, or enjoy the licence of a darkened hall (1947, p.151).

Even the normally sceptical cinema owners were perhaps a little surprised by this early apparent enthusiasm, as the *Kinematograph Weekly* reported on 1 August 1940 'At last the documentary film is coming into its kingdom. The Ugly Duckling of kinema, its inheritance is yet to be complete, but its status can no longer be ignored.' Although it should not be thought that, even in these early days audiences were all enthusiastic, or even sympathetic to the Mol films included in the regular cinema programmes. Daphne Cokkins from Dorking wrote to the *Picturegoer and Film Weekly*;

In my opinion the Ministry of Information shorts defeat their own ends. Such films may cause hot-blooded Italians to leap to their feet crying, "Let us sweat and die for our country!" They have the opposite effect upon Britishers... We've got patriotic spirit enough, we don't want to have patriotic heroics blared at us from the screen (7 September, 1940).

This might have been a minority view in the early months of the war for most audiences but the novelty of the inclusion of the MoI shorts seems to have worn off quite soon as far as the cinema owners were concerned. Perhaps underpinning this was a philosophical conundrum; as commercial operators they were required to include films in their daily programmes which, although distributed free to them, were not necessarily suitable for generating a paying audience. Certainly by the following summer the *Kinematograph Weekly* (17 July 1941) was headlining 'MoI shorts shelved by Exhibitors'. It went on to support this claim with a number of examples including 'one of the biggest cinemas in the West End shows its Government propaganda films only at 10 o'clock in the morning' whereas 'at a number of businesses in south London the films are not shown in the last programme of the evening'(17 July 1941). The article offered an explanation for this failure to show the MoI shorts in every programme;

The Ministry was not only turning out inferior films but their own distribution was careless. The town audiences who had to sit through films intended entirely for the country audience; such as a film about *Silage* do not easily forget the five minutes of boredom they had to endure. Can you blame them if they reach for their hats when a 'Ministry of Information film appears on the screen? (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 July 1941).

It seems quite clear that the cinema owners quickly became disenchanted with the five minute shorts and this was a significant push factor in the 1942 agreement to move to monthly fifteen minute films which were supposed to be of better quality and distributed more effectively to the appropriate audiences. This change seems to have reduced, if not entirely removed, the complaints from the cinema owners and, through them, the audiences. On reviewing the

incorporation of shorts into the daily cinema programmes towards the end of the war the *Kinematograph Weekly* was able to report;

The Mol policy of issuing one monthly 15 minute film to commercial cinema ...has resulted in a higher quality production. Of these the two-reeler *By Land and Sea*, the Crown Film Unit's film about the Royal Marines, has been the most popular (19 April 1945, p 8).

It is not clear from the article how the film's popularity was determined, but by December 1945 the cinema owners had undertaken a survey of their own which did support the continuation of shorts into the post-war period, the balance in favour was more than double at 61% to 24% (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 December 1945, pp.71-72). It was generally accepted that the shorts should continue after the war as, according to *Sight and Sound* 'the tasks of reconstruction which await us will need to be brought home to the 300 million weekly filmgoers just as the problems of the war have been explained to them through the screen' (1944, Vol 13, No 50). So the shorts continued after the war and became, for the owners, a minor irritant in their subsequent battle with Government over the British Film Quota as well as the Entertainment Tax which had to be paid on each admission. The tax was, in part, blamed by the exhibitors for the main problem facing the industry in those immediate post-war years which was that the British public was slowly losing the cinema-going habit. From the financial year 1948/9 to that of 1950/51 cinemas recorded a reduction in attendances of nearly 200 million, from 1480 million to 1292 million. (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 September 1951 p.6) The reasons underpinning the disappearance of the cinema-going public after the Second World War have been addressed by David Docherty, David Morrison and Michael Tracey, (1987); Nicholas Pronay, (1993); Christine Geraghty, (2000); Sue Harper and Vincent Porter (2003), and others but are outside the compass of this study. Suffice to say that nowhere has the COI short nor the Crown Film Unit itself been advanced as reasons for this dramatic and continuing decline. What this audience, albeit declining by the time of the closure of the CFU, thought about their films is obviously difficult to assess at this distance in time. However, it is reasonable to assume that the normal cinemagoer in Britain

between 1940 and 1952 would have been exposed to a number of Mol and COI shorts and trailers, a proportion of which would have been produced by the CFU. The critical success or failure of each particular film and its overall reception is highly problematic. There seems to have been an understandable tendency for both audience and exhibitors to amalgamate the films together, as for example, in the survey reported above which merely asked the respondents to react positively or negatively to the continuation of Mol shorts (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 December 1945).

Some appreciation of the reception of CFU films in the commercial cinema can, of course, be gleaned from reviews published contemporaneously in national and local newspapers as well as a myriad of other journals and magazines. However, the relationship between audience attendance at, and reaction to, a particular film is inevitably complex especially when this is muddled by film advertising and reviews. In the former case Janet Staiger has noted that

Historical, theoretical and empirical studies indicate that advertising comes in mediated form to the consumer, that the consumer is an active (if not fully conscious and unified) interpreter of that discourse, and that effects are a result not only of the ad's construction but also of the consumer (i.e., constructed self-image, unconscious desires, knowledge and ideologies) (1990, pp.20-21).

However, this advertisement mediation factor could only have been an issue in respect of a few of the CFU's productions, those few which were released as feature films with preliminary publicity as with the examples below.



Fig. 5

Although designed for the American release the cinema poster does take some artistic licence as the aircraft in the film was a twin engine Wellington bomber.



Fig. 6

This poster highlights the use of Technicolor, and was one of the first CFU films to use colour.

The vast majority of the CFU productions released through the commercial cinema circuit in the UK were shorts and these were almost never pre-advertised to the public and, as noted above, rarely featured on any cinema programme bill. However there would, of course, be promotion by word of mouth and by the impact of the occasional published film review.

Despite the lack of publicity the films remain an important resource providing an insight into the issues and concerns of those in Britain in the 1940s and these are often reflected in contemporary film reviews. Indeed it is possible that these had an influence on audience size. Research reported by Docherty, Morrison and Tracey (1987) and Jehoshua Eliashberg and Steven Shugan (1997) does

seem to suggest that there is a small but statistically significant relationship between positive film reviews and subsequent cinema attendance. However, whether the methodology and conclusions can be directly translated to fifty years beforehand must remain a moot point. There is a further substantial caveat as any attempt at looking backwards through a lens made increasingly murky by subsequent events is always a major conceptual problem for historians. It is even more difficult for the film historian as the accepted realities of what the screen showed in the past have been blurred, sometimes beyond recognition, by what has been screened subsequently. Although Jean Baudrillard (1981) in particular has argued that reality, especially as represented through the mass media, is essentially counterfeit, 'a simulacra' in his words, but that is perhaps too harsh a judgement on the slightly less media shrewd population of the 1940s. It is therefore important to accept that there is a significant temporal filter and it is thus appropriate in such a study as this to take at face value contemporary reviews which in the second decade of the twenty first century might appear somewhat crass or naïve. If a film was described as 'authentic' then, at that moment and for that audience, it probably was in some way.

It was quite rare to read newspaper reviews of the Mol short films as, of course, these were almost always supplementary to the main feature in a cinema programme. However, there are some limited examples which give a flavour of contemporary critical opinion. Some of these emphasised both the excellence of the production values as well as the intrinsic worthiness of the message. So, in March 1942 the *Yorkshire Post* was able to report;

A Crown Film Unit documentary *Builders* is one of the best this alert company has ever turned out. Short, simple, hard-hitting as a pneumatic drill, it brings to the screen the immediate actuality of the war effort as it is understood and practised by ordinary people in a way that has to be seen to be appreciated (31 March 1942).

The words 'actuality' and 'ordinary people' are recurring themes in many of these reviews which sometimes more heavily reflect the partisanship of the newspaper than the actual films themselves. Thus, the following year the *Daily*

Worker, the official newspaper of the British Communist Party, was able to review the CFU short *Worker's Weekend*;

Some time ago the workers in a North of England factory decided to complete a Wellington bomber in 30 hours in their time off. They did it in 24 ½ hours and the bonus went to Red Cross Aid for Russia. This is a composite portrait of the workers on the job.

This is an unbelievably tense and exciting film. The growth of the plane as the minutes race by is pictured in all its sections. There is too, the deeper implication – the love and pride of the job that is inherent in all workers, and which, unfettered, could build a new Britain in record time (16 October 1943).

Reviews of the CFU's shorts continued after the war, although infrequently, and were nonetheless generally supportive. Donald Zec of the *Daily Mirror*, under the heading 'Ballet gets weaving in this film', produced a complimentary notice of the short *The Dancing Fleece*,

If I awarded the Oscars I'd give one to the CFU for *The Dancing Fleece*. It tells the story of wool, in ballet. Instead of the whirr and clatter of looms and the usual clogs and shawls, we see the dancers of the Sadler's Wells Ballet pirouetting the warp and the weft (23 January 1951).

Not all the reviews of shorts were written by dedicated film reviewers, sometimes the subject of the short determined who produced the notice. For example, a key problem in the immediate post-war years was the perceived increase in road accidents and the Government became anxious to improve the nation's attitude to road safety. In order to support this policy the CFU produced, in 1948, a short entitled *Worth the Risk?* In line with film's topic and content it was reviewed for *The Times* (7 August 1948) by the motoring correspondent who commented;

The film follows the cinema tradition of being larger than life, with the result that the "good" motorist is shown blinding [sic] round main road curves on the wrong side at an impossible speed, and it is difficult to

believe that he has succeeded in doing this 'year in year out' without having an accident (or at least a sobering narrow shave) before his spectacular meeting with a lorry – a sequence which is shown with properly frightening vividness.

Worth the Risk is the Government propaganda film offered to exhibitors for August and will be distributed free to some 3500 cinemas throughout the country next week.

The importance of the short in getting across a message of national importance was certainly a factor which motivated the opposition to the closure of the CFU which had been announced by the new Conservative Government in 1951. So a *Times* correspondent on 19 February 1952 was able to comment about another short:

A Family Affair was released a year ago and has already been given over 12,000 times in cinemas and elsewhere. It is addressed to the general public to encourage the adoption by suitable foster-parents of the 20,000 orphaned children which are at present in the care of the nation. This most moving film has already been highly successful in encouraging new foster-parents to come forward...

Inevitably most of the contemporary newspaper and magazine reviews of CFU films seem to have been generated instead by the relatively small number of feature length films which can normally be categorised as drama documentaries. These were often amongst the most famous of CFU productions and have subsequently spawned, as discussed in the Introduction, a literature of their own featuring in monographs (Winston 1999) or in the autobiographies or biographies of, mainly, their directors (Watt, 1974, or Logan on Jennings 2011). Most of these feature length films were produced during wartime and were usually initiated directly by the CFU or Mol. The opportunities for producing films of a similar type or length after the war ended receded substantially when the Mol was replaced by the downgraded COI and its film arm, the CFU, was only able to create films if they had been sponsored and

financed by particular Government ministries or departments which were themselves strapped for money by expenditure cutbacks.⁷¹

As mentioned above, an interesting aspect of many of the contemporary reviews of CFU feature films is the frequent assertion of 'authenticity'. This may seem a little naïve when the records indicate that sections of some of the most famous films were created in studios with mock-up sets that were often quite artificial. So, the shooting of *Coastal Command* was delayed as, according to a letter dated 5 November 1941 from the CFU to the Ministry of Food:

The CFU is constructing in Pinewood a film set representing a section of a service aircraft. [Short Sunderland Flying Boat] They have to simulate rows of small rivet heads, which appear in the original. For the purpose there is nothing more suitable than large grey continental lentils which would be glued and painted over. Permission is sought to purchase 7lbs of these. It is unlikely that the whole of the 7lbs would be used, but as the lentils are not of uniform size then some selection would be necessary, any balance would be handed over to the canteen (TNA: INF5/86).

It was not recorded whether the subsequent meals were satisfactory.

An aspect of the authenticity of CFU films which often provoked contemporary comment was that the Unit frequently used non-professional actors, preferring individuals selected from the ranks of the appropriate occupation or military unit. It was perhaps this unusual casting approach which was a key differential in the critical success of some of these films. One of the earliest reviews of the CFU film *Men of the Lightship* (1940) certainly supported this observation:

The effect of the film depends upon the skill with which the crew are made to seem real people in a real situation, and once again the employment, not of professional actors but of men who might well have had the experience – in fact men of Trinity House and the Royal Navy –

⁷¹ See Appendices 3 and 5 for the details of sponsorship, annual production numbers and running times of post-war CFU productions.

turns out to be inexplicably a better means of attaining reality than any skilled imitation (*The Times*, 25 July 1940).

Furthermore, Dilys Powell, writing about *Target for Tonight* in *The Sunday Times*, also emphasised the contemporary belief in the value of the apparently authentic in film,

I have long been persuaded that the most effective film propaganda is a good feature film which makes no attempt at direct argument but which, by its intrinsic truth, or charm, or beauty, persuade the audience to a certain way of thinking.

Harry Watt's *Target for Tonight* turned out to be, not only exactly the line needed, but by far the best war flying film since the war began, and I am not forgetting Hollywood.

All this first part of the film is calm, orderly, controlled; the plans are laid with minute accuracy; it is only in the audience that the undercurrent of excitement makes itself felt.

The film is a superb unemphatic statement of the work of Bomber Command; it makes the usual fiction film about the handsome pilot and the blonde look, in the classic phrase, like a ha'porth of cat's meat (17 July 1941).

Less flowery in its praise but striking a similar note was the *Yorkshire Post*,

The grimness of the flight home is accentuated by glimpses of the RAF station's tense anxiety, until finally, in a thick fog, F for Freddie makes a successful landing. RAF personnel and Harry Watt, director for the CFU, have made *Target for Tonight* a piece of vivid reality (17 September, 1941).

Although not the first film of its type produced by the CFU, *Target for Tonight* to some extent set the standards or at least expectations for a wartime drama documentary as far as some reviewers were concerned. Many of the CFU's subsequent wartime drama-documentaries upon which much of the Unit's popularity rested were generally well received by the press.

A sense of the developing critical response to the CFU's feature films in wartime and post-war Britain can be gleaned from some of the reviews of a selection of the more famous films often identified as key works of certain directors. *Target for Tonight* ably demonstrated the cinematic impact of a single aircraft and its crew and this model was repeated a year later by J.B. Holmes's *Coastal Command* (1942) to almost identical plaudits in the press. According to Reg Whitely in the *Daily Mirror*,

This is another of those very interesting CFU productions, a seventy minute film which provides a fascinating peep behind the scenes of a less spectacular and often underrated branch of the RAF.

A story told with simple realism and embellished with no heroic frills – the story of the exploits of T-Tommy, a Sunderland flying boat (16 October 1942).

Whereas for Dilys Powell it was not quite up to the standard of *Target for Tonight*, 'that is all, that and the unemphatic playing, the casual dialogue and the vigilant untheatrical faces. Holmes may not have an ability quite equal to Harry Watt's for handling non-professional actors, but it is good enough, it will do.' (*The Sunday Times*, 18 October 1942). Interestingly, the *Yorkshire Post* seemed to be still confused about the nature of reality in documentary films,

Stripped of the artificiality and embellishments of a fictional film *Coastal Command* grips the interest by its authenticity and straightforwardness. It is a plain tale of plain men doing a vital job of work guarding convoys, sinking submarines, crippling raiders and fighting German aircraft. Drama is lightened by the laconic humour of the crews; pictorially the film is of the first order and the music, especially written by Dr Vaughan Williams, gives greater depth to a fine piece of work (24 October 1942).

It seems unlikely that anybody could be baffled into thinking that the feature length wartime drama documentaries directed by Humphrey Jennings could be anything other than fiction. He had used his creative skills in the direction of such films as *Fires were Started* and *Silent Village*. The former was essentially a homage to the work of the National Fire Service during the Blitz. Once again the CFU used non-professional actors as the *Daily Express* reported;

Star of yesterday's production was pre-war taxi driver, Fred Griffiths, 31 years old of Englefield Green, Surrey, driver of a heavy unit in the worst of the 1941 blitz. "Blimey, they'll want me for Hollywood next! I've a lovely scene in the picture with my own boy, David, - kid of seven, he is and my old woman. It's a fight scene and he hit me so hard the blood came out of my face" [sic] (30 May 1943).

That particular aspect of authenticity was appreciated by other sections of the press;

"Fires were started" was a familiar phrase in the news bulletins of the time (NB – now past!), but not even those who had fires raging on their own doorsteps, so to speak, could realise the extent of the organisation and the amount of work and courage which went to the combating of them.

The film follows the tradition of the Crown Unit in telling of heroic events in a matter-of-fact manner.

The night does not pass without its tragedies, but the ammunition ship sails in the morning and the Crown Film Unit completes yet another film which shows its genius for interpreting the services to the world without emotionalism, vainglory or false modesty. The idiom is difficult, but the Unit is its master (*The Times*, 25 March 1943 p.6).

Ironically the next of Jennings' major drama documentaries was highly emotionally charged and slightly outside the usual choice of topics. *Silent Village* was a direct homage to the villagers of Lidice, now in the Czech Republic, who had been massacred by the Nazis in reprisal for the assassination of Reichsprotektor Rudolf Heydrich in June 1942. Jennings' film envisaged this happening in a Nazi conquered Wales. He did, however, retain the Unit's policy on actors as the *Daily Mirror*, reported the film's world premiere:

Miners in the village of Cwmgiedd, near Swansea, changed their clothes in a hurry yesterday and took their wives and families to the pictures in the neighbouring small town of Ystradgynlais. It was no ordinary cinema

entertainment they went to see. They watched themselves on the screen – and afterwards received the congratulations of hundreds of people (29 May 1943).

More reflective in its review was *The Times* which opined:

This imaginative record is one of the most powerful exercises in intelligent propaganda yet witnessed on screen. The Crown Film Unit made it, and the Unit is expert in the means of expressing fundamentals by means of colloquialisms.

Too many films have been made which, however, honest their intentions, distort in effect the reality of what is happening on the Continent – this is a record that does not pretend to heroics but which explains, with tight-lipped emotionalism, some of the consequences of being ‘protected’ (10 June 1943, p.6).

Although *Silent Village* can be seen as unusual in that it was entirely fictional the contemporary reviews placed it clearly within the CFU mould. More conventional in its selection and consideration of its subject matter was Pat Jackson’s *Western Approaches* (1944). As *The Times* review stated:

There have been many films made of ships going down and men struggling in the water or suffering in lifeboats, but *Western Approaches* has the immense advantage of being both authentic and austere.

There are no professional actors in *Western Approaches* and the Atlantic is allowed to unroll in its own story in terms of effective Technicolor. Those who appear in it, men of the Navy and the Merchant Service make the mintage of men shine brightly, and if only for that reason *Western Approaches* would be a memorable film (10 November, 1944).

Although *The Times* review has, once again, emphasised the absence of professional actors this is not to suggest that this particular policy was without criticism. Admittedly written some thirty years after the war John Mortimer, who worked for the CFU as a scriptwriter, penned a stinging, if witty, condemnation of the use of laymen:

Another reason for the extreme artificiality of our films was that it was part of the documentary credo never to use actors. 'The Man in the Street' had to be played by the actual man in the street, with results which varied from embarrassing timidity to outrageous over-playing. Documentary films never learned the first dramatic lesson, that naturalism is only possible by the use of extreme artifice.

'People' in our films were confined to that wholly mythical figure 'The Man in the street' – or the worker at the assembly bench, or the landgirl in the turnip field, or the pilot at the 'Roger and out' apparatus (*New Statesman*, 4 May 1979 p.6).

The CFU did, of course, occasionally use professional actors, including some very famous ones in either film voiceovers or cameo appearances. For example, Laurence Olivier narrated *Words for Battle* (1941) and John Gielgud appeared briefly as Hamlet in *A Diary for Timothy* (1945). The screen appearance of recognisable popular actors in lead roles during wartime in CFU films was quite rare. *Two Fathers* (1944), starring Bernard Miles and Paul Bonifas, in which an English father of a downed pilot commiserated with a French father of a woman in the Resistance, was almost unique in this category as having 'named' film stars in the credits.

War has always been a major topic for the film industry; on the one hand it is dynamic and exciting on the other frightening and horrific. The ending of the Second World War had a curious impact on the reception of one CFU drama documentary, Jennings' *A Diary for Timothy*. Jennings was doubly unfortunate in the timing of his film, not only had the war in the Far East ended far more quickly than was expected but the film had the misfortune to be premiered on the same evening, 23 November 1945, as *Brief Encounter*. Although technically well-constructed and now regarded as one of his major films (Logan, 2011) it was given somewhat of a rough ride by contemporary reviewers. Perhaps it was no longer appropriate for the zeitgeist, the coming of peace posed too many problems and uncertainties to reflect on those last days of war. This was succinctly summed up in *The Times* review;

by ignoring the bomb which destroyed Hiroshima, the detonation of which was heard within the time limit this film lays down for itself, it shirks the issues it well-meaningly attempts to raise.

Idealistic and intelligent as it is, it seems to be at sparring distance from, rather than at close quarters with, its theme. It is not only the atom bomb which makes *A Diary for Timothy* seem a little out of date (24 November, 1945).

A Dairy for Timothy effectively marked the end of general feature film length drama documentary production for the Crown Film Unit. Post-war expenditure constraints and the move from being an initiating production unit to one which only dealt with commissioned work meant that most films would not only be restricted to a maximum of 30 minutes or so but that there was little appetite amongst sponsors for films which had general morale building intentions. Ironically, by way of a postscript, Jennings did produce another CFU drama documentary of 37 minute's duration for the Ministry of Fuel and Power on the nationalisation of the coal industry. The response to *Cumberland Story* (1947) summed up the rapid decline of that particular aspect of the genre. The admittedly unsympathetic *Kinematograph Weekly* concluded its review; and the film ends on a triumphant note, with the nationalisation of the mines. "Now the battle of the miners is over", declares the miners' leader, "and the pits belong to all of us". At which I heard a titter of laughter here and there in the house' (4 September 1947, p.81).

