

## Chapter Twelve

# The End of the Newsreels

My job at Pathe was to be an assistant in the publicity and production department with my immediate boss the news editor and production manager – a woman – Grace Field. I learned this with some misgivings. I had not been consulted as to whether I wanted the job or what it entailed. It transpired that from a fairly creative occupation as a newsreel cameraman, I was to sort newspaper cuttings and do odd things no one else wanted to do. I felt it was back to the days when I had just started work. However, I thought it wise to accept the situation as it at least gave me a base with the opportunity to look around for something better without the desperation of being jobless, something I had never been since I started work. I was in an office with a middle-aged fellow who searched through newspapers for stories and the news editor's secretary, a bumptious girl I did not like although I thought she was brighter than Miss Field. She was instrumental in bringing the Beatles to the notice of Pathe before they took off and the reel got an exclusive session with them at just the right time. Grace Field was quite a pleasant woman, almost apologetic sometimes, but never made use of my experience on the production side. Whether this was a directive from Cummins I never knew. He did not like me. Having a full compliment of cameramen I think he resented having to take me on his staff and find a position for me. In doing so he certainly did nothing to give me any status. He was a complex character. Sometimes he could be quite charming but I had the impression he was suffering from an inferiority complex and that underneath his gruff manner he was essentially a nice man. However I did not trust him and our relationship was never close. When he turned on the charm he usually wanted to know something to do with Buckingham Palace. On that I must admit I was not forthcoming. I was keeping my contacts and friends to myself. Grace Field could have used me to advantage, for she was not very knowledgeable technically and whenever a story had to be contacted to make prior arrangements she sent one of the cameramen to deputise for her. I did not suggest otherwise, for it was a practice that had been going on over many years and I think it suited Cummins for he was very pro-cameramen – his cameramen – and sometimes would go out with them. He had been a cameraman himself. It was not a happy time. I was at an age when it was not easy to find another job where my experience would be beneficial, but I kept my ear to the ground for a move.

Then the fates stepped in. Tommy Cummins retired early, although he was by no means at retirement age. I think his decision was prompted by the fact that his wife was ill. This rather endorsed my earlier thoughts that basically he was a nice man. However his going was a godsend for me. His successor was Terry Ashwood, a former cameraman, one of the few I had never met, and a protegee of Howard Thomas, managing director of ABC Television. Ashwood had also become a director of the company by the time he came to the newsreel. We clicked at once. Life immediately had a different look. He thought Grace Field was not the right person for her position and it was not long before she was moved sideways and then out. She was not young and was given early retirement. Her secretary was not a favourite of Terry Ashwood either, and it was not long before she left. I was promoted to production manager and after Grace Field left became news editor as well. I was now able to appreciate fully what it was like to be behind the desk. The story researcher was efficient and I obtained a glamorous secretary who was very much on the ball. How I had scoffed in my early days as a cameraman when I was given a newspaper cutting to cover a story. Now instead of receiving them, I was handing them out! At first I gave out the more interesting events with reluctance, for I would probably have had such stories myself had I still been a cameraman. It took a while to become the executive and to realise that the team of cameramen was under my command and that I was no longer one of them. I did think they were an imaginative lot when I saw their expenses; I had obviously been missing a lot. They accepted the loss of Cummins and Miss Field with good grace and appreciated that the close life that they had had with those two was no longer quite the same with Ashwood and me. It must have been very traumatic for them to be faced with new management after so many years under the old. We were all facing change, however, and generally we got on well without any great difficulties. With give and take on both sides of the desk we continued and remained a good team.

I endeavoured to show no favouritism, but Pat Whitaker and Ken Goddard were the ones I liked best. They always accepted assignments without queries and inevitably often got the best ones. The portly, outspoken, likeable Ken Gordon was occasionally troublesome and Ced Baynes, the chief cameraman, took some time to be really cooperative, but with all of them the stories were always well-covered and that was what mattered. On major stories it was usual for the production manager to make the early arrangements. When meeting directors or other interested parties it was necessary to have the authority to agree or disagree with proposals which affected our coverage of a story. If it was a complex event one would be there on the day to coordinate everything. So I was often out to fix camera positions, lighting and sound feeds, often in conjunction with television. With the latter, regarding lighting, our problem was to try to avoid making the event look like a film studio. The television engineers were first-class and I worked very well with them. We normally were able to work out a compromise to suit both television and cinema.

With colour we required more light but a flatter light than did television in black and white. Too much light destroyed their contrast. With the aid of the laboratories and the skills of all concerned with lighting we somehow managed to obtain results that satisfied both parties. It was an interesting period with changes in film stocks and television working towards colour and we were not then cursed with the do-it-yourself brigade and the amateur. I would sometimes take a cameraman with me if he was to have a difficult job or position and I thought he would benefit by seeing the problems in advance. Often the cameramen would make useful suggestions, which I found helpful and would usually accept.

