

# E. M. Smedley Aston (production manager) 1912 - ?

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**BIOGRAPHY:** E. M. Smedley Aston entered the film industry as a runner at British International Pictures in 1932. Throughout the 1930s he worked as Production Assistant, and Assistant Director at a variety of studios, including Gaumont British, MGM British, and for more cut-price producers such as George King. During the war he joined the RAF Film Unit, and worked in Canada. After the war he worked as Production Manager for the Independent Producers group at Rank on films such as *Great Expectations* (1946) and *The Blue Lagoon* (1949). He maintained a particularly strong working relationship with Launder and Gilliat. He became a producer through Group 3 in the 1950s, and his later productions include *Two Way Stretch* (1960). **SUMMARY:** In this particularly entertaining and detailed interview, Smedley Aston talks to Roy Fowler about his career, and his memories of many colleagues. There is particularly rich material on BIP Elstree in the early 1930s, with discussions of Robert Maxwell, Joe Grossmann, Walter Mycroft, Fred Zelnick and a host of other 1930s personalities. He recalls his relationship with Launder and Gilliat, and the working practices of Independent Producers in the mid 1940s, and also discusses his experience of working with American directors, Raoul Walsh and Sam Wood. A jolly good read. (Lawrence Napper, BCHRP)

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Interview Date: 1997-04-30

Interviewer: Roy Fowler

Interviewee: Fred Tomlin

**Roy Fowler:** So starting at the beginning, when and where were you born?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I was born in Birmingham. My father was an accountant and during the first war we moved out from Erdington to Henley-in-Arden which in those days was a very nice little village between Stratford and Birmingham. But I haven't been to there for some years. And I imagine probably now it's been absorbed with an outer urban sprawl, which now I think more or less links Stratford with Birmingham. But it was very pleasant in those days and I lived there for I suppose it was about 15 years or so and then we moved nearer London to Great Missenden, and it was from Great Missenden that I started in films. I should say that when I left school in 1929 I went into the advertising industry and I was going to be with Mather and Crowther...

**Roy Fowler:** Oh really?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...which as you know now come over Ogilvy and Mather I think. And they're still quite a powerful force in the ad. business. But as things were starting to get a bit dicey with the General Depression, I started work with one of their biggest clients, which was the Fruit Trades Federation with the famous slogan 'Eat More Fruit'. So I was not in the fruit business but I was in the placard business whereby when you went round various fruit shops you saw these little things hanging up with Greek currants and South African apples and God knows what. Anyhow it was quite good but the problem was that whereas I'd gone in expecting to be temporary with you know six or nine months...

**Roy Fowler:** As what? As in the copy writer or on the office side?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, just as the general office dogsbody, office boy really. But the idea was that I would move over as a copy-writer to across the road which was then in New Bridge Street with Mather and Crowther but people were being fired left, right every week because of the General Depression. So I really I wasn't ever going to make it there and so I left. And I was out of work for...I suppose it must be a good six or nine months, until I managed to get a job at Elstree at I think I've said, 25 shillings a week was it on the note there?

**Roy Fowler:** I think you did yes. Let me ask you about that though. It wasn't easy, especially in the Depression years to get a job in pictures.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no, that's quite true. Well I...the first studio I ever went into was Beaconsfield where there was a female Art Director, I think her name was Mary Brabham or something like that. Anyhow, she was a friend of the family and she said...well I think the studio there was run by Sam Smith in those days, who was Herbert Smith's. Do you remember a character called Herbert Smith? Anyhow there was I think Edgar Wallace had put a large slice of dough into that because they did make a lot of his pictures there. You know 'The Whip' and The Calendar and all those things, you know.

**Roy Fowler:** They were quota pictures weren't they?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I think some of them were slightly better. There was an American director called I think Hayes Hunter?

**Roy Fowler:** T. Hayes Hunter yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** And he did some of them so I think it's only fair to say they were superior quota.

**Roy Fowler:** A little more than a pound a foot.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes well I'll come to that later on because I [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** May I just dwell on this...was it a career choice or was it happenstance that took you into pictures?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh purely career choice. I mean as I mentioned earlier on, my father was an accountant and he and his brother had quite a good business going in Newhall Street in Birmingham. And you know, the obvious thing was that I should follow into the business but he was very understanding on these things and when it became fairly obvious that I had no aptitude for figures [laughs] and that I didn't want to go into accountancy, he never played the heavy father and said, "Oh well my son. I've worked very hard..." and this, that and the other. He was awfully good about it. In fact it was through him that I did get an introduction to Elstree. There was a man who I think was still a name in the city, called Scringer and he was a director of Associated British Picture Corporation which as you all know was founded by John Maxwell. And I think at that time the Associated British had a rather large overdraft with the Midland Bank and I think you'll find it was something in the nature of three quarters of a million pounds, which of course today would be what [laughs]...ten I suppose. But anyhow, I got an interview with Scringer and he said, "Well the film business isn't all that you might think. You've probably got some rather boyish ideas as to what it's all about." And I said, "Well I don't think so but at least I can try." So he sent me down to see P.C. Stapleton, who's a name I am sure you're familiar with because after he finished at Elstree he was with London Films I think for a time. And I got on reasonably well with that. And then suddenly, after about a fortnight I got a telegram saying "Report to Elstree Studios Monday morning..." whatever it was, November the something, you know. So there I was and the first picture I worked on was a film called Their Night Out and it had Renee Houston and Claude Hulbert. And the vamp, they had things called vamps in those days, was none other than the future Mrs Frankovich, in other words Binnie Barnes. And [laughs] the director was a very nice character but not exactly a dynamic director, called Harry Hughes. And I was on there as a runner and we finished it...I think they'd been shooting a week when I joined the thing.

**Roy Fowler:** What year was that sorry?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** This was in the November 1939. Sorry, 1932.

**Roy Fowler:** Right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** So yes...we finished about mid December 1932 and then the next one...