Although the production of the CFU's feature length drama documentaries were essentially restricted to the war years their theatrical success was not just confined to the UK. They were a significant part of the British overseas propaganda effort that also had the important role in generating income being shown, principally, on the US commercial exhibition circuit. Where, according to *The Factual Film* (1947, p.87) the British Information Services 'works a rota system with the eight major American distributors, whereby each company distributes one feature and two short films in each twelve months. Certainly the impact of the American market was by no means negligible. It was estimated (INF1/632, September 1942), for example, that *Target for Tonight* grossed

more than \$100,000 from its release in the United States. Indeed, as early as the summer of 1940 distributors sympathetic to the British (and later Allied) cause had eased the distribution of Mol films onto the American circuit. In order to maximise the impact of some of these films they were re-edited for the United States. By way of illustration, CFU productions *Men of the Lightship* (1940) and *Merchant Seamen* (1941), although distributed on different US circuits, were both re-edited and re-dubbed by Alfred Hitchcock (INF 1/632). Such films did give American audiences an insight into the battle being waged on the other side of the Atlantic and may have been a factor in ensuring that the British Government had a sympathetic hearing in Washington even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December, 1941 pushed the USA into the war.

There was also the occasional example of a film being produced specifically for the American market. *Patients are In* (1945), for example, was commissioned by the American Division of the Mol for distribution in the USA. This short film showed daily life in an American Field Hospital in Cirencester, dealing with the casualties being flown in from Western European battlefields. As such it demonstrated to their countrymen that these wounded soldiers and airmen were receiving excellent medical care and, in a sense without the obvious satire, it was perhaps a precedent for the later movie and television series *M*A*S*H* (1970 and 1972-83).

It is beyond doubt that between 1940 and 1952 a large number of people watched films produced by the Crown Film Unit. The context and environment in which they were both seen and shown differed significantly from palatial London cinemas to factory canteens, from mobile cinema vans on street corners to troopships heading towards conflict zones and from downtown Los Angeles to a small bush hospital in Nigeria. Given the complexity of exhibition and the widely differing and changing audiences CFU films do not sit easily within any conventional analytical framework. However, from a reception perspective each member of any particular audience would have taken something from the film away with them, whether that be a new skill or an appreciation of life in Britain. The depth, influence and effectiveness of these on

the individual differed dramatically and, given its complexity, is impossible to quantify.

There was some evidence to suggest that audiences in the UK were positively disposed to the early CFU productions perhaps as a way of seeking comfort in an increasingly hostile and negative war environment. Following the entry of the United States and the improving military situation then the desperate need to seek out reassurance diminished and with it, some of the enthusiasm for CFU films. Having said that, even when the war ended and the nation was faced with a long period of austerity the Government, exemplified by Herbert Morrison, still felt that there was a place for the CFU shorts to be shown to a generally sympathetic national audience. However, these five, ten or fifteen minute shorts are not to be found amongst the more famous films produced by the CFU. There are a very small number of feature length films which have had a disproportionate influence on the audience and general perceptions of the Unit. Films such as *Target for Tonight*, *Coastal Command*, *Fires Were Started* or *Western Approaches* became box-office successes in the cinema. These films were reviewed in the same way as any commercially produced pictures and have subsequently received academic interest to the exclusion of almost all the others.

Success at the box office was, of course, a key requirement for the cinema owners and exhibitors and their fluctuating support for MoI films from 1940 to 1951 has been examined above. Although after 1946, as Tom Wildy has shown (1988, pp.195-202), with audiences on the decline and the competition from the revived BBC television mounting annually, the exhibitors became increasingly discriminating about the inclusion of Government sponsored films in their programmes. In fact the cinema owners had already proved that they were not without influence on the actual productions themselves. Their hostility to the five minute short had become apparent quite early on, thus ensuring that the Government moved to the better quality, if less frequent, fifteen minute film.

Despite this the fact that CFU films were often regarded highly by their various audiences is undeniable. In particular much of the early praise revolved around the apparent authenticity of the productions. The frequent employment of non-

professional actors supposedly imbued the productions with a sense of reality. However, perhaps the most telling endorsement of the reception of CFU films were the accolades received from the film industry itself. Thus, as has already been mentioned, *Daybreak in Udi* was recognised by BAFA (British Academy Film Awards) as the best documentary in 1949 and the film was given world-wide acclaim the following year by the award of a Hollywood Oscar. The talkative young men in red ties had indeed made an impact.

6. The Legacy of the Crown Film Unit

Although disbanded by the Conservative Government in the spring of 1952, the Crown Film Unit had an important legacy which has yet to be fully acknowledged in academic discourse and the principal aim of this research is to remedy that omission. Chapters Three and Four have examined CFU films produced between 1940 and 1952 from a thematic perspective placing them within their contemporary and dynamic social, economic and political contexts. Chapter Five then considered their national and international reception from both theatrical and non-theatrical exhibition viewpoints. This chapter will explore the legacy of the Crown Film Unit but does not attempt to advocate any direct causal relationship between the CFU and subsequent film production and events in the national and international film industries but rather to suggest that there were some influences and anticipations which were greater than mere random chance would seem to indicate. These allusions, which have often gone unrecognised in academic studies and which make this a distinctive thesis, can be seen in a number of developments in film and television, both in Britain and overseas, during the 1950s and beyond. It is unsurprising that these occurred as, after its closure, those who were employed by the CFU inevitably sought opportunities to utilise their skills elsewhere.

Although the dissolution of the CFU was not directly promised within the Conservative Party's election manifesto for the General Election of 1951 there were significant indications that its future would be under review. Some twenty months beforehand at the 1950 General Election the Conservative Manifesto had clearly stated, 'there is also plenty of scope for retrenchment - to give only a few examples - in public relations, *Information Services* [my emphasis], excessive control over local authorities, the county agricultural committees, Government travelling, etc.' (1950). The possible political imperative behind the dissolution of the CFU in April 1952 and the events leading up to it have been examined elsewhere (Harding, 2004) and the conclusions, which are now perhaps more nuanced after a decade or so of reflection, will be briefly reviewed in the final chapter of this research. However, it is pertinent at this stage to outline briefly some of the key themes underpinning the closure as

they are the context in which CFU personnel made their decisions about their future direction and employment and, consequently impacted upon their subsequent contribution to the film industry in particular.

A fairly damning indictment of the Unit, and one which would naturally appeal to an in-coming Conservative Government determined to cut expenditure, had already been identified by Attlee's Labour Administration. As early as the autumn of 1948 the Treasury, in an attempt to identify cost savings in an increasingly worrying economic climate, had established the *Review of the Crown Film Unit* led by A. G. D. Collis of the Treasury's Organisation and Methods Division with the remit to 'examine the organisation of the CFU and to make recommendations on organisation, costing and production procedures necessary to maintain an effective control over production expenditure' (TNA T219/144).

When it was published in December 1948 Collis revealed what many in Whitehall had long suspected, the CFU had operated with an ad hoc and fairly cavalier management and accounting systems from the very beginning. Amongst a range of negative conclusions perhaps the most damning, in light of what was to happen eventually, was the actual cost of film production. In a striking echo of the Boxall Report, some eight years earlier, Collis discovered that;

In the year to September, 1948, the CFU completed and delivered 25 films totalling, in all, approximately 50 reels... The yearly charge for salaries and other expenditure, to March 1948, was £194,000, but this amount should be increased by at least £13000 in respect of the services which are not actually paid by the Central Office...This indicates that the cost to the Government per reel of film produced by the CFU is over £4100. A sample of eleven representative films made by contractors in 1947 - 8, of a type which could be made by the CFU, showed an average cost to the COI of £2830 per reel. This obviously raises the question of the profitable continuance of the CFU at all, but since factors other than cost are also concerned, the question has not been taken up in this report (TNA T219/144 para. 6).

It was not even as if the Collis Report, like so many before and since, got buried in the morass of Civil Service prevarication and ineptitude. Within a year it was to feature in a major supporting role underpinning the conclusions of the Committee on the Cost of the Home Information Services (TNA: CAB124/1005) which essentially required the CFU to either cut its costs or raise revenue. This was speedily endorsed by the Labour Government which had retained the CFU after the war and invested in new studios at Beaconsfield⁷² but was, by late 1948, becoming increasingly concerned about the cost implications. In December 1948 the Lord President of the Council, Herbert Morrison, had written to Attlee.

I am myself seriously concerned at the rising cost of Government publicity, and I share the Chancellor's view that the time has come to call a halt and that estimates for the financial year 1949-50 ought, if possible, to show some reduction. A gross figure of £16.7m is certainly not beyond public criticism. In that connection I have ordered the D-G COI that the estimate of the Department for next year must, at all events, keep within and should, if possible, show some reduction on the figure for the current year (TNA: PREM 8/1064).

Therefore at a senior Government level the Labour administration already had serious concerns about the cost basis upon which the CFU operated. How far this information trickled down to the filmmakers of the CFU and subsequently influenced their actions remains a moot point. Given the responses of some leading members of the Unit on the announcement of its closure the earlier critical reports seemed to have had little effect. Ken Cameron, the Senior Sound Editor, casually recalled during his BECTU interview on 14 November 1988 with John Legard that he was 'desperately sorry to see that Crown was closing' and resolved 'to do something about it'. The 'it' in these circumstances was to establish the post-production company Anvil. Indeed one of the less obvious and visible benefits of the CFU was the influence of its staff in their post-1952 employment. Of course, during the lifetime of the CFU it had a

⁷² See Appendix 8 for a schematic of the CFU's Beaconsfield Studios – they were a significant financial drain imposing a major fixed cost upon a film unit which primarily shot on location.

fluctuating membership, of never more than 130 (See Appendix 9) with individuals dropping in and out and moving between other similar film units. However, as the COI's Director General, Robert Fraser, noted in an appeal to Mr A. Johnston of the Treasury, 'Not less important than its own direct production has been its role as the parent of all British documentary, and as a training ground for young producers, directors and technicians for the UK film industry' (TNA: INF 12/691).

The importance from a legacy perspective was that if an organisation is normally defined as group of individuals banded together for a common goal or purpose then on leaving that organisation their subsequent careers will unsurprisingly reflect to a greater or lesser extent the influences of that organisation.⁷³ Inevitably the more famous individuals, such as Humphrey Jennings, have attracted greater research and comment but the work of the Crown Film Unit was essentially that of a team of skilled practitioners and technicians. As one of Jennings' most recent biographers, Philip Logan has attested,

the final cinematic representation [of Jennings' wartime films] relied upon the contribution of each member of his team... Ken Cameron's recording then mixing of sound attempted to achieve not necessarily a natural rendition of sound but the creation of 'soundscapes'...Chick Fowle's black and white photography would attempt to capture the appropriate visual texture for images. Joe Mendoza advised on suitable types of music to accompany sequences. This creative process could stimulate the memory and create forms of authenticity and truthfulness which may have an imaginative impact on the observer (2011, pp.342-343).

The creative symbiosis, to which Logan refers above, had an influence upon many who worked at Crown and it was perhaps predictable that they subsequently achieved success in a wide variety of roles. What they had learned, experienced or developed at the CFU would underpin their ensuing careers. Sometimes they directly acknowledged that foundation and at other

⁷³ See Charles Handy (1976) *Understanding Organizations* for the conceptual basis upon which this part of the chapter is based.

times it has to be inferred. As can be seen from the listings in Appendices 2 and 4 a large number of individuals are credited, either on screen or in the documentary record. Unfortunately, tracking, describing and evaluating all the ensuing lives and employment histories of everybody who worked for Crown is beyond the scope of this study, however, reference will be made inevitably to those individuals particularly involved with film production in the 1950s and beyond.

It perhaps should also be mentioned at this point that although this chapter concentrates upon the legacy of the Crown Film Unit from a British perspective there were also important international impacts which occurred primarily in two areas. Firstly, in films, and especially those produced in Brazil in the 1950s and early 1960s where CFU cameraman, H. E. 'Chick' Fowle, had been recruited in 1950 by Alberto Cavalcanti to assist in the development of the new Vera Cruz Studios in São Paulo. Fowle was to provide the cinematographic expertise which underpinned the development of the post-war Brazilian cinema as he was the main cameraman on a number of films, some of which won international acclaim. Peter Rist has reported that, 'according to Cavalcanti, Fowle was the only genuine success of the imported talents, and he was engaged as the cinematographer for Vera Cruz's first feature film, *Caiçara* (1950)' (2014, p.257). Fowle went on to shoot a number of films in South America including *O Cangaceiro* (*The Bandit*, 1953) which won the Best Adventure Film at the Cannes Film Festival in 1953, and a decade later *O Pagador de Promessas*, (*Keeper of Promises*) actually won the top prize in 1962, the Palme d'Or. The pervading influence of the CFU could also be seen in contemporary reviews such as *The Spectator* which commented, somewhat affectedly, on *O Cangaceiro*, 'the film is photographed by Chick Fowle, who was for long a leading cameraman in British documentary and whose work here has a characteristic silky luminosity' (10 September 1953, p.10).

Secondly, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then there were certainly international examples of countries developing national film production organisations which were very reminiscent of Crown. Although Crown's sister government film production organisation, the Colonial Film Unit, survived the Conservative cull at least until 1955, the Units had worked reasonably well

together, with Crown completing a number of films for the Colonial Office such as *Cocoa from Nigeria* (1949), *El Dorado* (1951) or most famously *Daybreak in Udi* (1949). Partially this was because from the late 1940s the remit of the Colonial Film Unit had changed away from actually making films to establishing national film units in those countries working towards independence.⁷⁴ Countries as diverse as Nigeria or Malaya developed their own National Film Units modelled on the example of the Crown Film Unit and began producing films which celebrated local achievements which were designed for local, rather than imperial audiences.

However, the greatest legacy of the Crown Film Unit was the effect it had on British films in the 1950s and early 1960s. Not only was this the result of some of the later filmmakers being the adolescent cinema viewers of the 1940s but it was also hardly unexpected as many of the technicians behind the camera and in post-production had 'graduated' from the CFU film school of Pat Jackson's recollection. During his BECTU interview in 1991 he confirmed that he and his colleagues regarded the training aspect of the GPOFU and subsequently Crown as extremely important, 'there was nobody to teach us, we had to teach ourselves'. He also explained that Crown's approach contrasted to that of Grierson which he described as 'pamphleteering' whereas the CFU he argued emphasised 'the use of story [and] the presentation of your story in dramatic terms', which was more in line with the approach of commercial filmmakers.

Crown's 'graduates' appeared across all aspects of British film making in the subsequent years. Some, such as Ken Cameron, who had explained in his BECTU interview in 1988;

I say this with all modesty, I was terribly reluctant to see this [CFU] Sound Department going because we'd built it up into quite an efficient Sound Department and we were getting a lot of outside work, like Group 3 and other things.. [Also] foreign versions [of COI films] meant that practically every documentary had to be made in about 15 or 16 different

⁷⁴ See Tom Rice (2011), *From the Inside: The Colonial Film Unit and the Beginning of the End* for a thorough discussion of the events leading up to the eventual closure in 1955.

languages, which meant translation, commentary, dubbing, a very big job.

This reluctance to see his skills dissipated by the closure of Crown encouraged him, along with three other ex-CFU members Richard Warren, Ralph Nunn May and Ken Scrivener, to establish Anvil Productions. Working initially out of the Crown studios in Beaconsfield it provided audio facilities for both documentary and feature films in the 1950s and beyond. Indeed, so successful was Anvil that in 1956 it acquired a controlling interest in Realist Films. Realist had been established in 1937 by Basil Wright and had subsequently produced documentary and films similar to those of the CFU. There had been a regular transfer of staff between the two film units, including Wright himself, with the inevitable cross-fertilisation of ideas and methods, although its final subsuming into the Anvil group is indicative of the continuing successful legacy of Crown. Realist continued to produce documentary and short films up until the 1970s, including such diverse topics as *Electro-magnetic Waves: Part 1 – Discovery and Generation* (1964), *The Bagpipes* (1969) and *HMS Pinafore* (1972), the latter as part of a series on Gilbert and Sullivan works.

Also continuing to practice in a similar area of work, but primarily public sector based, was Stewart McAllister (1914–1962), the often mercurial film editor who had worked closely with Jennings on most of his CFU films from *Words for Battle* (1941) to a *Diary for Timothy* (1945). McAllister joined Edgar Anstey's British Transport Films (BTF) as senior film editor, subsequently increasingly taking directorial roles. McAllister brought some of the CFU's standards and production processes to such films as *Berth 24* (1950), a quite long at 40 minutes film, about the turnaround of a freighter on the Hull to Gothenburg route, or the shorter at six minutes, but more whimsical, *I am a Litter Basket* (1959), featuring a talking litter bin urging railway users to be more litter conscious. McAllister had also encouraged his young protégé at Crown, John Legard (1924-2017) to come with him to British Transport Films and the CFU legacy continued as Legard went on to become the editor in chief at BTF producing comparable films such as *The Nine Road* (1976), a story about the Number 9 bus route in London between Mortlake and Liverpool Street, and *A New Approach to Hong Kong* (1982) which was a film about the building of a

railway line from Lo Wu on the Chinese border to Kowloon on Hong Kong harbour.

The prominence of high quality production values alongside a coherent story line told in dramatic terms were key aspects of many Crown productions which, after its closure in 1952, translated easily into to a range of films. Some of these influences were exemplified by the incorporation of particular techniques and approaches. As a director Pat Jackson, for example, claimed to have pioneered the use of the subjective camera in the 1942 film, *Builders*.

I was asked to make this film on building an ordnance factory and we went to Bedford and just covered ourselves in mud, filth and slime! And I thought, 'This is impossible – how on earth are you going to make a subject of building an ordnance factory interesting?' And so I was in despair about that and I thought. 'Well the only way to do it, is to really use the subjective camera, and the camera will be somebody who is going to visit them and talk to various people. It was the first use of subjective camera, actually (BECTU, 1991).

Another perhaps less controversial example would be, as mentioned in the Preface, the submarine camera rig used by Jonah Jones in *Close Quarters* (1943). However, a review of some films and, followed by a case study of films relating to preparations in the event of attack from the air, show how frequently what was originally created and presented by Crown in the 1940s was recreated a decade or so later.

Not only was Crown's influence important upon production techniques and standards but also the Unit's films often predated aspects of what are thought of as later genres. This anticipation of future cinematic trends had been noted as long ago as 1972 by Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier who maintained that there was a direct link between so-called *Free Cinema* and the work of John Grierson and Humphrey Jennings.⁷⁵ *Free Cinema* had been established by Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson and Lorenza Mazzetti in 1956 as a

⁷⁵ A brief review of the development of Free Cinema and its subsequent iteration as New Wave can be found in Jeffery Richards (1992), *New Waves and Old Myths: British Cinema in the 1960s*.

putative pressure group with the main aim of establishing the right of directors to creatively interpret society. As such, according to Lovell and Hillier, they were clearly influenced by the documentary film makers, especially Jennings, who 'captured the interest in film as an art' (1972, p.138).

However, it could also be argued that the influence of Crown on subsequent films, especially those that are sometimes referred to as British New Wave films, was more subliminal but no less important. For example, as has already been seen, Jack Holmes' 1949 CFU film *The People at Number 19* addressed venereal disease, a highly controversial topic in the late 1940s. Holmes' perspective was relatively free from either sentimentality or prurience instead concentrating upon the impact of the infection within one small working class family. The mise en scene anticipated somewhat literally the 'kitchen sink' or social realism films of a decade or so later. Holmes situated almost the entire action of the film within a small kitchen⁷⁶ with the entrance and departure of the various characters determining the direction and flow of the storyline. This approach was certainly adopted and developed further in scenes in such New Wave feature films as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) or *Billy Liar* (1963).⁷⁷ *The People at Number 19* was not an isolated example of a CFU film of this type including a kitchen mise en scene and confrontational storyline, as the same approach, but this time dramatizing family problems associated with mental health, can be seen in Leacock's *Out of True* (1951).

It was not just in mise en scene that the CFU anticipated later films but also a case can be made for its impact on the development of certain specific genres. Some of these were reflections of contemporary disquiet which, in the case of juvenile delinquency, was anticipated by the CFU short *Children on Trial*

⁷⁶ The word 'kitchen' developed significantly during the twentieth century, especially when used in the context of working class homes. Until the development of central heating and many electric convenience devices from the 1970s onwards, the 'kitchen' was the main family room used not only for cooking but also for eating and socialising. This is the context in which kitchen is used by Holmes and those directors of the 'kitchen sink' films such as Clayton or Richardson. For more information see David Eveleigh (2011), *A History of the Kitchen*.

⁷⁷ The kitchen set featured in *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* after Arthur's (Albert Finney) night with Brenda (Rachel Roberts) but was more obvious in *Billy Liar* as the second scene in the film was key to the plot as the audience were introduced to Billy's family.

(1946). Public concern about the poor and violent behaviour of young people later became a common cinema storyline in such British feature films as *The Blue Lamp* (1950). The influence of the CFU is more obvious, yet apparently little appreciated, in the creation of the screen persona of the scientist as hero. Robert Jones (1997) has written of the development of the 'boffin' in British films yet does not comment on the importance of such a role in the wartime and post-war PIFs, many of which were, of course, produced by the CFU. As has already been mentioned Peter Cushing's white coated doctor in *It Might be You* (1946) warned of the dangers of road traffic. Elsewhere, *The Magic Touch* (1950) with its plethora of white coats and laboratories certainly added to the canon of films featuring the scientist as hero. It predated the mini-boom in the genre in the early 1950s with such films as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) in which Michael Rennie's alien exhibits special scientific knowledge or, from a British perspective, *The Man in the White Suit* which was also released in 1951 and had ex-CFU man, Terry Bishop, as second Unit Director. The film, a comedy drama, starred Alec Guinness as the scientist who had invented a fibre which was both stain resistant and indestructible. Unfortunately the resulting cloth would have been the death knell for both textile workers and factory owners and the film ends with Guinness being chased from the town by an angry mob. Of course, the most famous of the British scientists as screen hero in the 1950s was Barnes Wallis, played by Michael Redgrave in *The Dam Busters* (1955).