Sitting at my desk looking through the story possibles, I found it strange to be looking mainly for non-royal stories when for ten years I had only looked at royal events. It was of course more interesting to be involved with what was happening in the world, as had been the case before I became royal cameraman. My stories came from sources which must seem old-fashioned today. There were no mobile phones, no Internet, no computers, no e-mail or any of the advanced communication systems that editors enjoy (or perhaps do not enjoy) nowadays. We received many hand-outs from government departments, from the Central Office of Information (COI), from business, from entrepreneurs, from newspapers and news agencies and on the tape machine which all news offices had then and which poured out, in our case, news from Reuters, which was received from worldwide connections. All in all it was quite an efficient way of obtaining news. I worked some way ahead for the normal run of stories and compiled a list of possibles for the immediate Monday and Thursday issues, which I would discuss with Terry Ashwood. We would provisionally decide how each reel would be made up and which stories to drop if something unexpected turned up as it so often did. It was a busy life and I worked closely with Ashwood. I was often present when he had meetings or took someone to lunch. I had meetings too with the cutting-room staff and I was co-opted on to the management committee of the parent company, Associated-British Pathe. Although I was no longer accredited I kept my association with Buckingham Palace and had the entrée to the press office with Colville and those who followed him. One such was Bill Heseltine, later Sir William, who was a pleasant Australian who became a good friend and eventually became private secretary to the Queen. It was a life that had all the usual things a business manager had to do plus always being conscious of television taking the meat out of a story. But it was a life I eventually began to enjoy, looking at stories in the newsreel, not at what I had filmed, but with a critical eye on someone else's efforts. When it was wet and cold I was glad I was not the one out there probably trying to make time at night driving back in freezing conditions or in fog.

When there were five newsreels the COI would give commissions to each reel to film special stories for its overseas outlets, sometimes political, sometimes trade, and frequently it would take a story covered for our newsreels. The COI distributed

to 120 outlets, made six newsreels for seventy countries in various languages; it was a useful source of extra income. With the closure of Paramount, Gaumont and Universal, Pathe and Movietone got more of those commissions and I was constantly in touch with its representatives and filming departments. The COI's requests sometimes caused me problems in providing a cameraman when we had a busy week.

During my years with Pathe there were many historic events which we either covered or received from our associates in other countries. I have picked out a few of these to show how we covered or obtained them or if there was an interesting story attached to them.

One of the first big events I became associated with was Operation Hope-Not – the coded reference for complicated advance arrangements for the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill when he eventually died. Tommy Cummins was personally involved in the undertaking for three years before I took over, not delegating it to his production manager, perhaps understandably as Grace Field did not have sufficient technical knowledge for such an important event. It involved meetings with the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl Marshal, the dean of St Paul's Cathedral, the



Pall-bearers carrying Churchill's coffin outside St Paul's Cathedral. From Pathe News.

British Pathe

police, the Ministry of Works, television, lighting engineers, Blenheim, where Churchill was to be buried – and sundry others. It took up a great deal of my time, for it was an ongoing project. As the months and the years passed, people changed, roads were altered, buildings appeared or disappeared, so every few months there were meetings to accommodate such changes. One major problem which occurred at every important event and in which only the police were involved was getting the negatives to the laboratories from the different positions as quickly as possible and at intervals so that everything did not arrive for processing at the same time. This meant several collection points and with roads closed over a wide area those points had to be very carefully planned. I made each of those places responsible for three camera positions. An assistant was to be with the first camera position, make his way on foot to the second and third positions and then if it was practical make for a motor bike nearby, which would take the negatives to the laboratories. If not he would go by tube to a point outside the closed area. The police were very helpful and when possible allowed us the movements we required.

When Churchill died in January 1965 all the arrangements made over five years were put into operation. Camera positions appeared magically, built by the Ministry of Works; lighting in the cathedral was placed in position without further discussion, and the necessary passes arrived on time. It was a massive undertaking, well thought-out in advance, and was on a scale in line with the funeral of a monarch. For deaths of royals there is a set programme of arrangements worked out over years, but Churchill was a one-off situation. In some degree it certainly followed the sort of arrangements made for the death of a king, including a state funeral. I had a cameraman at Westminster Hall to get the procession leaving after the coffin was taken from the lying-in-state and placed on the gun-carriage. That was a pre-arranged official position. I had cameramen in Trafalgar Square in high and low positions, in the Strand, in Fleet Street and at and in St Paul's. After the service the procession went by Cannon Street, Great Tower Street and Tower Hill to the Thames where the coffin was placed on a Port of London launch and taken upstream to the Festival Pier, thence by hearse to Waterloo Station and to Blenheim and Bladon cemetery for burial. All these places were covered. The burial was private but I had obtained permission for a camera on a stand some distance from the grave, which enabled us to get general shots of the proceedings at the graveside. A hundred and ten representatives of the world's nations attended the funeral. Detachments from all the Guards' regiments were in the funeral procession as were those from the navy and Battle of Britain aircrews. The pallbearers included Harold Macmillan, Sir Robert Menzies, Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templar, Lord Ismay, Earl Attlee, Earl Alexander, Earl Mountbatten and Viscounts Slim and Portal, indicating the regard in which Sir Winston Churchill was held. There was nothing I could do on the day of the funeral except to check that everyone was in position early on and to watch from one of our camera stands the procession,

which was one of the most impressive I had seen in all my years of filming such occasions.

