

# BICC FILM SOCIETY

Being the History of the Film Society  
at the BICC Research Laboratories, Wood Lane  
from its Foundation in 1954 to its End in 1987

Told in Four Volumes and an Epilogue  
with Appendixes listing Personnel  
and the Films shown

by Ted Morrison

and Tom Ruben

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# PROLOGUE

In 1900 the Kensington and Notting Hill Electric Light Company opened its new power station at 38 Wood Lane (later 38 Ariel Way, Wood Lane), Shepherd's Bush in west London. Eight years later the recently-signed Entente Cordiale was celebrated in a Franco-British Exhibition in grounds the other side of Wood Lane, nicknamed The White City, where the BBC TV Centre now stands. Access from Shepherd's Bush tube station was by means of an elevated building containing a passenger railway, which skirted the power station site (though on the eve of the exhibition's opening a tube extension was opened to Wood Lane station, situated at the corner of what is now Ariel Way).

Also on the exhibition site was an athletics stadium which was the home of the 1908 Olympic Games. This later became the White City greyhound stadium. Today you can see this and surrounding streets as they were in the 1950s in the film *The Blue Lamp*.

In 1925 the power station at 38 Wood Lane came into the ownership of the London Power Company, who closed it in 1928. Three years later Callender's Cable and Construction Company of Erith, Kent, took over. They moved their Outside Testing Department to Wood Lane and established a new Research Department, which was officially opened in 1934 by Lord Rutherford.

After World War II, in 1945, Callender's merged with British Insulated Cables of Prescott, Lancs, to form British Insulated Callender's Cables; in 1977 the company name was officially changed to BICC.

The research department flourished at Wood Lane, its staff peaking at over 500. It had a very active Athletic and Social Club, and in 1954 this set up a Film Section, most commonly known as BICC Film Society. It was founded by Don Tester and Alan Rogers. The post of secretary soon fell upon Ted Morrison, to be followed after some years by Tom Ruben. These two have come together to tell the story of BICC Film Society over the thirty three years of its existence.

One important activity of the Athletic and Social Club, which served to knit together its many and varied sections, was the publication of a (mostly) monthly magazine, *The Bush Telegraph*. All but the last part of this history first saw the light of day in its pages. Volume I, covering 1954 to 1968, appeared in instalments between September 1868 and May 1969; Volume II, covering 1969 to 1979, appeared between September 1978 and April 1979. They were written jointly by Ted Morrison\* and Tom Ruben.

Volume III was written by Tom Ruben on the occasion of his leaving Wood Lane in 1984. It appeared in the *Bush Telegraph* in the July-August 1984 edition. Volume IV and the Epilogue, by Tom Ruben, are a brief account of the society's last three years. Written almost twenty years after the society's closure, they are based principally on surviving records: Film Society annual brochures; film show programmes; *Bush Telegraphs*, particularly the *Film Columns* in its pages.

This is followed by two appendixes listing the people who ran the society throughout the years, and all the feature films shown over thirty three years.

\* The late Ted Morrison was also the author with Geoff Holder of "The History of Wood Lane".

# Volume I

## 1954 - 1968

Writing histories always gives the game away (My God, has he been here that long?). Nevertheless, as we are about to launch into the fifteenth season of the Film Section we thought you might like to be reminded of the activities of the section over the years since its inception. The trials, tribulations, joys, chaos, tears and horror (mainly horror) associated with the life of this section could occupy many volumes of the Bush Telegraph. In these articles you will get only a potted version of the events, although it goes without saying that we shall put you in the picture.

It all began in '54 (1954, that is). In April of that year Dr D.A. Tester of the Rubber and Plastics Department, ably assisted by Mr Alan Rogers of the then Electrical Section of the R & P Department, formed the British Insulated Callender's Cables Athletic and Social Club (Wood Lane) Film Section (also known outside Wood Lane as the BICC Film Society). A constitution was drawn up which gave the objects of the Film Section as:

- 1 To encourage interest in the film as an art and as a medium of information and education by means of exhibition of films of a scientific, educational, cultural and artistic character.
- 2 To promote the study and appreciation of films by means of lectures, discussions and exhibitions.

This constitution was approved by the Federation of Film Societies, who admitted us to their membership, and we were well and truly launched.

In those days the McFadzean Laboratory didn't exist, and the major part to the south of the Faraday block was a collection of low buildings including the canteens. It was in one of the canteens that the very first show was screened - our first 'cinema' is now the General Fitting Workshop. The date was Friday 23rd April 1954, and a large audience turned out to see a film by René Clair. We share with Hampstead's Everyman cinema the distinction of starting our career by showing *Le Million* (they showed it again a couple of years ago when they celebrated their 30th anniversary - maybe we will do the same in 1984) which was supported by *Felix Wins and Loses* (Felix the cat for those who can remember that far back) and *Ultrasonics*, just to give the programme a touch of quality (it was also free). Mr N.E. Davis projected, using a 16 mm projector borrowed from the Photographic Department.

This show was followed in June by *Brief Encounter* (David Lean). By this time, it was realized that the acoustics in the old canteen left a lot to be desired and therefore with the blessing of the management the old Conference room (now the Design Office) was taken over - complete with a real projection room. The section was now well and truly 'in'.

The first show in the section's new home was *Citizen Kane*, the famous Orson Welles classic followed, in succession by programmes featuring *A Night at the Opera* (Marx Bros), *Rome, Open City* (Rossellini), *Tony Draws a Horse*, *All About Eve*, *Whisky Galore*, *Viva Za'ata*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Sunset Boulevard*.

Not a bad start, and the very healthy audience attendance figures were a great encouragement.

Having established themselves, Don Tester and Alan Rogers decided to become really ambitious and stage a complete programme devoted to old-time movies. It was a great success. Five films were shown and not one of them was post-1919. The main feature was entitled *The Road to Ruin* (1915) and had them sobbing in the aisles (in 1915 that is).

The first Western was then screened: *Destry Rides Again*, with James Stewart and Marlene Dietrich. This was shown in the old canteen for some reason or other. Probably the management didn't fancy a shooting match in the Conference room - it was new at that time.

Films were regularly shown throughout the remainder of 1955 but we will not bore you with their titles here (we're saving them till THE END). However, a milestone was reached on the 30th May 1956 when that classic silent film *Intolerance* was screened before a large audience. What was not realized by that audience was the heart-ache experienced by the Film Committee in preparing a musical background score for this mammoth epic. We received the film on the Monday and were screening it on the Wednesday. Monday night armed with pencils and paper, we ran the film through, noting mood changes in the scenes so that we could find the appropriate background music. Thanks to 'Doc' Watson, who ably provided a dual turntable and mixer, we were able to make some progress. All the music came from 78 rpm records (they were still popular then) because tape-recorders were still a luxury item not possessed by the Social Club. Tuesday night saw a second trial run. By this time we had seen these 'silent characters' so many

times on the screen we could almost lip-read them. One piece of music always stands out in the mind from that film show. It was 'Night on the Bare Mountain'. We flogged it to death.

Anyway, the great night came, and as far as the audience were concerned it passed off without incident. The exhausted disc jockeys in the 'back room' thought otherwise. Records were in the wrong piles, the fade in and outs came close to disaster. Still, it was great fun while it lasted. It was also years before it was attempted again.

Our next adventure was not a success in the way we had expected. We had decided that it would be a jolly good idea to hold a joint film show with the Music Section and share the cost of the film. They agreed. *I Pagliacci (Love of a Clown)* was the masterpiece chosen, for two reasons:

1. The music lovers could sit back and enjoy the music.
2. The rest of us could sit back and enjoy Gina Lollobrigida (the star with a dubbed voice but everything else real).

It was a disaster. The projector was getting pretty old by this time and when it found itself confronted with a sound track covering every known range of octaves and decibels, it just gave up. The film committee felt the same way. There are still people working at Wood Lane whose memory is permanently scarred by that episode. But, as we said earlier, it was not a success in the way we had expected. The unexpected success was the purchase of a brand new re-conditioned second-hand Western Electric projector.

In that year, 1956 Don Tester reluctantly vacated the position of secretary (before the above mentioned film show) and Ted Morrison was volunteered for the position.

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Soon after the foundation of the Film Section the film committee began attending 16 mm viewing sessions which were, and still are, organised by the Federation of Film Societies, the idea being that organisers can have opportunities of seeing films available for booking, rather than having to rely on the blurbs in the film catalogues. Apart from small regional events (the local ones being organised by the London Regional Group of the Federation) every spring sees the National 16 mm Viewing Sessions. A few words on this event are called for, if only to illustrate the efforts of the organisers to acquire the best films for their audiences. A 16 mm viewing session is like running in an Olympic marathon in hob-nailed boots. The session starts at 10 a.m. on Saturday, finishes at 10 p.m. Saturday night; restarts 10 a.m. Sunday and ends at 10

p.m. Sunday night. If one is keen, a total of about thirty four films can be seen which might cover anything from digging up coal in Wales to Japanese Opera. By Sunday night even your by then square eye-balls will have square eye-balls. It is like being marooned on a distant planet for the weekend. Still, the French Institute does have its compensations.

It was at the 1956 Viewing Session that we came across *La Fete a Henriette*, a film by Julien Duvivier. It was about two film directors arguing about how they would make a film about Henriette's birthday. One wanted to treat it as a romance, the other as a theme for gang warfare. The resulting film was hilarious and well received when we showed it at Wood Lane.

Throughout 1957 the shows continued with varying success, and early in 1958 we decided to join forces with another social event. At that time the Horticultural Section was in full flourish and ably supported by a hobbies and handicrafts band of enthusiasts. Together with the photographic section and some cookery experts they decided to put on a combined social event, with judging and prizes for the best entrants. The evening was to be devoted to a dance in the old canteen. The film section joined in by putting on a film show to fill in the gap between the afternoon and evening events. The film chosen was *The War of the Worlds*, the film of H.G. Wells's book with impressive special effects by George Pal. With a captive audience we couldn't go wrong.

In June of that year we screened *The Wild One* starring Marion Brando. This was at the time when the film was banned to general audiences in this country. It was a shrewd move; we packed them in. Reeling from this success we embarked on a very ambitious evening of films under the banner Foundations of the Cinema. We collected together quite an assortment which is well worth listing.

*Origins of the Motion Picture*  
(1889-1897)

*Beginnings of the Cinema*  
(Britain 1896-1900)

*The Great Train Robbery* (USA 1903)

*Lt Daring and the Plans of the Minefield*  
(Britain 1911)

*The Masquerader* (USA 1914 - Chaplin)

*Early Trick Films* (1895-1912)

*Bewitched Matches* (USA 1913)

*Pathe Colour Stencil-Tinted Trick Films*  
(France 1910)

*Early Sound Films*  
(USA, France, Britain 1896-1926)

We still think this show was one of the most interesting that we have ever screened. We repeated the experiment at a later date but with fewer films.

A horror programme (intentional) was screened about this time. The feature was *Vampyr* and the supports were extracts from *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

We started 1959 in an interesting fashion by presenting an evening of amateur films including an only copy of *The Festiniog Railway* (1958) kindly organised by Geoff Ward and one of his colleagues.

That year we also screened such diverse films as *Arsenic and Old Lace* (Capra), *The Long Voyage Home* (Ford), *Smiles of a Summer Night* (Bergman), *The Best Years of our Lives* (Wyler) (which incidentally ran for about 2 years in the West End and collected a record number of Oscars), *The Devil's General* (Germany) and, for Christmas, *The Road to Bali* starring Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour. We used to have a 'thing' about Christmas film shows. They had to be Christmassy but we never agreed what this really meant. Consequently in 1954 it was *Tony Draws a Horse* (about a little boy who used to draw rude pictures on the walls at home - much to the consternation of his parents); in 1955, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (??), in 1956 *Blue Skies* (a weepy musical), in 1957 *The Road to Morocco* (same crew); and in 1959 *Easy to Love*. See what we mean? Today the same idea is raised - a Christmassy film for Christmas. That's progress.

And so we entered the '60s.