Indeed the most obvious connection with fictional film genres can be seen in the war-based feature films which were produced in some numbers in Britain during the 1950s. This link was most apparent in those films, such as *The Wooden Horse* (1950) and *Appointment in London* (1952) which were directed by ex-CFU men, Jack Lee and Philip Leacock respectively. Both made use of location shooting, eschewing the then standard practice of the British film industry to remain within studios, and they were also shot in black and white. This approach was later adapted by other directors in a conscious manner as John Ramsden has pointed out;

It was also a deliberate policy in at least some cases where colour or a wider screen were a real option, as for example in *Dunkirk* (directed by

Leslie Norman, 1958) or *The Dam Busters* (directed by Michael Anderson, 1955); in such cases, the traditional look was consciously adopted so as to make post-war films look like films made during the war years, deliberately obscuring the passage of time, and continuing the visual merging of documentary and fictional traditions that was a notable feature of 1939-45 film making (1998, p.37).

Of course this also enabled directors to splice in actual combat and contemporary footage quite easily, an approach utilised earlier by the CFU in such films as *Ferry Pilot* (1942) or, somewhat later, *Alien Orders* (1951).

The importance of combat footage whether actual or fictionalised became an essential element of many British war films in the 1950s and these have been examined in no little detail by a number of historians including, Ramsden (1998 and 2003), Geoff Eley (2001) Neil Rattigan (2001) and Robert Murphy (2005). However, for the purposes of this study what was important was the debt they appeared to owe to the Documentary Movement and the CFU in particular. A brief review of the highest grossing British made films in the 1950s certainly demonstrated the domestic popularity of the genre. According to Murphy, '*The Dam Busters* and *Reach for the Sky* were the top box-office films of 1955 and 1956 respectively, and *The Cruel Sea* (1953), *The Battle of the River Plate* (1957), *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957) and *Sink the Bismarck!* (1960) were equally successful' (2005, p.205).

Take *The Dam Busters* (1955) as a case in point. The debt it owed to its predecessors, especially *Target for Tonight* (1941) has been acknowledged by both Rattigan who described it as 'the linear descendant of *Target for Tonight*' (1994, p.149) and Murphy who argued that it 'was a dry run for *The Dam Busters*' (2005, p.219). It is therefore somewhat surprising that in his otherwise comprehensive and thoughtful BFI monograph, *The Dam Busters* (2003), Ramsden singularly ignored its CFU predecessor despite their many similarities. Indeed, once the section which addressed the development of the 'bouncing bomb' is discounted then the comparisons with the earlier film are manifest. The storylines followed the same sequence: the briefing for the raid with the inevitable 'jokey' behaviour of the bomber crews, probably necessary

to relieve obvious anxieties; the take off into the night and the journey over enemy territory; the raid itself and the German response, then the tortuous and hazardous return, finally the debriefing and the essential bacon and eggs. All of this was cut at regular intervals with scenes of the operations control room staff who were monitoring the progress of the aircraft. If the mise en scene which accompanied this sequence was similar in both films then so too were many camera angles and approaches. The tension building close ups of the bomb aimers in the films would be an example as was the result of their actions with the detonation of the bombs. In both cases these explosions, by modern CGI standards, were rather naïve but no less effective.

Not only did Ramsden omit any comparison with the CFU's *Target for Tonight* in terms of its filmic quality but he also missed similarities in the production process. At least one member of *The Dam Buster's* production team had worked briefly with Crown. The Film Editor Richard Best (1916-2004) had also been an uncredited film editor on *Malta G.C.* (1943) which had been a CFU production in conjunction with the service film units (IMDb). However, in a less serious vein Ramsden described an unfortunate occurrence during filming,

The actors had been given use of the officers' mess [at RAF Scampton, the original Dam Busters airfield] for the duration of the filming but 'Flight Sergeant' Robert Shaw was denied admission on the grounds that he wasn't an officer. After an embarrassing row, the actor-NCOs were allowed in, but only if they removed their uniform jackets, surely a mess rule unique in the history of armed forces etiquette (2003, p.51).

Ironically, some fourteen years earlier, Harry Watt and Jonah Jones had a similar experience. During the filming of *Target for Tonight* they were summoned to an important meeting at the Air Ministry. A lengthy and disrupted night time journey to London at the height of the Blitz found them the following morning in the office of an RAF Wing Commander who proceeded to admonish them for failing to wear jackets and ties in the Officers' Mess at RAF Mildenhall (where the flying scenes were filmed). They were advised in no uncertain fashion that, unless they conformed, the particular courtesy would be removed

(Sussex, 1975, pp.129-30). This was at a time of course when the Government were asking citizens 'is your journey really necessary?'

Such examples of military protocol, however, enabled Ramsden to argue elsewhere that there was a contrast between the earlier CFU films in their representation of social classes and those war films of the 1950s, such as *The Dam Busters*, which

do not celebrate the union of classes and regions that was so characteristic of such wartime films as *The Way Ahead* (directed by Carol Reed, 1944), *Millions Like Us* (directed by Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, 1943), or *Fires Were Started* (directed by Humphrey Jennings, 1943); rather they tend to revert to the stock officers-as-heroes and other-ranks-as-comic-figures that was more characteristic of films of the 1930s. The reviewers were particularly hostile on just this point, but a modern viewer can hardly disagree: Peter Baker complained of *Sink The Bismarck* that 'the characters are almost unbelievably typed - the wooden, muddling British officer types; the matey, tea-swilling lower deck cockney types'. There were certainly exceptions to this approach, but not many, and even such quality films as *The Dam Busters* clearly leave leadership in the hands of senior officers and the scientist Barnes Wallis (1998, p.56).

The differences between the social class cohesion of the wartime CFU productions evident in such scenes as the pilots' mess in *Ferry Pilot* (1942) and, more obviously, in *Ordinary People* (1941) can perhaps be overstated, especially in the context of an operational military unit. It tends to ignore the fact that the majority of the contemporary audience in the 1950s had acquired an understanding of service life either directly or vicariously and that screen representations, especially of actual events, ought to have at least a veneer of contemporary reality. Ramsden perhaps unconsciously overlooked the fact that in the military there is a strict distinction between the officer corps and 'other ranks', which continues to exist today.⁷⁸ In the Second World War there were,

⁷⁸ All three services maintain strictly segregated messes even today. The importance of command can still be seen as the present Army's training methodologies clearly distinguish

after all, many 'temporary gentlemen' who had been recruited from social classes and situations without a tradition of supplying officers to the forces. The rank based segregation was not primarily evidence of social class divisions, although it did of course frequently echo and reflect them, but more it signified the exigencies of command in which life and death decisions have to be made.

Although Crown did indeed produce a small number of feature length films, some of which like *Target for Tonight* (1941) or *Western Approaches* (1944) received both critical and reasonable box office success, the vast majority of the Unit's output especially in the post-war years can easily be placed under the heading of Public Information Films (PIFs). The CFU PIFs covered a wide variety of topics and were sponsored by an equally diverse range of Government departments and organisations. Sometimes the subjects were highly specialised and designed for particular audiences such as *Patent Ductus Arteriosus* (1948) for the medical profession or *Pigs on every Farm* (1949) for the agricultural community. These and many similar films produced by the CFU and other film companies, such as Realist, became the basis of the training film sector. Ex-CFU staffers appeared in the credits of a number of these after 1952 so, for example twenty years later, Fred Gamage was the cameraman on the somewhat esoterically entitled *Remotely Operated all-hydraulic Support* (1972), which was produced for the National Coal Board (NCB) to introduce miners to a new piece of equipment.

Crown's approach and success proved to be a model for some film making organisations and its demise created a vacuum which others exploited. The end of the CFU did not reduce the demand for film amongst public sector organisations. They had become used to the facility and appreciated its value, especially in training films or in promoting their particular organisation both amongst the staff and the lay population. Indeed Crown's last year of operation was its most successful in terms of the numbers of films produced. Appendix 5 clearly illustrates that nearly one third of the Unit's overall film post-war production was completed during 1951-52. This demand for training and public

between the roles of command, leadership and management (*CLM Policy Handbook*, MOD, 2015).

information type films encouraged the development of film units, often leavened with ex-CFU staff, both within and working directly for Government departments such as, for example, the aforementioned British Transport Films (BTF).

Alongside the training films were those which were less occupationally specific but usually intended as general careers guidance for a younger audience. Amongst the final films completed by the CFU in 1952 were *Making Boots and Shoes* for the footwear industry and *Light Repetitive Work* which introduced girls to opportunities available in factories. It should be noted, from a social history perspective, that the films revealed the contemporary strict gender division in employment. The former film emphasised that access to particular job roles and opportunities in the industry were actually determined by gender. Although it was some five years after the closure of Crown that the BBC and also the new Independent Television began regular transmissions designed for schools CFU productions certainly anticipated this.⁷⁹ As has been already mentioned during the afternoons of the early 1950s the BBC did indeed broadcast some Crown films in the *Is this the Job for Me?* series.⁸⁰ These broadcasts were often repeated as, at that time, there was no facility for domestic recording and all broadcasts had to be watched live. How many actually watched these films directly transmitted rather than borrowed from the COI library and viewed by means of the school projector is a moot point given the actual number of television licences in the early 1950s. It was, of course, highly likely that these films were included in broadcast transmissions, not so much for their vocational relevance, but rather to ensure that the potential television buying public would at least be able to see something on screen when visiting their local retailer.

Crown created a consistency of style and production values in non-theatrical PIFs which were both reflected in similar output from other commercial

⁷⁹ There is not a great deal in academic discourse about the history and development of Schools television in the UK. Although inevitably Asa Briggs' voluminous *History of Broadcasting in the UK* has some references, especially Volume IV *Sound and Vision* (1978).

⁸⁰ There might have been more television opportunities for CFU films in the late 1940s but these were always blocked by the CEA threatening to cancel the monthly film agreement with the Government. See Tom Wildy, (1988) *British Television and Official Film* for a comprehensive discussion of the negotiations.

companies such as Realist and Verity and which lasted well into the 1950s. Although vocationally specific films have been discussed above valid cases could equally be made for a variety of different topic areas for particular audiences from Local Government Administration (*Houses in Town*, 1951) to factory design (*Layout and Handling in Factories*, 1951). However, as may be seen from Appendices 1 and 3 a large number of films, most of which fall into the PIF category, were available for general theatrical release in the UK. Many of these anticipated similar productions over the next decade or so and the influence of Crown was to be seen in these films which may be briefly described as informative, advisory or a combination of both.

Non-fiction informative short films were a regular feature of cinema programmes during the 1950s and 1960s. Shows often consisted of the main feature with either a 'B' film and/or a short or animation or newsreel. The short tended to be fairly anodyne often a travelogue or tribute to a particular British achievement or other. In this vein Crown had produced such films as *Royal Scotland* (1952) which was essentially a scenic review of places in Scotland with royal connections or *Trooping the Colour* (1950) or *Into the Blue* (1950) about British aviation successes such as the Comet or the jet engine. Following the closure of Crown the staff would be found producing similar films. Thus, Jonah Jones filmed *Foxhunter: Champion Jumper* (1953), about one of the most famous show jumping horses of all time or another CFU cameraman, Fred Gamage, shot *Oxford* in 1958 for Greenpark productions on commission for the COI which was described later by Anthony Neild as,

part travelogue and part infomercial, both for the University itself and the city in general. Yet Williams [the Director] is determined to throw in the odd artful moment, show off some ambition and remain quiet when necessary: at times we get some wonderful compositions and striking tracking shots, at others we simply serve as a fly-on-the-wall, gaining an interesting behind-the-scenes glimpse at this institution (2011).

How far Derek Williams was advised by his more experienced cameraman is of course, open to question. Similarly, Ken Cameron, the CFU's principal sound recordist worked on *Under the Caribbean* in 1954 which introduced British

audiences to the thalassic world of Hans and Lotte Hass, later famous for their BBC television documentaries on life under the sea. As had been the case with earlier Crown films many of this type of PIF were also made available to overseas exhibitors, especially in the colonies.

It was the nature of theatrical exhibition which, in the years before the general availability of television in Britain, enabled the Government to disseminate a particular message in a short and readily accessible manner to a wide audience. It is therefore hardly surprising that many of the CFU PIFs and their successors were essentially advisory. The topics addressed by these films could be many and various and usually reflected the concerns of the moment, sometimes these were immediate and yet at other times they were recurring. In the latter customary category there were, for example, the PIFs which addressed road safety. As has been seen above *It Might be You* (1946) was an early CFU example in this classification and was one of the monthly COI films distributed to cinemas throughout the country. It was followed two years later by *Worth the Risk?* (1948) which strengthened the road safety message. The topic was subsequently reinforced at regular intervals first in the cinema and then on television. Such examples would be *Ambler Gambler Twins* (1977) or, increasingly, concerns about the incidence of drink driving with *Fancy a Jar, Forget the Car* (1982).

Also in this recurring category were the health advisory PIFs. Sometimes these provided mainly informational details of changes in Government policy or practice or occasionally they addressed immediate threats. A periodic issue was the need to recruit blood donors and the CFU had produced the short *Wanted for Life* (1951) to encourage people to volunteer to donate blood. This theme continued across the ensuing decades with the COI producing a range of films including *Blood Donors: The Spinners* (1976) or *Blood Donor – Jenny Jones* (1983).

In responding to an immediate and developing health threat the CFU had produced *Surprise Attack* (1951) which encouraged mothers to have their children vaccinated against smallpox as the disease had recently reappeared in the UK. Fortunately subsequent health concerns have not required any

significant national response to epidemic hazards with the possible exception of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s which did trigger perhaps one of the most famous recent PIFs, *Don't Die of Ignorance* (1987), broadcast on television as well as being exhibited in cinemas.⁸¹

This research has contended that the films of the CFU provide an important historical resource in that they both reflect contemporary changing Government policy and public concerns and anxieties and it is possible to demonstrate the lasting legacy of the CFU by examining over time a particular issue. Although Nicholas Pronay has suggested that 'the old British film Documentary Movement provides no films which have a source value for the Cold War' (1993, p.8) the following section will challenge this assertion as well establishing a connection between films produced by the CFU relating to a particular aspect of the Cold War and those of the subsequent decade or so. In structure, filmic devices, social observation and contextualisation the CFU films sponsored by the British Government about the possible impact of an aerial assault between 1941 and 1951 were continued by its successors well into the 1960s.

In order to appreciate the change effected upon PIFs by the Crown Film Unit it is necessary to firstly make some brief reference to *If War Should Come* (1939), a nine minute short produced by the GPOFU with, as might be expected, a number of crew members, such as editor Stewart McAllister, who would become stalwarts of the CFU (Vaughan, 2011, p.73). It was generally assumed that the German bombers would be quickly unleashed against the UK with devastating results. Indeed, in early September 1939 after the declaration of war, the film was given a new and more immediate title *Do It Now*, with an exhortation in the title frames that 'the film intended for the future, becomes advice for today. Advice to be heard and taken here and now!' It was rushed on to the national cinema screens with the support of the Cinema Exhibitors

⁸¹ Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency appeared in the early 1980s and, before treatments were developed, caused significant concern amongst health authorities worldwide.

Association (CEA) and was shown in over 2000 cinemas during the week beginning 18 September (TNA: INF 6/349). Essentially the film was a set of Government instructions illustrated by small cameos interspersed with reassuring stock shots of recognisable sights in the UK set against, initially, a stirring Elgar soundtrack. Indeed much of the poignancy of the film was its naivety in which preparations were being made to counter the aerial threat that, within twelve months, would become all too real.

Reality, however, was somewhat different from expectation in that not only was the aerial bombardment delayed until the summer of 1940 but, as has been explained in Chapter Three when it did occur, despite all the deaths and damage, the vast majority of British citizens survived. Thus the key message concerning air attack was one of survivability and this would last until the early 1960s. This more optimistic approach was quickly incorporated into subsequent PIFs as early as December 1940 with Jennings's *London Can Take It!* (later retitled as *Britain Can Take It!*) and other films, such as Holmes and Lee's *Ordinary People* (1941) which has already been discussed in some detail. Not only could life continue during wartime with only minor disruptions but adequate preparation in terms of bomb shelters and ARP arrangements would ensure that casualties would be limited.

Unfortunately the cessation of hostilities in 1945 only resulted in a short hiatus in the fear of potential attack from the air. The collapse of the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union and the Communist appropriation of many eastern European states created a mutually antagonistic situation with the western powers, better known as the Cold War. The proxy conflict in Korea, which commenced in 1950, resulted in newsreels again showing scenes of destruction caused by, amongst other things, aerial bombardment. The Government's PIF response included the CFU's *The Waking Point* (1951) which again has also already been discussed in some depth in Chapter Four.

Perhaps more worrying for the general civilian population in Britain was the fact that, although there were conflicts in faraway places, the weaponry and delivery systems available to the principal opponents in the Cold War had become awesome. The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945

and Nagasaki three days later changed the whole paradigm of aerial bombardment. It now meant that one weapon could cause as much damage as a whole fleet of conventional bombers. Alongside this, and from a brutal strategic perspective, it killed, maimed or, perhaps most horrific of all, caused long term sickness, amongst an enemy population. Indeed although there was some reference to the impact of radiation in the following films there was little real discussion about it or the taking of any significant precautionary measures.

Amongst a number of films such as *Defence Sense* (1956) and *The Warden and the Householder* (1961) distributed in the UK a decade or so after the closure of the CFU two are worthy of more detailed study both in the manner in which they address the issue and in their adoption of aspects of previous CFU productions. The first, *Atomic Attack* (1958) is exceptional in this study as it was not a film but rather a tele-recording made by the BBC for the Belgian Television Service. To emphasise this point one of the first scenes included a jeep, driven into shot, which has a television camera, emblazoned with the BBC logo, placed in the passenger seat. In one sense this echoed the early movie cameras being bulky and unwieldy but with the additional disadvantage of being linked umbilically to the recording machines. Apart from the obvious practical disadvantages of filming in this way the subsequent transfer to cinema quality 35mm film significantly reduced the picture quality. However, as the theme is post-nuclear attack the grainy pictures lend a certain authenticity to the production. The link to the CFU was reinforced as the principal cameraman was, again, Fred Gamage, who had been responsible for a number of CFU films including *Listen to Britain* (1942), *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) and *Daybreak in Udi* (1949).

The first few scenes of *Atomic Attack*, shot at the Civil Defence's training ground at Epsom, were set up to resemble what might occur immediately after a nuclear strike. So the camera panned taking in burning buildings, casualties laying in the road and even inside a telephone box. The audience was unambiguously reminded, not only by the telephone box, but also a post box and bus stop sign that these things might and could happen in the UK. *Atomic Attack* adopted a common Crown approach of the 1940s in that the action in the film was not undertaken by professional actors but rather it would seem that

the majority, if not all, of the participants were members of Civil Defence and other volunteers such as the Auxiliary Fire Service. Although, of course, it enabled them to carry out their various tasks competently the limited dialogue is somewhat forced and stilted. The voice over tended to rescue the coherence and flow of the film by providing the main explanation and linkage between the various scenes. It will always be a moot point as to whether a message is conveyed more authentically by those in reality engaged with the task or actors who understand the demands of the camera and appropriate film direction. As noted earlier John Mortimer had somewhat caustically recalled that 'It was part of the documentary credo never to use actors. "The Man in the Street" had to be played by the actual man in the street, with results which varied from embarrassing timidity to outrageous over-playing' (1979, p.6).

Other Crown employees such as director Pat Jackson took the entirely contrary view in that the use of non-actors gave the films the hallmark of authenticity so;

It was that people had the stamp of the environment and their life and background... not only on their faces but in their physique, which no actor can really give you. It also had the vernacular... their way of speech, their way of phrasing, because they never... even in *Western Approaches* I never asked them to learn lines, so that you get the gist, so that they interpreted the scene and used their own words to describe the content of the scene (BECTU, 1991).

It would therefore seem that the use of an amateur cast, frequently utilised by the CFU, was continued in some PIFs well after the closure of the Unit. There were also other on screen representations which reflected the films of the 1940s as the audience would no doubt have appreciated the roles and responsibilities outlined in the main part of *Atomic Attack*. For example, the key local role was played by the Warden who, as in World War Two had the responsibility of reporting local damage and casualties. The principal novelty in the face of the threat of nuclear weapons was that he now carried a Geiger counter to establish local radiation levels. As in *Waking Point* the emphasis of the film was that training was essential and that volunteering at the last moment would be totally ineffective.

These post-war films emphasised the survivability assumptions of the earlier films, such as *Ordinary People* (1941). However, by 1958 the situation had dramatically altered, especially in terms of ordnance.⁸² The weapons dropped upon Japan were Atomic or A Bombs whereas by the mid-1950s the opposing sides in the Cold War were equipped with Hydrogen or H Bombs. Although there is not a direct correlation between the amount of destruction and the power of the device exploded it is sufficient to be aware that the expected results were many hundreds of times greater than what happened to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Added to the immense destruction caused by blast and fire would be the inevitable radiation pollution which could cause further catastrophic and long term effects upon any surviving population. It was not that the Government was unaware of the potential for massive casualties. As early as May 1954 the Governments' Scientific Advisers had pointed out that depending upon the type of weapon used, meteorological conditions and time of day fatal casualties, either through blast or subsequent radiation poisoning in London (population 8.2m), for example, could be as high as 4.1m people (TNA: HO 225/52). Furthermore, in October 1954, following a war game, *Exercise Thunder*, involving all the armed forces and their civilian counterparts it was realised, 'It is now clear that an all-out enemy attack would so disrupt the centralised control and reliable and extensive communications upon which the execution of the existing War Deployment Plan (Xenophon) depends, that it would be impossible to carry it out in practice' (TNA: AIR 20/9115).

⁸² The weapons dropped upon Japan were "atomic bombs" which are fission devices, where uranium or plutonium is forced into a "critical mass", causing the atoms of the element to fission or "split" into the smaller atoms of other elements. When they split, they give off neutrons that split even more of the atoms. Each atom gives off a tremendous amount of energy. The later hydrogen "H" bombs were fusion devices in which the heat given off by a fission explosion is directed at a container of fusible hydrogen (deuterium). The heat and pressure causes the hydrogen to fuse into helium, the same process that takes place in the Sun and stars. This reaction produces an incredible amount of energy, because again a tiny amount of matter from each atom is converted into heat. The destructive output of these weapons is measured in kilotons, equivalent of TNT for the atomic bomb and megatons for the hydrogen bomb. To give some impression of destructive equivalence the bomb which devastated Hiroshima had an explosive power of about 15 kilotons; by the mid-1950s the arsenals of both the USA and USSR had weapons of 25 megatons and more. By the mid-1950s both the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO 1955) and Warsaw Pact (1955) nations were equipped with H Bombs. The United States developed its first deployable H Bomb in 1954, the USSR in 1955 and the UK in 1957.