A lot of well-known people died during the years I was at Pathe. Pandit Nehru, Prime Minister of India, died in the same year as Churchill, and the Prime Minister of Iran was assassinated shortly before Churchill died. Somerset Maugham, Richard Dimbleby, Marilyn Monroe, Eisenhower and Hugh Gaitskill all passed on. Donald Campbell was killed attempting the world water-speed record and John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were all assassinated. All stories which kept me busy either securing footage or preparing obituaries.

Terry Ashwood decided to devote around a quarter of the reel to colour supplements which he called 'extras', devoted to a single subject that was in the news. These would appear periodically as suitable stories were found. With Beatlemania sweeping the country we made one based on youth. Carnaby Street, just off Oxford Street, was a shopping street – a must for the young. It gave us some useful shots. The Beatles at Buckingham Palace when they received MBEs and later at Downing Street gave us the news angle. A further story in 1965 was the opening of the 620-foot Post Office Tower, the tallest building in London at the time. Harold Wilson opened the elegant circular building, a landmark in the centre of London. It housed a telephone exchange, fourteen floors of transmitting apparatus and a viewing platform and restaurant at the top which was very popular but was subsequently closed on security grounds. The opening of the Forth Road Bridge, the longest suspension bridge in Europe, completed our main stories for the year.

Nineteen sixty-six proved to be exceptional. The first most important event of the year was on the Queen's birthday, 21 April. For the first time filming was allowed in the House of Commons at the state opening of Parliament. I spent weeks negotiating with television and the parliamentary authorities before we obtained permission to film the whole ceremony and most importantly in getting agreement to install enough lighting to film in colour. At first I had a lot of opposition from television which, operating in black and white, did not require as much light as we did and feared that my requests for the level we needed would jeopardise the whole of the arrangements. In gaining access to televise the historic scenes in the House of Commons, television, especially the BBC, was very much in the spotlight in the papers. I do not think we would have succeeded on our own, but eventually our use of colour coupled with complaints in the national press about the lighting by some members of Parliament turned the publicity in our favour. We survived the criticism and when the newsreel was issued we received many favourable comments about the coverage and quality of the colour.

In the House of Commons we had a position at the back of the seating and were able to show the Government benches, Black Rod entering the House to summon the MPs to the House of Lords and the members leaving the chamber to enter the other House. I also had a position in the passage between the Commons and the

Lords to show Black Rod approaching the Commons and knocking on the door and to get close-ups of the MPs as they filed through into the House of Lords. In the Upper House I had fully lighted the whole area for colour with the lamps installed high up whereas in the Commons they had to be at a lower level and were more obtrusive, causing the complaints. It meant the scenes were slightly underlit because of the limit in the numbers of lamps I was allowed to use. We filmed from a balcony in the House of Lords to show the Queen's procession to the throne and all the colourful uniforms, costumes and ceremony that attended a state opening of Parliament in London, somewhat different from those I had sometimes partly filmed on overseas tours. I obtained sound from a special BBC feed from its microphones to our camera for the reading of the speech by the Queen and other sounds such as fanfares.

The newsreel was shown to over 150 members of Parliament, including the Speaker, in the House of Commons. We had a private screening in our theatre for Edward Heath and Willie Whitelaw, the Opposition Chief Whip. Earl Mountbatten borrowed a print to show at his home Broadlands and a copy was requested by Buckingham Palace. The Lords had their own show. We had several more screenings in our private theatre to many more which included Captain Mackintosh, secretary to the Lord Chamberlain and with whom I had the most difficult of the negotiations; Barbara Castle, then Minister of Transport; the Prime Minister's press secretary; Sir Richard Colville; the Garter King of Arms and the Leader of the House of Commons. Altogether it was a very successful story.