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Our first show in 1960 had an oriental slant when we showed what has been called "the film of the movie", the Japanese *The Seven Samurai* (the 'movie', Hollywood's remake *The Magnificent Seven*, is unfortunately not available on 16 mm). Remembered about this film is that the print was poor and the whole action appeared to be taking place at night. As the numbers in our audience who understood Japanese was minus zero, the feature became more of Japanese torture as time went by. This sort of situation is always nerve-racking as you never know whether the audience might become violent towards the committee (locked in the projection room by this time!). However, people being tolerant at Wood Lane, they filed out silently at the end of the show. It was one of the few times that we were glad to be ignored.

The following film was French in origin, *Touchez Pas au Grisbi* and was better received.

*The Man in the White Suit* starring Alec Guinness as a dedicated scientist had always seemed a must - so we showed it. Life at Wood Lane was never like this - except right at the end when the indestructible white suit fell to pieces - just like a lab coat! It should

perhaps be noted that Wood Lane possesses the same model of electron microscope as appears in the film.

Several films later we had a second go at showing a full length silent film (remember *Intolerance*, earlier). This time we had a tape recorder and 33 rpm records. The film, *Safety Last*, starring Harrold Lloyd, was a huge success - it was so funny that the quality of the background music was largely ignored by the audience!

In October of that year we showed yet another Western (our second to be precise), *5.10 to Yuma* starring Glenn Ford, and in December, the Christmas kick being with us again, it was *Lili* (colour) starring Leslie Caron and Mel Ferrer. This was shown on the 5th floor. Our support was another feature, the Czech comedy *Old Man Motorcar* which received a mixed reception (you can't win them all).

In 1962, we started and finished the year with two great triumphs. *Sweet Smell of Success* starring Tony Curtis and Burt Lancaster was pretty strong meat for an American film. It was beautifully directed by a Scotsman, Alexander Mackendrick. The 5th floor was again needed to accommodate the crowds!!

Following films from Great Britain, (*The Naked Truth*) and France (*Les Enfants Terribles*), the final show proved to be one of the greatest film shows we have ever put on. We had noticed that the American satirical musical *Li'l Abner* had been well received by the critics when shown at the Plaza but had then mysteriously disappeared. In fact, to this day it has never been on general release. We decided to show it. Full publicity was the order of the day, including a giant professional poster and colour stills (I still have mine under lock and key - Ted!) depicting gorgeous girls. The cast was largely unknown, except for Stubby Kaye (of Guys and Dolls fame) and Stella Stevens (of Playboy Magazine fame). We couldn't go wrong. Over ninety people turned up and enjoyed a good quality print of this wickedly funny film based on the characters of Al Capp. To us, it is the film show that succeeded in all respects and one which we are continually striving to better. (Later committees may claim that they already have!).

Perhaps at this point mention should be made of the very many people who have actively run the film shows over the years. You will find the names of later committees in Appendix I, but those of the earliest committees are lost in the mists of time. All who were on these committees gave their own time unstintingly for the pleasure of club members, their main satisfaction and reward being a successful show. This situation still continues today as exemplified by the start of the 15th season with still more new faces on the committee. It's a sobering thought that since 1954 about forty people have been on the film committees at one time or another.

Always striving for a novel twist we screened *Twelve Angry Men* in September 1963, and with it a critical appreciation of the film by John Freeman (shortly to become our ambassador to the United States - and lately of New Statesman fame). This was an interesting experiment which didn't quite come off.

A major crisis occurred with our next show. We were due to show *The Old Man and the Sea* based on Hemingway's story and starring Spencer Tracy. The film was booked, advertising was in full swing and the programmes had been written. We then had the shock of our lives. There was apparently only one print available and this would be in Scotland on the night of our screening! A slip-up by the renters, of the highest order. What a panic ensued. Should we cancel? But we had already sold programmes. The renters offered any alternative from their catalogue at reduced rates to help cover our pending financial disaster. We hurriedly conferred, and agreed that 'the show must go on.' (how original can you get?). So we chose *Phffff!*, which on reflection, seems to have been an appropriate title. It was a comedy starring Jack Lemmon and Judy Holliday. Although the audience was obviously reduced by those disappointed fans who had wanted the original film our faithful band of supporters came along and turned a disaster into a moderate success.

We pray this situation never arises again! Committees dread the non-arrival of films. Once before (at Christmas) a film hadn't arrived hours before the show although the renters had posted it off in plenty of time. The committee paid a personal visit to Loftus Road sorting office to find that one. On another occasion the projector broke down on the day of the show. Bloomsbury Street (to whom we are for ever grateful) offered us one of theirs for the night. People rushed to help, and it arrived about 2 hours before the show. It's this sort of co-operation that keeps us going.

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In the summer of 1964 Ted Morrison felt it was time he retired after eight years as secretary of the Film Section. The success of the section in that time was due in no small part to his untiring efforts. For the next year Tom Ruben took over as secretary, and he was followed briefly by Harry Shipley. Stuart Castle then became secretary, and when he left Wood Lane temporarily in 1967 Mike Dennis succeeded him.

At this point it may be as well to say a little about the duties that devolve upon the secretary of the Film Section. Assisted by the other members of the committee, he is responsible for organizing the film shows, starting with programme selection. This can be, and has been, tackled in many ways, ranging from

discussions of the whole committee to setting up sub-committees or even leaving the whole thing to the secretary. In the last few years an attempt has been made to take the potential audience's wishes into account by taking a poll on a list of films compiled by the committee. Inevitably a major part of the work of organising this falls on the head of the secretary.

Then he has to book the lecture room or Main Hall on the dates decided for the film shows, and to contact the film distributors to book the selected films. It usually happens that one or two of the films are not available on the dates selected or, worse still, are fully booked for the next year, or have been withdrawn. This sort of thing can lead to last minute changes of programme.

In addition to all this, and to looking after the financial side of the section's affairs, the secretary has to maintain contact with the various bodies to which the film section is affiliated, including the British Film Institute and the Federation of Film Societies, and not forgetting the Executive Council of the Athletic and Social Club. All told, a great deal of hard and unsung work by the secretary goes into the successful organisation of a season of film shows.

The efforts of the Works Engineering Department should also not go unrecorded. They are responsible for putting out the chairs for the film shows, and in order to ensure an equable climate an engineer is always on duty during the show to operate the air-conditioning system.

To continue with our narrative, the 1965 season started with one of the most successful shows held in recent years, when over eighty people crowded into the Lecture Room to see Peter Sellers and Mai Zetterling in *Only Two Can Play*. The next show turned out to be unexpectedly topical, for on the evening of the day when Mr Krushchev was ousted from his post as First Secretary of the USSR Communist party, and on the eve of the general election when the Labour Party was returned to power in this country, we showed the cartoon film version of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, made by John Halas and Joy Bachelor. This was supported by our second venture into the science fiction genre, *Village of the Damned* (in our second season we had shown *The Shape of Things to Come*). Then followed our first revival. *Oh Mr Porter* had previously been shown in 1955, but this Will Hay classic was shown again in a special programme of railway films organised jointly with the Railway Section.

The remainder of that season is notable primarily for another attempt to show a silent film, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*. As with *Intolerance* some years earlier, a musical accompaniment was provided. Members' record collections and the local record libraries were scoured for the records listed in the cue sheets, but this time dual turntables were dispensed with. Instead, a

tape was prepared to run in synchronism with the films, which eliminated all the hard work during the actual show which had been necessary on the previous occasion. Perhaps this was just as well, for half-way through the evening the projector broke down, with the result that during the last hour the projectionist had to wind the film on to the take-up spool by hand.

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The 1965-6 season started with a repeat. *The Wild One*, directed in 1954 by Laslo Benedek and starring Marion Brando as the leader of a gang of motor cycle hooligans who terrorise a small Western town, had been banned by the British Board of Film Censors and was shown at only one English cinema (with local watch committee approval). As the censor's edict does not extend to film societies the film had been shown at Wood Lane in 1958, and it was now decided to repeat it. Oddly enough, on the second showing it became very apparent how the film had dated. What had seemed very close to current life in 1958 now seemed hackneyed and dated. And Lee Marvin as a "ton-up" boy just didn't ring true. But even so it seems that here, as so often before, we were one step ahead of the film industry, for early in 1968 *The Wild One* was re-submitted to the Board; owing to the evolution of public taste and hence of censorship standards over the years, the film this time was granted an X-certificate and received a circuit booking.

Other films in this season included a Western, *Gunfight at the O K Corral*, and two comedies - one British (*Doctor at Large*) and one Italian (*Divorce - Italian Style*).

In addition to these regular film shows we screened a programme of films during Eileen King's Childrens Christmas Party. This is a duty that has been cheerfully performed by members of the film committee for many years, and the film show is now a traditional and very popular part of the festivities.

The 1966-7 season saw the beginning of an expansion in the activities of the Film Section. It had been noticed that one film distributor cut his prices by half during the summer season, and it was decided to take advantage of this by increasing the number of programmes each season from six to seven. Also, most of the features were selected to fit into a common theme and the programme was advertised as "A Season of Suspense". These films comprised Hitchcock's *North by North West*, Clouzot's *The Wages of Fear*, Frankenheimer's *The Manchurian Candidate* and Cayatte's *Eye for an Eye*. Another venture in this season was a complete programme devoted to documentaries, including Charles Frend's *San Demetrio, London*, which was based on a true episode

that occurred on the war-time Atlantic convoy runs.

A full supporting programme of worthwhile shorts has always been an important part of our shows, and in this season we introduced a new feature by including in each programme an animated short by Norman McLaren of Canada's National Film Board. These included *Neighbours*, *Begone Dull Care*, *Rythmetic* and *Pen Point Percussion*.

We also had one programme devoted entirely to shorts, including films from Great Britain (*The Tortoise and the Hare* and *Muloorina*) Canada (Norman McLaren's *Begone Dull Care*), Russia (*The Wedding*), the USA (an extract from *An American in Paris*), Poland (*Red and Black*) and France (*Incident at Owl Creek*).

The season was brought to a close with the screening of Haroun Tazieff's spectacular documentary compilation film *Volcano*. This is a quite startling pictorial presentation of this man's vocation - filming the insides of volcanoes. To the accompaniment of Wagnerian music the earth erupted in glorious colour and sent the audience home stunned, overawed and a little apprehensive as to what would be screened in the next season.

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The 1967-8 season brought a feast of good films. We started with the support of the Jazz Section, by showing *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, filmed at the Newport (Rhode Island) Jazz Festival. Then in November over eighty people turned up in the Main Hall to see what sort of a mess we would make of our first attempt to show a film in Cinemascope. For this purpose we hired an extra-large screen and an anamorphic lens. Instead of a mess they witnessed a very successful screening of Francois Truffaut's Mexican adventure *Viva Maria*, starring not only Jeanne Moreau but also Brigitte Bardot.

Our next show threatened to be a major disaster, when the projector seized up just before the interval, and we had visions of having to cancel the feature film, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death*, starring David Niven, Kim Hunter, Roger Livesey, Marius Goring and Richard Attenborough, to name just a few. However, we fortunately managed, during an extended interval, to get hold of the company's projector to continue the programme. But owing to technical difficulties the film had to be projected slightly out of focus, and the reproduction of the sound track also left much to be desired.

Next came a Japanese film, Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, followed by Joseph Losey's *Eve*. Then in April a spectacular double bill attracted an audience nearly the size of that for *Viva Maria*. The main film was Peter Watkins's controversial *The War Game*. This film showing the probable effects of a nuclear war on Britain had been made for the BBC, who then refused to show it because it was thought to be too horrific. After a public outcry the BBC made the film available to the British Film Institute for distribution, but it has never been shown on TV. This was supported by *The Balcony*, Joseph Strick's film of the play by Jean Genet. Throughout the season we included shorts showing some of the great silent comedians. In addition to Keaton and Chaplin we featured W.C. Fields, Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd, Barney Oldfield and of course the great Mack Sennett himself, with his Keystone Kops.