Consequently the assumptions upon which planning in the event of an aerial attack were based were now thought to be redundant. Despite this in 1958, perhaps to reassure the civilian population, *Atomic Attack* persisted in validating the belief in general survivability.

However, a mere four years later, *Hole in the Ground* (1962) was somewhat different in tone, content and presentation. It marked the beginning of the end of the expectation of survivability and instead a rather cold assumption that many British citizens would become collateral damage in any future nuclear exchange. Gone was the emphasis on casualty recovery and the somewhat enthusiastic amateurism of the Civil Defence in previous films. Much was still recognisable from previous CFU films which was hardly surprising as, once again, the chief cameraman was Fred Gamage. The film appeared to have little direct concern for the general populace who are only shown briefly and in both instances people are running away from the camera to take what little shelter they can in their own homes. Down in the Hole, a deep bomb-proof nuclear shelter, the sang-froid and blasé approach of those within to their compatriots above ground is somewhat surprising to modern audiences. However, it was an attitude which would have been readily recognisable from earlier Crown films from *Target for Tonight*, *Coastal Command* to *Western Approaches* and it was also reflected in some of the behaviour seen in the 1950s British war films such as *The Cruel Sea* (1953), *The Dam Busters* (1955) or *Ice Cold in Alex* (1958).

The key characters in *Hole in the Ground* were not introduced by name but rather by job title or role. So there was the Chief Sector Warning Officer [the only permanent member of staff] and the Leading Scientist accompanied by a variety of telephonists and other technical helpers. Consistent with previous CFU films such as *The Magic Touch* (1950) or even *Insect Pests in Food* (1950) the scientist had been elevated to hero status and in this film it was his advice which determined the decisions made by the Chief Sector Warning Officer. The film detailed the likely sequence of events should the UK be attacked from the air with nuclear weapons. Although the USSR was never mentioned by name the implicit assumption was always that it would be the aggressor.

The operations room of the Sector Warning and Monitoring Organisation would have been familiar to many in a contemporary audience as being almost identical to that in *Target for Tonight* and many subsequent films, both documentary and feature, about the air war in World War Two where people were earnestly and frantically busy around large maps. *The Hole in the Ground* confirmed on screen the Government policy of deterrence as it included a series of shots of Vulcan bomber crews enplaning and taking off to attack the enemy. Direct defence of the UK was taken up by Lightning and Buccaneer fighter aircraft scrambling and these, alongside the launching of Bloodhound ground to air missiles, were shown engaging and destroying 'enemy planes'. However, the narrator intoned, echoing Baldwin thirty years before, 'it is inevitable that some enemy planes and missiles will get through'.

Amongst the scenes there was a brief homage to earlier CFU films, like *Listen to Britain* (1942) with a panoramic shot across London, implying perhaps that this was to be the last time it was to be seen this way. Meanwhile, in contrast to the civilians above, those in the Warning and Monitoring Organisation were safely ensconced 120 feet below behind steel doors.

The film also introduced a French liaison officer who advised the Chief Sector Warning Officer of potential fallout approaching the English south coast. It was the result of a bomb on Boulogne but, he added, 'only a little one of about 100 kilotons'. This was said in a manner which appeared totally oblivious to the massive destruction and loss of life that even such a 'small' weapon would have caused to his country and countrymen. He did perhaps redeem himself slightly by commenting to his Belgian colleague sitting alongside that the situation 'ce n'est pas joli'; which was probably the understatement of the film.

Indeed all those below ground in the Hole carried out their tasks without any sign of emotion despite the fact that, above, families and friends were being slaughtered. There was little hint of the personal impact of what was occurring except in one screen incident when a female telephonist asked the Chief Sector Warning Officer if he was aware of the situation on the south coast. His response was that it was fine although Southampton had been hit by a bomb. The film cuts to the telephonist's friends who mutter amongst themselves that

the girl's parents lived in that city. Cutting back to the telephonist there was a brief lip wobble but she then took control of herself and returned to her duties. This casualness or sang-froid in the face of what could only be massive devastation persisted throughout the film. Even towards the end the two leading characters were quite cheerful and set about rewarding themselves with chocolate and a smoke. Again this seems to be a reflection on the behaviour anticipated and seen in many war films of the 1940s and 1950s. It was not quite as cheerful as the air raid shelter scene in *Ordinary People* but was certainly in the same vein. However, in this case, they were all safely in The Hole whereas the majority of the population were on the surface being blasted or irradiated.

This film was produced at a time both of heightened tensions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries, indeed it is contemporaneous with the Cuban Missile crisis in which a standoff between the USA and the USSR over Soviet deployment of missiles in Cuba almost initiated a global conflict. It was also produced at a time when support for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was growing in the UK. Although there was much in the film technically and in production values which echoed its CFU predecessors its general insensitivity to the civilian population was not a message seen within previous Crown productions.

Certainly all the films about an aerial assault were reflections of the concerns and priorities of the times in which they were produced. In many cases this was overtly demonstrated, normally by the inclusion of appropriate newsreel or stock footage, which contextualised the subsequent action and development within the film. Although not a feature uniquely of CFU films it was a device used quite frequently; such films as *Ferry Pilot* (1941) and *Coastal Command* (1942) include library shots. Indeed, in the case of *The Waking Point*, the first scene was in a cinema where a newsreel was being screened. The newsreel itself showed the deteriorating international situation across the world, culminating with the outbreak of war in Korea. The inclusion of news and stock footage to emphasise a particular point continued across the range of CFU films in this study. So *Hole in the Ground* (1962) uses library shots of RAF

aircraft and missiles taking off and attacking [drone] enemy planes in the middle of the film to establish that retaliation was being undertaken.

This tactic reflected the Griersonian dictum that documentary films are 'the creative treatment of actuality' (1933. p.8) and permeated the approach of many of the CFU productions and, in turn, appeared in the later COI commissioned films. The drama documentary was seen as a suitable vehicle to convey information even when addressing the ultimate survivability event, a nuclear strike. The narrative aspect of the film provided an easily understandable, direct and with the use of actors, professional telling of the story. This could be the intertwining of a number of individual stories relating to the same event as, for example, *Ordinary People* or the interaction of people responding to a possible calamity as, in the case of *Hole in the Ground*. The message becomes personalised but is nonetheless powerful.

Not only was the influence of the CFU evident in terms of form and approach in the later COI films relating to aerial attack but there were also more subtle similarities. As has been noted earlier the CFU did not challenge the contemporary perspective on social class and correspondingly this can be recognised in the later films and, as such, demonstrates their value as historical artefacts. In *Ordinary People* although the overall message was one of 'we're all in this together' the class stereotypes were plainly evident. Those from the working classes tended to fit into a spectrum one end of which was stolid and worthy and the other was marked by a mischievous and jokey attitude. In the first category there was Mr and Mrs Payne, the housewife who represented self-sacrifice and neighbourly support and her husband, the worker in an armaments factory who, afterwards, still did his bit as an Air Raid Warden. Similarly, Frank, the GPO telephone engineer represented diligence and dedication as he continued his repair work despite an imminent air raid. Meanwhile, his mate, Dougie, shows less application but cheerfully eyed up passing girls and flicked a V sign at the oncoming German bombers. Not quite in the same category, but still demonstrating humour and cheerfulness throughout the film was the corpulent taxi driver, Tiny. These working class stereotypes were replicated in the later films as, for example, in *Hole in the Ground*, the unnamed telephonist was allowed a brief lip tremble having been

told, somewhat cavalierly, that her parents were likely to have been killed, but soon, composed herself and got on with her duties.

A slight exception to this interpretation of the class stereotypes was that of Joe Mercer, a railway Pullman coach attendant in *The Waking Point*. He was clearly the hero but, in a sense, his heroism was based upon his previous wartime experience in an Air Raid Heavy Rescue team and his willingness, eventually, to volunteer once again for Civil Defence. Furthermore his commitment was finally rewarded by appointment as one of the few, full-time paid officials. As such he became, through the redemptive process of nearly losing his son in an accident, a stolid and worthy citizen. However, such a working class hero was quite rare in these later aerial bombardment films, more often than not in the working class are represented as running, panic stricken to their terraced homes at the sound of the air raid siren (*Hole in the Ground*) or at the other extreme, later in the same film as the cheerful, wise-cracking sailor on HMS Bellerophon.

Indeed the links between the classes are most notable when the participants are in uniform. In all the films a uniform confers both respect and responsibility but it clearly denoted the difference in attitude and behaviour between those officers, normally middle class, and the other ranks, normally working class. The individuals who provided the cross class and cross rank communication, are the non-commissioned officers (NCOs) normally from working class backgrounds but having assumedly, through diligence and conscientiousness, been promoted. The most notable example of this is Bob, the Civil Defence (CD) organiser in *The Waking Point* Bob's NCO status is emphasised in the film in a number of ways, his uniform and rank badges, his authority demonstrated by his actions during the CD exercise and, perhaps, most tellingly by his interaction and deference to Mrs Rankin and the senior regional CD officer.

The NCO role was apparent in subsequent films but was less central to the narrative. So, for example, in *Ordinary People* the Court Usher has the role of both communicating with the judge and the plaintiff, an obviously working class lady who had become in arrears in her rent. Bomb damage to her house had

meant that she was unable to take in lodgers. The more formal uniformed NCO role is seen in most of the other films where military or semi-military figures feature. In *Atomic Attack* the NCO was seen in his traditional role as carrying out the instructions of the officer of the Army's Mobile Defence Corps.⁸³

Although the officer role was often depicted and remained very similar across the films under study the general depiction of the middle class was quite nuanced. So there were representatives of the professional middle class as in the CFU's *Ordinary People* this role was taken by the judge administering justice at a local level and in a small claims case. He was both the representative of the establishment and the status quo but also of fairness and understanding. He epitomised a phlegmatic attitude in the face of the aerial attack but also a determination to continue with his duty regardless of any consequences to himself. Similarly, in the later film *Hole in the Ground* the Scientific Officer also demonstrated his professionalism by his objective assessments and decisions.

The middle class sense of duty and commitment was also highlighted in the early CFU films. In *The Waking Point* the middle class couple, Mr and Mrs Rankin, their status shown by taking sherry in the garden of a large detached property, were concerned by the deteriorating international situation and volunteered for the Civil Defence. However, not all middle class individuals were portrayed in a sympathetic light. In *Ordinary People* for example, an ancillary character was a shopper in the ladies wear department of Bourne and Hollingsworth. This particular store, on the corner of Oxford Street and Berners Street in London, had provided merchandise for the middle class since the beginning of the twentieth century. Here, in the middle of a major conflict was an individual who was more concerned about the design of a sweater than an imminent assault by the Luftwaffe. Even when the sirens sounded she had to be shepherded reluctantly down to the shelters. The war it seems had the temerity to interfere with her purchase. Furthermore, her treatment of the shop assistant was also quite dismissive and brusque. This type of characterisation

⁸³ The Mobile Defence Corps (MDC) were a short-lived (1955-59) Army Unit designated to assist the Civil Defence authorities in the event of a nuclear attack.

appears in the later films as well. In *Hole in the Ground* both the Chief Scientific Officer and the Chief Officer in the middle of a nuclear attack are dismissive of their more junior colleagues appearing to be more concerned about their chocolate and tobacco fix than the holocaust above.

Although the example of aerial attack has been used to demonstrate the continuing influence of the CFU after its closure in 1952 similar cases could be made for other aspects of public policy mentioned above ranging from road safety to medical advice. Popularly Crown's fame rests upon a very few of its wartime productions such as *Target for Tonight* (1941) or *Fires Were Started* (1943) but feature length films were always a very small part of its overall output. This research has concluded that its importance is much wider and as such its legacy was far more in terms of its production values and standards which created a consistency of output, especially in term of Public Information Films that later became templates for other producers. This was, of course, hardly surprising as those who had worked for Crown took their skills to other organisations. Indeed, the importance of the CFU's legacy to film making both in the UK and elsewhere was ironically anticipated by Robert Fraser, Director-General of the Central Office of Information who wrote to a senior civil servant in the Treasury on 14 December 1951 in a desperate attempt to prevent the Unit's closure;

Crown is still the most famous documentary film unit in the world. Most people would say it is the best in the world. At any rate in this and every other country, its works are known and its standards followed, and the British Government has long been honoured in all film circles for showing how film can be used as a means of public enlightenment and social progress (TNA: INF 12/691).

7. Conclusion

The closure of the Crown Film Unit was, of course, a political decision in that it was taken by a Government Minister, John Boyd-Carpenter, and yet it may have been more partisan than I had originally described a decade or so ago when I first examined it.⁸⁴ Certainly there could be no disguising the parlous financial position of the Unit that had been so forensically identified in the Collis Report and, from an accounting perspective, the elephant in the room was the massive studio at Beaconsfield. Although it returned to film use later in 1971 becoming the home of the National Film and Television School, the studio's size can be appreciated as in the late 1960s it had been the warehouse facility for the natural gas conversion appliances for the North Thames Gas Board. However, as far as the CFU was concerned it was an enormous fixed cost upon the balance sheet and a totally unnecessary one in that the vast majority of Crown films of the late 1940s and early 1950s were actually shot on location. Finding much smaller accommodation more appropriate for post-production, perhaps in London, would have significantly reduced both fixed costs and travel expenses. Studio facilities, when required, could have been hired from commercial operators. This possible solution to the CFU's financial difficulties was actually suggested in a memo from Robert Fraser, the Director-General of the COI, on 14 December 1951⁸⁵ but it was much too late and was subsequently ignored by all the decision makers.

Although the opposition to the closure of the CFU was principally concerned with the merit of the films themselves there was an underlying belief that the later films lacked any real artistic or aesthetic value as was implicit in Boyd-Carpenter's one line dismissal of the Unit in his autobiography. This perception is still held in certain academic circles, as epitomised, for example, by Neil Rattigan's dismissive comment reported in Chapter Four. It could be, of course, that there was a significant partisan aspect to Boyd-Carpenter's view as,

⁸⁴ See Alan Harding (2004) 'The Closure of the Crown Film Unit in 1952: Artistic Decline or Political Machinations?'

⁸⁵ Written to a Mr A. Johnston of the Treasury (TNA: T219/120).

undoubtedly, some of the CFU's most ardent supporters were from the political left, championed by the *Daily Mirror* but including a raft of Labour MPs from Anthony Greenwood (Rossendale), Patrick Gordon-Walker (Smethwick), Sir Leslie Plummer (Deptford) and many others as the contemporary Hansard records show. However, another possible explanation could be that by 1950 the types of films that the Unit produced were not feature length or near feature length ones for theatrical distribution but short public information films often designed for specific audiences. Indeed a review of the actual number of films being produced after 1945 (see Appendix 5) shows that, after a decline in the immediate post-war years, by 1950 and 1951 the CFU was completing more films per annum than it ever had. It was just that these films were designed for, and reached, discrete audiences. The CFU's distribution had moved proportionately away from theatrical to non-theatrical exhibition. Hardly surprising then that a politician seeking headline expenditure savings should see the Unit as an obvious target as most voters would probably fail to notice the CFU's absence.

The lack of obvious theatrical feature length film successes post-war has also perhaps prejudiced observers against the CFU. However, the review of these conducted in Chapter Four does indicate that they were perhaps not as poor as has been previously suggested by such authors as Rattigan. There were certainly box office failures like Jennings's *The Cumberland Story* (1948) but this has to be set against later critical successes such as *Daybreak at Udi* (1949) and *The Waking Point* (1951). Perhaps the Minister when making the decision to close the Unit had merely scanned the newspapers and, finding no reviews, assumed that the Unit's purpose was now superfluous to Government requirements. Perhaps too he paid more attention to the cajoling of the normally Conservative supporting CEA which, by the last year of the Labour Government, had demanded a limit upon the theatrical circulation of official film and, more optimistically, 'the power to censor all official film to safeguard against any abuse of the national spirit of the [COI shorts] agreement' (Wildy, 1988, p.200).

Since this research commenced the principal technical change has been the wider and easier availability of many of the CFU's production catalogue.

Television, DVD compilations and the internet has given the films both an unexpected longevity and the potential of a wider audience. This research is therefore timely as it provides a framework through which the films can not only be reviewed but also reinterpreted.

However, when the films were originally released they were seen, or at least experienced, by many millions of people in a variety of situations from the conventional cinema seat to a NAAFI stall to a dusty floor in a distant part of the then Empire. With a very few notable and usually well-known exceptions such as *Target for Tonight* (1941) or *Fires Were Started* (1943) these films could not be described as box office successes. Indeed there was, in most cases, no serious intention that they would challenge the existing studio system for popular acclaim. As has been seen in Chapter Five there were a few contemporary reviews of CFU productions which gave some indication of their possible reception. However, these usually addressed those few films which had theatrical exhibition and subsequently academic interest has tended to revolve around these, in essence, small handful of the overall CFU output. Yet, it is reasonable to suggest that, given the numbers of people who were actually exposed to the films and, depending on individual circumstance and interest either engaged with them or ignored or just endured them, they almost certainly had some social and economic impact. Most of the Unit's productions were PIFs and therefore difficult, especially at this distance in time, to assess their individual impact. Even one mother being prompted to have her child vaccinated against smallpox after viewing *Surprise Attack* (1951) at her local cinema must be deemed a success. Perhaps too, a farmer having watched *Breeding for Milk* (1947) at his local NFU meeting and subsequently improved the yield of his dairy herd would have recognised an economic benefit.

The intention of this research has been to explore and re-assess the importance of the Crown Film Unit with particular reference to a number of areas by, essentially, placing it in its historical, political, social and filmic contexts. In doing so it would in addition review whether the Unit's output contributed to British morale and self-image, especially during the Second World War. It would also consider the contention that the CFU was fundamentally a producer of propaganda films and, in terms of its legacy,

whether it had any influence on subsequent films, especially those produced in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, the research would evaluate any contribution made to the documentary film movement in Britain.

Contribution to British morale and self-image

As has been seen in Chapters Three and Four Crown produced films throughout its dozen years of operation which reflected British life and for the twenty first century viewer they provide an insight into Britain at war and at peace in the 1940s and early 1950s. Jennings' *Listen to Britain* (1942) provided images which would have been instantly recognisable to those contemporary audiences as well as, perhaps, current students of the Second World War. Even in the post-war years the majority of the CFU's domestic films were placed in easily identifiable environments such as *Moving Millions* (1947) with its plethora of London buses and tube trains. Indeed if these had not been situated in recognisable settings their impact as PIFs would have been significantly reduced as audiences would be far less likely to identify and empathise with them.

Unsurprisingly too the CFU portrayed the same stereotypes as those to be found in mainstream cinema films. As has been previously noted in, for example, both *Ordinary People* (1941) and ten years later in *Waking Point* (1951) the characters were fairly typical social class stereotypes. As such there was little significantly different in this representation to that of the commercially produced *Millions Like Us* (1943), the story of a young woman conscripted into war work in an aircraft factory, or even *The Dam Busters* (1955). Whether the CFU productions were in reality more authentic as they usually utilised non-professional actors recruited from the role or organisation featured in the film must be, in retrospect, unresolved. At the time, however, there was a feeling they were more realistic for as a *Yorkshire Post* reporter noted having just seen *Fires Were Started*, 'For those service pictures professional artists are not employed. If a well-known actor appears in such a film the attention of the audiences, I was told, tends to be engaged with the personality rather than in the message of the picture' (30 May 1942).

This might go some way to suggest that perhaps the CFU had the slight edge in terms of authenticity as cinema-goers would by necessity have to suspend disbelief to a greater or lesser extent as most contemporary commercially released productions were advertised as starring particular individuals. Thus in the above examples *Millions Like Us* showcased Patricia Roc, Gordon Jackson and Eric Portman and, perhaps more memorably, *The Dam Busters*, starred Richard Todd and Michael Redgrave. So the principal difference between the CFU and commercial feature films both in wartime and beyond was that the key function of the former's films were its purpose and message rather than privileging the star.

Although many of the CFU's wartime output could be construed as endorsements of the 'People's War' interpretation of the conflict they were not necessarily exact representations the struggle. However, it may be worth re-emphasising the fact that many contemporary film critics thought that these wartime films had in fact been accurate portrayals of wartime life. For example, even as late as 1955, Penelope Houston argued in *Sight and Sound* that, 'anyone wanting a picture of what Britain was like during the war has only to look at the screen: *Fires Were Started* may reveal more than *Waterloo Road*, *Western Approaches* more than *In Which We Serve*, but still the record stands' (1955, Vol 25. p.13).

Whether or not Crown films contributed to national identity, self-image or morale, especially during wartime, is to some extent a function of the nature of film itself. It is a poor and inflexible medium for responding to immediate issues. In order to justify the time, effort and cost from initiation to exhibition a successful film must resonate with the audience. When it did, as in the case of *Target for Tonight* (1941) it was regarded contemporaneously as successful but, when it did not as with *The Cumberland Story* (1948), then it was panned.

This research has established that it is possible to categorise Crown's output in such a manner as to identify those themes which were important at the time. This analytical framework has shown that, even within the themes themselves, the films changed as both Government needs and public anxieties altered. On the one hand CFU films responded to threats in the external environment and,

inevitably, war and national survival was the largest existential threat to the UK but, importantly from a cinematic and audience perspectives it was far easier to dramatise than the later sterling and productivity crises. Post-war threats were diverse and often not immediately apparent to the audience and therefore difficult to provoke a response. Threats as diverse as devaluation, road safety and even poliomyelitis were far less universally menacing than the Nazis. On the other hand, as has been seen, as far as theatrical exhibition was concerned most of the CFU's production output was experienced as a cinematic wallpaper being a small part of a daily programme which might, or might not, have engaged the individual audience member with a particular message. Undoubtedly Crown used both conventional and novel filmic devices to envelop the audience with images that they would have recognised and, if engaged, would probably have responded to. However, whether this was actually transformed into improved morale is, at this distance in time, impossible to determine. As such the CFU's output probably contributed in a small way to what James Chapman has called the 'discourse on nationhood and national identity' (2007, p.65). A more fruitful perspective on this might be a consideration of the intention behind the actual films themselves.