To follow this in July there was another success – one that nearly was not – the football World Cup, and the final between Britain and West Germany at Wembley. The dramas began when the Cup trophy was stolen but that turned up in a garden shortly before the match. Pathe was the liaison company for the newsreels and it was my job to make the arrangements for camera and sound positions, car parking, collection points for the negatives, all the things necessary for covering the occasion. It meant frequent visits to Wembley to meet various officials and to see that the camera stands were properly built and sited. The Football Association was responsible for sending me the passes, car stickers, programmes etc., which arrived late in the afternoon two days before the match. I arranged with Movietone to pick up theirs at 10.00 am the next day – the day before the match. That meant that I had to sort them out before the morning. It was not a long job, but I did not want to delegate for I did not want any mistakes and only I knew exactly what to allocate to each position. I was particularly busy that afternoon so I decided I would take home everything the FA had sent me and quietly sort it all out ready for the next morning. At that time I was living on the south coast and travelled up daily by train to Victoria Station. The next day I carried my precious cargo in my brief case on to the train and placed it on the rack above my head and as I usually did leafed through newspapers on the lookout for stories. Each time the train stopped I

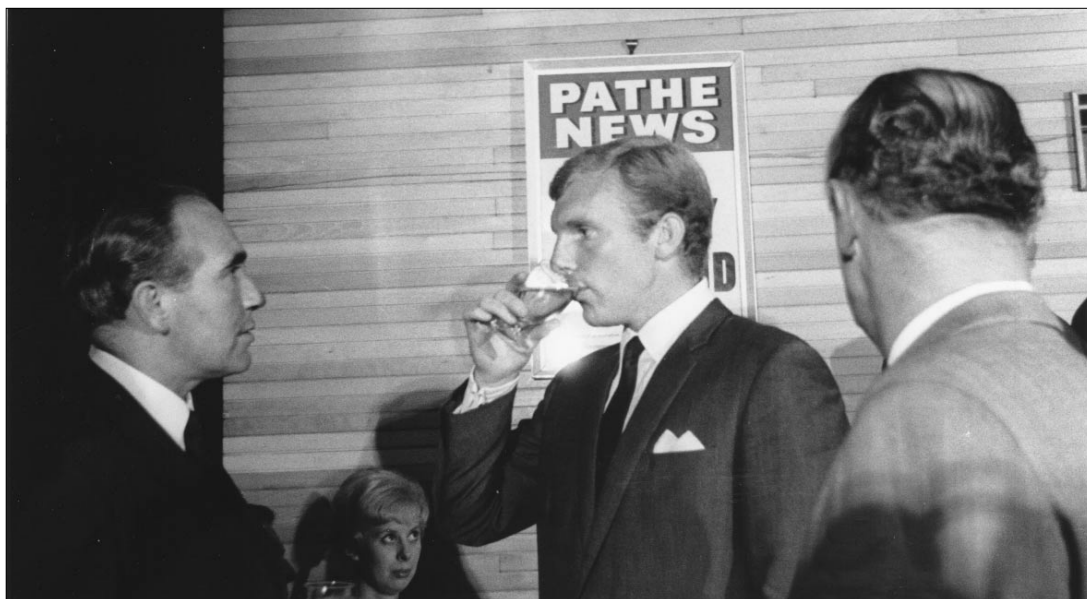
glanced up to see that my case was still there. When I arrived at Victoria my case had an unfamiliar feel. It looked similar but it was not mine. Panic! I opened the case I had, praying there would be identification of the owner. Inside there were no papers, only a thermos flask and a packet of sandwiches. In exchange someone had got entry passes to the World Cup Final, car stickers, the lot! It was a ghastly thought. I would have to go to the office and tell my boss that I had lost all our passes and almost worse, Movietone's as well.

It would have been almost impossible to get replacements from the FA in such a short time and there would be the embarrassment of having to tell of the loss. I was frantic with worry when I arrived in Wardour Street and sat at my desk wondering what to do. I had to tell Ashwood and my secretary. As I write this now my mind goes back to those early pre-war Cup Finals at Wembley. Before the match they used to have community singing, which always ended with that lovely hymn, 'Abide with Me'. I always thought it strange and never understood why they chose that hymn to end the singing. Admittedly it was always sung loudly but its words are principally concerned with the ending of life. What would have been suitable and imaginative is if they had had singing and ended with the hymn at the last match at Wembley before the stadium was closed. A line from the hymn comes to mind which would have been appropriate as I sat at my desk in 1966: 'I need thy presence every passing hour'. Perhaps such a thought was subconsciously in my mind at that time for the phone rang. 'What brief-case?' queried my secretary who was not yet aware of my predicament. I grabbed the phone and asked the voice if he had taken the wrong case from the train at Victoria. He had and was very apologetic and was glad to find identification in mine. He was in Holborn and I sent someone to exchange the cases at once. I was very fortunate the chap was not a football fan and appeared to be uninterested in what he found. I expect he was glad to get his lunch back. I sat back and there and then vowed I would never take work home again and I never did. When I told Ashwood what had happened he laughed, but I do not think he would have if the passes had been lost. What would have happened if I had not got them back I really do not know. I suppose we would have got in somehow but it would have made a good newspaper story if it had leaked out.