**Roy Fowler:** Can you paint us a picture of BIP [N.B. British International Pictures] in that period of time? The atmosphere in the studio and the people you were with.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, the atmosphere in the studio was probably quite hard for me to depict because I'm not exactly given to great sort of word pictures. But the fact was that there was a great deal of I would say enthusiasm around. As you will know, ACT was not exactly firmly established in those days.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh I don't think it existed.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** So...well it was I think about '30...I joined I think in '33/'34.

**Roy Fowler:** I think it was founded in '33 wasn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well Arthur Graham and I forget the other one, who were the sort of main... at Elstree. But anyway the thing was that there were a number of pictures on the go the whole time. I think there was at that time...there was about 8 sound stages and there was at least two or three pictures on the go. And the First Assistants varied tremendously from the sort of doyen of them all, which we casually called Frank Mills. I don't know whether the name is familiar to you but he was very, very sort of quiet but very sort of wise and he'd seen it all and he knew it all but he never sort of threw his weight about. Shall we pause for breath now? [break in recording]

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** On the various First Assistants that happened to be at Elstree at that time. And Frank Mills was really a character who, as I said, had been around for some time and really was very, very good.

**Roy Fowler:** They'd all come up through the silents presumably.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Pardon?

**Roy Fowler:** They'd come up through the silents.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, yes, very much. But the thing that I should make clear now is that...a lot of people probably won't believe this...but at BIP there were no production managers. The First Assistant carried the entire production. Now...

**Roy Fowler:** Including all the prepping?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. You used to get the script on the Friday night and you broke it down over Friday night and Saturday morning. You had the casting had got one at the same time so the cast was sort of there for Monday morning. The Art Director somehow had to revamp sets and things and you were off, you know, just. But the amount of responsibility that a First Assistant had in those days was extraordinary.

**Roy Fowler:** And you were being paid...Well what were they being paid? You were being paid 25 bob but what were they getting?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well when I left Elstree as a First Assistant I think I was only getting about 8 quid a week.

**Roy Fowler:** Tell me - when you were earning 25 shillings a week, did you find it necessary for your family to contribute?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** You bet you! [Laughs.]

**Roy Fowler:** I mean that was one of the problems at that time was it not - that one had to be middle class just to be working.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh sure, yes. But the thing was of course that 25 shillings in those days [laughs] was not impossible. Because I would say the average working wage was about 2.50 or something, you know, or 2 pounds 10 I think I should say in those days. So that you know, today when one sort of tries to tell one's grandson or something, what certain things cost - the fact that you could get lunch at the Cafe Royal for 17.5d up to the beginning of the war, you know they sort of think, "Oh he's starting to go funny already." But 25 shillings was not to be sneezed at but it certainly wasn't enough to live on.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you live locally?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, I had digs in the village.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. And what would they have cost?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I can't remember much, I think about 15 shillings, you know. So I was 10 bob in pocket for meals and things [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** What sort of hours at the studio?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh well you got in at 8.30 in the morning and you were lucky to get back by 8.30 at night because although the general shooting pattern was about 7.30, by the time you'd gone off the floor, got in the office, checked the props and everything for the call sheets for tomorrow, you know, you never got home much before that. But what often used to happen is at a few minutes notice they'd say, "All right we're working until 10 o'clock." Now the only people who were organised in those days of course were NATKE and ETU, so they more or less governed the actual financial side of things as far as working late. The ordinary camera crew, assistants and odd people and so on, they didn't matter because they didn't have to be paid. Although I will admit we got 1/6d supper allowance which had to be spent in the studio canteen. But by working to 10 o'clock at night, that was the only perk we had. But you know, one did it [laughs] and looking back on it one thinks one must have been stark, staring mad. But one didn't think so at the time. We knew we were being exploited but we figured that in the long run it was probably all right.

**Roy Fowler:** Was it more than a job for you? You enjoyed it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, there's no doubt. I somehow...of course I have fond memories of Elstree because I met my wife there, but the thing is that as you know, I live in the Isle of Man at the moment but I'm not one of these tax exiles, far from it. But my wife is Manx and we never said, "When we retire let's go over there." It's just one of those chance things. An uncle of hers dies and left her a house. We went over and looked at it and we didn't think much to it because it was in the middle of the last village where the TT course goes round outside the door [laughs]. So we sold it and found another little cottage further out, it's just outside Ramsay. But I, in my usual way, I get off target and I start wandering. So let's get back to BIP.

**Roy Fowler:** Right, well one very small wonder...how did a Manx woman end up at Elstree? That in itself is impressive.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I'll tell you this, and that is, that she earlier was brought up in Hornsea but her sister was Frank Launder's first wife. So that's really why I was at the service.

**Roy Fowler:** And Frank was a story editor was he not there?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, he certainly was not. No, Frank was then a very junior writer, or fairly junior writer. In Roy Boulting's address yesterday, which I'm afraid was not very audible in some parts of the hall, but he did refer to the fact that Sidney Gilliat's father had been the editor of the Standard, and the film critic was Walter Mycroft, who Maxwell had taken down to Elstree in charge of production. Well he was in charge in of production but the title he had then...he was never called Head of Production, he never got the screen credit as Head of Production, he was the Scenario Editor. And he had about I should think eight writers underneath him, and Frank was one of them. And the others were people like Vic Kendall, Val Valentine and I can't think of the other two or three. But they were all very busy sort of tucked away in little hutches that were all around the studio. And Frank as I was just going to say, was on - the next picture I did which was in 1933, was a thing called Facing the Music, which was based on, I think, a play or operetta called The Jewel Song. And there was a West End actress called Jose Collins and she had been in it on the stage and Frank I think was responsible for the adaptation and the screenplay, so that was really the first time I came in touch with Frank. And there are some stills here of that film and I think we were...I think it was quite a big one. I think we were probably about five weeks, which something special for then. And after that I got on to two pictures with Bebe Daniels. One was called The Song You Gave Me, where I think her leading man was a Hungarian actor called Victor Varconi who subsequently went to Hollywood. A lot of the Hungarian department did. And then there was Southern Maid which was also...that was originally I think going to be for Jose Collins but Bebe Daniels was available and she starred in it. And it was quite a successful film. But anyhow, I've probably jumped too far ahead. What did you want to ask about the really early part? You wanted to know the feel around the studio.