Propaganda role

That the CFU produced films, especially during the wartime years, which contributed to, or perhaps purported to, maintain national morale is an obvious indication that much of the output could have been described as propaganda. As William Crofts has explained propaganda was 'any attempt by the Government or other organisation to create or maintain states of mind conducive to the required end' (1989, p.12). Accordingly a review of the films produced primarily for cinema exhibition by the CFU between 1940 and 1952 outlined in Chapters Three and Four does demonstrate that for many, particularly in the early years, their function was in the main to persuade, encourage, and reinforce as well as to provide entertainment and information. None of the films produced were as blatantly exultant as *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, 1935) or as provocative and inflammatory as *Jud Süß* (*The Jew Suss*, 1940). However, as Appendix I indicates well over 50% of the CFU wartime films fell into either the Hitting Back or Reassurance categories

which in essence were seeking to reinforce or create a general sentiment of national unity in the face of Nazi aggression. It was also the case that some of these films were designed not only for domestic consumption but had also an important role in propagandising the British cause in the United States and elsewhere. The major theatrically released films in this category such as *Target for Tonight* or *Fires Were Started* were produced mainly between 1940 and 1943 when there was a possibility that the war might have been lost. This particular type of film was similar in content and approach to those being produced under Mol guidelines by the commercial film sector such as, for example, David Lean and Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve* (1942). Although many of the theatrically released wartime CFU films tended to emphasise the role of a particular service arm others, such as *Listen to Britain* and *Ordinary People* had a more general purpose in both encouraging domestic morale and publicising the British cause abroad.

As far as non-theatrical exhibition is concerned Nicholas Pronay has intimated that Mol films, and by implication those made by the CFU, were utilised in a somewhat sinister fashion;

as long term conditioning propaganda ... Going to factories, working men's institutes, church halls, adult education classes and the like at regular intervals, and being projected not in an entertainment context but in a context designed to lead to 'structured discussion' afterwards, it was in fact a classic Soviet type, Agitprop operation (1983, p.72).

However, this research uncovered little to support this accusation either in terms of post-exhibition activity or ideology. Of course, there were a few films produced between 1941 and 1943 which were sympathetic to the USSR, such as *Tale of Two Cities* (1942) or even *Worker's Weekend* (1943) but these were consistent with the contemporary and widespread relief that Germany was fighting upon another front, thus drawing troops and materiel away from the west. As has been explained in Chapter Four this adulation of all things Soviet soon turned to fear and hostility after 1945 with the development of the Cold War.

Although over half the wartime output could be classified as Reassurance and Hitting Back that type of film disappeared almost entirely after the 1946. Of course there were a few films in the latter years which it could be argued encouraged a positive general sentiment towards Britain and therefore could be easily placed in the propaganda category. However, most of these were not for domestic consumption but rather for overseas exhibition. An example of this would be the cinemagazine *This is Britain* (1950-51) which was sponsored by the Board of Trade and was designed to showcase British exports and British life in general across the world.

However, the larger proportion of CFU productions were not designed to evoke sentiment but rather to address particular initiatives, often with a very limited audience in mind. As can be seen in Appendices 1 and, particularly, 3 most of these were fairly mundane and fell more naturally into the category of Public Information Films. According to Crofts, 'Governments prefer the term "information services" yet information is a necessary component of propaganda, but not the whole of it' (1989, p.12). This was especially the case after 1946 when the CFU came under the auspices of the Central Office of Information (COI) and was required, essentially, to tout for business. It was also true that the new Labour administration was concerned that Government publicity should be, as far as possible, immune from a criticism of partisanship. So, from then on each film (see Appendix 3) was sponsored by a particular ministry or department of government with the direct aim of promoting a specific scheme or policy. Many of these, as examined in Chapter Four, were designed for specialised audiences such as farmers or medical professionals. As the Government's principal film making unit the CFU responded during its lifetime to the requests of its political masters but moved from attempting to influence the national 'state of mind' in wartime to producing a large number of 'informationals' in the later 1940s, often more akin to modern advertising and training films.

Influence on later films

This aspect has been thoroughly discussed in Chapter Six but it would be pertinent here to make a few observations. Firstly, as has been seen, the CFU

provided an important training ground for many of those who continued to work in the industry in the 1950s and 1960s. Hardly surprisingly they took with them aspects of Crown's production approach and ideas. It cannot have been mere chance that a number of films of the 1950s which represented Britain and the British during wartime were directed by ex-CFU men. As Linda Wood has explained,

because they [Leacock, Jackson and Watt] came from documentary, where filming in situ was done as a matter of course, they brought the approach to feature film and at a time when British cinema was studio-bound this because of the technical difficulties of working on location, they pushed to make features against real backgrounds. Lee and the other ex-documentary film-makers set about a revolution in film making and, although largely unacknowledged in the UK, his influence has been considerable (2006, p.367).

The importance of the documentary approach has also been recognised in films not immediately connected with Crown. Ramsden (2003) observed that in casting and preparing for *The Dam Busters* director Michael Anderson wanted individuals as close in appearance to the original bomber crews as possible. Thus Richard Todd copied Guy Gibson, [the raid's leader] in wearing a small Boy Scout badge on a wrist band and also a captured German Mae West life jacket and 'Bill Kerr, playing Sqd Ldr 'Micky' Martin, had to have his ears chocked out in line with the real life character. Anderson wanted to secure 'documentary accuracy'because actual events were being created on film' (Ramsden 2003, p.44).

Contribution to documentary film

Crown's reputation amongst both contemporary and subsequent observers appears to have been based principally upon the belief that its films were reasonably accurate representations of reality. As such any review of the Crown Film Unit has almost always situated it in that section labelled 'Documentary'. In the 1940s the *Documentary News Letter* regularly published lists for both theatrical and non-theatrical outlets under the general heading of Documentary Film releases and, amongst these, were included CFU films.

More recently, for example, in James Chapman's *A New History of Documentary* (2015) the CFU has a sub-heading to itself within the chapter entitled 'The Documentary at War'.

There is much to commend this approach as, indeed, most of the staff of the CFU probably thought of themselves primarily as documentarists. However, as early as 1941, it could be seen that this was a portmanteau term rather than a specific description. Even the more famous personalities could not agree as, on introducing Humphrey Jennings and Jack Holmes to the British Kinematograph Society's Annual Meeting, CFU producer Ian Dalrymple said, they were representatives of 'two fundamentally different methods of approach to documentary: the former a believer in the surreptitious capture of realism and the latter of restating reality' (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 4 September 1941). Similarly Pat Jackson's comments as mentioned in Chapter Six confirm that the CFU personnel never really agreed about what was meant by the term 'documentary' – a conceptual dilemma which appears to have persisted to the present day. Consequently this research has determined that if it is to be placed in any particular filmic category then inclusion as a Documentary Film production unit is probably the most appropriate. Although it could be suggested that it would be better placed in a subsection of 'documentary' as, if there was a thread which ran through most CFU productions from the very beginning in 1940 to the completion of the last films in the spring of 1952, it was that the films were essentially didactic. Crown productions were normally films with a purpose, films with a message. In order to get that message across there was almost always an appreciation that the audience had to be engaged. In order to achieve the sponsor's intention the method was entertainment and the medium was film.

This research has explored the range of films produced by the Crown Film Unit and has categorised the 225 or so films and placed them in their historical, social, political and filmic contexts. It has demonstrated that Crown's influence was much wider than a few famous cinema exhibited wartime films. Its films certainly reflected Government policies and priorities but in addressing those demands it developed an approach which emphasised authenticity, if not always direct realism, as a means of engaging the audience with the message.

The research has suggested that Crown had a significant role in the development of the British films, short, documentary and feature, not only in the 1940s but beyond as CFU staff went on to work in film and television taking their skills and ethos with them. The Crown approach would range from the use of non-actors, to location shooting, to story lines designed to engage the audience with the sponsor's message. Crown's demise occurred at a time when cinema audiences were plunging and the sale of television sets was rising. As such Crown was situated at the cusp of the change in the British public's viewing habits. It therefore represented a transition phase in particular types of British film making in that it was a forerunner of, not only television documentaries but also much subsequent advertising, training and public informational films.

Crown's contribution has often been relegated to the periphery of academic discussion. However, this research has concluded that the CFU ought to be considered as an important and dynamic production company in its own right with a significant impact both upon how the British viewed themselves in the 1940s and early 1950s and how they have been viewed subsequently.

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A Note on CFU Film Listings

Film Titles:

Titles used are those normally applied to a particular film in the UK. Occasionally a film title changed during the production process. So *Come Again* (1943) started off as *Britain Revisited*. Sometimes a title was changed for the overseas market, thus *Western Approaches* (1944) was released in the USA as *The Raider*. As is explained in Chapter One films which were substantially re-edited and normally reduced in footage for the non-theatrical market are treated as separate entities in the appendices. For example, *Air Operations* (January 1942) was a truncated version of *Target for Tonight* (November 1941).

Possible CFU titles:

A few films which were produced during the period 1940-1952 could be reasonably classified as CFU productions but the evidence is limited and as provenance is questionable they are itemised at the end of the film listings but are not included in the analysis. Similarly, films in which production commenced but either never completed or exhibited have been excluded. An example of this latter category would be the 1944 short *Escort Carrier*.

Running time (RT):

Running Time given is to the nearest minute. Where RT had been listed in overall film footage in some of the literature, and where it has not been viewed personally, this has been converted into time by using the conventional calculation for 35mm film running through a projector at 24 frames per second; 1 minute of RT = 90 feet of film.

Release dates:

Those quoted are normally the dates for Theatrical Exhibition. It was reasonably common for the films to be available through the Central Film Library (CFL) for non-theatrical use two or three months later, often but not always in 16mm format. However, release dates in both cases must be treated with caution as films were sometimes delayed or pulled at the last minute. For

example, *Africa Freed* (1944) was never exhibited as it was thought to be ‘too British’.

Type of Exhibition:

The Documentary News Letter published a regular listing of films produced and released over the previous few months. A feature of these listings was a description of each film’s intended exhibition and was abbreviated thus:-

T – Theatrical

NT – Non-Theatrical

O – Overseas

OO – Mainly Overseas

OOO – Wholly Overseas

I – Instructional

Inevitably there were frequent overlaps in the categorisation and the practice was discontinued from about 1948. However, for the purposes of the listings in this research the categorisation has been extended to cover the entire CFU production canon. By way of a caveat it is important to recognise that the allocation of a particular exhibition method by the *Documentary News Letter* was often heuristic and that is also the case in the post 1948 apportionment.

Film Content:

This is a very brief description of the film content. Often a more detailed account may be found in the preceding text or in the BFI, National or Imperial War Museum Archives.

BFI Reference:

This is the reference given by the BFI for a particular film. Please note that a reference number does not indicate that the BFI Library either has a copy of the film or that, if it does, the film is viewable. It is merely an acknowledgement that the film existed.

National Archive Reference:

Many of the CFU films have some documentary reference in the National Archive, usually in the INF 6 or INF 33 categories. However, some caution is necessary as the reference is often quite limited and, occasionally difficult to discover as, for example, film titles sometimes changed from treatment to release. Thus *Before the Raid* (1943) was originally referred to as *Calling All Peoples*.

Films Viewed:

As is mentioned in the text a number of the films were released for either theatrical or non-theatrical exhibition in different forms. Some were shortened versions of longer films such as *Up Periscope* (1944) which was a shorter version of *Close Quarters* (1943) or later, *The Railwaymen* (1946) became the shorter *Along the Line* (1947). Others were re-edited for overseas distribution like *Target for Tonight* (1941). Unfortunately the lack of, or very limited, film credits mean that the exact provenance of each individual film viewed can be unclear. Suffice to say that the textual commentary is always based upon the print of the actual film viewed. A check mark thus indicates that the film has been viewed in full as part of this research. The absence of a check mark usually means that the film is not available as a viewable copy or has been lost.

Themes:

These are described in detail in Chapter Three for Appendix 1 and Chapter Four for Appendix 3.

Screen Credits:

Many CFU productions do not include any credit references or, if they do, they are very sparse. The listings in Appendices 2 and 4 are often gleaned from documentary evidence such as that available from the National Archive or elsewhere.

Feature Films:

The BFI have defined any film over forty minutes duration as a feature film and this is the criterion used to identify productions in Appendix 5.

Appendix 1

Crown Film Unit Films – Wartime Themes 1940 - 1945

Appendix 1 : Crown Film Unit Films - Wartime Themes 1940 – 1945										
Title	Release Date	Running Time	T/NT/O etc	Hitting Back	Reassurance	Participation	Look Forward	No obvious category	Brief Description	
<i>Musical Poster No 1</i>	Jun-40	3	T/NT/O	1					Animation warning that Nazi sympathisers might hear important war information. Bright colours	
<i>Britain at Bay</i>	Jul-40	7	T/NT/O		1	-	-	-	J. B Priestley's commentary draws together images of Britain in face of German attack. Includes Churchill's 'Fight Them on the Beaches'. Released overseas as <i>Britain on Guard</i>	
<i>Welfare of the Workers</i>	Oct-40	8	T/NT			1	-	-	Welfare initiatives to meet new factory and production conditions. Includes speech by Ernest Bevin	
<i>The Front Line</i>	Oct-40	7	T/NT/O		1				Dover in the weeks after Dunkirk and during the Battle of Britain	
<i>Men of the Lightship</i>	Oct-40	24	T/NT/O	1					Dramatisation of sinking, on 29 January 1940, of East Dudgeon Lightship	
<i>Air Communiqué</i>	Nov-40	6	T/NT/O	1					Reviews how statistics for destroyed enemy planes are compiled	
<i>Spring Offensive/ Unrecorded Victory</i>	Dec-40	20	NT/O			1			Farming Year - reclamation of derelict land (GPOFU/CFU)	
<i>Britain Can Take It</i>	Jan-41	8	T/NT/O		1				Released OS as <i>London Can Take It</i>	

<i>Christmas Under Fire</i>		Jan-41	9	T/OO		1				1940 Christmas - holly and barbed wire
<i>The Heart of Britain</i>		Mar-41	32	T/NT/O		1				Tribute to Northern and Midlands industrial workers: US as <i>This is England</i> - Ed Murrow
<i>India Marches</i>		Early 1941	5	T/NT		1				Indian soldiers training and at recreation
<i>Lofoten</i>		Apr-41	7	T/NT/O	1					Commando raid on Norwegian town - combat film with Army Film Unit
<i>Ordinary People</i>		May-41	25	T/O		1				A day in the life of Londoners during the Blitz
<i>Merchant Seaman</i>		May-41	24	T/NT/O			1			Seaman sunk by U-Boat, takes gunnery course and gets revenge
<i>Words for Battle</i>		May-41	8	T/NT/O		1				Commentary Laurence Olivier - call to battle, poems etc over shots of wartime Britain
<i>Target for Tonight</i>		Aug-41	50	T/O	1					Wellington bomber night mission
<i>Venture Adventure</i>		Nov-41	7	T/NT/O			1			Recruitment film for Air Training Corps
<i>The Pilot is Safe</i>		Nov-41	7	T/NT/O			1			Air Sea Rescue service save downed RAF pilot
<i>America Moves Up</i>		Jan-42	12	OOO		1				US troops in training
<i>Tale of Two Cities</i>		Feb-42	7	T/NT/O		1				London and Moscow survive the Blitz
<i>Air Operations</i>		Feb-42	21	NT/O	1					Abbreviated <i>Target for Tonight</i>
<i>Ferry Pilot</i>		Mar-42	27	T/NT/O			1			Work of Air Transport Command - ferrying aircraft to operational squadrons.
<i>Wavell's 30000</i>		Mar-42	48	T/NT	1					Early Desert campaign against the Italians

<i>Listen to Britain</i>		Apr-42	19	T/NT/O		1				Sounds of Britain at war
<i>Builders</i>		Apr-42	8	T/NT/O				1		Off screen narrator interviews builders to emphasise importance of role in wartime and reconstruction
<i>Day that saved the World</i>		Aug-42	9	T/O	1					Importance of Battle of Britain
<i>United Nations</i>		Aug-42	10	OOO		1				Big' three powers united against Axis
<i>Coastal Command</i>		Nov-42	73	T/O	1					T-Tommy Sunderland Flying Boat on Atlantic patrol - submarines and surface raiders
<i>Malta GC</i>		Jan-43	19	T/O			1			Siege of Malta tribute - Combined with AFU and RAFFU
<i>We Sail at Midnight</i>		Feb-43	27	T/O		1				Importance of "Lend-Lease" to tank building in UK
<i>Letter From Ulster</i>		Feb-43	35	T/O		1				US Troops training in Ulster
<i>Fires Were Started</i>		Apr-43	63	T/O			1			The Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) during the London Blitz: Reduced cinema released version of <i>I Was a Fireman</i> @ 74 minutes
<i>The Silent Village</i>		Apr-43	36	T/O	1					Homage to victims of Lidice massacre transposed to Welsh village
<i>Close Quarters</i>		Jul-43	71	T	1					British submarine operating in N Sea waters (released in USA as <i>Undersea Raider</i>)
<i>Before the Raid</i>		Sep-43	35	T/O	1					Norwegian fishing village under Nazi occupation
<i>Worker's Weekend</i>		Oct-43	14	T/NT/O			1			Workers beat record of building Wellington bomber in under 30 hours

<i>Come Again</i>		Nov-43	18	OOO			1			Australian, Canadian and New Zealander on leave in UK
<i>Up Periscope!</i>		Jan-44	18	NT	1					Submarine warfare - shortened version of <i>Close Quarters</i>
<i>South Africa</i>		Jan-44	14	NT/OO			1			<i>Know your Commonwealth</i> No 1: Three races-separate development. Difficulties for Africans wearing boots??
<i>New Zealand</i>		Mar-44	15	NT			1			Compilation; Part of <i>Know your Commonwealth</i> Series No 2
<i>Two Fathers</i>		1944	13	T	1					Two fathers, English and French discover they have children fighting. French daughter for the resistance, and son recently shot down RAF flier
<i>Africa Freed</i>		1944			1					Not exhibited as thought too British - replaced by <i>Tunisian Victory</i> (Capra)
<i>The True Story of Lili Marlene</i>		Aug-44	17	T	1					Brief history of the song beloved by both Afrika Korps and 8th Army
<i>By Sea And Land</i>		Sep-44	12	T/NT/O	1					Royal Marine Corps in battle for Normandy
<i>Western Approaches</i>		Nov-44	83	T			1			Survivors of torpedoed ship in an Atlantic convoy. Released as <i>The Raider</i> in the USA
<i>The Eighty Days</i>		Nov-44	14	NT		1				History of V1 attack on Southern England
<i>Killing Farm Rats</i>		1944	10	NT					1	Destruction of corn ricks, fouling of the grain and other food stuffs, killing fowls, etc. Methods of killing by administering poison-bait and poison gas

<i>The New School</i>		Dec-44	10	T/NT				1		Encouraging women to train as teachers. <i>New Teacher</i> alternate title
<i>Transatlantic Airport</i>		Dec-44	9	T				1		Prestwick Airport - urgent medicine flown in from Canada
V1		Jan-45	8	OOO		1				2 reel version of <i>Eighty Days</i> for, mainly, US market
<i>The Eighth Plague</i>		Feb-45	11	NT				1		Locust depredations in East Africa and response
<i>Children's Charter</i>		Mar-45	18	NT				1		Butler Education Act. Explaining why raising of school leaving age (ROSLA)
<i>Sisal</i>		Apr-45	10	NT				1		Growing and processing of sisal in Tanganyika (Tanzania)
<i>Southern Rhodesia</i>		May-45	10	NT			1			<i>Know the Commonwealth</i> Series No 5 now Zimbabwe
<i>Myra Hess</i>		Jun-45	10	NT					1	Famous concert pianist - reworked from <i>A Diary for Timothy</i>
<i>The Broad Fourteens</i>		Aug-45	35	T	1					Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) crew become team
<i>Father & Son</i>		Sep-45	14	NT				1		Kenyan elderly learning from young man trained by Royal Navy
<i>Farm Work</i>		Sep-45	21	NT				1		Post-war opportunities in agriculture
<i>This was Japan</i>		Sep-45	11	T	1					Review of Japanese history, graphic descriptions. No militarism in future
<i>The Channel Islands 1940 – 45</i>		Oct-45	17	T/NT		1				Occupation history - re-enactments and newsreel
<i>Diary for Timothy</i>		Nov-45	40	T/NT				1		The first year of a baby's life set against final year of the Second World War

<i>Australians in London</i>		1945	17	OOO				1		Australians in London; VE parade
<i>Picture of Britain</i>		1945	10	OOO				1		
<i>Canada's North West</i>		1945	15	T/NT				1		Japanese attack on communications and supply through Alaska and Canada's plans for development of NW
<i>Unrelenting Struggle</i>		1945	18	OO		1				Wartime speeches of Winston Churchill
<i>Patients are In</i>		1945	10	OOO						Day to day in a US field Hospital in Cirencester - for US
<i>Jungle Mariners</i>		Jan-46	16	NT	1					Filmed in South East Asia Command (SEAC) area. Royal Marines jungle fighting
<i>Johnny Gurkha</i>		Jan-46	14	NT	1					Recruitment and training of Gurkha soldiers in their native Nepal (2 & 3 reel versions)
Totals					20	16	13	12	2	
%					32	26	21	19	3	
Productions with probable CFU involvement										
<i>Recruiting Women</i>		1942	2	T/NT				1		Recruitment trailer for ATS, WRNS & WAAF -(CFU edit)
<i>Report from Burma</i>		1945	15	T/NT	1					War in Burma AFU but CFU edit
<i>Atlantic Charter</i>		1942	20	T/NT/O		1				Atlantic Meeting of Churchill and Roosevelt in August 1941 - probably Movietone, although produced by Dalrymple