The coverage of the match was superb and Terry Ashwood arranged with Sir Stanley Rous, president of FIFA and a good friend of his, that as we had won 4-2 the winning team should come to Film House the following morning to see the film of the match in colour. It was a Sunday and Sir Stanley arrived at the appointed hour of 11.00 a.m. I was waiting at the doors of Film House to conduct the team to our offices and was relieved to see a large coach coming up Wardour Street to stop outside our building.

One can never be absolutely certain when that kind of arrangement is made at the last minute whether those expected will turn up, particularly so in this case when a winning team would have many engagements. But, due at 10.00 a.m., the





Alf Ramsey, England's captain Bobby Moore, and on the right Terry Ashwood, when the England team came to see the World Cup film at Pathe's newsreel theatre in Wardour Street.

Technicolor print of the match had not arrived. Frantic calls were made to Technicolor, whose laboratories were way out of town near Heathrow airport. They told us they had done their best to get a good print and that it was about to be despatched. That was 11.15 a.m. We dared not tell the team we had nothing to show them for with their other engagements they would certainly have left. We had some champagne laid on for them after they had seen the film but, in the circumstances, we offered them a drink – to relax – before they saw the film. They were a good bunch and on top of the world after their win so we offered them another – and another – for the print had still not arrived. We began to run out of champagne and being a Sunday in 1966 the pubs did not open until noon. It was about that as I waited at the door of our local – The George – opposite Film House. The two elderly ladies who ran the pub responded magnificently and I returned laden with bottles and more champagne was served. By that time no one was thinking about the film except us and Sir Stanley Rous, who was getting anxious, as the team were due at Pinewood Studios at 1.00 pm. We told him of the problem and just as he was thinking of leaving with the team the print arrived. There was no opportunity of seeing the film before we showed it to our guests so we explained the delay as we quickly ushered them into the theatre before Sir Stanley could act. So finally they saw the match and themselves – at least I think they did – for they clapped enthusiastically at the end. After a final noggin, it was a very cheery crowd that climbed into their coach, and we waved them off to Pinewood just about the time they were due there. After calling the studio to say the team had been unavoidably

delayed and were on their way, Terry Ashwood, our secretaries, the cutting editor and I left for a jolly lunch at the trattoria down the road. The World Cup had certainly produced some anxious moments but we received a lot of congratulations from the cinemas, the public and the directors of Associated-British Pathe.

In September 1966 I went up to Barrow-in-Furness, a small west-coast town on the edge of the Lake District, the home of the Vickers shipyard. The Queen Mother was to launch HMS *Resolution*, the 300th submarine to be built by that company. I had made arrangements previously for filming that important event and was at the yard at the launch to coordinate our coverage. This was the first of the Polaris submarines, vessels that combined nuclear power with the ballistic missile. It was an awe-inspiring warship, dark, menacing and slim as it lay stern-first on the slipway, designed to fire sixteen missiles from beneath the waters with a range of 2,500 miles in addition to its six torpedoes.

It is a naval custom for names of ships of distinction to be handed down through the ages. This submarine was the fourteenth to be named *Resolution*. The first was built in 1650, one of those beautiful ships carrying sail with eighty guns located in its sides. The last was the battleship which was lost in World War II and which I saw badly damaged by a French torpedo at Dakar. HMS *Valiant*, my favourite battleship in that same war carries her proud name forward as a nuclear submarine, launched in 1963. This launch was an impressive picture as 7,000 tons of steel slid gracefully into the water with hardly a splash, soon surrounded by tugs to take her to her fitting-out berth. With no more battleships or big ships being built it is a frightening thought that future wars at sea could probably be fought by ships one could not see, firing deadly missiles controlled by computers and many miles distant from the target.

Also in September the Queen launched the 58,000-ton *Queen Elizabeth II* at John Brown's shipyard on the Clyde. As these huge ships slip almost silently into the sea it is always spectacular and a proud if somewhat anxious moment for the builders. So we had two ships launched in the same month with very different roles. The submarine, the first of its class, built as a deterrent or an aggressor to operate beneath the waters; the passenger ship, said at the time to be probably the last of such big ships, destined to give pleasure to those who travelled or cruised above the waves.

In October of that eventful year of 1966 I had one of our cameramen, Ken Goddard, in Wales on a local story. I received an early call from him to tell me he had heard of a terrible disaster at Aberfan in which many children had been killed. It was not far from where he was so I told him to go there immediately and to let me know what had happened. Shortly after that call the door leading into Terry Ashwood's office opened and he came out. He had with him in his office one of Movietone's executives who had just received news of the disaster. Ashwood said we had better get someone there quickly by air and we would share the plane with

Movietone. I was able to say I already had someone on the way whom I expected to be there within the hour. It was a moment of glory for although the two reels worked together amicably it was always nice to get one up on the opposition. As well I knew it stressed how important it was for cameramen to keep in contact with the office and to keep an ear to the ground when on assignments. If Ken Goddard had not phoned and perhaps acted on his own initiative I would not have been able to get in touch with him and possibly have sent someone else to Wales. Aberfan was indeed a major disaster and we were able to get some dramatic early pictures. The story soon came up on the tape machine and has been well documented with 116 children and twenty-eight adults killed when a coal slag slid down, engulfing a school.