The season finished with the most unusual programme of that, or any other, year. It had been planned to show Luis Bunuel's *The Exterminating Angel* on May 29th. But as the day approached it was realized that there was a rival attraction on television in the form of the final of the European Cup, in which Manchester United were due to play Benfica at Wembley, and that unless we did something about it we were in danger of having no audience. So we re-arranged the schedule and, by dint of starting half an hour earlier than usual, managed to show the feature film and then had a break in the programme to allow the audience to watch the match on TV without leaving their seats. After Manchester United had won a very exciting match by 4 goals to 1 in extra time, the film show resumed at 10.30 with the two short films, finally finishing at 11.10 p.m. to constitute, at 5 hr 10 mm, the longest show in our history.

We are now nearing the end of our fifteenth season, which has seen another landmark in the decision to expand the season to nine shows, one a month from September to May. This was no easy decision to take since, with very few exceptions, we lose money on every show, which is made up by a subsidy from the Athletic and Social Club to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude. The expansion this season was made possible by two factors. The introduction of Season Tickets in 1967 has at last assured us of a basic minimum of support, and a special rate for block bookings of films by certain distributors has meant a substantial saving in film hire costs this season. Whether it will be possible to maintain this policy of one show a month remains to be seen. The answer will depend on the support we get from our audiences. In the past this support has centred round a hard core of film enthusiasts who have attended regularly. Grateful as we are to them, their number is nowhere near sufficient. In order to keep the deficit incurred by the film shows within the limits set by the Club we need an average audience size of at least fifty.

Consequently one of our biggest headaches concerns the sale of tickets. The conditions of film hire oblige us to sell programmes in advance and this involves a great deal of work, since we try to visit personally everyone at Wood Lane. One of the best ways in which you can help us is to buy a season ticket every autumn. Apart from ensuring that you will not be pestered to buy a programme before every show, it is cheaper that way.

Well, that concludes the history of the Film Section up to the present. A new season, run by a newly elected committee, will soon be under way, and will open with yet another landmark - our one hundredth show. We wish them every success, fewer headaches and a lot of fun running the shows. Be there to enjoy it with them!

# Volume II

## 1969 - 1979

In the Bush Telegraph of ten years ago, between September 1968 and May 1969, a series of articles related the history of the first 14 years of the Film Section. In this 25th season we thought the time was right to bring the story up to date. This first, introductory, article summarises the previous series.

The Film Section of the BICC Athletic and Social Club (Wood Lane)) to give its full title, was founded in 1954 by Dr Don Tester and Mr Alan Rogers of the then Rubber and Plastics Department, with a constitution approved by the Federation of Film Societies. The first film show took place on Friday 23rd April 1954; the main film was René Clair's *Le Million*, supported by a Felix the Cat cartoon *Felix Wins and Loses* and *Ultrasonics*. In those days the McFadzean Laboratory had not been built, and the show took place in the canteen, which is now the General Fitting Workshop. Norman Davis was the projectionist.

The second show, when the main attraction was David Lean's *Brief Encounter*, was also held in the canteen, but the next show, Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*, moved to the then Conference Room, which is now the Design Office. This remained the venue until the opening of McFadzean in 1961, when the Lecture Room on the 4th floor (now disappeared to form part of the Commercial and Patents Department enclave) became our regular home, with occasional forays to the 5th floor Main Hall when large crowds had to be accommodated.

From its inception the Film Section has striven to present a very diverse range of programmes, and in the first 14 years it encompassed complete programmes devoted to various periods of film history ranging from silent films up to the introduction of 16 mm Cinemascope prints. Films generally unavailable to the public such as *The Wild One* and *Li'l Abner* were also included with great success, and we even ran probably one of the longest film society shows on record at 5 1/4 hours when, between the films, we included live on TV the final of the European Football Cup between Manchester United and Benfica - a classic case of live with thine enemy.

Generally, the early part of this period was devoted to films available from the British Film Institute, a goldmine of the classics, and we showed such films as *Intolerance*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and a great many more. An alternative and equally rewarding source was provided by the Federation of Film Societies, who every year arrange Viewing Sessions at the French Institute. Lasting a whole weekend, a complete range

of films from all over the world is presented to committee members for their judgment and possible consideration in programme planning. Our society has always attended these strenuous sessions in strength, and many of our programmes included viewing session items which proved a great success at Wood Lane.

The society has often co-operated with other sections of the Social Club such as the Music Section, Railway Section and Horticultural Section to add a new dimension to their activities. For example, in 1958 the Social Club organised a combined social event involving the Horticultural, Hobbies and Handicrafts interests, the Photographic Section and a few cookery experts. Together they put on a large exhibition and competition one Saturday afternoon to be followed by an evening dance. The film society filled the gap between exhibitions and dance by screening *War of the Worlds* and probably obtained the best captive audience that we are ever likely to get.

To many of our audiences it may seem that the presentation of a film show is simply confined to obtaining the film, threading it through the projector and switching on. Far from it. There is of course a vast amount of preparation needed before the day, including persuading an audience to come along. Throughout our life we have had our share of misfortunes ranging from failure of the projector during the programme - or even before the programme started - to the non-arrival of a film (*The Old Man and the Sea*) after the programmes had been printed and sold. On other occasions, especially at Christmas, committee members could be seen at Loftus Road GPO sorting office frantically searching among the Christmas cards for that distinctive brown box that stood between us and disaster.

Still, the sense of adventure always prevailed. When screening the full-length silent classic *Intolerance*, a complete programme of mood music had to be gleaned from anyone who had 78 rpm gramophone records in their possession, and matched to the film. This little exercise occupied two full evenings prior to the show and the use of two turntables and a mixer (provided by 'Doc' Watson) for the night. Apart from physical and mental fatigue, the committee thoroughly enjoyed the challenge - and luckily so did the audience. A similar effort was made some years later to provide music to accompany *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, but on this occasion the music was transferred to tape before the show.

In addition to the normal shows during the season, an additional treat for the film committee was to provide film shows for the regular Children's Christmas Parties. We were normally sandwiched between tea and the appearance of Father Christmas.

As the first fourteen years progressed we became ever more ambitious, showing programmes that included shorts each month depicting a particular director's work, or with some other common theme running through them. Such was the case with the National Film Board of Canada and in particular Norman McLaren, whose speciality is off-beat animated shorts such as *Rythmetic*, *Neighbours*, *Begone Dull Care* and *Pen Point Percussion*. In another season we devoted a complete programme to shorts from different countries, including Russia, Canada, Poland, USA, France and Great Britain. Features were not forgotten either; in the 1966-7 season the entire range of programmes was selected to fit into a common theme and entitled "A Season of Suspense". These films comprised Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, Clouzot's *The Wages of Fear*, Frankenheimer's *The Manchurian Candidate* and Cayatte's *Eye for an Eye*. Another venture in this season was a complete programme devoted to documentaries, including the moving but true war-time nautical drama *San Demetrio, London*.

The last season in those first fourteen years, 1967-8, witnessed our first attempt to screen 16 mm Cinemascope. For this we hired an extra-large screen and an anamorphic lens to 'unsqueeze' the picture. The film that marked this occasion was *Viva Maria* starring both Brigitte Bardot and Jeanne Moreau, and over 80 people turned out for the occasion. It was a case of hoping that *Viva Maria* would echo as "vive le BICC Film Society", and that is what the coming instalments of this history will show in fact happened.

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We left the first part of this History with our first 'scope film, *Viva Maria*, in 1967. That season was notable also for other events. At Christmas we showed a film that is a favourite of one of us, the British *A Matter of Life and Death*, written, produced and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. And if you want to know what all the fuss is about (and if the BT plays its part by publishing early) you might just catch the film again at the NFT on October 16th or 17th.

That show was dogged by gremlins of a technical kind, and we had to swop projectors half way through. The gremlins at the final show of that season were of a different kind, caused by a rival attraction. We were due to show Luis Bunuel's *The Exterminating Angel*; but at the same time BBC TV were showing the final

of the European Football Cup between Manchester United and Benfica, and we were in danger of having no audience. The situation was saved when we decided to integrate the two events. The start was brought forward half an hour to six o'clock, when we showed the main film, and we turned on the TV set for the start of the match at 7.30. This turned out to be an exciting game which Manchester United eventually won 4-1 in extra time. The film show was finally able to resume at 10.30 for a further forty minutes, with two short films. At over five hours this was by far the longest show in our history.

Other noteworthy films in the season were *Rashomon*, the film by Akira Kurosawa which first put Japanese cinema on the Western map when it was shown at the 1951 Cannes Film Festival, and Peter Watkins's *The War Game*. This film was made by the BBC, who however decided it was not suitable for showing on TV because of the realistic way in which it depicted the likely results of a nuclear attack on Britain. After much argument in the national press the film was eventually made available through the British Film Institute to responsible bodies - like your society.

The films shown in that season had been selected following an innovation, the Film Poll. Up to that time (and again today) films had been selected entirely by the committee, using as one of the criteria what they thought the members might want to see. The purpose of the Film Poll was to ask this question of the members themselves. The committee drew up a list of about thirty films which, with brief descriptions, was published with the June edition of the Bush Telegraph, and readers were asked to vote for the five films they would most like to see. Although for various reasons it was not always possible over the years to show all the top films in the poll, the results have proved valuable in guiding committees when selecting film programmes. In that first year the top films were *Viva Maria* (23 votes), *The War Game* (16 votes) three and *Jazz on a Summer's Day* (12 votes). This last film was shown in a programme put on jointly with the Jazz Section.

Up to this point we had usually had six or seven shows per season. For the 1968-9 season the bold decision was taken to increase this to nine, one every month from September to May. The season opened with our second film in Cinemascope, the original *The Pink Panther*. Later on we showed *It Happened Here* by Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, which like *The War Game* was another attempt to show what might have happened under an occupation of Britain by Nazi Germany in the Second World War. The film was made over a period of eight years at weekends and in their spare time by a mainly amateur cast and crew, and the story of its making was graphically described in a tape-recorded talk by Kevin Brownlow which we played after having seen the film.

This film produced a very large audience of 80, and nearly as many people came along a couple of months later to see an International Selection of "Underground" Cinema. We showed a feature-length film from the USA, *Chafed Elbows*, and short films from the Netherlands and Great Britain.

The 1969-70 season was noteworthy in many respects. It started with our hundredth film show. For the occasion we chose the film which had had a runaway win in the third Film Poll, *Tom Jones* starring Albert Finney. Being in Cinemascope, we had to screen the film not in our usual home, the Lecture Room, but in the Main Hall; this was just as well, because we had a record audience of about 140. Perhaps this was accounted for in part because following the film the audience were for the first time invited to a Soirée, with food and wine provided in the Lecture Room. This was so successful that it has since become an annual event at the first film show of each season.

Another innovation that season was the first Film Section Brochure. We decided to replace the single sheet of paper listing the season's films with a multi-page illustrated booklet giving full details. With its oblong A5 format, that first brochure contained 32 pages and was unashamedly modelled on the programme booklet published by Cambridge Film Society. The next season we reverted, for some reason, to a single sheet, but every year since then we have published the brochure. The design of that first one was so successful that this year's tenth edition differs very little from the first one. We had been encouraged by high attendances - averaging over fifty - the previous year, when the season had been extended to nine shows, and we decided to increase it yet again by having a show in June 1970. In doing so we perhaps over-extended ourselves, for we had not taken sufficient account of the counter-attractions of summer weather, or the inadequacy of the black-out provided by the Lecture Room curtains, which combined to produce a small audience watching a pale image of Stanley Kramer's nuclear war picture *On the Beach*. So in the next season it was back to nine shows.

It started with Ken Annakin's *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines*, followed by the second Soirée. Other films in the 1970-71 season were a delicious (literally) French comedy *La Treve*, a Japanese ghost story *Kuroneko*, an Italian science-fiction film *The Tenth Victim*, and Jane Fonda in Roger Vadim's *Barbarella*.