Appendix 2

Crown Film Unit Films – Credits, etc., 1940 - 1945

Appendix 2 : Crown Film Unit Films - Credits, etc 1940 – 1945												
Title	Director	Producer	Camera	Sound	Editor	Music	Unit PA/ Manager	Narrator/etc	Actors	BFI Ref	NA Ref	Viewed
<i>Musical Poster No 1</i>	Lye					Herman		Robert Newton		2069 3	INF6/10 28	✓
<i>Britain at Bay</i>	Watt		Rogers		Mc Allister?	Addinsel I		J B Priestly		1330 2	INF6/32 7	✓
<i>Welfare of the Workers</i>	Jennings		Jones	Cameron	Lee			Richie Calder		1458 6	INF 6/356	✓
<i>The Front Line</i>	Watt		Jones								INF 6/354	✓
<i>Men of the Lightship</i>	MacDonald	Cavalca nti	Jones	Cameron	McAllister	Addinsel I				1334 3	INF6/35 3	✓
<i>Air Communiqué</i>	Elton	Watt	Jones, Fowle, Gamage	Cameron						8433	INF6/19 15	✓
<i>Spring Offensive/</i>	Jennings	Cavalca nti	Cross, Fowle, Jones	Cameron	Foot	Mathies on		Street- writer		1455 3	INF6/35 1	✓

<i>Unrecorded Victory</i>												
<i>Britain Can Take It</i>	Jennings/Watt	Duff-Cooper/Wright	Fowle, Jones	Cameron	Lee/McAllister			Quentin Reynolds		21085	INF6/328	✓
<i>Christmas Under Fire</i>	Watt/Hasse		Cross/Fowle			Mathieson		Quentin Reynolds		13856	INF6/329	✓
<i>The Heart of Britain</i>	Jennings	Dalrymple	Fowle	Cameron				Holmes - writer; Cooper - continuity		200923	INF6/331	✓
<i>India Marches</i>	N/K	Bombay Talkies						Z A Bokhari		13710		✓
<i>Lofoten</i>	Tennyson d'Eyncourt.	MacDonald Army Film Unit						Lt Cmdr Kimmins		13710	INF33/10	✓
<i>Ordinary People</i>	Holmes/Elton(?)/Lee		Jones	Cameron	Hales			Cooper - Continuity, Carrick - Art Direction		13567	INF6/330	✓
<i>Merchant Seamen</i>	Holmes/Elton		Fowle	Cameron		Lambert		Blewitt		13646	INF6/332	✓
<i>Words for Battle</i>	Jennings	Dalrymple		Cameron	McAllister			Laurence Olivier		13416	INF6/338	✓

<i>Target for Tonight</i>	Watt	Dalrymple	Jones, Catford	Cameron	McAllister/Krish	Lucas/Mathieson				13093	INF6/335	✓
<i>Venture Adventure</i>	Hasse		Catford	Valentine						13025	INF6/337	✓
<i>The Pilot is Safe</i>	Lee		Kelly		Stone					13510	INF6/336	✓
<i>America Moves Up</i>	Elton		Catford		Ginsberg			Bob Trout - CBS reporter		8611	INF6/343	✓
<i>Tale of Two Cities</i>	Monck									14332	INF6/341	✓
<i>Air Operations</i>	Watt	Dalrymple	Jones, Catford	Cameron	McAllister					112738		✓
<i>Ferry Pilot</i>	Jackson	Dalrymple	Fowle	Cameron	McNaughton	Mathieson		Krish - asst editor		13961	INF6/335	✓
<i>Wavell's 30000</i>	Monck	Dalrymple		Cameron	Monck/Krish	Mathieson		Willis		13796	INF6/342	✓
<i>Listen to Britain</i>	Jennings/McAllister	Dalrymple	Fowle/Gamage	Cameron/Edwards	Jennings/McAllister	Mathieson	Wright	Mendoza Asst Dir		14132	INF6/339: INF5/83	✓
<i>Builders</i>	Jackson	Dalrymple	Pennington-Richards		Cockburn			Hilton		14421	INF6/340	✓

<i>Day that saved the World</i>	Chambers									1545 33	INF6/34 5	✓
<i>United Nations</i>	Dalrymple									1560 4	INF6/34 4	✓
<i>Coastal Command</i>	Holmes	Dalrymple	Jones, Gamage, Catford	Cameron	Gordon/Krish	Mathieson		Bryant - asst dir; Mendoza - asst dir		1413 2	INF5/86	✓
<i>Malta GC</i>	Monck/ De Marney/ Cekalski	Dalrymple			Best	Bax		Laurence Olivier		1429 3	INF6/34 8	✓
<i>We Sail at Midnight</i>	Spiro/John Ford?	Dalrymple	Fowle	Cameron	Stone/Hales	Mathieson				1560 4	INF6/34 6	✓
<i>Letter From Ulster</i>	Hurst	MacQuitty	Fowle	May	Ginsberg		Dawson			1428 5	INF6/34 7	✓
<i>Fires Were Started/I was a Fireman</i>	Jennings	Dalrymple	Pennington-Richards	May	McAllister	Alwyn	Dawson/Wright	G. Gravett		1407 3	INF6/98 5	✓
<i>Silent Village</i>	Jennings	Vaughan	Fowle	Cameron/May	McAllister	Mathieson		Pine - asst. dir		1557 8	INF 33/23	✓
<i>Close Quarters</i>	Lee	Dalrymple	Jones/Gamage	Cameron/Hales	Lloyd/Stone	Mathieson				1408 1	INF33/1 9	✓
<i>Before the Raid</i>	Weiss	Dalrymple	Catford	Cameron		Mathieson	Pargiter	Laurie Lee - story		1408 6	INF6/35 7	✓

<i>Come Again</i>	Elton									2024 9	INF6/35 8	
<i>Worker's Weekend</i>	Elton		Fowle (appears)							1561 0	INF6/35 9	✓
<i>Up Periscope!</i>	Lee	Dalrympl e	Jones/Gam age	Cameron/H ales	Lloyd/ Stone	Mathies on				1408 1		✓
<i>South Africa</i>										2893 39		✓
<i>New Zealand</i>										2426 70		✓
<i>Two Fathers</i>	Asquith	Elton	Jones	Cameron	Trench	Parker	Pine	V S Pritchett - writer	Bernard Miles, Paul Bonifas	1888 7	INF6/39 2	✓
<i>Africa Freed</i>	Dalrymple/ Boulting					Williams		Hodson - writer				
<i>The True Story of Lili Marlene</i>	Jennings		Fowle/ Densham	Cameron	Stone	Mathies on	Nora Dawson	Kranz asst dir	Marius Goring, Lucie Mannhe im	4921 6	INF6/36 0	✓
<i>By Sea And Land</i>	Lee					Parker				9947	INF6/36 1	✓
<i>Western Approaches</i>	Jackson	Jackson	Cardiff	Ash/Gould	Freeman	Mathies on	Bryant	Bolton- asst.dir;		1887 6	INF1/21 3	✓

								Carrick- Art Dir				
<i>The Eighty Days</i>	Jennings	Jennings	Arapoff, Catford, Rowland	Cameron	McAllister			Murrow		1892 7	INF6/36 2	✓
<i>Killing Farm Rats</i>	Wallace									2147 0	INF 6/27	
<i>The New School</i>	Ackland	Pargeter	Catford	Cameron	Trench	Frankel			Cushin g	3913 5	INF 6/986	✓
<i>Transatlantic Airport</i>	Gordon	Elton	Gamage	Cameron						1888 5	INF6/36 4	✓
<i>V1</i>	Jennings	Jennings	Arapoff, Catford, Rowland	Cameron	McAllister			Markle.F		1887 8	INF6/36 2	✓
<i>The Eighth Plague</i>	Lee					Van Wyck				1642 49	INF6/36 8	✓
<i>Children's Charter</i>	Bryant	Holmes	Jones/Fowl e	May			Pine			1889 3	INF6/63 6	✓
<i>Sisal</i>	Kingsford- Davis									1226 3	INF6/66 0	✓
<i>Southern Rhodesia</i>	Wright	Wright		Cameron	Trench	Green wood		John Mortimer		2896 38	INF3/13 78	
<i>Myra Hess</i>	Trumper/Je nnings					Beethov en				1893 7	INF6/29	✓

<i>The Broad Fourteens</i>	McNaughton	Holmes	Gamage	May	McNaughton	Mathieson	Pargiter			1336 32	INF6/36 5	✓
<i>Father & Son</i>	Schauder							John Mortimer		942	INF33/3 6	✓
<i>Farm Work</i>	Gordon	Wright				Parker				748	INF6/36 6	✓
<i>This was Japan</i>	Wright	Wright		Cameron	Obiston/ Trench			Knight		1896 7	INF6/98 8	✓
<i>The Channel Islands 1940 - 45</i>	Bryant	Wright	Jones	Cameron	Jackson	Mathieson	Pine			1408 50	INF 6/26	✓
<i>Diary for Timothy</i>	Jennings	Wright	Gamage	Cameron/ May	McAllister	Mathieson	Pine	Michael Redgrave - commentary, E M Forster- writer		1478 1	INF 6/1917	✓
<i>Australians in London</i>	Shaw	Dean						Shaw, Dean		1213 11	INF6/19 17	✓
<i>Picture of Britain</i>	Bolton	Wilkinson						Michie, Alan		2574 05	INF 6/35	
<i>Canada's North West</i>										1038 0		
<i>Unrelenting Struggle</i>		Wright								3123 14	INF 6/367	✓

<i>Patients are In</i>	Bolton	Wright	Jones							2545 71	INF6/98 7	✓
<i>Jungle Mariners</i>	Elton	Wright	Densham	Cameron		Elisabet Lutyens				1893 1	INF 6/371	✓
<i>Johnny Gurkha</i>	NK									2080 63		✓
Productions with probable CFU involvement												
<i>Recruiting Women</i>	Stewart									1422 1		✓
<i>Report from Burma</i>										9690	INF6/65 9	
<i>Atlantic Charter</i>		Dalrymple								1203 35	INF6/33 3	✓

Appendix 3
Crown Film Unit Films – Post-War Themes 1946 – 1952

Appendix 3 : Crown Film Unit Films - Post -War Themes 1946 – 1952														
Title	Release Date	Running Time	T/NT/O etc	Sponsoring Ministry	Financial Problems	Unfinished Business	New Jerusalem	Themes		Colonies	Red Menace	Education/PR	Sector Specific	Brief Description
								Technical Problems	Social Change					
<i>Tea from Nyasaland</i>	Jan-46	9	NT	Colonial Office						1				Tea growing in Nyasaland
<i>A Defeated People</i>	Mar-46	68	T	Control Comm for Germany		1								Immediate post-war situation in Germany
<i>School for Danger</i>	Mar-46	8	T/NT	COI		1								British SOE agents in wartime - also released as <i>Now it Can Be Told</i>
<i>The Way from Germany</i>	Jun-46	8	T	Control Comm for Germany		1								Displaced Persons Camps compared concentration camps - Cert A
<i>Hausa Village</i>	Jun-46	21	NT	Colonial Office						1				Life in village in northern Nigeria
<i>The Railwaymen</i>	Sep-46	21	NT	Min Transport/Labour								1		Min transport - job series
<i>Partners</i>	Sep-46	21	NT	Colonial Office						1				Colonial Admin in East Africa Partnership - Know the Commonwealth 4

<i>Indian Background</i>	Sep-46	10	NT/O	Foreign Office						1				Changing face of India prefaces new nations. Re-edit of 1943 footage
<i>Beginning of History</i>	Oct-46	48	NT	Min Ed								1		Min Ed - British Life earliest days to Roman Invasion
<i>Instruments of the Orchestra</i>	Nov-46	20	NT/O	Min Ed								1		Instrument by instrument analysis of Orchestra - Malcolm Sargent
<i>Town Meeting of the World</i>	Nov-46	12	T/NT/O	COI			1							Attlee's speech opening of UNO - Warning on A bomb (Monthly)
<i>The Story of Omolo</i>	Dec-46	9	NT	Colonial Office						1				Kenyan villager learns science at Bukara College (silent Ed 1949)
<i>Children on Trial</i>	1946	61	T/NT	COI					1					Child delinquency - 3 children from different types of homes. Sent to approved schools, become law-abiding citizens. Also has 1948 release date
<i>Mr Jones Takes the Air</i>	1946	10	T/NT	ROSPA					1					Driving in the countryside; cameo app Sam Kydd
<i>It Might be You</i>	1946	15	T/NT	Min of Transport					1					Road safety - Monthly release Early Peter Cushing and Alfie Bass
<i>Minesweeping</i>	1946	21	NT	Admiralty									1	Naval Instructional Film
<i>The House that Jack Built</i>	1946	9	T/NT	Min of Works									1	Min Works - apprenticeships in building
<i>Fight for Life</i>	1946	17	NT/O	Colonial Office						1				Gold Coast - local dept of agriculture helps farmers improve cattle husbandry
<i>Report on Coal August 1947</i>	Aug-47	10	T/NT	Min Fuel & Power			1							Durham miners' Gala - handed over to NCB. Mechanisation the future

<i>Mining Review No 1</i>	Sep-47	8	T/NT	Min Fuel & Power			1					1	Cine Magazine for Coal industry - Meco-Moore Cutter Loader, 5-day week, The Miners song
<i>Mining Review No 2</i>	Oct-47	10	T/NT	Min Fuel & Power			1					1	Cine Magazine for Coal industry - Training school, Open cast mining, Welsh pit production committee, Workington football match
<i>Mining Review No 3</i>	Nov-47	10	T/NT	Min Fuel & Power			1					1	Cine Magazine for Coal industry - Subsidence, visit of Joe Baksi US heavyweight boxer, NUM conference
<i>Mining Review No 4</i>	Dec-47	10	T/NT	Min Fuel & Power			1					1	Cine Magazine for Coal industry - Model Engineering, Mining in Forest of Dean, Denbigh Hall Washery
<i>Moving Millions</i>	1947	20	T/NT	London Transport								1	London Transport - buses, Red & Green, Trams and Trolley, Trains
<i>Shown By Request</i>	1947	18	T/NT/O	COI								1	Work of Central Film Library - premiered UNESCO Paris
<i>Aircraft Recognition</i>	1947	20	NT	Army Kinema Corp								1	Military Training - flying from early days, important to observe shapes
<i>The Charter of the United Nations</i>	1947	8	T/NT/O	COI			1						Formation and structure of UNO
<i>Breeding for Milk</i>	1947	15	NT	Min Ag								1	Selection and breeding improvements for dairy farmers
<i>Along the Line</i>	1947	15	T/NT	Min Transport/Labour								1	Jobs on the Railways shortened version of <i>Railwaymen</i> .

<i>Home and School</i>	1947	20	NT	Min Ed						1				Min Ed - encourage growth of PTAs; written by John Mortimer
<i>Mining Review No 5</i>	Jan-48	10	T/NT	Min Fuel & Power			1						1	Cine Magazine for Coal industry - Smoke elimination , Durham Miners Gala
<i>Mining Review No 6</i>	Feb-48	10	T/NT	Min Fuel & Power			1						1	Cine Magazine for Coal industry - Hunslet underground locomotive, tour of the Ruhr, hound trials in Cumberland
<i>The Cumberland Story</i>	Feb-48	40	T/NT	Fuel & Power			1							Modernisation of pits, incl 1837 Ladypit disaster
<i>How Townfolk get their water</i>	Sep-48	12	T/NT	COI				1						Water supply improvements
<i>Town Rats</i>	1948	16	NT/I	Min Food									1	For Local Authorities - pest control
<i>Rhondda and Wye</i>	1948	19	NT	VisAids in Ed								1		Contrast industrialisation of Rhondda with pastoral Wye. National Screen & Sound Archive of Wales - only clips available
<i>Accident Prevention Concerns You</i>	1948		NT	ROSPA									1	Early H&S film
<i>KRO Germany 1947</i>	1948	15	T/NT/O	Control Comm for Germany		1								Role of Kreis Resident Officer - police in Germany.
<i>Trained to Serve</i>	1948	15	T/NT/O	Control Comm for Germany		1								New police force in Germany, focussing on Hamburg. Different edit from KRO.
<i>Furnival and Son</i>	1948	18	T/NT	Board of Trade			1						1	Sheffield steelmaking - mass production against craft (F&son)

<i>Postman's Nightmare</i>	1948	3	T	GPO								1		Cyril Fletcher poem - post early for Christmas
<i>Worth the Risk?</i>	1948	10	T/NT	Min Transport				1						Road Safety - 'we're all good drivers and careful pedestrians'
<i>Water Spout</i>	1948		NT	COI			1							The construction of two atomic piles in Windscale
<i>Steps of the Ballet</i>	1948	25	T/NT/O	British Council									1	Ballet - straight to camera description
<i>School in Cologne</i>	1948	14	T/NT/O	Control Commisson for Germany		1								Denazification through the school system
<i>Patent Ductus Arteriosus</i>	1948	15	NT/I	Min of Health									1	Medical Training - heart complaint in neonates
<i>Children of the Ruins</i>	1948	10	NT	Foreign Office		1								Post-war life of children in Germany - compilation from various sources
<i>Pop goes the Weasel</i>	1948	10	T/NT	Treasury	1									Post-war economic troubles
<i>Report on Industrial Scotland</i>	1948	8	T/NT	Board of Trade			1							Scottish central belt industry from depression years to post-war development sin light engineering (Scottish Screen Archive)
<i>Under New Management</i>	1948	10	T/NT	Min of Labour			1							Impact of nationalisation of mines, different pit jobs and welfare facilities
<i>Voices of Malaya</i>	1948	34	T/NT/O	COI						1				United Malaya in face of Communism
<i>Answer Four Questions</i>	1948	18	NT	Min of Labour									1	Civil Service Training and job opportunities

<i>A Yank Comes Back</i>	1948	42	T/NT	Economic Information Unit	1									Burgess Meredith (wrote & produced) as ex-GI telling how GB coping with aftermath of war
<i>Queen o' the Border</i>	1949	10	T/NT/O	Board of Trade									1	Scenes at the annual Hawick Festival and footage of Hawick hosiery workers knitting sweaters, and washing, drying and ironing the finished products (Scottish Film Archive)
<i>Early Diagnosis of Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis</i>	1949	61	NT	Min of Health									1	For medical practitioners. Includes operation at Hillingdon hospital.
<i>Antarctic Lands</i>	1949	10	T/NT	Colonial Office						1				The life of British scientists stationed in Graham Islands in the Falkland Islands Dependencies
<i>Cocoa from Nigeria</i>	1949	10	T/NT/O	Colonial Office						1				Cocoa production Abridged version of <i>Good Business</i> , originally had a Colonial Film Unit credit
<i>Daybreak at Udi</i>	1949	40	T/NT/O	Colonial Office						1				Development of maternity hospital in Nigeria
<i>Dollars and Sense</i>	1949	10	T/NT/O	Economic Information Unit	1									Balance of payments issues and devaluation explained
<i>Faster than Sound</i>	1949	10	T/NT/O	Min of Supply				1						Jet aircraft development
<i>His Fighting Chance</i>	1949	10	T/NT/O	Min of Health									1	Rehabilitation of victims of polio. Commentary Eleanor Roosevelt

<i>Heating Research for Houses</i>	1949	25	NT	Dept of Scientific and Industrial Research				1						Heating improvements - 3 reels
<i>London Airport</i>	1949	10	T/NT/O	Min Civil Aviation				1						Development of Heathrow - junction of the world; old ways have to be cleared
<i>Inside US Aid</i>	1949	12	T/NT	Economic Information Unit										The opportunities presented to Britain by the European Recovery Programme, and the necessity for Britain to make it work
<i>People of Malaya</i>	1949	10	NT/O	Colonial Office						1				As above on Malaya. Mute educational, <i>Malay Village</i> film released (RT 12 min)
<i>The People at No 19</i>	1949	18	NT/I	Min of Health							1			Venereal Disease - has A Certificate
<i>Co-operative Research in Industry</i>	1949	10	T/NT/O	Dept of Scientific and Industrial Research				1						Export initiatives
<i>Wonders of the Deep</i>	1949	10	NT/I	Admiralty				1						Frogman and Submarine developments - now able to film down to 100ft.
<i>Beet Sugar</i>	1949	20	NT	Min Ag								1		Production, harvesting and processing
<i>Caring for Children</i>	1949	10	T/NT	Min of Labour					1					Youth employment - girl's careers, local nursery
<i>The Good Housewife in her Kitchen</i>	1949	10	T/NT	Min Food							1			Intended for the woman who has to make the most of limited kitchen and larder space. Shown on BBC Television at 1530 on Thursday 1 September 1949 (www.genome.ch.bbc.co.uk)

<i>Pigs on Every Farm</i>	1949	24	NT/I	Min Ag									1	Essentials of pig farming - breeding, farrowing, etc. to encourage farmers to introduce more pigs
<i>The Magic Thread</i>	1949	11	NT/O	Board of Trade				1						The development of rayon and its influence on the fashion industry
<i>The Dancing Fleece</i>	1950	19	T/NT/O	British Council								1		Animation - showcasing fashion, Hartnell
<i>Atlantic Isles</i>	1950	12	T/NT	Min Education										Comparing life on Shetland and Channel Islands
<i>A Family Affair</i>	1950	12	T/NT/O	COI					1					Fostering children - recruiting new foster families
<i>Men of the World</i>	1950	9	T/NT/O	COI							1			Tribute to Army - off duty in Triploi, Suez, Malta: jungle patrol Malaya against Communist bandits
<i>The Magic Touch</i>	1950	10	T/NT/O	Dept of Scientific and Industrial Research				1						Science makes best use of natural resources. E.g..Seaweed for medical gauze, toothpaste, etc
<i>It Need Not Happen</i>	1950	10	T/NT	COI								1		Shows methods used to prevent road accidents- Highway Code, teaching children road sense, practical experiments
<i>Insect Pests in Food</i>	1950	33	NT	Dept of Scientific and Industrial Research									1	Reviewing problems caused by insect pests in food, crops and storage and means of control
<i>From the Ground Up</i>	1950	12	T/NT	COI			1							Post-war reconstruction: rebuilding and modernisation