After the six-day war between Israel and Egypt in June the Middle East was very much in the news. Yasser Arafat became a key figure in Palestine. He had not yet become leader of the Palestine Liberation Army but was involved in training guerrillas in Jordan and was making hit-and-run raids on Israel from Syria and Jordan. Terry Ashwood thought if we could get some training pictures it would make a stunning 'extra'. I contacted the Jordanian authorities in London and, understandably, at first they were not cooperative. Eventually I managed to persuade them to help by pointing out that world pictures of the Palestinians training for fighting might influence the Israelis to give some ground. It was extremely complicated requiring great secrecy. I could not make arrangements by letter or telephone as to where we would find Arafat. Finally I obtained what amounted to a pass to film and a meeting place from where one of the Palestinians would conduct the cameraman to the training grounds. I gave the job to Pat Whitaker and we flew him to Jordan, taking on trust that the Palestinian would turn up at the appointed time and place. The man did arrive as planned but was reluctant to reveal where the training was taking place. However, Whitaker did very well in his persuasive powers and finally managed to get some very good pictures. It was quite a scoop, shot under very difficult conditions.

There was a trip to the South West in May to arrange positions for the return to Plymouth of Francis Chichester after his epic solo sailing round the world. We placed a cameraman on a boat which we shared with press photographers to get *Gypsy Moth* entering the harbour and scenes around the boat, one on the Hoe overlooking the harbour, one getting him coming ashore, one to take the drive into the town, and a truck with a sound camera and a hand-cameraman for civic greetings at the town hall. A big story which made a large section of the reel but took all our cameramen.

The International Newsreel Association (INA), established in 1957, held its meetings in a different country each time it met. The principals and editors-in-chief of newsreel companies from all over the world and who produced at least

one newsreel a week gathered together periodically to discuss problems and to further cooperation and set up associations for the supply of material to each other. The meetings usually lasted around three days. After registering in the afternoon when one arrived and meeting old friends or making new ones, there was what amounted to a state banquet on the first evening with a speech of welcome from a highly placed government official. The next days were taken up with debates and speeches in the main hall with adequate translation facilities through interpreters. There were informal lunches and dinners for everyone to discuss individual problems with their associates, and there was an afternoon set aside for sightseeing and shopping. If possible on the last morning the secretary would arrange a meeting with the head of government. I had been to one meeting in Majorca with Terry Ashwood but in 1968 he was president of the association and Prague in Czechoslovakia was the chosen venue. We flew to that beautiful city on 15 August. The hotel was just off Wenceslas Square within walking distance of the hall hired for the meeting. The debates and speeches were interesting but nothing of any consequence was actually decided. I thought the main benefit of such an assembly, impressive in the number of members who attended, was the opportunity to meet in person the executives from the various newsreels with whom we were associated so that we could put a face to a voice on the phone. There were many promises of possible tie-ups with reels not already in our orbit but as generally happens at such gatherings they came to nothing after the meeting broke up. We met Alexander Dubcek, the president, on the last morning, a historic meeting for us as a week later he was deposed when Soviet tanks invaded the country and stormed through Wenceslas Square.

In November 1968 there was another world event at which Terry Ashwood was chairman. The 1968 World Newsfilms Awards were held at the National Film Theatre in London. This festival was the first international one of its kind and designed to pay tribute to the work and skills of cinema and television cameramen. Entries came from Great Britain, Europe, the USSR, the USA, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. The entries, divided into various categories, were pre-judged by a panel of ex-cameramen for films shot in the year ending 31 July 1968. The cinema Grand Prix was won by Pathe for our film of the European Cup Final and we won another first prize for the Derby and a second for the funeral of Robert Kennedy. The television Grand Prix was won by a Japanese broadcasting company. Terry Ashwood presented the prizes and I was on the stage receiving our awards from my boss for films taken by our cameramen.

We were coming under increasing pressure from television as we entered 1969. The BBC had been transmitting in colour from late 1967 and it was noticeably affecting our newsreels. Nineteen sixty-nine was a busy year, recording events destined for the history books. It was also to be the last full year for *Pathe News*, a reality of which we were unaware as the months passed to the next decade. In April

Concorde made its maiden flight. We were not certain it was going to fly but were at Filton, near Bristol, to get pictures of it taxiing fast down the runway with the possibility of taking off if test pilot Brian Trubshaw decided the conditions were right. They were. The nose lifted and the 100-ton body was airborne for the first time. It made a good story and one in which the COI was interested.