**Roy Fowler:** Well yes, the feel and also some of the characters. These were the years when Hitchcock was more or less a journeyman director...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well Hitch left about the first or second year to go to Gaumont. And he did - he took with him a very extrovert character who was First Assistant called Dicky Beville who'd been in the Navy in the First World War. And he had all the old Naval parlance and said, "Come on me hearties" and ... and all that sort of thing when anything had to be done, which is very good for morale because he was able to sort of organise a crew very well. But Hitch being somewhat of a sadist used to take terrible advantage of Dicky and really not only rib him but he was made the subject of a lot of really rather unpleasant practical jokes [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But anyhow, I never worked with Hitch and I as I said, after about six months he departed Elstree and ended up at the Bush [N.B. Shepherd's Bush]. But I should just say, as we were talking about Mycroft, that the two pillars of the studio were Mycroft in charge of the so-called artistic side, which as I said yesterday, he was really in charge of production but he never had the credit. And the other was Percy Stapleton, who was in charge of the personnel

and the crews and everything there. And you arrived either a Stapes man or a Mycroft, you know. And I was really Stapes, who I more or less trusted whereas Mycroft was rather devious at times.

**Roy Fowler:** The 'poison dwarf' I think he was called.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well that is absolutely true but I mean, you remember the scene in the Invisible Man of the car driving along...well Mycroft who as you know was [indicating] that high, had a large American Nash car and he lived up Deacons Hill at the far end of Elstree over the railway. I think it's now full of very prosperous Jewish lawyers now. Anyhow, Mycroft had quite a nice house up Deacons Hill and you'd suddenly see this Nash going along Borehamwood High Street apparently [laughs] driver-less! But anyway, the other characters you think of, the art department had some great characters in it, people like David Rawnsley who I am sure you must have heard of.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** And John Mead was also there. The main sort of head of the art department was another Scot. called Clarence Elder who subsequently took over from Stapleton when Stapleton left. And I didn't get on very well with Elder in fact I went in, and when I left, I sort of did it rather on the impulse. I forget what it was, something very stupid like he wouldn't pay half a crown for a taxi I'd had to get an artist back from the pub who'd disappeared, you know one of these sort of silly things. And anyhow, in somewhat high dudgeon I handed in my notice and I was then fortunate enough to get a job, a very happy occasion, with a very great director, and that was Raoul Walsh...

**Roy Fowler:** Indeed.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...at Gaumont British. But I don't want to get off my track as usual and so I'd better get back to Borehamwood.

**Roy Fowler:** Well okay - Mary?

**Mary Harvey:** I just had this thought that among the characters that Sidney used to talk about and Frank so often was this extraordinary...was he the studio manager? John Courtney Appleby Thorpe.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, yes. Now that was before my time, he was I think, that. I think he left at the end of 1932 so he was sort of just about to disappear as I got there.

**Mary Harvey:** He was a great story.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes this is a name which rings a very, very distant bell - John Courtney Appleby Thorpe, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** He was the great malapropist according to Sidney.

**Mary Harvey:** Exactly.

**Roy Fowler:** We should identify names now. We're talking of Sidney Gilliat and it's Mary Harvey who worked with Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat who asked that question. This is for the record. Yes.

**Mary Harvey:** Sidney may well have covered the story of John Courtney Appleby Thorpe [???].

**Roy Fowler:** He did indeed yes. [EMSA laughs]. The story of handing something to someone on a silver salivator [laughs].

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, I can well believe it. Yes he had some very good malapropisms I seem to remember. But one thing is that although, as I've told you, I met Frank for the first time on the second picture I did there, I don't honestly remember Sidney there. And talking to Sidney later on things, I always got the impression that he started his career as a gag man with Walter Forde at Nettlefold Studios, is that correct?

**Mary Harvey:** No, no, no, he was there because of Mycroft. He went in under his wing.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh I see because of the head on the Standard yes. [NB Mycroft had been critic for the Evening Standard]

**Mary Harvey:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** So many of them did.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No I don't remember Sidney there quite honestly.

**Mary Harvey:** He was a shy sort of man.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** [Laughs] I'm sure he was.

**Roy Fowler:** Now we mustn't talk too much about Sidney because...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no, I'm sorry.

**Roy Fowler:** I have a question which is...I was talking to Brian your son earlier and we were talking of the days when everyone wore suits and ties. Was there that kind of formality then at the studio, and was it to some extent them and us? Were there divisions there, class distinctions, front office and the studio floor.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes there was. What you see the only people organised as I said, were ETU and NATKE and they were always referred to as 'The Hourly Boys' you see. So that there was, as you've said quite rightly, people like art department assistants, assistant directors and most of the camera crew were middle class and although I don't think we necessarily always wore ties...to just go around into a studio restaurant or something without a tie in those days was

considered rather, sort of, you know, a bit bad. But I was just trying to think of the camera department of course, we had Jack Cox who was undoubtedly one of the big ones because he went with Hitch to Gaumonts. And of course Claude Friese-Greene who was an extraordinary character and the first picture I got my break on as First Assistant was with the late Arthur Woods on Drake of England. And Ronnie Neame was going to do all the model shots because there were quite a lot of scenes with galleons blowing over and all that sort of thing. And so Ronnie had sort of been promoted from operator to Photographic Director on the second unit. And then poor old Friese who had what is known today as a drink problem was, after about a week, could not go on, so Arthur promoted Ronnie and so Ronnie and I both got our breaks respectively as cameraman and First Assistant on Drake of England.

**Roy Fowler:** Really.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** And I think you've looked at some of the stills...