April 1st saw an unusual double-feature show. From Yugoslavia there was *The Switchboard Operator*. And with it Roger Corman's *The Trip*. This film was a no-holds-barred look at the drug LSD and its effects. Banned by the censor at the time (it was to belatedly receive an 18 certificate in 2003), it could be shown in film societies.

The season ended with another double-feature programme, Anthony Harvey's *Dutchman*, from Britain, and another French comedy, *The Order of the Daisy*. Truly an international selection.

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1971 was the year when we welcomed our friends of the Commercial and Patents Department to Wood Lane. Their move from Bloomsbury Street did however have serious repercussions for the Athletic & Social Club, and not least the Film Section, in that we lost the Lecture Room, which had been our home for many years. Apart from seating an audience of 80, at a squeeze, the Lecture Room was equipped with a bar at one end behind which there was our projection room. This meant that the audience did not have to suffer from projector noise. Alas, all was to vanish, and now this space forms part of the Commercial and Patents Department offices.

Our new home, the Main Hall of the McFadzean building, seemed like an aircraft hangar in comparison, and can comfortably hold well over 100 people - a feat that we have achieved only on rare occasions, and which, with your help, we would like to repeat.

An immediate problem was the reappearance of projector noise for the first time in 18 years. This was only partially alleviated by a curtain around the projectors, which are now situated on the balcony at the west end of the hall. The new curtains we acquired when the hall was recently redecorated have improved the noise position somewhat since then, however.

The first film of the 1971-2 season also marked the occasion of the first ever combined film show and soirée in the Main Hall, an event which has continued to this day (previously the film had been shown in the hall, with the soirée taking place in the lecture room). On that occasion over 80 people attended to see the Cinemascope epic *Zulu*, starring Michael Caine as a Zulu War hero, but sadly the average attendance for the rest of the season dropped to little more than half this number (food for thought).

The next show was a double bill, featuring the then little-known *Charlie Bubbles*, starring Liza Minelli and Albert Finney, who also directed the film. In support was our first film from Latin America, *The House of the Angel*, by the Argentinian director Leopoldo Torre Nilsson who died a few weeks ago. At Christmas another double bill, and both British: Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in *Doctor Faustus*, supported by Robert Fuest's *Just Like a Woman*.

Following Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* in January, February's advertised attraction was *The Blue Max* supported by an Australian short, *The Gallery*. There was however a last-minute addition to the programme - the premiere of the first film produced by Wood Lane's newly-created Cine Section. *Serpentine Serendipity* is an idiosyncratic view of Hyde Park by Dennis Cooper and Denis Groombridge, and to film this epic they had hired a 16mm camera for the weekend. Their efforts were well received, and a recent re-run of the film drew even greater applause from the audience - was the film ahead of its time?

Other films we showed in the 1971-72 season were Lindsay Anderson's public school drama *If.....*, Terence Stamp as *The Collector* of Samantha Eggar, and Catherine Deneuve as Luis Bunuel's *Belle du Jour*. Two of the films in that season had been in the top three places of the previous year's Film Poll. Unfortunately for us, though, they were popular elsewhere as well, and we had found that they were fully booked up to the summer of 1971. We therefore included them in the 1971-2 programme, and made sure of getting them by booking in the spring, before the 1971 poll was conducted.

An innovation that season was the introduction of Reaction Slips. These provide the audience with an opportunity to give their comments on the films, and are a recognised feature of many other film societies. We introduced them following a request at the previous Annual General Meeting.

In the 1972-73 season two major changes occurred. One was beneficial to the society, while the other was, through no fault of our own, reluctantly forced upon us.

The improvement came with the purchase of a second projector. Up to this time films had been projected on a single projector, in recent years a Bell & Howell purchased in 1963. The use of a single projector had meant that feature films could not be presented without at least one interruption to allow reels to be changed. At this stage an opportunity arose to buy another similar projector cheaply, the catch being that it lacked a transformer and speaker. Nothing daunted, we purchased the projector with the encouragement of the Social Club, and set about building a switching unit to allow the two projectors to be used with one transformer and one speaker. This also provided a degree of remote control, and the resulting instantaneous changeovers between projectors gave uninterrupted projection of feature films, an improvement greatly appreciated by all.

Dual projection was first used when on our opening soirée evening we showed John Schlesinger's *Far From the Madding Crowd*, starring Julie Christie and Terence Stamp, and beautifully photographed in Cinemascope in Dorset. This was the first of four

British films, the next being Jerzy Skolimowski's *Deep End*, with Jane Asher, John Moulder-Brown and Diana Dors. Thirdly there was *Kes*, a sensitive study of a friendless boy (David Bradley) growing up in a grim northern town, with only the kestrel that he has tamed to turn to; and finally *Billy Budd*, directed by Peter Ustinov and starring - again - Terence Stamp. We also showed Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* and an unusual French film *Don't Deliver Us From Evil*.

The season reached its climax, though, in May when we showed "An Evening of Cinema in the Thirties". We started with *The Mail Pilot*, an early and exuberant black-and-white Mickey Mouse, and *Fairy of the Phone*, an entertaining instructional film from the GPO Film Unit on how to use the telephone. Then there was *South Sea Sweetheart*, a hilarious puppet film by George Pal extolling the virtues of Horlicks, a Laurel and Hardy comedy *Towed in the Hole*, and a Technicolor view of Pompeii and Vesuvius in eruption, *The Eternal Fire*. These films, which were interspersed with some screen advertisements of the period supplied by 'Doc' Watson, constituted merely the first half of the programme. In the interval Georgina came down the aisle selling ice cream from the tray while Mac McAllister provided the musical interlude on the organ. To complete a memorable evening we had W C Fields starring in *The Bank Dick* - a highly popular choice.

However, as stated, the 1972-73 season also heralded a less popular change, when the size of our season was reduced. The sale of programmes for a film show will, on average, provide no more than half of the cost of hiring films. The balance is provided by our subsidy from the Social Club. In the 1972-73 season we, like many others, had to concede to the ever-rising film hire charges. In order to control our budget we reluctantly reduced the number of shows in the season from nine to seven.

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The 1973-74 season was destined to become the most unpredictable, and from our point of view the most disastrous, since we had started.

The season opened normally with the now well-established Soirée evening, when we showed *The Night of Counting the Years*, an Egyptian film directed by Shadi Abdelsalam which had been a surprise hit when it was shown at the 1970 London Film Festival. Beautifully photographed in Egypt, the film told the story of a search for some of the country's ancient treasures by an official of the Cairo Museum. Intrigue abounded, and the result was a fascinating and very unusual insight into the past and the present. The rather small audience saw the film projected without

interruption thanks to the dual projector system we had installed in the previous season.

We next showed the Italian film *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* in October, and in December a Czech film, *Valerie and her Week of Wonders*. Thus far the season had progressed on a normal course, but it was now, in the middle of winter, that the power crisis struck. Suddenly we were all embroiled in power cuts, four-day weeks, lack of heating, early shut-down of TV and so on. In this climate it was not surprising that the functioning of the Social Club also suffered. The Bush Telegraph ceased publication, cutting off our main means of communication with our members and potential audiences, and - worse - the uncertainty of electricity supplies forced the cancellation of both the January and February 1974 film shows.

Eventually a semblance of normality returned, and the April and May film shows, *Shock Corridor* and *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* took place as arranged. But the power crisis was not without its lasting effects.

It took nearly four years before the Bush Telegraph was re-started. Because paper was short for many months we reduced the size of our programme notes from eight A5 pages to four. For the same reason, and also because we decided that two of the seven shows in the coming season were to be devoted to the films we had had to cancel in the previous season, we discontinued the annual Film Poll in 1974. The programmes that year, and ever since, have been decided by the Film Committee, but they have of course always been open to suggestions and requests from the members.

When in 1971 we lost use of the Lecture Room we had also lost the considerable benefit of having our own projection room. In partial compensation the Company had agreed to pay for a new electrically-operated screen in the Main Hall, and this was finally erected in time for the beginning of the 1974-5 season. The actual installation proved to be a major operation by the unsung heroes of the Works Engineering Department. First the screen proved too large to go into the lift or up the stairs, and it had to be hauled up the outside of the building on to the balcony and thence into the hall. Then scaffolding was erected at the east end of the hall, and one Saturday morning the screen was manhandled into position by all available personnel.

The advent of the new screen was welcomed with open arms by the members of the film committee, as it marked the end of the hazardous monthly performance of literally building the framework of our previous cinemascope-sized screen which stood on a pair of tripods, and then with the help of willing hands from the audience hoisting them on to tables in order to bring the screen to the correct viewing height. This

performance had in itself provided considerable entertainment value to members of the audience who turned up in time to witness it.

The new screen was first used for the opening of the new season in October 1974 when we showed Franco Zeffirelli's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was followed by the usual soirée. Since the new screen is perforce situated at the very end of the hall, the picture is a little larger than it was on the previous screen, and consequently it is also somewhat dimmer. This was particularly noticeable on this occasion, since we showed the film in its original Cinemascope format by using an anamorphic lens, which cuts the screen brightness by a factor of at least 2. The result was an image on the screen whose illumination was barely acceptable. The committee decided that something had to be done about this, and quickly since we were due to show another 'scope film in December.

The ideal solution would have been to buy two new projectors, but since this was out of the question on the grounds of cost another way had to be found. The solution we finally hit upon involved replacing the relatively inefficient lamps in the projectors by a newly-available type of quartz-iodine pre-focus lamp running at mains voltage. The conversion involved making adaptors to fit the new lamps into the lamp housings, and some re-wiring since the original lamps ran at 110 volts. The result was very successful, giving an image on the screen some 75% brighter than before, and shedding plenty of light on the escapades of Elliott Gould and Donald Sutherland as two Korean war doctors in Robert Altman's anarchic *M\*A\*S\*H* (the origin of the highly successful TV series).

Other films shown in this season included the two postponed films, *Getting Straight* and Roman Polanski's send-up of horror films *The Dance of the Vampires*, Humphrey Bogart in *The Caine Mutiny* and our first western for many years, *The Magnificent Seven*. The season ended with a double bill of Ealing Comedies, *Passport to Pimlico* and - repeated from a previous season - Alec Guinness as a would-be research chemist in *The Man in the White Suit*, which was at times reminiscent of Wood Lane. This show marked our 21st anniversary, and we also included a film from our very first show in April 1954, *Felix Wins and Loses*.

Attendances during this season had been abnormally low, ranging from a low point of 17 to 50 for *M\*A\*S\*H*, and averaging only 29. The main reason for this was that we no longer had the Bush Telegraph to carry our publicity.

Before closing this instalment, we would like to mention an engagement that the Film Section has kept every December for many years now. For as long as anyone can remember Eileen King has organised a Children's Christmas Party every year. Part of the

entertainment has been provided by a film show, and this has for a long time been run by the Film Section. Although a considerable variety of films has been shown over the years, we find that Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck have been consistent favourites.

The Wood Lane Christmas Party takes place just before Christmas. Bloomsbury Street have a similar event just after the New Year, and for the last two or three years we have been projecting for their event also.

To all our readers, we wish you a very Merry Christmas, and assure you that we will be back in the New Year with the next instalment.

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In the course of a quarter of a century any organisation is bound to experience some crises which might conceivably have led to its death. The fact that the Film Section is still with us and about to celebrate its Silver Jubilee is an indication not that it never experienced such crises but that it met and successfully overcome them. One such was that brought about by the Three Day Week, described in last month's instalment. Another occurred in 1975, at the Annual General Meeting in February. At the AGM every year a new committee is elected to plan and run the coming season, although the existing committee remains in harness until the end of the current season. Well, in 1975 there were no nominations for election to the new committee - not, perhaps, surprising in view of the workload involved. An interesting discussion took place at the AGM, revolving around the point of whether no committee meant the end of the Section. The constitution demanded a committee including a chairman, secretary and treasurer. Could one person fulfil all three roles? And if there was not even that one person, was that the end? The constitution here came to the rescue again, for it said that the Section could be wound up only at an AGM at which there had been advance notice of this intention. So the Section was safe for at least another year. But if there was no Chairman/Secretary/Treasurer to call such a meeting, would the Section therefore continue indefinitely, albeit inactive? Fortunately this last question was never answered, for at this stage four people allowed themselves to be nominated, and the continuation of the Film Section was assured.