I was next involved in planning our extensive coverage for filming the investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarvon Castle at the beginning of July. It meant several journeys to Wales. I had a good contact there – Idris Evans of the COI – who became a friend when I was on the road. He was my Welsh liaison with the COI when covering stories for it in Wales but especially on royal stories in that part of the country as the COI coordinated press arrangements for Buckingham Palace. He was made director of information for the investiture and helped me secure the positions I wanted when meeting with the Earl Marshal, the Duke of Norfolk. Television was very much in evidence and had prime positions everywhere. Our sound camera had a good site on the battlements overlooking the dais. It enabled us to film the main part of the ceremony when Prince Charles was created Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester. The symbolic insignia were given to him by the Queen by placing a coronet on his head, a mantle round his shoulders, a gold ring on his finger, a sword on his waist and a gold rod in his hand. This was followed by a loyal address to the Prince and his reply in Welsh. The sound, fed to the camera by a special feed from the BBC, included the speeches, choirs singing, harps and brass bands playing, trumpets, fanfares and royal salutes. We had other positions when the Prince was presented to the people both outside and inside the castle and for the many processions in and to and from the scene. The weather was grey and looked very chancy but apart from occasional drizzle the rain held off. I was there on the day to coordinate our coverage and to see that the negatives left by air on time. It was a magnificent spectacle, made for colour. The heralds in their tunics, the lords in their ermine, the hats of the ladies, the mayors in their robes, the banners hanging from the battlements, the Yeoman of the Guard, the green uniform of Lord Snowdon, Constable of the Castle, the purple velvet mantle of the Prince, the vermilion chairs, the green grass and so much more were the ingredients making up that colourful pageant. It was sad for us to realise we were no longer the only news outlet in colour – television was transmitting live by our side in colour. We made a full reel, however, and it was very popular in the cinemas.

Three weeks later Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin landed on the moon as the dramatic message came – ‘The *Eagle* has landed.’ I had to make many calls to America to secure footage of that historic event, which made another full reel for us and was very exciting and impressive on the big screen.

In November Independent Television began transmitting commercial adverts in colour, yet another nail in our coffin. And so it was. Nineteen seventy began, another decade, which was to bring still another change in my fortunes but this time

unfortunately not with the newsreels. On 26 January 1970 Bernard Delfont, chairman of Associated-British Pathe, put out a statement to the press that the Pathe newsreel was to close, the last issue to be on 26 February 1970. Alongside this the company was also closing its television commercial division and the Pathe production group for documentaries – sponsored short films. Television, giving an immediate topical service against which the cinema newsreels could not compete, was given as the reason for the closures. So, as we had been aware through the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s that the increasing power of television and eventually its output in colour was a danger, it had now become a reality and finally defeated us. All the newspapers ran the story of our closure. ‘Pathe rooster to retire,’ said *The Times*; ‘Pathe News reels into the past,’ said *The Mail*; ‘Pathe News killed by television,’ said *The Telegraph*; ‘It deserves a state funeral,’ said *The Guardian*. In Parliament Gwyneth Dunwoody of the Board of Trade said *Pathe News* had become ‘almost an institution ... the men who turned it out year in, year out have done a great job in the service they have offered to the community’. Commiserations indeed, which strangely had not been evident when the other reels closed. Only Movietone continued although not really as a newsreel, concentrating on short films and commercial subjects and using its comprehensive library until it too closed in 1979. Pathe’s film library did survive and is still around today.

So for me, forty years in the film industry and thirty-four with newsreels came to an end. When I received the letter telling me my position would become redundant it was the first time in my working life that I was faced with unemployment. I was not at retirement age but old enough for it to be difficult to find another job, particularly at that time when anyone over forty was regarded as almost unemployable. Terry Ashwood was offered a job at Pinewood with Pathe library, but older than me, he turned it down and decided to take early retirement.

When I left Film House for the last time as an employee my thoughts went back to those first days all those years ago when I arrived on the fifth floor in publicity, when C.K. used to come to our office to see a girlfriend before I knew him as my boss with *Gaumont-British News*. It was a sad thought, for in this same year 1970 as my newsreel days ended, he died. I thought of the many stories I had filmed and how fortunate I had been in my assignments. I thought of the romantic places I had been to in privileged positions – India, South America, Canada, round the world in a royal ship. I thought of the war during which I had sailed in thirty ships – landing craft, torpedo boats, destroyers, cruisers and battleships; I had seen plenty of action but had come to no harm. How fortunate I had been by being with the navy rather than with the land forces. I always had a cover over my head for sleep, plenty of water, plenty of gin and plenty of food. And there was royal rota, one of only two cameramen to hold such a position. Then finally to have the job of running a newsreel from the other side of the desk. Television had finally shut us down but the cinema newsreels set the standard for much of the way television operates today

in news coverage. Sometimes people had said there were frivolous items in the reels. Well, in essence we were part of an entertainment industry. In addition to many years of being the only visual outlet in providing live news of the day, perhaps sometimes a little lighter touch was permissible. I had indeed had a unique career which finally came to an end as I closed the door of Film House and, with my thoughts, walked down Wardour Street not knowing what I was going to do.