**Roy Fowler:** No I haven't had a chance yet.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Ah, well I've got quite a lot of stills from that. And that was quite a film. But I don't know how much you want me to elaborate on the in-between pictures. I've got as far as...

**Roy Fowler:** Well...sorry...I was going to say to some extent the pictures are less important because they're matters of record...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** ...than the people who made them and the ways in which they were made. I'd love to ask you about Arthur Woods because he was at one stage a great white hope and he died.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes well now the most extraordinary thing about Arthur Woods, if I'd known you were going to do that I'd have brought you the correspondence. And extraordinary American woman called Zupan, who came over to London I think about oh...18 months or so ago...and she was sort of writing a biography of Arthur Woods and she sort of corresponds with me occasionally. And unfortunately the person who worked with him a lot was my assistant Peter Bolton who unfortunately died about a year ago. And he followed Arthur when he left BIP and went to Warners. So I mean, Arthur was somebody who I worked with and he was...I think he had quite a lot of potential and it was most unfortunate that he was killed together with, right at the beginning of war, somebody who was I think perhaps even more gifted which was from Ealing, Pen Tennyson who was killed in a flying accident up in the north of Scotland I think it was. But anyhow...

**Roy Fowler:** You were talking about cameramen. Bryan Langley was there at some time wasn't he?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, Bryan was an operator. Bryan had the luck to be with this very gifted Czech cameraman who everybody liked, called Otto Kanturek. And he was killed during

the war. I gather that he was photographing something from an Anson and somebody sliced the tail off and just went in you know. But there were...I think there was Jack Cox, Friese-Greene, Otto Kanturek, Jimmy Harvey who was Lillian Harvey's brother. I think his real name was Walter but he was always known as Jimmy Harvey. And Jimmy Wilson, I don't know where that name...

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** He was one of what you would call the stolid sort of cameramen who were always there and always reliable but not terribly sort of artistically minded but very, very much someone who was after BIP's heart because he'd never hold up a production under any circumstances whatsoever [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** In your day there was there a strong continental influence or did that come later with Hitler?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, yes, certainly there was. Yes it started you know in the early '30s and so we had people like Paul Stein and Freddy Zelnik and little Di...

**Roy Fowler:** ...Dupont?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Hmm?

**Roy Fowler:** Dupont? E.A. Dupont?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh Dupont was there long before and I think he'd gone on somewhere like America because the Moulin Rouge wasn't...that was the one...

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, that was in the '20s wasn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well that was more or less semi-silent, wasn't it? And that was done before I arrived on the scene, that was about 1930 I think.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, and I think the next one was Atlantic and then as you say I think he disappeared to the States.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, yes. No he had I think been and gone but there were others besides Paul Stein and Zelnik whose name escapes me at the moment. But there was this funny little character, the first time I was given a chance as a First Assistant. As I said Arthur gave me the break on the film but I had been allocated with this young man, I don't know whatever happened to him afterwards but he was a funny little Austrian called Maxy Mack[N.B. Possibly Max Mack]. And we did a sort of succession of shorts of well-known songs of the sort of music halls, you know, Henry the Eighth I Am and Anybody Here Seen... whoever it is.

**Mary Harvey:** Jenny?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Jenny, that's right [laughs]. And anyhow, that might amuse if you haven't seen it, [passing over photograph] that was the end of the Southern Maid with Bebe Daniels. But yes, there had been quite a strong influence and of course at Gaumont British I think you'll find at the same time they had a number of emigres from the continent which...

**Roy Fowler:** I'm looking at a photograph which of course doesn't help much when we're recording on audio, of a studio dinner.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Following end of Southern Maid.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. Um...so...yes...train of thought.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I must tell you one funny incident from the other side. We've been talking about the east to west importation of talent from the continent but there were one or two from America, including latterly old Marcel Varnel who was very, very successful.

**Roy Fowler:** I thought he was French. Wasn't he pure French?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well he wasn't all that pure, but he did have a decidedly Franco-American accent and he had worked in Hollywood, he did a picture called I think it was Chandu the Magician or something which apparently was quite successful. And he came with one or two others and a Bill Beaudine who did a couple of Will Hay pictures. I worked with him and he was a very nice guy. But the one I was going to mention was this character called Alexander Esway who was a Hungarian. And he came to Elstree with very glowing testimonial and everybody said he was marvellous. And Lubitsch, Ernst Lubitsch who then was considered you know, the thing, had written to say he was absolutely tremendous and he was reliable, he had a great way of talking to people and so on and so forth. So he was given a job. And I worked on this film with him, with a character called Gene Gerrard who was a West End comedian, not terribly funny but anyhow. The picture I think it was called It's a Bet. And we had the two Black brothers...George Black was the editor, George Black junior, who is now dead, and Alfie, who's still alive, was the camera operator. And Alfie Black was great fun and after a while you know we were sort of chatting on, and said, "This guy doesn't seem to now an awful lot about it." And of course you know, Alf was very good on set-ups and things like that and so gradually this sort of thing got around and somebody started to check up, and apparently he'd been Lubitsch's chauffeur! So he was reliable and he was good with people, but not exactly as a film technician.

**Roy Fowler:** That's a great story.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But still we stumbled through the film and you know, like most of the BIP stuff at that time, I think it got its money back. But it was one of these stories that you know people say, "Oh that's ridiculous." But I mean it did actually happen.

**Roy Fowler:** In the light of that story and knowing you were later at Denham, is it true there was a sign at Denham that said, "To be Hungarian is not enough"?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Um well there was a story...I did go to Denham at the end of the war...I'm sorry that's before the war...Sam Wood on Chips [N.B. Goodbye Mr Chips]...But I never actually saw the sign but I did hear the story and I think probably somebody, one of the writers or somebody put it up for fun. But the Hungarian influence in the British film industry, apart from Korda was really considerable, all over the place they cropped up.

**Roy Fowler:** To mixed effect.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I must say I have a sneaking admiration because for a very small nation they have contributed so much, in not just films but in music and literature and God knows what.