These four, later augmented by the co-option of a fifth member, set to work with a will and produced a full season of seven shows. The opening attraction was one of the James Bond spectaculars, *Thunderball*, followed as usual by the Soirée. And attraction it was, for at 72 the turnout was more than double that at the corresponding occasion a year before.

Other films shown in the 1975-6 season included Jacques (Monsieur Hulot) Tati in *Traffic*, Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland in Alan Pakula's *Klute*, a double bill of Frank Perry's *Diary of a Mad Housewife* and Val Lewton's horror classic *Cat People*, and Claude Lelouch's *Un Homme et une Femme* starring Anouk Aimee and Jean-Louis Trintignant. In the end this season turned out far better than one could have dared to hope after its troubled start, and indeed it was one of the most successful seasons for a number of years; average attendance at 39 was 10 up on the previous season's.

The summer of 1976 saw a transformation of the Main Hall, which was redecorated in its present colour scheme, and new curtains and lighting provided. At the Film Section's request the lighting console was moved from its inaccessible site on the East Balcony to the West Balcony, so that full use could be made of all the sophisticated lighting features available: coloured lights surrounding the ceiling raft, spotlights with dimmers on the curtains, etc. At the same time the opportunity was taken to replace the by now rather tattered maroon curtain slung on hooks on the West Balcony to define the area of the projection booth, with a pair of new curtains running on fixed tracks and retracting into wooden boxes on the rear wall when not in use. Improvements were also made to the loudspeaker wiring, and a separate light was provided for the booth. Together with the still fairly new electrically operated screen, all this made the process of setting up for a film show very much easier than it had been ever since we moved from the Lecture Room to the Main Hall, and the refurbishment of the Hall lent a much more intimate atmosphere to the shows. This was also aided in no small part by the fact that the new hall curtains were designed to encourage heat from the radiators to warm the hall rather than to be dissipated out of the windows.

The first film show of the 1976-7 season, preceding the annual soirée, was the Jewish musical *Fiddler on the Roof* with Topol as the star. This was followed by Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* and another musical, French this time, Jacques Demy's *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* starring Catherine Deneuve. Other films in the season included the Marx Brothers in *A Night at the Opera*; Joanne Woodward in *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-The-Moon Marigolds*, directed by her husband who is more often to be seen on the other side of the camera, Paul Newman; and a magnificent historical epic telling the story of Sir Thomas More, *A Man For All Seasons*, directed by Fred Zinneman and starring Paul Scofield.

During the season a change took place at Wood Lane which had wide repercussions, the introduction in March 1977 of flextime working. Although there is no way of knowing its precise effect on the Film Section, we believe that it has encouraged more people to stay

on after work to see the film shows. They have always been timed to start at 6.30 which is thought to be the earliest time to allow wives, husbands and other guests to get to Wood Lane. In the same way, in the early days of the Section Wednesday was decided on as film show night, and it has remained so for over twenty years. As an experiment, however, two programmes in a recent season were held on Mondays. The results were inconclusive, the attendances being respectively the highest and lowest of that season. After that we decided to stick to Wednesdays.

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From a peak of nine or ten film shows per season (i.e. the period September to May) between 1968 and 1972 there had been a reduction to seven shows. Owing to falling attendances and ever-rising costs (does this sound familiar?), coupled with a reluctance to ask the Athletic and Social Club for a subsidy even larger than the one they generously provide, it was decided in 1977 to curtail activities even further to six shows. In part this decision also stemmed from the refurbishing of the Main Hall for, despite their other advantages, the new curtains have one serious drawback from our point of view: they are not as light-tight as the old curtains. Consequently it is not really practical to show films as early in the evening as 6:30 in the late spring or early autumn, and film shows have to be restricted roughly to the period of Greenwich Mean Time. In the last two seasons, therefore, we have planned one film show every month from October to March.

1977-8 opened with the Richard Lester epic *The Four Musketeers*, loosely based on the Alexandre Dumas tales; and of course our traditional soirée, attended by 64 people. This was followed by the exciting story of an attempt to assassinate President de Gaulle, *The Day of the Jackal*, accompanied by a repeat showing of the Wood Lane film *Serpentine Serendipity*, made by Dennis Cooper and Denis Groombridge. In response to pressure from the anti-smoking lobby, we followed the example of a well-known chain of cinemas and banned smoking in the right-hand half of the hall; smoking is still permitted on the left-hand side, and this measure seems to be generally popular.

The Christmas film was *The Mad Adventures of Rabbi Jacob*. And in addition to Eileen King's annual Children's Party, where we as usual projected the films, another important event that Christmas was the reappearance after a four-year absence of your favourite monthly magazine, the Bush Telegraph. We had high hopes that the resulting improved publicity for film shows might lead to much larger audiences from Wood Lane and Alperton, but this doesn't seem to have happened yet. However, we have recently

established friendly relations with our neighbours from across Wood Lane, the BBC Film Club, and some of their members have attended several of our shows. Incidentally, they have issued an invitation to their shows, held in the City, to all Social Club members.

The feature films shown in the second half of the 1977-8 season were Bo Widerberg's *Elvira Madigan*, *The Andromeda Strain* and Claude Faraldo's anarchic *Themroc*. But the most momentous event of the season, and arguably of our whole history, occurred on 1st April 1978.

Every year the British Federation of Film Societies (British had been added to its title when the original FFS merged with the Scottish FFS) holds a competition among its 700-odd members to find the Film Society of the Year. Societies are judged on a combination of qualities such as Programming, Publicity, Community Involvement, Presentation, etc. There are separate categories for Schools, Student, Closed, Town and Rural societies, and the winner of one of these sections is adjudged to be the Film Society of the Year.

Well, no, we didn't actually win any of the above awards. But we were runners-up to the Post Office Research Film Society in our category, for closed societies. No mean achievement, we feel, for a small society like BICC. 1st April was when the awards were announced, at the Federation's annual National Viewing Sessions at the National Film Theatre, and presented by the Minister for the Arts, Lord Donaldson. Our award was accepted by the Film Section secretary, Annette Mattock.

In these last few instalments of this History we aim to include a complete checklist of all the feature films that BICC Film Society has shown in the last quarter century. [Note: this list has been updated to encompass the entire life of the society, and will be found in Appendix II.]

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No Film Society could exist without the dedication and hard work of individuals, and no historical record of its activities would be complete without acknowledgement to them. In the summary of the first fourteen years of our history (part I of the current series of articles) this was not possible, but full recognition up to 1968 appeared in the first series. Since that time no fewer than nineteen persons have served on BICC Film Society committees in capacities ranging from chairperson to do-it-yourself electrical engineer. They have not only coped with the running of the section and the many emergencies that inevitably arise, but also have striven to improve the presentation of programmes to their audiences. It should be

remembered that it is not only the choice of films that attracts an audience but also the ironing out of niggling problems such as brightness of picture, quality of sound, warmth of the hall, comfort of the seats and so on. With varying degrees of success these problems have been tackled year in and year out by these individuals working until all hours behind the scene.

Certainly the most consistently demanding job is that of film secretary. It needs a dedicated person to cope with all the facets relating to the administrative side. We have been fortunate in always finding a volunteer for this position, and most have stayed the course for several seasons in succession: people like Mike Dennis, Karen Jackson, Carol Tilbury and up to this month Annette Mattock. Whoever she or he has been, the post has demanded a lot.

The secretary must organise the committee into a working unit to ensure smooth running of the section. This involves setting up meetings at the end of the previous season in order to delegate responsibilities between the committee members and to organise the choosing and booking of films. Simple in theory but difficult in practice, especially choosing the films. Committees have met in homes, offices, laboratories, on the 4th and 5th floors, over lunch and even out on the lawn in hot weather. Armed with film catalogues and personal choices, they have discussed, argued and cajoled in an effort to get their choices accepted; and in the middle, trying to maintain a sense of proportion and fair play - the secretary. Even when a 'final list' was produced, the problem of dates, costs and actual bookings had to be resolved.

At one stage it was agreed that a film poll should be taken throughout the establishment so that the views of our potential audience could be considered. It was a good idea but has lapsed during the past few seasons. Once the season's programme has been established, the secretary must check that the hall is available and that chairs and heating will be provided. A brochure must be produced and regular monthly programmes must be written, printed and sold. Posters must be purchased or, if not available, must be designed by willing volunteers. Dennis Cooper has been a tower of strength here; those who attended our opening film show this season witnessed his efforts in our poster display. Finally, the prompt arrival of the films to allow a pre-show run-through is essential, and most of our secretaries have suffered from the agonies of late arrivals. Frantic phone calls to the distributors as the hours tick away is no way to prepare for a retirement pension!

As if this wasn't enough, most of our secretaries have taken it upon themselves to organise tickets for outside events such as national and local viewing sessions, and at the time of the year when so many other personal activities are reaching a peak they have (with the help of other committee members) booked films for and

presented shows at children's Christmas Parties at Wood Lane and the BICC head office at Bloomsbury Street. (We suspect that they have enjoyed this aspect more than they care to admit). Then, as the term of office reaches its conclusion, the secretary organises the AGM as required by the Social Club rules.

Obviously he or she could not cope without the able help of not only the other committee members but also the Management, the Social Club, Typing Pool, Studio, Works Engineering, General Office, Print Room, Accounts Department, electricians, Bush Telegraph editors and programme sellers. Nevertheless, the secretary is the king (or queen) pin of the organisation. As stated earlier, the importance of our other committee members has been in their ability to tackle problems, make constructive improvements in the quality of presentation and try to improve the comfort and well-being of the audiences, as well as their contributions to choosing the films. The successful effort of Richard Grigsby and Tom Ruben to improve the picture brightness was mentioned in a previous instalment. On another occasion they wrestled with the problem of sound quality, and although they succeeded in improving this to some extent they could find no answer when confronted with a poor quality print which on occasions gave the impression that the film had been recorded in a motorboat, with the actors speaking through cottonwool! Thank God for tolerant audiences on these occasions.

Tolerance was also the operative word with respect to the seating. Seats were perhaps the most moaned-about subject of the early film shows, as sitting on these "canteen couches" could be quite an ordeal. In fact one person, who shall remain nameless, still swears that the comfort of the seats was related to his interest in the film; if he did not like the film the seats became progressively harder - and vice versa. He felt, in fact, that the seat was the best film critic in Wood Lane. Fortunately all these seats have now been replaced. Another idea we had was to attach cinema-type ashtrays to the back of each seat, but it was abandoned when we realised that in the dark a fire hazard might arise involving either the seat or its occupant. Now we have gone to the other extreme and banned smoking in one half of the hall.

Other instances where efforts have been made to improve the well-being of the audience have been Richard Grigsby's "food market" (sandwiches by courtesy of the Canteen) and the provision of background music from various committee members' tapes. We even sometimes have a 'speech from the rostrum', delivered as often as not by Ted Morrison, prior to the show - but of course we lock the doors first! Joking apart, though, we feel that personal contact with the audience is essential, and could be extended into discussion after the show.

Finally, a word about an extra service that has been provided at small cost for the benefit of those interested in films and film-making. For some years Annette Mattock and Tom Ruben have regularly circulated various film magazines such as 'Films and Filming', 'Sight and Sound' and 'Continental Film Review.' Some years ago a long-standing member of the film section was 'elected' to purchase the latter publication each month. As the years have progressed so this magazine has taken on a more liberal pictorial approach with the result that (a) the said purchaser becomes more apprehensive by the month, and (b) the magazine now takes years instead of months to circulate. So much for catering for those interested in films. Perhaps there is a clue to successful programming here?

It would be remiss not to record the names of committee members who have served over this period. Therefore we are including here a list of all those stalwarts who have served between 1967 and 1979, and will just say thank you on behalf of all the audiences that have attended their film shows. [Note: For the first fifteen years records of committee names have not survived, and only secretaries have been listed. The list has been updated to encompass the entire life of the society, and will be found in Appendix I.]