I came to a decision to set up my own company and stay in the film business. When the reel closed we had a number of documentaries lined up to make for an American air company – Pan-Am. They told me they would give me four fifteen-minute travel films they wanted on Lebanon, Hong Kong, Japan and Europe. The COI promised to give me commissions, and Terry Ashwood said he had a number of useful contacts and would use his influence to get sponsors. That seemed a reasonable start. It was a gamble, for making films was different from producing newsreels, but all the facilities one needed such as cutting rooms and editors, viewing theatres, sound effects libraries, music libraries and commentators were all available for hire in Soho. So John Turner Enterprises Ltd came into existence. It was gratifying to find how helpful people were when I told them I was starting a new business, especially in the basic facilities I needed like accounts with Kodak for film stock and laboratories like Technicolor and Denham. My bank manager was extremely helpful offering me substantial aid if I needed it while waiting for payment. He advised me to become a limited company as it would give me status when trying for sponsors. I made an arrangement with Terry Ashwood that he would join me when a film was to be made which he had helped to get. We worked together amicably for some years. Pat Whitaker and Ken Goddard both had acquired 35mm and 16mm cameras and had decided to go freelance so I employed them as my cameramen.

I managed to find a two-room office in Denmark Street, the street of the music companies and just across the road from Soho Square. It was a bit rough and on a top floor but it was in the West End, a good address and a good rent of £10 a week. Only Pathe was not generous to me. The furniture I needed for my office – desk, chairs, filing cabinet, typewriter, paper and the odds and ends I needed to equip an office mostly came from my Pathe office and was surplus to requirements after the closure and they made me pay for it with very little reduction on the price. My redundancy money after thirty-four years with the newsreels was almost negligible. They assessed it on the time I was actually on the Pathe staff, not taking into account the time I was partly employed by them on royal rota. Of course with hindsight I should have made sure I was protected against redundancy for the years I spent with Gaumont and royal rota. Apart from that, however, no one took advantage of a novice in business, for that was what I was at the beginning of my new career. What money I did get I used to start my company, helped by a first-class bank manager. I was my own secretary, did the VAT returns and only used an

accountant when I had to by law as a limited company. My most difficult job was in costing films, for I had to make sufficient profit but not too much or too little to remain viable. I was successful for ten years with good clients for sponsored films such as banks and insurance companies, some shown on television through contacts Ashwood knew. I made four full length documentaries for actress Ann Todd, of which Jordan and Australia had cinema distribution. She got the money; I produced the films. It was a busy life.

The Pathe Sound Effects Library, owned by Pathe, was still being run by the librarian, Ken Nunn, but around 1978 the library was looking for a home. I made arrangements with Pathe and Nunn to continue to run it from my office; that is, it was sub-let to me, and all the transfer equipment and tapes were moved into my second room. After a while Ken Nunn, an elderly man, decided to retire and the library became almost a full-time job for me. It was a major problem at first learning where, among the hundreds of tapes, a particular effect was located, for the references were not always clear as to what exactly the sound was, and then transferring the effect in whatever way was required by the customer – and always working against the clock. However, it came at a useful time to aid my finances, as companies had begun to set up their own video departments, and the electronic age lessened the requirements for film as video tape took preference. Then in 1981 my office changed owners and I was asked a prohibitive rent. As by then I was past retirement age, I finished making films, the sound library went to KPM, and I wound up my company. It had been a very different life from that with the newsreels, without the excitement and interest of daily involvement with world events, but I had managed to stay in the film industry.

I was glad my office was so close to Soho Square, for I was working in the same area in which I had always been and that was a comfort. I was still able to see the large windows of the film companies in Wardour Street and Dean Street displaying their wares with posters and stills from their films. As I used the various facilities for making films and met my clients in pubs and restaurants in Soho I was at home, for as I said earlier, Soho was almost my lifeblood. It typified London for me, and still does, for I am a Londoner, born in London, as was my wife. We had our own private names for each other. She was SB and I was BB, so it is to SB, my lovely wife, that I dedicate this book. It is very sad and of great regret that she is not here to read it. She always wanted me to write of my experiences and I wish so much I had managed to do it earlier. I often wonder now whether all those days, weeks and months when I was away from her were worth it. Now my book is written, ever generous, she would probably have said, 'Yes, it was.'





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