**Roy Fowler:** Theatre...yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** It's an extraordinary thing, but don't let's go and get ethnickal.

**Roy Fowler:** Indeed, no.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Right, sorry.

**Roy Fowler:** So there was another character who you probably remember from those days - Joe Grossman who was the studio manager.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh God yes! [laughs] Well the story about the King of Greece is absolutely true. [NB see BECTU HP interview with Val Guest for this story]

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Which you've heard I know.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** You know, he'll show you round the studio and he started to explain the sound system and so on and then he'd turn round and say, "Oh well I won't worry, it's all Greek to you I'm sure." But...

**Roy Fowler:** He was also in charge of the studio fire brigade.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, yes. That was really...Will Hay did a film subsequently for Gainsborough called Where's that Fire? And I'm sure that Frank then was scenario at Gainsborough and I'm sure they put in some actual gags which are probably straight out of the Joe Grossman fire department [laughs] you know. Because he was extraordinary, he was a little cockney and came along you know, "Here, put that fag out, don't you know it's...don't let's

smoke...." And Joe was, of course, when Maxwell was due to come down, Joe was always there ready to open the door and do everything like that. But he had a brother called Charlie who was always on call if there was ever a scene, as there were, with a dummy band you know, having done the playbacks of dummy musicians...Charlie Grossman with his trumpet was always had to be number one on the call sheet. But Joe was really out of this world. It's awfully difficult for anyone who hadn't met him to not think that one was over the top because if any character was over the top it was Joe!

**Roy Fowler:** Legendary.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But of course the lovely story about the fire department was that when the big fire did happen at Elstree and here you must help me because I can't remember exactly what year that was but you remember B and D, the two far sound stages of BIP which adjoined British and Dominion, they went up overnight. And apparently the rumour came along that there was a section there which is used as a camera-store and someone had some rather old Mitchells [cameras] and some of the lads locally rushed to the studios to see what they could save. And they started pulling some of this stuff out and Joe comes up, "Don't listen to him!" [?]he got the Mitchells and was pushing them down!

**Roy Fowler:** Well there's another version of that from Freddie Young who says they called him to say, "But we saved the cameras guv." And he said, "You bloody fools!"

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well this I think is part of the same story you see. But I was told - that was probably from the B and D side but from the actual Elstree side [N.B. meaning the BIP side] it was I think probably quite true [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** Was it a cheapskate studio?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, I think so.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh I'm sorry we're out of sound for some...oh there we go, no, no...Your mic's gone dead?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I haven't done anything. Left it exactly as it...

**Roy Fowler:** Right, well I don't know what caused that. Right. Yes. Equipment-wise for example...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well the first thing that you found was that Mitchells were an extreme luxury and which I think somebody like Jack Cox had. But what very often around the studio they had a French thing called a Debrie [camera] which you had to crank up to load and instead of having a sliding blimp or anything like that you had a handle, you had to wind up this blimp and then put the old magazine in and sort of take it down again. And you looked through it. The operator, instead of having a viewfinder, you looked through the film and the film was generally pretty hazy. So how the operator managed I never found out. And of course a number of Vintons [cameras] you'd see several of those there. Vinton's had I suppose at least six cameras at BIP, so

that really there were only by that day I think about two Mitchells, about four Debries and about six Vintons I would say.

**Roy Fowler:** Did the cameras go with the DoPs or where they just assigned to a production?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, there was a chap called Bill Haggett I think it was who was in charge of the camera department and he had a maintenance man under him to service the cameras. But he allocated them all to the various units.

**Roy Fowler:** Would Jack Cox have a claim on a specific camera?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well Jack of course was probably the highest paid man at BIP, I think he was getting 100 a week which is more than the directors were. And that was in those days pretty phenomenal you know. And so he I think had claim to anything like that so if there was a new Mitchell coming, which there wasn't, but if there had been, Jack would have had it.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you have an American sound system or...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, I was just going to come onto that. I mean as you know in those days, in the early days of sound it was either Western Electric or RCA. But you had to pay fairly heavy royalties on both those, being American origin. So of course, being BIP and being John Maxwell, they had to have some German system called Noyhaven[?] or something, I can't remember exactly. [N.B. Low suggests Ambiphone at Elstree, and Klangfilm Tobias at Welwyn] But they were sausage mics and so were the ordinary mics. They were a sausage like that with a little sort of thing at the bottom like this, little tiny sort of minor mic, nothing like the other mic systems. But this was something which was cooked up by a character called George Adams. The man who was literally head of sound was a man called Atkins, but he was more or less a nominal head of the department and so on. The actual man who I think had been something in the First World War to do with communications, was George Adams and he I think was responsible for getting this German sound system in. And I think, if I'm right, they started by giving it a trial run at Welwyn, which in those days was also under the Associated British banner. It was actually called BIF, which is British Industrial Films. And there was a man called Woolfe there. And of course that is where they started the thing where you sort of stop-motion things of flowers blooming and all this sort of thing. [NB The Secrets of Nature series] So they I think were the first people to have this German system and then when I arrived at BIP they'd fortunately finished with these terrible booths, which I imagine somebody must have explained to you, like Jack Cox, exactly what was involved in them. But they were absolute murder and in the summer they were so hot and sweaty, with no ventilation at all, but you know the wretched assistants were more or less fainting by numbers. But the sound system was very much hit and miss in those days. But as I said one had escaped the very primitive days of the booth, but the actual sound on BIP pictures, if you compare it I would imagine with early Gaumont pictures, was pretty bad.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes. Was there an average shooting schedule or did it vary considerably?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** It varied very much, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** What was the least and what was the longest would you say?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well the least was about, I should say, four weeks. And the longest I think was a thing that when you got someone like Bebe Daniels, well it might be as much as ten weeks.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. So you were getting then more or less the average now in terms of screen time per day.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. I think you could say that. Of course you see, when you've got a star, which Bebe Daniels was a star, and Friese was the cameraman she wanted, and Friese was very good with women from the point of view of lighting effects and things. And when Friese was good he was very, very good and these things take time as you well know.