\*

It but remains in this final installment to bring the story of BICC Film Society up to date by recounting the events of this Silver Jubilee season. The opening film was Billy Wilder's version of *The Front Page*, starring Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon. Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's newspaper play had been filmed twice before - the last time with Rosalind Russell in the Jack Lemmon part; although all three versions have their merits, this one is probably the best. Among the audience of 55 for this film and the soirée that followed was the secretary of the British Federation of Film Societies, Dave Watterson. Perhaps he came to see if we really deserved the award we had won in the Film Society of the Year Competition a few months before, but in any case he left with a favourable impression of the society and the enthusiasm of those who helped run it, as well as of Annette Mattock's catering. This was the third time we had had the privilege of entertaining the secretary of the Federation, as two previous holders of that office, Barrie Wood and Jean Young, had visited us in past seasons.

The main feature of the November show was *Images* by the director of that success of a previous season *M\*A\*S\*H*, Robert Altman. To mark our Silver Jubilee season we featured, in several shows, films that we had shown successfully in past seasons. The first of these, accompanying *Images*, was Robert Flaherty's famous *Louisiana Story*, which we had previously shown 23 years before.

The main attraction at the Christmas, show was *Hollywood Cowboy*, a film that had been a huge success at last year's National Viewing Sessions. Directed by Howard Zieff and also known as *Hearts of the West*, this is a spoof on the early days of Hollywood. It was accompanied by a film made in that silent era but in this country, *Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Minefield*, which we had previously shown not in the silent period but in 1958.

The attendance at this show was disappointingly low, probably attributable to the timing which, being close to Christmas, clashed with many other seasonal functions. This is a great pity, for the few people who came thoroughly enjoyed the show.

1979 started with a double feature programme *I'm Jumping Over Puddles Again* by the Czech director Karel Kachyna, and John Huston's *Beat the Devil*, starring the unlikely combination of Humphrey Bogart and Robert Morley. The attendance equalled the low December figure, but this time there were more definite reasons: - the weather was about the worst of a very severe winter, a rail strike was about to start, and the BBC had chosen to show one of our films on television the very next night. Thankfully these effects were short-lived, as there was a greatly improved attendance for our next film, by another Czech director but this time made in the USA. This was Ivan Passer's *Law and Disorder*. With it we showed, for the fourth time, Norman McLaren's witty animated mathematics lesson *Rythmetic*.

The season concluded with two British films, Peter Duffell's version of the Graham Greene novel *England Made Me*, starring Peter Finch and Michael York, accompanied by a picture of the goings-on at a typical English country-house weekend, *Futtock's End*. The end, yes, of our first quarter century, but the threshold of our second twenty-five years.

# Volume III

## 1979 - 1984

This is a time of anniversaries: not only the fiftieth of the official opening of the Wood Lane laboratories, but also the thirtieth of both BICC Film Society (in April) and the Bush Telegraph (in June). It is therefore appropriate to bring up to date in the pages of the latter the history of the former. Readers are referred to the pages of the BT of September 1968 to May 1969 for the story of the first fifteen years, and September 1978, to April 1979 for that of the next ten.

We left the story in the spring of 1979. The AGM in March that year saw the retirement of Ted Morrison. Ted was a founder-member of the Film Section back in 1954, secretary from 1956-64 and for many years he introduced the films at the start of each film show. Also retiring was the secretary, Annette Mattock, who was succeeded by Ted Cooke.

That summer we revived the Film Poll, a means of consulting everyone at Wood Lane on which films they would like to see. The runaway winner was *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and this film opened the new season in October 1979. Almost 70 people came to see the film and enjoy the by now traditional soirée afterwards. But the best-received film of the season, as measured by the Reaction Index (a way of gauging the audience's opinion of the film they have just seen) was the one shown in the next month, Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*. Then came our first film representing the strong revival of the Australian film industry, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. The secretary of the British Federation of Film Societies (BFFS), Dave Watterson, visited us for the occasion, and set the audience a competition on the subject of 'Let Stalk Strine Film Titles'; the winner, Sasha Hove, promptly joined the film committee and is now its secretary.

Another notable film shown that season was a short, *Second Sight*, made by our neighbours the BBC Film Club and directed by their secretary David Charlton, who has been a good friend and frequent visitor to our shows. It is worth noting that this film came second only to *Chinatown* in the Reaction Indexes that season. Unfortunately only 14 people came to see this show, at which the main feature was Billy Wilder's *Avanti!*; this was the lowest ever recorded attendance up to that time.

One experiment that year, which was judged not to be successful and which has not been repeated, was to hold the AGM of the Film Section in the Main Hall just before the final film show of the season. Ever since then the AGMs have been held in the Boardroom one lunchtime.

The 1980-81 season opened with *Bugsy Malone*, Alan Parker's gangster musical in which all the parts are played by children. "Bring the Children" said our publicity - and they did, for we had happened to schedule this show for the middle of the half-term holiday. At the next show, to accompany *The Lacemaker*, we showed another film from the BBC Film Club, *Devil's Dyke - A Victorian Pastime* directed by John Payne, a frequent visitor to our shows, and we had the pleasure of once again welcoming Dave Watterson of the BFFS.

In December Helen Royal became the new film secretary, but when she left Wood Lane in the following September Jonathan Nevett took over.

In January we showed a double bill of *The Passenger* and *The War Game*, the film showing the aftermath of a nuclear war which was made by the BBC but then banned by them. Several members of their staff crossed Wood Lane to see it.

The last show of the season was another double bill, but not the one we had planned. To accompany *Girl on a Motorcycle* we should have shown *Truck Stop Women*. But when the film box was opened only minutes before the show we found that the distributor had sent *Dark Star* instead by mistake. This film had in fact come second to *2001* in the previous year's film poll, but had not been selected for showing because we felt that two science-fiction films in one season was too much of a good thing.

At the AGM in March 1981 a revised constitution was adopted. The financial clauses of the original 1954 constitution were now very much out of date, and the opportunity was taken to revise them. The main change, however, was the adoption of a new name: we are now officially "BICC Film Society", this name replacing the unwieldy "British Insulated Callender's Cables Athletic and Social Club (Wood Lane) Film Section". After more than a quarter of a century as the only film society within the BICC Group, we felt we had earned the right to officially call ourselves BICC Film Society, by which name we had been commonly but unofficially known for many years.

This is a suitable point to discuss the aims of the society. These are described in our constitution (old and new) as being "to encourage interest in the film as an art and as a medium of information and education by means of exhibition of films of a scientific, educational, cultural and artistic character". As a glance at the list of films shown over the years will confirm, we have always tried to live up to these aims.

But we are often asked why the constitution makes no mention of entertainment - after all, most people go to see films to be entertained. The reason is connected with the charity laws, as the BFFS, of which we are members, is a registered charity, and entertainment is not a legitimate charitable object. However, all film programmes must include an element of entertainment in order to attract an audience, without which we could not fulfil our declared aims.

Another film poll was held in the summer of 1981, and the results were headed by *The Deer Hunter*, *Monty Python and The Holy Grail* and the Australian *Breaker Morant*. We could not show the first film, however, because by this time it was fully booked for the whole season, so the 1981-82 season opened with *The Sunshine Boys*, starring George Burns and Walter Matthau, followed as usual by a soirée. In December, with *Last Tango in Paris* starring Marlon Brando, we showed a sadly topical film, *Abel Gance - The Charm of Dynamite*. Abel Gance was the pioneering French film-maker whose magnum opus, *Napoleon*, had been all but lost until painstakingly reconstructed over a period of many years by film historian Kevin Brownlow, and finally shown to great acclaim with live orchestral accompaniment as part of the London Film Festival. We showed *The Charm of Dynamite*, a documentary on the life and achievements of Gance by Kevin Brownlow, just a month after Gance had died in his 93rd year. Other films that season included *All the President's Men*, starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* with Jack Nicholson.

The 1982-83 season opened with John Schlesinger's World War Two drama *Yanks*. A notable first occurred later that season, when in January we showed our first 3D film, *The Creature From The Black Lagoon*, with the audience watching a black and white film through spectacles with one red and one green lens. This was highly successful, and attracted an audience of 50, the largest number for several years for any film show except the opening film show/soirée every season. But in general there has been a steady decline in audiences over the years, attendances now being commonly in the low 20s where some years ago

they used to be in the 30s or 40s. One can speculate endlessly on the reasons for this, but the spread of domestic video recorders and the coming of Channel 4 must share some of the blame. Also in that season we showed *Cabaret* with Liza Minelli and Michael York, *Cousin, Cousine* from France, *Gregory's Girl* from Scotland, and the first feature film ever to have been made in Tasmania, *Manganinnie*.

1983-84 as the Film Society's 30th season. It opened with *La Cage Aux Folles* and, of course, a soirée. And the first show of 1984, *The Marriage of Maria Braun* by the controversial German director the late Rainer Werner Fassbinder, was the society's 200th film show. The next show, Volker Schlöndorff's excellent film of the Gunter Grass novel *The Tin Drum*, attracted an audience of only eight, which is by a long way the lowest ever recorded.

However, things improved next month when 19 people turned out to see *Lenny*. One notable innovation during the season was to re-arrange the hall; the seats are now grouped informally round several tables facing the screen, instead of being set out in serried ranks. As a result, our present small audiences are not dwarfed so much in the very large hall. Among the other films they saw in this last season were Natassia Kinski in *Cat People* and two from British directors: Nicolas Roeg's *Bad Timing* and Mike Leigh's *Bleak Moments*.

At the risk of repeating something from the previous volume of these histories, mention must be made of one service which the Film Society has provided for many years: showing a film, or sometimes more than one, at the annual Children's Christmas Party. The popularity of this spot in the proceedings may be judged by what happened when it was decided to drop the film a few years ago; the reaction of the party-goers was such that the film had to be reinstated the following year.

Well, that brings the story of BICC Film Society up to date. The society will be steered into its next decade by a new film committee headed by Richard Grigsby as chairman and Sasha Hove as secretary.

# Volume IV

## 1984 - 1987

As BICC Film Society entered its fourth decade Sasha Hove took over as secretary from Jonathan Nevett. The opening film on Wednesday 24th October 1984 starred Harrison Ford in the Indiana Jones adventure *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, followed as usual at the opening show of a season by the Film Society Soirée. There was an attendance of 55 adults and children. This was followed in November by the Australian epic *Gallipoli*, which played to an audience of 25, while 30 people turned out in December for *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

In an attempt to halt the general decline in attendances, it was decided to introduce occasional shows where the usual programme sequence - 6:30 p.m. start with a short film, interval (bar open), feature film - would be replaced by dispensing with a short, starting with the feature film at 7.00 p.m. and following this with a small party, dubbed a mini-soirée. The first of these took place at the start of 1985.

The new year started with a Polish evening. After Jerzy Hoffman's *The Quack*, wines and snacks from Poland were served. At two shows in February the features, *The Long Good Friday* and *The Year of Living Dangerously*, were preceded by shorts. But at the last show of the season the Australian film *The Getting of Wisdom* was followed by an End of Season party.

1985 had been designated British Film Year, and the films in the first half of the 1985-86 season all had British connections, however tenuous. First, before the traditional soirée, there was *Flash Gordon* - Hollywood, but with a British director, Mike Hodges. Next to Scotland for Bill Forsyth's *Local Hero*; and, finally in 1985, Roman Polanski's *Tess*.

In 1986 the films ranged more widely. In January it was back to the antipodes with Gillian Armstrong's *My Brilliant Career*, followed by an Australian mini-soirée. Next to the USA with Billy Wilder's *Fedora*, then to India with *Heat and Dust*, directed by James Ivory. Back home finally with Hugh Hudson's epic of athletic endeavour *Chariots of Fire*, followed by an end-of season mini-soirée.