<i>Four Men in Prison</i>	1950	41	T/NT	Home Office					1					Administration of criminal justice and effect of prison on different offenders
<i>Spotlight on the Colonies</i>	1950	10	T/NT	COI						1				Helping 40 colonies towards independence - raising standards
<i>Trooping the Colour</i>	1950	10	OO	Foreign Office								1		Trooping the Colour on Horse Guards in 1949
<i>Into the Blue</i>	1950	10	T/NT/O	Economic Information Unit				1						Civil Aviation - BEA and BOAC - Comet, Brabazon, Princess
<i>Making Engines</i>	1950	10	NT	Min Lab				1						Is this the Job for me? Engineering factory - tractors, heavy goods
<i>The New Councillor</i>	1950	19	NT/TV	Min Health								1		Experiences of new councillor for Luton Borough
<i>Underwater Story</i>	1950	13	T/NT	Scottish Office									1	Scottish Fisheries - need to work with other countries on net size, etc
<i>The Wonder Jet</i>	1950	19	T/NT	/Min SupplyDept of Scientific etc				1					1	Gas Turbine Engines struggle for prosperity - Whittle appears
<i>Jack of What Trade</i>	1950	17	T/NT	Min Lab									1	Role of Youth Employment Officer - Tony Newley features
<i>Defeat Tuberculosis</i>	1950	7	T/NT	Min Health									1	Drama doc of two sisters one with TB incl Koch discovery - long cure, mobile X-Ray vans: Re-edited Paul Rotha Seven Leagues' 1942 Production to include NHS
<i>London Style</i>	1950	7	T/NT	Board of Trade				1						The processes of manufacturing rayon from wood pulp and current fashions

<i>Football</i>	1951	10	T/NT/O	COI								1		Football every race and colour Wolves 3: Leicester 1 Billy Wright. Orderly and good natured crowd
<i>Eagles of the Fleet</i>	1951	10	T/NT	COI				1						Naval aviation
<i>Industrial Dermatitis</i>	1951	14	NT/I	Min Lab									1	How to avoid Industrial Dermatitis
<i>Surprise Attack</i>	1951	10	T/NT	Min Health									1	Smallpox Vaccination -young girl gets smallpox, scarred for life
<i>Fire's The Enemy</i>	1951	11	T/NT	Home Office								1		Recruitment AFS - fear of atomic bombs
<i>Go Ahead Please</i>	1951	18	NT	GPO	1									GPO film for staff - importance of role in helping national productivity
<i>Mary's Birthday</i>	1951	10	T/NT	Min Health									1	Animation - fly contamination and spread of disease, how to avoid
<i>Life in her Hands</i>	1951	58	T	Min Health					1					Produced for United Artists, written Monica Dickens. Widow trains as nurse
<i>Layout and Handling in Factories</i>	1951	16	NT/O	ECA?									1	Improved factory layouts and process improve productivity - also dubbed in French
<i>In on the Beam</i>	1951	10	T/NT/O	Civil Aviation				1						Safety in the air, air traffic control - use of radar
<i>Houses in the Town</i>	1951	18	T/NT	Local Government				1						Planning laws and changes; including Lansbury experiment
<i>Prevention of Cross Infection</i>	1951		NT	Min Health									1	Gastro-enteritis in infancy: Training film for nurses (Hansard HC Debate 10

														March 1952 vol 497, cc1223-32 - Anthony Greenwood)
<i>Bristol Brabazon - King of the Air</i>	1951	10	T/NT	Min Supply				1						New airliner development - propeller driven jumbo! Also released as <i>The Flying Skyscraper</i>
<i>Wing to Wing</i>	1951	10	T/NT	Air Ministry						1				Latest RAF aircraft and air operations in face of Red menace (brief Korea footage)
<i>The White Continent</i>	1951	20	T/NT/O	Foreign Office										Record of Norwegian-British-Swedish Expedition to Queen Maud land 1949 - first season on ice. Colour
<i>Caribbean</i>	1951	25	T/NT	COI						1				Tradition, native dances and songs, modern customs and developments in West Indies, Honduras and B Guyana
<i>El Dorado</i>	1951	36	T/NT	Colonial Office						1				People, resources and industry of British Guiana: Dual Credit with Argosy Pictures Corp
<i>The Farmer's Horse</i>	1951	18	NT	Min Ag								1		Challenges assumption that complete mechanisation on the farm is desirable: for example hill farming or moving small loads
<i>Christmas is Coming</i>	1951	1	T	GPO/COI								1		Animation - post early for Xmas
<i>Post Haste</i>	1951	12	NT	GPO									1	Survey of work of the Post Office
<i>Out of True</i>	1951	40	T/NT	Min Health								1		Fictional Account of a nervous breakdown with information on treatments under NHS

<i>Alien Orders</i>	1951	11	T/NT/O	Colonial & Foreign offices							1			Communist bandit raids in Malaya
<i>The Colonies and Britain</i>	1951	11	T/NT/O	Economic Information Unit						1				Released as <i>Spotlight on the Colonies</i> ; Relationship between GB and colonies - mutual benefits, especially social and economic advance
<i>Commonwealth of Nations</i>	1951		T/NT/O	Commonwealth Rel Office						1				Story of Commonwealth special relationship
<i>Festival in London</i>	1951	9	T/NT/O	COI			1							Record of 1951 South Bank Exhibition: Also titled <i>Festival of Britain</i>
<i>Modern Polar Exploration</i>	1951	10	T/NT/O	COI/Festival of Britain			1							Research in Antarctic - for use at Festival of Britain
<i>The Waking Point</i>	1951	20	T/NT	Home Depts							1			Civil Defence recruitment in preparation for nuclear attack
<i>Wanted for Life</i>	1951	7	T/NT	Min Health								1		Need for Blood Donors
<i>Over to you</i>	1951		T/NT	Economic Info Unit	1									British productivity group from hosiery industry visits USA
<i>A Man on Trial</i>	1952	10	T/NT	Colonial Office						1				Survey of British judicial procedure in the case of larceny, revealing what happens from the accused's arrest down to his conviction, and complete with courtroom procedure
<i>Royal Scotland</i>	1952	10	T/NT	Foreign Office								1		Technicolor - scenery of Scotland and royal associations
<i>Atoms at Work</i>	1952	11	T/NT	COI				1						Harwell's radioactive isotopes solve problems

<i>Local Newspaper</i>	1952	17	NT/O	Overseas Depts/COI								1		Newbury Weekly News
<i>La Fenetre Ouverte</i>	1952	18	NT/O	Education?									1	Cooperative effort: Belgium, France, Lux, Netherlands and UK - study of landscape painting, CFU edited UK version. BAFA nominated 1952
<i>Electricity Generation and Distribution</i>	1952	11	T/NT	Min Labour									1	Is this the job for me? series - 2 boys on apprenticeship
<i>Energy Foods</i>	1952	8	T/NT	Min Food				1						Slice of bread converted to energy to cut down tree. Human body compared to petrol engine
<i>Light Repetitive Work</i>	1952	10	NT	Min Labour				1						Mass Production - jobs for girls
<i>Local Handyman</i>	1952	10	t/NT	Min Labour									1	Blacksmith and son
<i>Making Boots and Shoes</i>	1952	19	T/NT	Min Labour									1	Old and new methods of shoe-making
<i>Making of the Soil</i>	1952	35	NT	Min Ag								1		Variety of soils in GB, need to preserve soil fertility.(Colour)
<i>People's Palace</i>	1952		O	Colonial Office									1	Tour of Hampton Court
<i>Protective Foods</i>	1952	11	T/NT	Min Food								1		Vitamins and workings of body – animation
<i>There's a Way</i>	1952	18	T/NT	Min Health								1		The trials and tribulations of establishing a rehabilitation centre for physio- and occupational therapy
<i>Doctor in Nigeria</i>	1952		O	Colonial Office						1				Medical Services in Nigeria (CFU edit)

<i>How the Telephone works</i>	1952	7	NT	GPO								1		Explanation of telephone, boys with string, animation and Leslie Phillips
<i>Harwell Assembly</i>	1952		NT	Min Fuel & Power				1						Secret Film - restricted audience until 1958
<i>Body Building Foods</i>	1952	10	T/NT	Min Food								1		Food maintains body - bones, flesh and blood: animation
<i>Lady Returns</i>	1953		T/NT	Control Comm (Ger)		1								Raising Liner 'New York' from Kiel Canal - but she was towed to Scotland and scrapped
<i>The Golden Rule; Careless and Carefree</i>	1957		T/NT	COI					1					Two films joined together GR -road crossing and CC safety for child cyclists - intended for adults
<i>Cinemagazine - This is Britain Series</i>														
<i>37 General</i>	1949	12	O	Board of Trade										Cosmic ray research and Longleat House
<i>38 General</i>	1950	12	O	Board of Trade								1		Steel plant, Swansea Bay, soap substitutes and the Old Vic
<i>39 General</i>	1950	12	O	Board of Trade								1		Cheaper book printing, glassmaking, Jersey fashions, London river bus
<i>40 Transport</i>	1950	12	O	Board of Trade			1					1		Shopping centre of Queen Mary, Sports Cars and Comet
<i>41 Agriculture</i>	1950	12	O	Board of Trade								1		Harvest volunteers, training for vets

<i>42 Television Looks Ahead</i>	1950	12	O	Board of Trade				1						No detail
<i>43 Accent on Health</i>	1950	12	O	Board of Trade					1					First <i>TIB</i> not to be numbered: Cold and flu research, syringe and needle manufacture, artificial limbs
<i>44 Old Crafts, New Graces</i>	1950	11	O	Board of Trade			1							Alternative title - <i>Handicrafts</i> : fishing rods, silver smiths, saddlery, gentlemen's wear
<i>45 Britain's New Resources</i>	1951	10	O	Board of Trade			1							Agriculture, factories, forestry - economic recovery
<i>46 An Hour from London</i>	1951	12	O	Board of Trade								1		Tourist guide - from Lavenham, to Brighton, to Henley, to Windsor, to Hampton Court to Greenwich - all within an hour from London
<i>47 Auto Suggestion</i>	1951	12	O	Board of Trade				1						Motor trade, Ford Prefect, Austin A40, Morris Minor, future of cars - gas turbine
<i>48 Sense of Taste</i>	1951	12	O	Board of Trade								1		Alternative title - <i>Food and Drink</i> : Drambuie, Frank Cooper's Marmalade, Stilton, Pimms, Roast Beef - best of British foods
<i>49 The Glassmakers</i>	1951	12	O	Board of Trade								1		<i>This is Britain</i> Glassmaking from church windows to precision optics
<i>50 Love of Books</i>	1951	12	O	Board of Trade								1		History of books and printing, includes Somerset Maugham
<i>51 Man of Fashion</i>	1951	12	O	Board of Trade	1				1					Britain's role men's fashion

Appendix 4
Crown Film Unit Films – Credits, etc., 1946 - 1952

Appendix 4 : Crown Film Unit Films - Credits, etc 1946 - 1952												
Title	Director	Producer	Camera	Sound	Editor	Music	Unit PA/ Manager	Narrator/etc	Actors	BFI Ref	NA Ref	Viewed
<i>Tea from Nyasaland</i>	Kingston Davies	Wright			Davies/ Trench					21247	INF6/379	✓
<i>A Defeated People</i>	Jennings	Wright				Warrack		Hartnell - narrator		10888	INF 6/374	✓
<i>School for Danger</i>	Baird		Pollard			Mathieson				44115		✓
<i>The Way from Germany</i>	Trench	Wright		Camero n	Trench/ Hollingswo rth	Lutyens		Guylar - narrator			INF 6/373	✓
<i>Hausa Village</i>	Trench/Du ff									10071	INF 6/707	
<i>The Railwaymen</i>	Shaw	Wallace	Catford		Trench			Leonard Sachs - narrator		21275	INF 6/378	✓
<i>Partners</i>			Kingston Davies	Camero n	Trench	Greenwo d		Julian Huxley - narrator		25344 9		✓

<i>Indian Background</i>					Cummins			Stagg - narrator; Sommerfi eld - writer		200942		✓
<i>Beginning of History</i>	Wallace	Wright								14770	INF 6/377	✓
<i>Instruments of the Orchestra</i>	Mathieson	Shaw	Gamage	Cameroon	Trumper		Pine		Malcolm Sargent	15095	INF6/380	✓
<i>Town Meeting of the World</i>	Wallace	Wright			Jackson			Jennings - narrator		304372	INF6/1918	✓
<i>The Story of Omolo</i>	Kingston Davies	Wright								21287	INF 6/376	✓
<i>Children on Trial</i>	Lee	Wright	Fowle	May	Obiston			Warren - asst.dir		142521	INF 6/375	✓
<i>Mr Jones Takes the Air</i>									Sam Kydd	234137		✓
<i>It Might be You</i>	Gordon	Wright	Gamage	Poulton					Cushing, Bass	14922	INF6/372	✓
<i>Minesweeping</i>			Gamage							232995	INF6/1919	✓
<i>The House that Jack Built</i>	Wallace	Shaw									INF 6/381	✓

<i>Fight for Life</i>	Page									17294 5	INF 6/688	✓
<i>Report on Coal Aug 1947</i>										11370	NA 6/1334	✓
<i>Mining Review No 1</i>		Taylor						Levis - presenter in song		21031	INF 6/386	✓
<i>Mining Review No 2</i>		Taylor								60932	INF 6/387	✓
<i>Mining Review No 3</i>		Taylor								21030	INF 6/388	✓
<i>Mining Review No 4</i>		Taylor								21029	INF 6/389	✓
<i>Moving Millions</i>	Arthur	Taylor			Freeman					8469	INF33/57	✓
<i>Shown By Request</i>	Dean		Gamage		Trench		Spencer	Allen - narrator		21279	INF 6/382	✓
<i>Aircraft Recognition</i>	Arthur									5571	INF 6/394	✓
<i>The Charter of the United Nations</i>										21344	INF 6/384	✓
<i>Breeding for Milk</i>	Gowers	Shaw	Catford		Legard					21354	INF 6/683	✓

<i>Along the Line</i>	McNaughton	Shaw	Catford	Cameroon	Trumper/Trench	Hollingsworth	Pine	Spencer asst.dir		21369	INF 6/378	✓
<i>Home and School</i>	Bryant	Shaw	Jones		Trench	Mathieson			Maurice Denham	195030	INF6/28	✓
<i>Mining Review No 5</i>	Stanford	Taylor								21028	INF 6/390	
<i>Mining Review No 6</i>		Taylor								61000	INF 6/391	✓
<i>The Cumberland Story</i>	Jennings	Shaw	Fowle	May	Jackson	Mathieson	Pine	Wallace asst. dir		21231	INF 6/385	✓
<i>How Townfolk get their water</i>										1538/197841	INF 6/1924	✓
<i>Town Rats</i>										304395	INF6/31	✓
<i>Rhondda and Wye</i>										9834	INF6/1922	✓
<i>Accident Prevention Concerns You</i>												
<i>KRO Germany 1947</i>	Wallace/Borgstadt	Meyer	Rautenfeld							11515	INF 6/395	✓

<i>Trained to Serve</i>	Wallace	Taylor	Koch		Albrecht					305369	INF 6/401	✓
<i>Furnival and Son</i>	Segaller									11613	INF6/1179	✓
<i>Postman's Nightmare</i>								Fletcher		11974	INF6/1442	✓
<i>Worth the Risk?</i>										12012	INF6/1920	✓
<i>Water Spout</i>										12230	INF33/73	
<i>Steps of the Ballet</i>	Mathieson	Shaw	Jeakins	Arnaud/Cameron	Jackson			Robert Helpman - Narrator		12256	INF 6/399	✓
<i>School in Cologne</i>	Wallace									12274	INF 6/990	✓
<i>Patent Ductus Arteriosus</i>	Jackson									12298	INF 6/396	
<i>Children of the Ruins</i>	Jill Craigie									11539	INF 6/393	✓
<i>Pop goes the Weasel</i>										11324	INF 6/1333	✓
<i>Report on Industrial Scotland</i>										269646	INF33/81	✓

<i>Under New Management</i>										310149	INF33/82	
<i>Voices of Malaya</i>	Freedman / R Elton				Trench	Elisabeth Lutyens				12232	INF 6/397	✓
<i>Answer Four Questions</i>	Dean		Gamage	Scrivener	Jackson					8742	INF 6/989	✓
<i>A Yank Comes Back</i>	Dean	Meredith	Catford		Trench	Hughes			Burgess Meredith		INF 6/400	✓
<i>Queen o' the Border</i>	Wilson				Jackson	Arnold				2687	INF 6/1336	
<i>Early Diagnosis of Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis</i>										163055	INF 6/1331 & 2368	✓
<i>Antarctic Lands</i>										17690	INF 33/84	
<i>Cocoa from Nigeria</i>										17712/145744	INF33/85	✓
<i>Daybreak at Udi</i>	Bishop	Anderson	Gamage	Cameroon	Trench	Hollingsworth	Spencer			17717	INF 6/403	✓
<i>Dollars and Sense</i>	Pine	Legg								17719	INF 6/1931	✓
<i>Faster than Sound</i>	Pine	Taylor	Densham		de Potier					17727	INF 6/404	✓

<i>His Fighting Chance</i>	Innes							Redgrave -narrator		17739	INF 6/405	✓
<i>Heating Research for Houses</i>	Warren	Taylor								17740	INF 6/1921	
<i>London Airport</i>										18326	INF 6/992	✓
<i>Inside US Aid</i>										18333	INF 33/92	
<i>People of Malaya</i>										18363	INF 33/94	✓
<i>The People at No 19</i>	Holmes		Jones			Davo	Clore			18365	INF 33/95	✓
<i>Co-operative Research in Industry</i>	Arthur									18576	INF 33/92	
<i>Wonders of the Deep</i>	NK									18676	INF 6/407	✓
<i>Beet Sugar</i>	Clore									59706	INF6/118 0	
<i>Caring for Children</i>										9992	INF 6/402	✓
<i>The Good Housewife in her Kitchen</i>										18474 3	INF6/32	✓

<i>Pigs on Every Farm</i>	Warren									18361	INF 33/93	✓
<i>The Magic Thread</i>										21220	INF 6/993	✓
<i>The Dancing Fleece</i>	Wilson/Reiniger	Wilson/Koch	Hildyard		Bezencenet	Hollingsworth			Turner, Harris, Pidgeon,	15091	INF 33/99	✓
<i>Atlantic Isles</i>										18028	INF6/1925	
<i>A Family Affair</i>	Thomson	Moulpied	Gamage	Cameron	Legard	Hollingsworth				18046	INF 6/413	✓
<i>Men of the World</i>	Clark	Legg	Catford		Freeman	Williamson				18068	INF6/1942	✓
<i>The Magic Touch</i>										18069	INF 6/1935	✓
<i>It Need Not Happen</i>	Bryant	Legg	Densham		Freeman				Jack Ralph	18080	INF 6/994	✓
<i>Insect Pests in Food</i>										18084	INF6/1933	✓
<i>From the Ground Up</i>	Frankel	Legg			Angell	Tausky		Jack Ralph - narrator		18121	INF 6/1338	✓
<i>Four Men in Prison</i>	Anderson		Gamage		Bezencenet				William Mervyn,	18123	INF 6/410	

									Arthur Mullard			
<i>Spotlight on the Colonies</i>	Pine	Legg			Freeman	Wilkinson		Jack - narrator		18147	INF 6/1337	✓
<i>Trooping the Colour</i>	Bishop				Trench					18180	INF6/1932	
<i>Into the Blue</i>										18085	INF 6/411	✓
<i>Making Engines</i>										224894		✓
<i>The New Councillor</i>									Hector Ross, Eric Maturin, Wallas Eaton, Grace Anold			✓
<i>Underwater Story</i>	Frankel	Legg	Densham/Hodges		Freeman					168617	INF 6/416/412	✓
<i>The Wonder Jet</i>	Legg										INF 6/408	✓
<i>Jack of What Trade</i>										17883	INF33/139	
<i>Defeat Tuberculosis</i>	Nieter (Seven League)	Rotha (Seven League)	Suschitzky	Halstead						351666	INF6/1934	✓

<i>London Style</i>										21979 8		
<i>Football</i>											INF 6/419	✓
<i>Eagles of the Fleet</i>	Frankel		Densham		Freeman	Matthews		Ralph Richardson - narrator		66143 5	INF6/193 6	✓
<i>Industrial Dermatitis</i>										18089	INF 6/409	✓
<i>Surprise Attack</i>									John le Mesurier, Clive Dunn, Jean Anderson	115	INF33/11 6	✓
<i>Fire's The Enemy</i>										6319	INF 6/414	✓
<i>Go Ahead Please</i>									Leslie Philips	6798	INF 6/415	✓
<i>Mary's Birthday</i>	Reininger					Williams				7575	INF 6/1339	✓
<i>Life in her Hands</i>	Leacock	Wilson	Gamage	Cameroon	Jackson	Hollingsworth		Monica Dickens - writer	Kathleen Byron, Elwyn Brrk-Jones	16400	INF6/193 8	✓

<i>Layout and Handling in Factories</i>										16422	INF6/1945	
<i>In on the Beam</i>								Richard Dimbleby - narrator		16647	INF 6/417	✓
<i>Houses in the Town</i>										16513	INF 6/997	✓
<i>Prevention of Cross Infection</i>										17073	INF 6/1947	
<i>Bristol Brabazon - King of the Air</i>								John Mills - narrator		17120	INF 6/1929	✓
<i>Wing to Wing</i>	Frankel									17144	INF 6/418	✓
<i>The White Continent</i>	Carse?		Stobart		Legard					17180	INF 33/127	
<i>Caribbean</i>	Wallace		Chaston/ Tilling		Legard			Eytle - narrator		17519	INF 6/1332	✓
<i>El Dorado</i>	Alderson				Trench			James Cameron - writer		17679	INF 6/1943	✓

<i>The Farmer's Horse</i>	Easterbrook									17724	MAF240/11	✓
<i>Christmas is Coming</i>										20603	INF33/131	✓
<i>Post Haste</i>										261290	INF6/1440	✓
<i>Out of True</i>	Leacock	Wilson	Jones	Cameron	Trench	Lutyens			Jane Hylton, Muriel Pavlow	40456	INF6/33	✓
<i>Alien Orders</i>						Arnold				59148	INF 6/557	✓
<i>The Colonies and Britain</i>	Pine	Legg								146320	INF6/1337	
<i>Commonwealth of Nations</i>										147944		✓
<i>Festival in London</i>	Leacock	Wilson	Jones		Jackson			James McKechnie - narrator; James Cameron - writer		172421	INF6/1944	✓
<i>Modern Polar Exploration</i>	Leacock									17096	INF 6/1340	✓