**Roy Fowler:** He was slow?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** He was not as fast as Jack Cox, but at the same time, when you saw it on the screen you realised that quality does take a little longer.

**Roy Fowler:** Did he noticeably drink on the floor? Or was that just sometimes?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well he used to have tea from a Thermos flask and I say tea with a capital D, so you know, that was it. But officially of course the studio was very, very anti-drink and all that sort of thing. You couldn't get a beer in the studio canteen, you had to go over the road to the Red Lion.

**Roy Fowler:** That was what...Maxwell's Presbyterianism?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. I think exactly that. And of course Joe, being his sort of spy, if somebody was over in the Red Lion at lunchtime and was sort of doing a bit more and was coming in a little bit like that, Joe would sort of make a note and there was a very good spy system.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you feel that you were being watched?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well not to that extent but I think anybody who might have stepped out of line was looking over their shoulders just to make certain Joe wasn't in the background.

**Roy Fowler:** More than Joe, would there have been a front office spy on the unit reporting back?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh I don't think it went as deep as that, no. I think though that some of these new, important, continental directors I think there was people watching them, just on their first say, couple of weeks as to how they had fitted in with the unit and whether they had any awkward continental habits or anything like that you know. I think there was a little bit of that, but you weren't conscious of big brother watching you at all.

**Roy Fowler:** Did people ever get pulled off a production, away for some infraction of the rules?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I can't remember it at my time but...

**Roy Fowler:** Reasonably tolerant then in terms of attitude?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I think so but one is working fairly hard. You didn't have much time for any sort of thing like that. I mean, as, I think in two and a half years I did about 15 films there, which is quite something.

**Roy Fowler:** So it's what - finishing on Friday or Saturday and back on Monday for another one?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Mmm, that's about it yes.

**Roy Fowler:** How about Maxwell, did he ever show up?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes. Maxwell used to come down periodically, often with somebody like Scringer[?] or somebody from the money side.

**Roy Fowler:** The board.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. But the one character who was allowed down only on Saturday afternoons when he'd finished his chores in Wardour Street...as you know the release system for all BIP films was called Wardour Films and they had actually an office in Wardour Street. And they were responsible for booking the things for all the cinemas outside the ABC circuit. And Robert Clark, who was also a Scottish lawyer, was in charge of all the sort of Wardour Films and anything outside the studios. And he was allowed down in his own time, having finished at 1 o'clock on Saturdays, to come to the studio on Saturday afternoons. Of course we didn't finish 'til six...we had an early night on Saturday, six o'clock. So Clark used to come and stand around on the set and look and thinking, "All this one day will be mine." But I always got on quite well with Robert Clark. I remember meeting him in Hyde Park many years afterwards and we had a chat about old times and things but I didn't object to him although he was the last person to be put in charge of a studio because he just did not understand what the average entertainment consisted of. I suppose he must have probably been to a cinema in Glasgow but as far as knowing public taste or public appeal, he had this legal brain which was very good because as you know he got hold of Joe Levy[?] and went into this very prosperous estate business after he left pictures and became a multi-millionaire.

**Roy Fowler:** I didn't know he did that. I'm going to flip the tape. [Break in recording] There was an off-camera comment then about Ronnie Neame selecting a secretary...tell me, was there a lot of naughtiness, a lot of going-on?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well a certain amount of hanky-panky in a sort of...

**Roy Fowler:** There was a stock company presumably?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. The stock company were all on at ten pounds a week and it was Gus McNaughton who was quite a versatile comic, there was Hal Gordon who I think subsequently kept a pub in Kingston. And there was Jimmy Godden who was a sort of nothing of an actor and I always wanted to find out how he got a contract because no one seemed to quite know where or how. But he had to be fitted in; all these contract artists had to be fitted in. Now that is the three male ones, now on the female side, there were two winners of competitions, one from South Africa and one from Australia, and the South African was called I think Molly Lamont and the Australian girl was Judy Kelly. Now I don't suppose either of those names mean much to you.

**Roy Fowler:** No, I remember the name Judy Kelly but that's all.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well she I think married a successful lawyer in the West End and became a sort of would-be, slightly a society what have you but she was pleasant, but not anything great in the way of an actress. There weren't anything really, looking back on, no really local talent ever emerged from BIP. But they may have gone on somewhere else and then emerged but BIP I don't think ever moulded someone sufficiently to become something. It's a very good grounding and a very good sort of basic place but not to groom somebody properly.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes. Although it was I suppose when you were there, the foremost British production company wasn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well yes. I mean the output was undoubtedly the biggest. But of course B and D with old Herbert Wilcox next door was making what I would say was a slightly superior product and that was all British.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. And Korda was just beginning wasn't he?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, Korda was still in Paris I think at that time. And I can't remember when he first came over but it was probably...

**Roy Fowler:** ...'33.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Was it '33? Oh yes. Well he didn't really get going until about '34/'35. But he made a film in English in Paris which I think Wendy Barrie or somebody was in. I can't remember what it was called...It wasn't School for Husbands was it? No I think it was made in England. But anyhow, Gaumonts had a rather mixed bag of people at that time. Of course Victor Saville I suppose was the chief, one of the chief people at Gaumont's.

**Roy Fowler:** And Balcon.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, yes. But Mickey was always a producer, he never directed.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh yes, not as...yes. It's interesting, I meant to comment on this earlier, how many people came out of Birmingham.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, yes that's absolutely true.

**Roy Fowler:** Saville and ...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...Boxall...

**Roy Fowler:** ...and yourself, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Harold Boxall was quite powerful.

**Roy Fowler:** Oscar Deutsch.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Pardon?

**Roy Fowler:** Oscar Deutsch.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, oh well yes, I know. Yes, that's quite true. And of course Mickey had Chan, his brother...Chandos. But [laughs] to diverge again, Jonathan Balcon as you know went into the city and I think is now retired and lives somewhere down in Kent. But he and I.. [break in recording]

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, that's all right. [Laughs.] Sorry, did you say the tape is expiring...?