Summer, in between seasons, is always when repair and maintenance of equipment is carried out. In 1986 considerable and expensive repairs to projectors were found necessary. The Athletic and Social Club had always over the years been very generous towards the

Film Society, but even its coffers were not inexhaustible. It was therefore decided to introduce some fund-raising events to pay for these repairs. The first of these was unveiled at the start-of-season soirée.

What turned out to be BICC Film Society's final season kicked off on October 29th in a sombre atmosphere: it had just been announced that seventeen members of staff were to be made redundant. Nevertheless an audience of 58 turned out to see Sydney Pollack's *Tootsie*.

As mentioned above, the soirée after the film featured a couple of money-raising innovations. A raffle for a bottle of whisky was won by Ian Fordham. The other fund-raiser was a film quiz. It was set by Howard Spencer, a member of Patents and Licensing Department who was the BBC's Film Buff of the Year for 1985. Tested out on the film committee, the quiz proved far too hard, and it was converted to a multiple-choice format before being unleashed on the general public. Even this fairly-knowledgeable-about-film writer scored abysmally when he tried it when the questions were published in the Bush Telegraph. It shows that Howard Spenser must have been worthy of his BBC award. It is not recorded who won the quiz or how much money these events raised.

Attendances, as usual, dived after the Soirée, with 23 people turning out in November for Alan Parker's *Midnight Express*, a drama set in a Turkish prison. This was followed in December with Woody Allen's Oscar-winning *Annie Hall*.

1987 started off in January with David Drury's *Defence of the Realm*; it was followed by an English mini-soirée, with food and drink of an English flavour. Two shows in February: Mike Nichols's *Silkwood* and John Landis's *The Blues Brothers*. And in March we had Daniel Vigne's *The Return of Martin Guerre*, followed by an "End-of Season Evening, with food and drink of a French flavour". End of Season and, as it turned out, End of Film Society.

It is fitting here to pay tribute to the many people who laboured long and hard to make BICC Film Society a success for thirty three years. A list of film committees and its secretaries over the years, as complete as we could make it, will be found in Appendix I.

# EPILOGUE

The 33rd season of BICC Film Society ended on 18th March 1987 with the showing of Daniel Vigne's *The Return of Martin Guerre*. On 15th May came the shock announcement that BICC Research and Engineering Ltd (as the British Insulated Callender's Cables Research Organisation had become ten years earlier) was to close at the end of the year. Some staff were moved to a new Technology Centre at Wrexham or elsewhere in the BICC Group or associated companies; many were made redundant. There were no more film shows. *The Return of Martin Guerre* was therefore the last film the society showed

Today (2006) BICC itself is no more. What is left of the company, divested of its cable-making side, is known as Balfour Beatty. But the spirit of Wood Lane lives on. Balfour Beatty host a well-attended annual buffet lunch for Wood Lane pensioners in Croydon. Another, more informal, event is an annual get-together of Wood Lane staff at a London pub, with attendances usually upwards of fifty people. That these events flourish nearly twenty years after closure says much for the friendships and spirit of camaraderie engendered by BICC Research and Engineering, by the BICC Athletic and Social Club (Wood Lane), and not least by its Film Society.

# APPENDIX I

## SECRETARIES AND COMMITTEES OF BICC FILM SOCIETY

1954 - 1987

<u>SEASON</u>	<u>SECRETARY</u>	<u>COMMITTEE</u>
1954-55	Don Tester	
1956-57	Ted Morrison	
1964-65	Tom Ruben	
1965	Harry Shipley	
1966-67	Stuart Castle	
1967-68	Mike Dennis	Tom Ruben Albert Pinching Chris Winstanley
1968-69	Mike Dennis	Tom Ruben Albert Pinching Chris Winstanley Annette Mattock Arthur Boardman Ted Morrison
1969-70	Karen Jackson	Tom Ruben Albert Pinching John Shapley Annette Mattock Arthur Boardman Ted Morrison Brian Tilbury Mike Dennis
1970-71	Mike Dennis	Albert Pinching Russell Pride Annette Mattock Arthur Boardman Ted Morrison Brian Tilbury
1971-72	Mike Dennis	Tom Ruben Albert Pinching Russell Pride Annette Mattock Ted Morrison Brian Tilbury
1972-73	Mike Dennis	Tom Ruben 'Doc' Watson Richard Grigsby Annette Mattock Peter Higgins Ted Morrison
1973-74	Carol Tilbury	Tom Ruben 'Doc' Watson Richard Grigsby Annette Mattock Peter Higgins
1974-75	Carol Tilbury	Tom Ruben Ron Hall Richard Grigsby Ted Cooke Tom Bonikowski
1975-76	Annette Mattock	Ron Hall Richard Grigsby Ted Cooke Tom Bonikowski
1977-78	Annette Mattock	Ron Hall Richard Grigsby Jim Clarke Ted Cooke Tom Bonikowski
1978-79	Annette Mattock	Ron Hall Richard Grigsby Jim Clarke Ted Cooke Tom Bonikowski Albert Pinching Mike Dennis Tom Ruben Ted Morrison
1979-80	Ted Cooke	Richard Grigsby John Anton Mike Dennis Yvonne Ferrier Ron Hall Ted Morrison Tom Ruben
1980-81	Ted Cooke	Richard Grigsby Stuart Akish John Anton Mike Dennis Ron Hall Sasha O'Bow-Hove, Tom Ruben
1981-82	Jonathan Nevett	Richard Grigsby Ted Cooke Mike Dennis Ron Hall Sasha O'Bow-Hove Les Ireland Olric Morrison Tom Ruben Bobbie Wardrop
1983-84	Jonathan Nevett	Sasha O'Bow-Hove Bobbie Wardrop Ron Hall Olric Morrison Simon Jones Ted Cooke
1984-85	Sasha O'Bow-Hove	Richard Grigsby Bobbie Wardrop Ron Hall Joe Lou Martin McDonough
1985-86	Sasha O'Bow-Hove	Richard Grigsby Martin McDonough Ron Hall Joe Lou Annette Burgess Tina Tregenna-Piggott
1986-87	Sasha O'Bow-Hove	Richard Grigsby Martin McDonough Ron Hall Joe Lou Tina Tregenna-Piggott Mike Irvine Anne Turner

# APPENDIX II

## FILMS SHOWN BY BICC FILM SOCIETY

1954 - 1987

<u>Title</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Showdate</u>
Le Million	René Clair	France	1951	Apr 54
Brief Encounter	David Lean	Gt Britain	1945	Jun 54
Citizen Kane	Orson Welles	USA	1940	Jul 54
A Night at the Opera	Sam Wood	USA	1935	Oct 54
Tony Draws a Horse	John Paddy Carstairs	Gt Britain	1950	Dec 54
All About Eve	Joseph L Mankiewicz	USA	1950	Jan 55
Whisky Galore	Alexander Mackendrick	Gt Britain	1949	Feb 55
Viva Zapata	Elia Kazan	USA	1952	Mar 55
The Grapes of Wrath	John Ford	USA	1940	Apr 55
Sunset Boulevard	Billy Wilder	USA	1950	May 55
Destry Rides Again	George Marshall	USA	1939	Sep 55
Quai des Orfevres	Henri-Georges Clouzot	France	1947	Oct 55
Oh Mister Porter	Marcel Varnel	Gt Britain	1937	Nov 55
The Private Life of Henry VIII	Alexander Korda	Gt Britain	1933	Dec 55
Louisiana Story	Robert Flaherty	USA	1948	Feb 56
Casque d'Or	Jacques Becker	France	1952	Jun 56
The Shape of Things To Come	William Cameron Menzies	Gt Britain	1936	Mar 56
Convict 99	Marcel Varnel	Gt Britain	1938	Apr 56
Intolerance	D W Griffith	USA	1916	May 56
I Pagliacci	Mario Costa	Italy	1950	Sep 56
The Treasure	Marion Leonard	Poland	1960	Oct 56
Strange Incident (aka The Oxbow Incident)	William Wellman	USA	1943	Nov 56
Blue Skies	Stuart Heisler	USA	1946	Dec 56
La Fete a Henriette	Julien Duvivier	France	1953	Sep 57
Gentlemen's Agreement	Elia Kazan	USA	1947	Oct 57
The Road to Morocco	David Butler	USA	1942	Dec 57
Young Man's Fancy	Robert Stevenson	Gt Britain	1939	Feb 58
The War of the Worlds	Byron Haskin	USA	1953	Mar 58
The Wild One	Laslo Benedek	USA	1954	Jun 58
Vampyr	Carl-Theodor Dreyer	France	1931	Oct 58
Easy to Love	Charles Walters	USA	1954	Dec 58
The Long Voyage Home	John Ford	USA	1940	Mar 59
Arsenic and Old Lace	Frank Capra	USA	1944	Apr 59
Smiles of a Summer Night	Ingmar Bergman	Sweden	1955	May 59
The Best Years of Our Lives	William Wyler	USA	1946	Sep 59
The Devil's General	Helmut Kautner	Germany	1955	Oct 59
The Road to Bali	Hal Walker	USA	1952	Dec 59
The Seven Samurai	Akira Kurosawa	Japan	1954	Feb 60
Touchez Pas Au Grisbi	Jacques Becker	France	1954	Mar 60
The Man in the White Suit	Alexander Mackendrick	Gt Britain	1951	Apr 60
We're No Angels	Michael Curtiz	USA	1938	May 60

<u>Title</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Showdate</u>
Half-way House	Basil Dearden	Gt Britain	1943	Feb 61
Safety Last	Fred Newmayer	USA	1923	Apr 61
Vive Monsieur Blaureau	Yves Robert	France	1957	Jul 61
3:10 to Yuma	Delmer Daves	USA	1957	Oct 61
Lili	Charles Walters	USA	1953	Dec 61
The Sweet Smell of Success	Alexander Mackendrick	USA	1967	Feb 62
The Naked Truth	Mario Zampi	Gt Britain	1957	May 62
Les Enfants Terribles	Jean-Pierre Melville	France	1950	Oct 62
Li'l Abner	Melvyn Frank	USA	1959	Nov 62
A Man is Ten Feet Tall	Martin Ritt	USA	1957	Mar 63
Twelve Angry Men	Sidney Lumet	USA	1957	Sep 63
Whisky Galore	Alexander Mackendrick	Gt Britain	1949	Sep 63
Phffft!	Mark Robson	USA	1954	Oct 63
The General	Buster Keaton	USA	1927	Nov 63
Bell Book and Candle	Richard Quine	USA	1958	Dec 63
Rififi	Jules Dassin	France	1954	Feb 64
The Bad Seed	Mervyn LeRoy	USA	1956	Apr 64
Zazie Dans le Metro	Louis Malle	France	1960	May 64
Only Two Can Play	Sidney Gilliat	Gt Britain	1961	Sep 64
Animal Farm	John Halas & Joy Bachelor	Gt Britain	1954	Oct 64
The Village of the Damned	Wolf Rilla	Gt Britain	1960	Oct 64
Oh Mister Porter	Marcel Varnel	Gt Britain	1937	Nov 64
Private's Progress	John Boulting	Gt Britain	1956	Dec 64
The Smallest Show on Earth	Basil Dearden	Gt Britain	1957	Dec 64
The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari	Robert Wiene	Germany	1919	Feb 65
Some Like it Hot	Billy Wilder	USA	1959	Apr 65
Jamaica Inn	Alfred Hitchcock	Gt Britain	1939	May 65
The Wild One	Laslo Benedek	USA	1954	Sep 65
Gunfight at the O K Corral	John Sturges	USA	1957	Nov 65
Doctor at Large	Ralph Thomas	Gt Britain	1957	Dec 65
The World of Suzie Wong	Richard Quine	USA	1960	Feb 66
Divorce Italian Style	Pietro Germi	Italy	1961	Apr 66
North by Northwest	Alfred Hitchcock	USA	1959	Oct 66
The Wages of Fear	Henri-Georges Clouzot	France	1953	Nov 66
On the Town	Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen	USA	1949	Dec 66
San Demetrio, London	Charles Frend	Gt Britain	1943	Jan 67
The Manchurian Candidate	John Frankenheimer	USA	1962	Mar 67
An Eye For an Eye	André Cayatte	France	1956	May 67
Volcano	Haroun Tazief	France	1958	May 67
Jazz on a Summer's Day	Bert Stern	USA	1959	Sep 67
Viva Maria	Louis Malle	France	1965	Nov 67
A Matter of Life and Death	Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger	Gt Britain	1946	Dec 67
Rashomon	Akira Kurosowa	Japan	1950	Jan 68
Eve	Joseph Losey	France	1962	Feb 68
The Balcony	Joseph Strick	USA	1963	Apr 68
The War Game	Peter Watkins	Gt Britain	1967	Apr 68
The Exterminating Angel	Luis Bunuel	Mexico	1962	May 68
The Pink Panther	Blake Edwards	USA	1964	Sep 68
Seven Days in May	John Frankenheimer	USA	1964	Oct 68
The Train	John Frankenheimer	USA	1964	Nov 68
How to Murder Your Wife	Richard Quine	USA	1965	Dec 68
Zorba the Greek	Michael Cacoyannis	Greece	1967	Jan 69
The Red Inn	Claude Autant-Lara	France	1951	Feb 69