<i>The Waking Point</i>									John Slater	317728		✓
<i>Wanted for Life</i>										318090		
<i>Over to you</i>										251976	INF6/34	
<i>A Man on Trial</i>	Warren/Bryant		Jones							7583	INF6/1946	✓
<i>Royal Scotland</i>	Pine		Jones/Densham		Freeman					11944	INF6/1342	✓
<i>Atoms at Work</i>	Pine		Densham/ Jones		Freeman	Fricker			Stuart Legg	17782	INF6/1181	✓
<i>Local Newspaper</i>	Storck	van Nouten	Knowles	Bouwhuis				Hugh Turner		17844	INF33/140	✓
<i>La Fenetre Ouverte</i>	Storck							Pigout-narrator		204822		
<i>Electricity Generation and Distribution</i>										165829	INF 6/420	
<i>Energy Foods</i>										217289		✓

<i>Light Repetitive Work</i>	Stark									21920 8	INF 6/1950	✓
<i>Local Handyman</i>										22486 5	INF6/38	✓
<i>Making Boots and Shoes</i>	Durden		Durden							22508 7		✓
<i>Making of the Soil</i>	Worth		Durden							25574 4	INF/6/195 1	✓
<i>People's Palace</i>	Worth									26438 1	INF 6/1949	✓
<i>Protective Foods</i>	Bryant	Warren	Gamage		Josephine Jackson				John Laurie	33077 4		
<i>There's a Way</i>										15935 2	INF6/421	✓
<i>Doctor in Nigeria</i>										21389 4		
<i>How the Telephone works</i>											INF 6/999	
<i>Harwell Assembly</i>	Pine									61087	INF 6/1952	✓
<i>Body Building Foods</i>										13073 2		✓

<i>Lady Returns</i>										21389 4		
<i>The Golden Rule; Careless and Carefree</i>									Leslie Phillips?	13073		✓
Cinemagazine - This is Britain Series												
<i>37 General</i>										33094 4		
<i>38 General</i>										33094 5	INF6/71	
<i>39 General</i>										33094 6		✓
<i>40 Transport</i>										20939	INF6/72	
<i>41 Agriculture</i>										33094 6		
<i>42 Television Looks Ahead</i>										76040 5	INF6/699	✓
<i>43 Accent on Health</i>										76319 0	INF6/73	
<i>44 Old Crafts, New Graces</i>										64434 44	INF6/700	

<i>45 Britain's New Resources</i>										76319 0	INF6/74	
<i>46 An Hour from London</i>										59395 3	INF6/196 3	✓
<i>47 Auto Suggestion</i>	Cyril Frankel								Howard Marion-Crawford	33094 9		
<i>48 A Sense of Taste</i>											INF6/196 2	
<i>49 The Glassmakers</i>	Leacock	Wilson	Catford		Jackson			James McKechnie		18331 2	INF 33/135	✓
<i>50 Love of Books</i>	Cyril Frankel									12619	INF6/701	
<i>51 Man of Fashion</i>								Engleman - narrator		33094 9		
<i>Possibly CFU Films - no corroboration</i>												
<i>Katsina</i>										21049 8		
<i>Our Teeth</i>										20939	INF6/72	✓

Appendix 5

Crown Film Unit Annual Record of Completed Films and Running Times: 1940 – 1952

Crown Film Unit - Annual Record of Completed Films with Running Times, 1940 – 52									
Year	Films		Cinemags		Screen Time	Feature Films +40mins *			
1940	7				75	0			
1941	11				182	1			
1942	10				234	2			
1943	9				318	2			
1944	12				215	1			
1945	17				275	1			
1946		20			418	3			
1947		8	4		164	0			
1948		20	2		354	2			
1949		20	1		343	2			
1950		19	7		363	1			
1951		29	7		507	0			
1952		20			205	0			
Total	66	136	21	223	3653	15			

Appendix 6

A Review of Film Classification Taxonomies as previously applied to CFU productions

In 1941 the Dartington Hall School in Devon, which already had a reputation for documentary film making, was chosen by the Mol to be the regional film library for the South West of England. At the same time the Trustees of the School initiated and funded an enquiry into the Arts in wartime. This investigation brought together artists, filmmakers, intellectuals and other interested parties to examine all aspects of wartime artistic life, including documentary films. As a result three substantial studies were published; *The Visual Arts* (1946), *The Factual Film* (1947), and *Music* (1949) which provided comprehensive reviews of those aspects of the Arts and, as such, a valuable starting point for both academic analysis and classification.

The Factual Film study of wartime documentary production proposed that the films could be classified in terms of key themes. These were (p.66-67):-.

- Supporting Government Propaganda Campaigns sponsored by different departments – such as *'Salvage with a Smile'* (1940); *'Mr Proudfoot Shows a Light'* (1941); *'Dig for Victory'* (1941) and *'The Nose has It'* (1942) in which Arthur Askey showed why the British public must not be sneezed at
- Morale builders – like *'Britain at Bay'* (1940); *'The Front Line'* (1940); *'Words for Battle'* (1941) and *'Heart of Britain'* (1942)
- Recruiting films – *'ATS'* (1941); *'Hospital Nurse'* (1941) and *'Land Girl'*(1942)
- War news – *'Lofoten'* (1941); *'Northern Outpost'* (1941); *'Corvettes'* (1941); *'Middle East'* (1942); *'Diary of a Polish Airman'* (1942)

This classification has some merit in that it is the most contemporary of the systems and would seem to identify those themes which, at the time, were deemed to be of key importance. However, as a potential framework for analysing the output of the CFU or, indeed the wider Mol commissions, it lacks sufficient breadth to incorporate the variety of production topics, nor importantly for one of the main aspects of this

research, the clarity to show themes developing in response to the changing military fortunes as the war progressed.

The Factual Film approach was reviewed some thirty years later by Frances Thorpe and Nicholas Pronay in their comprehensive examination of *British Official Films in Second World War* (1980). Although many of the wartime documentary titles may be seen as fairly esoteric and specialist Thorpe and Pronay also emphasised the difficulty in classification as 'most films served several purposes and the most effective propaganda films operated on several different levels at once while ostensibly dealing with only one subject' (1980, p.49). Thus,

films apparently designed to give instructions on how to assist some wartime agency such as the auxiliary fire service might be in fact designed to show how thoroughly prepared, organised and capable the government was in dealing with all possible emergencies (1980, p.49).

In the context of the entire documentary film output of British Official films during wartime Thorpe and Pronay (1980) arrived at a more comprehensive fourteen category classification, which is given below:-

1. Homefront – General
2. Homefront – Specialised Instructional
3. Homefront – National Fire Service, Air Raid Precautions, etc
4. Homefront – Wartime social services
5. Fighting Services and campaigns
6. Dominions and Colonies – General
7. Dominion and Colonies – Africa
8. Dominions and Colonies – Canada
9. Dominions and Colonies – India
10. Allies – General
11. Allies – Czechoslovakia
12. Allies – France
13. Allies – etc
14. Overseas Distribution

Although there is much to commend in this classification it is somewhat rigid and still does not really provide an adequate or flexible framework for an evaluation of the CFU's multifarious output. As can be seen in Appendices 1 and 3, for example, some CFU films were intended for differential exhibition therefore adoption of this model would make reception analysis particularly difficult. As will also be seen, a key feature of CFU films was the manner in which a theme was developed over time to address changing wartime conditions. Furthermore the Thorpe and Pronay taxonomy omits any reference to the post-war world with its different priorities and concerns but which eventually accounted for nearly three-quarters of the entire CFU output.

Appendix 7

A Brief Note on contemporary short film Production Companies

The Crown Film Unit was not the only Government Film Unit nor the only company producing Films sponsored by the Ministry of Information (Mol) and later the Central Office of Information (COI). Although the focus of this research is upon the CFU it should not be regarded in isolation from the other producers as, inevitably, there was a cross-fertilisation of both ideas and personnel. Essentially competition came from specialist film units established by the armed services and Colonial Office but also from the commercial sector documentary makers. Both of these groups relied to a greater or lesser extent upon the Mol Films Division, of which the CFU was the principal production house, for support and for access to distribution and exhibition.

1. Armed Forces Film Units

Perhaps inevitably, given the security considerations involved with filming in military and especially combat situations, the Armed Forces wanted a greater degree of control over the nature, content and locations of productions. This may in some senses have been a 'normal' military response to the supposed eccentricities and inefficiencies of civilian filmmakers but by involving military personnel in the film making process it made them subject to military discipline and hence direction. Indeed, by the end of the war combat footage shot by embedded military cameramen would usually and predictably surpass anything produced within a studio or location situation. So, in a sense, the Military Units had reinforced the *actualité* nature of a wartime documentary film, something which the civilians at Crown were unable to emulate. However, in the early years of the war the Service units were seen as subordinate to the CFU. In 1942 this was organisationally apparent as both

the Army⁸⁶ and RAF⁸⁷ Film Units were co-located with Crown at the Pinewood Studios and as James Chapman points out the CFU was 'responsible for watching over the production ...of Army and RAF films intended for public release' (1998, p.139). This watching brief was probably established initially in response to the reception of firstly, the mediocre nature of the Army's first Mol five minute short *Northern Outpost* (1941) described in the *Documentary News Letter* as 'if the War Office sent someone, and I shouldn't think it was a proper cameraman, to Iceland, and told him to 'get what he could' (March, 1941 p.47). Furthermore, many of the early rushes were of poor quality – badly shot and often particularly boring.

Some of the better quality of these rushes were utilised by the CFU in joint productions, the earliest of which was *Lofoten* (1941). Although the filming of the commando raid on the Norwegian fish-oil factory was undertaken by Army cameramen the editing and commentary were completed by Crown technicians and released under the Crown logo. Probably the most famous collaboration between the Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) and Crown occurred the following year, with the ill-fated *Wavell's 30,000* (1942) where once again the Army provided the rushes and Crown did the cutting. Unfortunately, a film which described the success of British arms against the Italians was quickly overtaken by the onrush of the Afrika Korps. After this the AFPU tended to produce its own films, referring to Crown only for technical advice and support. The role of cameraman/photographer has continued to exist within the British Army going through a variety of Units and titles. At present the role is described as Logistics Support Photographer and the service personnel are part of the Royal Logistics Corps (RLC).

The two other services also had film units, although they were smaller than the AFPU. As noted above during the war the RAF Production Unit was situated with the

⁸⁶ When war started in September 1939 the Army only possessed one cameraman, Harry Rignold. The embarrassing film episodes of early 1940 had convinced the War Office of the need to establish and develop a more professional military unit. By 1943 the Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) comprised some 80 cameramen and 8 directors mostly, like Roy Boulting, recruited directly from the commercial film industry.

⁸⁷ The RAF Film Production Unit (RAFPU) had been established originally in 1941 to provide both a record of the air campaign and also to produce training films. For more details see Keith Buckman (1997) *The Royal Air Force Film Production Unit, 1941-45*.

AFPU and Crown at Pinewood. However, the Royal Navy Instructional Film Unit (RNIFU) was based at Portsmouth and was, in one sense, strongly influenced by the CFU. Joe Mendoza who had been at Crown from the beginning as an assistant director and editor on such films as *Listen to Britain* (1942) and *Coastal Command* (1943) was eventually conscripted into the Royal Navy and became, according to his 1993 BECTU recollections, a key member of the RNIFU introducing many of the procedures and practices he had learned at Crown. As is the case with the Army the role of cameraman/photographer continues to exist in both the RAF and Royal Navy.⁸⁸

2. Colonial Film Unit.

Mention perhaps ought to be made of another Government sponsored unit, the small Colonial Film Unit which produced instructional and informational films often showing life in some imperial outpost, such as *Empire at Work* (1940) and the later *Timbermen of Honduras* (1943) however these increasingly tended to emphasise the contribution to the war effort, such as in the 1942 film *Our Indian Soldiers*, or *We want Rubber* (1943). The Colonial Film Unit was also initially responsible for producing films about the 'Mother Country' for distribution throughout the Empire. In this latter vein the *This is/These are* series is a prime example, with such 1941 films as *This is a Barrage Balloon*, *This is a Special Constable*, *This is an ARP Warden* and *These are Mobile Canteens* was amongst the following year's offerings. Even though the Crown Film Unit was shut down in 1952 its smaller associate continued until 1955 under the auspices of the Colonial Office rather than the Film Division of the COI, although ironically, without directly making many more films. This was because, according to Rosaleen Smyth, 'the end of World War II meant that at last the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) could concentrate on what the Colonial Office had always considered should be the unit's primary mission: the production of instructional films for Africans' (1992, p.163).

However, she continues,

⁸⁸ In the RAF the current role is Communication and Intelligence Photographer whereas the Royal Navy has its own Photographic Branch.

A new urgency was injected into the work of the CFU in 1947, following the appointment, in 1946, of Creech-Jones as Secretary of State for Colonies. In 1947 Creech Jones dramatically revised Britain's colonial policy. Suddenly decolonisation was pushed to the top of the agenda....The major directive given to the new director, Kevin Blackburne, was to assist in the maintenance of a powerful British Commonwealth of Nations and ensure that the ties of friendship survived into the post-colonial era. For the CFU this new policy initiative meant that the overriding objective of the CFU would be to assist colonial governments to establish their own film units with the CFU gradually withdrawing from direct film production in the colonies to become a central advisory and servicing agency - financed in due course by contributions from colonial governments (1992, p.164).

Consequently the Colonial Film Unit, often using the Crown Film Unit as an organisational template, sponsored or assisted the development of national film production units across the new Commonwealth area. They produced a wide range of, normally, inward focussed films celebrating local achievements. So *Budding Policemen* (1956), a short film produced by the Nigerian Film Unit about the training of police officers or *Malacca, Then and Now* (1956) by the Malayan Film Unit were early examples of colonial film self-government.

3. Independent Film Units

Although the military production units were responsible for a significant number of films during the Second World War by far the most serious competition to the CFU in terms of volume of production and theatrical exhibition came from the independent documentary and short film companies. Many of these outfits had originated during the early 1930s producing advertising films for such diverse companies as Cadbury's, Austin Motor Cars and the London Midland and Scottish Railway. These productions gravitated onto the cinema screens so that by the mid-1930s advertising films were regular feature of cinema schedules. Other commercial film companies had produced more traditional Griersonian type documentaries for Government agencies, such as The National Council for Social Service and the Land Settlement Association during the 1930s. When war was declared in 1939 film companies from

both these backgrounds eagerly sought contracts from the Government to provide all manner of films supporting the war effort. Indeed the scope for production was dramatically increased by the five minute agreement with the Cinema Exhibitors Association. This was applauded by the *Kinematograph Weekly* as 'a valuable means of propaganda which is both effective and economical' (5 September 1940). Amongst the more famous of the independent documentary film companies working for the Mol during the war and later the COI were:-

Shell Film Unit

The Shell Unit produced travel and 'informational' films under the general direction of Edward Anstey for the Shell Oil Company both before and after the war. Its output of 22 Mol sponsored films during the war covered a wide range of topics. Shell tended to specialise on technical and instructional films such as *Turn of the Furrow* (1940) for farmers; *How to File* (1940) which demonstrated basic workshop practice; whereas *Ack Ack* (1942) and *Debris Tunnelling* (1943) were training films for Anti-Aircraft Batteries and Civil Defence respectively. However, other productions, like the 1943 documentary *War in the Pacific* addressed wider issues and wider audiences. After the end of the war and the later closure of the CFU the Shell Film Unit continued to produce films across a number of categories. Hardly surprisingly were those relating directly to the company's principal product; thus *The Engine* (1955), *Lubrication in Industry* (1956) or *We Call it Petrol* (1972). However, true to its wider documentary roots Shell also addressed a wide range of other topics including *Borneo Story*; *Turtle Island* (1956) or *Fate of the Forests* (1982).

Realist Film Unit

Realist, led in the main, by John Taylor during the war tended to produce films in a similar vein to Shell, although perhaps a little more in the informational category. It made some 47 wartime films for the Mol. These ranged from *Choose Cheese*, interestingly directed by Ruby Grierson in September 1940; *It comes from Coal* (1940) about the Gas industry in wartime; *Making a Compost Heap* (1942); and the equally down to earth *Making Grass Silage* came the following year. The Unit continued production after 1945 and tended to concentrate upon training and

educational films such as *Cricketing – Batting Strokes, Cut, Hook and Glide* (1947) or *Transference of Heat: Conduction, Convection and Radiation* (1962)

Strand Films

According to *Factual Film* (1947, p.100) Strand Films, operating under Donald Taylor and Alex Shaw, produced 52 films for the Ministry of Information, five of these over 3000 feet, in addition to 12 trailers. These ranged from *New Towns for Old* (1942) about replacing bomb damaged towns and cities to the slightly bizarre *Eating out with Tommy Trinder* (1941) extolling the attractions of the British restaurants. Other titles ranged from mundane such as *Growing Good Potatoes* (1943) to the celebration of patriotism in the 1943 film *Our Country*.

Paul Rotha Productions

The war was also the stimulus to the creation of a number of new documentary film production companies. Paul Rotha⁸⁹ who had developed his particular directing and production skills during the 1930s, making for example, *Contact* for Imperial Airways in 1933, set up his own film unit, Paul Rotha Productions in 1941. Rotha was fairly catholic in the topics he addressed and his Mol credits include *A Few Ounces a Day* (1941) on salvage; *Defeat Diphtheria* (1941); *All Those in Favour* (1941) on rural local government in wartime. His social documentary output included *World of Plenty* (1943) about food production and distribution and *Children of the City* (1944) on the problems of juvenile delinquency. Rotha's independent-mindedness was demonstrated in 1944 when he divided his own company into two; Films of Fact led by Rotha himself and DATA under Dennis Alexander. Both units continued making films for the Mol until the end of the war.

Other Film Units

⁸⁹ Paul Rotha (1907-1984) was born Roscoe Treeve Fawcett Thompson but unsurprisingly changed name by deed poll to the more memorable Paul Rotha. He established his film credentials at quite an early age with the publication of *The Film Till Now* (1930), the earliest critical history of world cinema, which introduced many to the idea that film could be taken seriously as an art. Rotha joined the EMBFU but found its austere spirit uncongenial and was quickly sacked. From 1933 onward he worked independently finding his own sponsors. He rapidly became a leading figure in the growing Documentary Movement.

Factual Film (1947, p.101) also records that 'a number of other units were formed during the war to produce mainly for the Mol. These include Seven League Productions, Public Relations Films and Films of Great Britain.' Amongst the smaller production units which produced for the Mol, along with films for other agencies and government Departments was the Spectator Unit which specialised in medical training films. Amongst its credits for the Ministry of Health were such diverse productions as *Scabies* (1943) and *Neuropsychiatry* (1943). Verity Productions⁹⁰ of Merton Park Studios also produced short films for the Mol across a range of topic areas from *Casserole Cooking* (1940) to *WVS (Women's Voluntary Service)* (1941) to *Shunter Black's Night Off* also in 1941. Towards the end of the war in 1944 Verity along with Greenpark Productions and another company working out of Merton Park came together in a loose cooperative under the title the Film Producers Guild (FPG). Either under their own names or under the FPG logo they continued to make short films across a range of topics until well into the 1970s. FPG credits include such as *Germany: A Regional Geography* (1964) or *The Curious History of Money* (1969) whereas Verity produced *Five Stars Ahead* (1953) for the Ford Motor Company and *Divertimento* (1968) for British Petroleum.

Offshoots of bigger feature film production companies such as Gaumont British Instructional (GBI) also produced short films although these tended to have a fairly narrow remit, such as making instructional films for the Army and Air Force. However, even GBI did produce some films for the Mol, such as *Quilting* (1940) and *Ship Builders* (1941) which were distributed and exhibited through both the theatrical and non-theatrical circuits.

The range and themes evident in Government sponsored films during and after the Second World War was enormous. According to Patrick Russell the war 'caus[ed] the factual film production scene to grow [and] the war laid foundations for the

⁹⁰ Verity is an example of those companies which provided a valuable training ground for those individuals who were later to play significant roles in the post-war British film industry. So Verity's Sidney Box became Head of Gainsborough Studios (1948-49), whereas his sister Betty was one of Rank's most successful producers and his wife, Muriel, a prominent director. For further information see Andrew Spicer, 'Extending people's minds for a brief time every day: the wartime propaganda short'. *Journal of Media Practice*, Vol 4 No 2 (2003), pp105-122.

golden era of industrial film making that followed, which reached its zenith under Britain's booming mixed economy of the late 1950s and 1960s' (BFI Screenonline, 2013). Crown, of course, had been the Government's the major in-house civilian production unit and, in many senses even after its demise, the repository of production values against which other Units judged themselves.

Appendix 8

A sketch diagram of the Crown Film Unit's studios at Beaconsfield

From: *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 May, 1949

Appendix 9

Staffing Establishment of the Crown Film Unit 1941 – 1950

Job Role	Jan 1941	June 1943	Nov 1946	Mar 1949	Dec 1950
Producer	1	1	1	1	1
Asst Producer		2	2	2	4
Directors	5	6	9	7	12
Asst Directors	3	3	7	3	4
Camera	3	5	6	6	6
Asst Camera	3	6	9	3	6
Editors	4	4	5	2	15
Cutters		6	7	5	5
Print Examiner		1	1		1
Stills		1	3		6
Musical Director		1			
Sound	1	3	1	2	1
Asst Sound	2	6	9	2	11
Continuity		2	4	1	2
Jnr Continuity		2		1	2
Art Director	1	1	1	1	1
Asst Art Director		1	1	1	2
Draughtsmen		2	4	1	4
Librarians	3	5	5	13	
Projectionist	1	2		5	
Scripts	2	3	5	2	5
Production Manager		1	1	1	1
Unit Managers		3	4	4	5
Camera Maintenance		2	2	2	
Storekeeper	1				
Carpenters	1			13	

Painters				5	
Electricians				10	
Despatch Clerk		1			
Admin Assistants			14	5	30
Cleaners				7	
Totals	31	70	101	105	124

Notes:

Data extracted from TNA: T219/144, T219/145, INF1/460, INF1/463 and INF1/464.

The job role categories are not directly comparable between years as these were amended often in attempts to incorporate 'creatives' within the civil service pay structures. What is evident from the distribution, however, was that the CFU had an increasing number of administrative civil servants of various grades allocated to it during its lifetime.