**Roy Fowler:** No, no, no, we're rolling.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh good. Well the things is, you must probably have other questions on BIP, I haven't really gone into the question of the art department as I started to say, Elder was in charge and he sort of got credits for various things but his taste was rather on the sort of Scottish art deco, of there is such a thing. And you know, everybody looks on him as being rather a sort of upstart, whereas people like Rawnsley and me really had got something to offer. Some of the things like the Tauber picture of Blossom Time and things[?], that was David Rawnsley. And he was I think quite an outstanding art director and I don't know what happened, he went on somewhere... But after the war I think he suddenly died, I think he had a heart attack or something like that. But he was very talented, no question.

**Roy Fowler:** Rawnsley, yes. He was responsible for Independent Frame.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Hmm?

**Roy Fowler:** He was responsible for Independent Frame.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Ah well, that was Donald Wilson really.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, that was Donald Wilson. Donald got David in on it.

**Roy Fowler:** Ah.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I actually worked on Independent Frame.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I shot a lot of the exterior unit stuff for them.

**Roy Fowler:** Well we must get to that at some stage.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, I haven't... [laughs]

**Roy Fowler:** Not on...we're jumping too far ahead.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I think I said to Mary, "I'm strictly pre-war." I mean I've got a host of stuff post-war with all the stuff with Shepperton and that sort of thing...no sorry that was pre-war. But it's very difficult to be, shall I say, not logical but controlled on this because so many things start dancing before you...

**Roy Fowler:** Ideal, ideal, well let them dance. Now how did you all feel about the films you were working on?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well it's like...

**Roy Fowler:** You worked hard.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...oh you worked hard but you got the feel after about the first week whether it's going to be a turkey or whether it's going to be something quite funny. And I mean most of the product were comedies or so-called comedies with people like Stanley Lupino and I was only saying to my grandson the other day who mentioned something about Ida Lupino, the fact that she'd been a director, one the very early female directors in Hollywood, and how I can remember her coming down on the set, you know, as a little girl when daddy was performing on some of these great epics at Elstree. Just as I can remember Tina Brown coming down when George was [? indecipherable]. Anyhow, be that as it may.

**Roy Fowler:** How did the commercial success of a film, or failure, reflect on you all in the studio?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** We never allowed...I mean it didn't filter down to us.

**Roy Fowler:** Not at all?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well not really. If something was like Blossom Time, which would probably have a premiere and a big do, that. But in general this was run of the mill product to feed the ABC circuit.

**Roy Fowler:** It was a factory system.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** It was a factory system, yes, yes, you can say that quite definitely.

**Roy Fowler:** You probably didn't get much chance to see anything outside of the studio did you, on a twelve-hour day?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** [Laughs] No, I don't know why. I've got a list of every British picture I've ever seen, which is quite a heavy thing. And I can't remember, I think possibly what they did do occasionally, they might have had on a perhaps in-between times if for instance one finished a picture on a Friday and Saturday you were supposed to be preparing for something else. Or very rarely if there was a week in-between, they might run a film for the crew. But very, very seldom, you know. As you probably are aware of course we had our own labs there. They were just right across in the studio compound. Elstree Laboratories, all film was processed there so that it was completely self-contained, from the script right through to the cinema. Maxwell had it absolutely taped in that way.

**Roy Fowler:** How did the job market operate? Was there any networking in those days between the studios, or was it a matter of foregathering in pubs?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, well I think really as you say, after a while you made various acquaintances and there was a sort of word of mouth thing gets around and so on. But Elstree at that time had[?] four studios going and so there was a certain amount in the Red Lion and the other Benskins [N.B. Local brewery] place up at the top by the station, where the boys used to go where they said it was better. There was the Gate Studio just by the station, which Korda subsequently used for special effects and things there. And then after the war I think Sydney Box made two or three pictures there, but it was absolutely un-soundproofed and you had to have a sort of man on the roof with a rattle so that when the Flying Scot was coming through he had to give him a warning when it got to a certain point, so they could shut off the sound! [laughs] But the great thing of course was where the Eastenders are made, it was Blattner Studios, Joe Blackner Studios [sic. Blattner Studios were taken over by Joe Rock in 1935 and became known as Joe Rock Studios] where they made...I can't honestly think of one title. But they had just before the war, a character called John Corfield and I think it was called British National, is that right?

**Roy Fowler:** That's right, yes. Lady Yule.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Lady Yule, that's right, yes, yes. I never worked there, I went round the studio but I never worked there.

**Roy Fowler:** The studio...sorry, I was going to say the studio site went back to I think 1916. Neptune and Ideal, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Really? Did it really? Ideal, well the name Ideal I can visualise their sort of trademark Ideal.

**Roy Fowler:** Eddie Dryhurst worked there for example.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh really yes. Well of course I knew Eddie quite well. But then as I said, the main block was BIP and B and D, which as you knew were sort of...

**Roy Fowler:** ...contiguous...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...adjacent, and that was it. So that really Borehamwood or as it is always referred to as Elstree, was the main thing and then there was Gaumont's and then of course one or two of these odd little places like Nettlefolds [at Walton] and Twickenham and so on and so forth. But I didn't...before the war the only place...after I left Elstree I went to the Bush and then to Shepperton, but then I went to Denham and worked for MGM. So I had Sam Wood as a director there on Mr Chips, which was quite something.