<u>Title</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Showdate</u>
It Happened Here	Kevin Brownlow & Andrew Mollo	Gt Britain	1964	Feb 69
The Ipcress File	Sidney J. Furie	Gt Britain	1965	Mar 69
Chafed Elbows	Robert Downey	USA	1968	Apr 69
Electra	Michael Cacoyannis	Greece	1961	May 69
The Way West	Andrew V McLaglen	USA	1967	Oct 69
Chimes at Midnight	Orson Welles	Spain	1966	Nov 69
Topkapi	Jules Dassin	USA/France	1964	Dec 69
Onibaba	Kaneto Shindo	Japan	1965	Jan 70
Modesty Blaise	Joseph Losey	Gt Britain	1966	Feb 70
Le Bonheur	Agnes Varda	France	1964	Mar 70
The Switchboard Operator	Dusan Makaveyev	Yugoslavia	1967	Apr 70
The Trip	Roger Corman	USA	1967	Apr 70
A Guide for the Married Man	Gene Kelly	USA	1967	May 70
The Saragosa Manuscript	Wojciech Has	Poland	1964	May 70
On the Beach	Stanley Kramer	USA	1959	Jun 70
Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines	Ken Annakin	Gt Britain	1965	Sep 70
The Pawnbroker	Sidney Lumet	USA	1965	Oct 70
La Treve	Claude Guillemot	France	1968	Nov 70
Charade	Stanley Donen	USA	1963	Dec 70
Kurenoko	Kaneto Shindo	Japan	1968	Jan 71
All Quiet on the Western Front	Lewis Milestone	USA	1930	Feb 71
The Tenth Victim	Elio Petri	Italy	1965	Mar 71
Barbarella	Roger Vadim	France	1967	Apr 71
The Order of the Daisy	Jean-Pierre Mocky	France	1966	May 71
Dutchman	Anthony Harvey	Gt Britain	1966	May 71
Zulu	Cy Endfield	Gt Britain	1963	Sep 71
The House of The Angel	Leopoldo Torre Nilsson	Argentina	1957	Oct 71
Charlie Bubbles	Albert Finney	Gt Britain	1967	Oct 71
If....	Lindsay Anderson	Gt Britain	1968	Nov 71
Doctor Faustus	Nevill Coghill & Richard Burton	Gt Britain	1967	Dec 71
Just Like a Woman	Robert Fuest	Gt Britain	1966	Dec 71
Rosemary's Baby	Roman Polanski	USA	1968	Jan 72
The Blue Max	John Guillermin	USA	1966	Feb 72
The Collector	William Wyler	Gt Britain	1965	Mar 72
Belle Du Jour	Luis Bunuel	France	1967	Apr 72
The Night of the Generals	Anatole Litvak	Gt Britain	1967	May 72
Far From the Madding Crowd	John Schlesinger	Gt Britain	1967	Sep 72
Deep End	Jerzy Skolimowski	Germany	1970	Oct 72
Romeo and Juliet	Franco Zefirelli	Gt Britain	1968	Dec 72
Don't Deliver us From Evil	Joel Seria	France	1970	Jan 73
Kes	Ken Loach	Gt Britain	1969	Mar 73
Billy Budd	Peter Ustinov	Gt Britain	1962	Apr 73
The Bank Dick	Eddie Cline	USA	1940	May 73
The Night of Counting the Years	Shadi Abdelsalam	Egypt	1969	Sep 73
Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion	Elio Petri	Italy	1970	Oct 73
Valerie and Her Week of Wonders	Jaromel Jires	Czechoslovakia	1970	Dec 73
Shock Corridor	Samuel Fuller	USA	1963	Apr 74
The Royal Hunt of the Sun	Irving Lerner	Gt Britain/USA	1969	May 74
The Taming of the Shrew	Franco Zefirelli	Gt Britain	1966	Oct 74
Getting Straight	Richard Rush	USA	1970	Nov 74
M*A*S*H	Robert Altman	USA/Eire	1970	Dec 74

The Caine Mutiny	Edward Dmytryk	USA	1954	Jan 75
<u>Title</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Showdate</u>
The Dance of the Vampires	Roman Polanski	Gt Britain	1967	Feb 75
The Magnificent Seven	John Sturges	USA	1961	Mar 75
Passport to Pimlico	Henry Cornelius	Gt Britain	1948	Apr 75
The Man in the White Suit	Alexander Mackendrick	Gt Britain	1951	Apr 75
Thunderball	Terence Young	Gt Britain	1965	Oct 75
Traffic	Jacques Tati	France	1971	Nov 75
Klute	Alan J Pakula	USA	1971	Dec 75
The Diary of a Mad Housewife	Frank Perry	USA	1970	Jan 76
Cat people	Jacques Tourneur	USA	1942	Jan 76
The Day of the Dolphin	Mike Nichols	USA	1974	Feb 76
Otley	Dick Clement	Gt Britain	1969	Mar 76
Un Homme et Une Femme	Claude Lelouch	France	1968	Apr 76
Fiddler on the Roof	Norman Jewison	USA	1971	Oct 76
Don't Look Now	Nicolas Roeg	Gt Britain	1974	Nov 76
Les Parapluies de Cherbourg	Jacques Demy	France	1965	Dec 76
The Adventures of Robin Hood	Michael Curtiz & William Keighley	USA	1938	Jan 77
A Night at the Opera	Sam Wood	USA	1935	Jan 77
Bof	Claude Faraldo	France	1971	Feb 77
The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds	Paul Newman	USA	1972	Mar 77
A Man for All Seasons	Fred Zinneman	USA	1966	Mar 77
The Four Musketeers	Richard Lester	Panama	1974	Oct 77
The Day of the Jackal	Fred Zinneman	Gt Britain	1973	Nov 77
The Mad Adventures of Rabbi Jacob	Gerard Oury	France	1973	Dec 77
Elvira Madigan	Bo Widerberg	Sweden	1968	Jan 78
The Andromeda Strain	Robert Wise	USA	1970	Feb 78
Themroc	Claude Faraldo	France	1972	Mar 78
The Front Page	Billy Wilder	USA	1974	Oct 78
Louisiana Story	Robert Flaherty	USA	1948	Nov 78
Images	Robert Altman	Eire	1972	Nov 78
Hollywood Cowboy	Howard Zieff	USA	1975	Dec 78
I'm Jumping Over Puddles Again	Karel Kachyna	Czechoslovakia	1970	Jan 79
Beat The Devil	John Huston	Gt Britain	1953	Jan 79
Law and Disorder	Ivan Passer	USA	1974	Feb 79
England Made Me	Peter Duffell	Gt Britain	1973	Mar 79
2001: A Space Odyssey	Stanley Kubrick	Gt Britain	1968	Oct 79
Chinatown	Roman Polanski	USA	1974	Nov 79
Picnic at Hanging Rock	Peter Weir	Australia	1977	Dec 79
Avanti!	Billy Wilder	USA	1972	Jan 80
Hitler - The Last Ten Days	Ennio De Concini	Gt Britain	1973	Feb 80
Sugarland Express	Steven Spielberg	USA	1974	Mar 80
Bugsy Malone	Alan Parker	Gt Britain	1976	Oct 80
The Lacemaker	Claude Goretta	Switzerland	1976	Nov 80
Never Strike a Woman, Even with a Flower	Zdenek Podskalsky	Czechoslovakia	1966	Dec 80
Phase IV	Saul Bass	Gt Britain	1973	Dec 80
The War Game	Peter Watkins	Gt Britain	1966	Jan 81
The Passenger	Michelangelo Antonioni	Italy	1975	Jan 81
Rafferty and the Gold Dust Twins	Dick Richards	USA	1975	Feb 81
Girl on a Motorcycle	Jack Cardiff	Gt Britain	1968	Mar 81
Dark Star	John Carpenter	USA	1974	Mar 81
The Sunshine Boys	Herbert Ross	USA	1975	Oct 81

All the President's Men	Alan J Pakula	USA	1976	Nov 81
<u>Title</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Showdate</u>
Last Tango in Paris	Bernardo Bertolucci	Italy	1972	Dec 81
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	Milos Forman	USA	1975	Jan 82
Breaker Morant	Bruce Beresford	Australia	1979	Feb 82
Monty Python and the Holy Grail	Terry Gilliam & Terry Jones	Gt Britain	1974	Mar 82
Yanks	John Schlesinger	Gt Britain	1979	Oct 82
Cousin, Cousine	Jean-Charles Tachella	France	1975	Nov 82
Gregory's Girl	Bill Forsyth	Gt Britain	1981	Dec 82
The Creature From The Black Lagoon (3D)	Jack Arnold	USA	1954	Jan 83
Cabaret	Bob Fosse	USA	1972	Feb 83
Manganinnie	John Honey	Australia	1980	Mar 83
La Cage Aux Folles	Edouard Molinaro	France/Italy	1978	Oct 83
Bleak Moments	Mike Leigh	Gt Britain	1971	Nov 83
Cat People	Paul Schrader	USA	1982	Dec 83
The Marriage of Maria Braun	Rainer Werner Fassbinder	West Germany	1980	Jan 84
The Tin Drum	Volker Schlöndorff	West Germany	1979	Feb 84
Bad Timing	Nicolas Roeg	Gt Britain	1980	Feb 84
Lenny	Bob Fosse	USA	1975	Mar 84
Raiders of the Lost Ark	Steven Spielberg	USA	1983	Oct 84
Gallipoli	Peter Weir	Australia	1981	Nov 84
The French Lieutenant's Woman	Karel Reisz	USA	1981	Dec 84
The Quack ((Znachor)	Jerzy Hoffman	Poland	1981	Jan 85
The Year of Living Dangerously	Peter Weir	Australia	1982	Feb 85
The Getting of Wisdom	Bruce Beresford	Australia	1977	Mar 85
Flash Gordon	Mike Hodges	Gt Britain	1980	Oct 85
Local Hero	Bill Forsyth	Gt Britain	1983	Nov 85
Tess	Roman Polanski	France/Gt Britain	1980	Dec 85
My Brilliant Career	Gillian Armstrong	Australia	1979	Jan 86
Fedora	Billy Wilder	West Germany	1978	Feb 86
Heat and Dust	James Ivory	Gt Britain	1982	Feb 86
Chariots of Fire	Hugh Hudson	Gt Britain	1981	Mar 86
Tootsie	USA	Sydney Pollack	1982	Oct 86
The Long Good Friday	John MacKenzie	Gt Britain	1978	Nov 86
Midnight Express	Alan Parker	Gt Britain	1978	Nov 86
Annie Hall	Woody Allen	USA	1977	Dec 86
Defence of the Realm	David Drury	Gt Britain	1985	Jan 87
The Blues Brothers	John Landis	USA	1980	Feb 87
Silkwood	Mike Nichols	USA	1983	Feb 87
The Return of Martin Guerre	France	Daniel Vigne	1982	Mar 87

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