**Roy Fowler:** We're jumping aren't we. So, still at BIP but obviously wrapping up on BIP. Have we covered the turf do you think, I mean are there any specific films that you think deserve a mention?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I think the last one I sort of mentioned was this one Happy, which was made by this German called Freddy Zelnik. And he was a very beaming sort of extrovert character, a complete opposite to Paul Stein who was very gloomy and rather downbeat. And there was an advertisement at that time for Eno's Fruit Salts and there were two characters, a Mr Can and a Mr Can't. And somebody came into the studio foyer, and I must say that anybody from the Continent or America coming to BIP [Elstree] Studios, the introduction was absolutely dreadful because it was...the hall, it was just so basic. I mean it a third-rate bus waiting room in Barnsley or something would have had better than that. And it was really, really disgusting because it looked so dreadful and Sergeant Seaman who was in charge of the commissionaires and naturally one of Joe Grossman's staunchest allies, he was in a little cubby-hole there. And it was really quite amazing because as I was saying, somebody came along one morning and both Stein and Zelnik were in there and he looked at them and said, "Oh Mr Can and Mr Can't." [Laughs.] But Zelnik was one of these brilliant, bubbling sort of Viennese what have you. And he made a film in Germany called, I think it was 'Gluecklich' - 'Happy' [N.B. Probably Es war einmal ein Musikus]. Very successful in Germany. Okay, he saw the writing on the wall and he heard the old storm troopers so he nipped off to Paris, where he made a very successful picture called 'Hereux' [N.B. Probably C'etait un musicien] and that was quite successful in France, so Elstree next stop with Happy. And that's how it was. And it had Stanley Lupino in it and so on and it was very successful. But what happened to him afterwards I don't know. But of course at the same time I've only really mentioned the people who'd come to BIP but I mean there was a company called Capitol Films and the Fritz Kortners and the Karl Grunes and all these people came around at the same time. And I think they were based, they went into accommodation I think next door at B and D [British and Dominions] with, I think they had to come into BIP for certain things as I remember. And of course the famous duo Elizabeth Bergner and Dr Paul Czinner, they came in and they did...it was Shakespeare...was it....?

**Roy Fowler:** As You Like It wasn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Pardon?

**Roy Fowler:** As You Like It?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes it was As You Like It, I'm sorry. That's absolutely right. And they had a big...on the silent stage they had a big selection of the Forest of Arden and they had a Lion Cub apparently which escaped and Joe Grossman had to organise the fire brigade in order to capture the [laughs] wretched animal. But still [laughs] we had a few laughs along the way. And I must say, I was talking about the actual assistants, but when I got my break I was very fortunate because I had with me an extraordinary character, who unfortunately is now dead, called Cecil Foster Kemp. You must have heard of him.

**Roy Fowler:** Something of a name, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well he was my Second, and the Third, who subsequently came up and went with Arthur Woods to Warners was Peter Bolton, who worked with Fred Zinnemann and when Fred got an Oscar for the Redgrave, Paul Schofield....

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, A Man For All Seasons.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Man For All Seasons. Peter got the Director's Guild Hollywood Assistant Directors Award for it. And he was a great guy and he was very showbusiness because his father had been a comedian on the northern circuit. In those days everything was very much sort of thing and Peter's father was quite a well-known...Reg Bolton was quite well known. He used to write pantomimes and do all sorts of things. So Peter was really 100 percent showbusiness. And unfortunately, when he retired he went to live in Norfolk and his sight went and he had trouble with his feet and so on, and he died about a year ago. But Peter was a great lad and he was by far the nicest and most consistent and the most efficient assistant that I came across, he really was. But anyhow...

**Roy Fowler:** Do you remember Mickey Powell from the studio?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, vaguely, yes. I think he made one or two at Welwyn. For some reason I can't quite see it. These are all the Elstree pictures. I did do two pictures at Welwyn. Besides this Vorhaus one was a film called Dance Band, with Buddy Rogers, who subsequently married Mary Pickford. Charles Buddy Rogers, who was a very good looking lad with sort of, pretty hair.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well they had this film Dance Band and this was shot at Welwyn Studios. And I don't seem to have put it on my list but Welwyn was fairly crude in those days and it hadn't got anything like the facilities at Elstree in the way of being able to build decent sets you know. Because the sound stages at BIP were really quite good. They had got enough room to swing the proverbial cat whereas over at Welwyn they were really just made for a different type of operation which is industrial films.

**Roy Fowler:** I'm told it's the Polyfilla factory now.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Pardon?

**Roy Fowler:** I'm told it's a Polyfilla factory now.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh is it? Polyfilla? I'm not surprised. The great claim to fame of Welwyn in those days of course was Shredded Wheat you see which was just down the road.

**Roy Fowler:** And George Bernard Shaw. Oh did you...were you connected with those BIP pictures that they tried to make of Bernard Shaw?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh Arms and the Man?

**Roy Fowler:** Arms and the Man...[???

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No I wasn't. That was Lewis wasn't it? Cecil Lewis.

**Roy Fowler:** Cecil Lewis, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No Frank I think, Frank Launder had something to do with it I think. But Frank...one of Frank's early things was Harry Lachman who was, I think he was a Franco-American or something. And he was an extraordinary character and that was just before...he left just before I arrived there. But people were still talking about Harry Lachman when I arrived there, I think he went to Hollywood but I don't think he did much.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes he did. Married to a Chinese wife I believe.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes I think that's true, yes.

**Mary Harvey:** He made Under the Greenwood Tree, Harry Lachman didn't he?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well that was I think practically the first thing Frank contributed to. In those days it was a question, as Roy was saying yesterday, of writing title cards, you know.

**Mary Harvey:** Oh yes, very much.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. But I never, as I said previously, I never actually worked with Hitch because he did leave very shortly after I arrived, so I can't claim that fame. But people, as I said, were still talking about him when...

**Roy Fowler:** Was he regarded benevolently then or was his dark side apparent?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well he was, shall I say, a personality. With the characters that we had, which were stock people like Harry Hughes, who I mentioned, first picture I did, who was like very much a sort of retired headmaster. And Tommy Bentley, who was quite a character, and he was the man who really had this famous thing about when they were starting to do a film and he

said to the artist, "Now this is a film which has got to move. And I want it to go...snap...snap...snap" and it did. But he did quite a lot of early stuff. He'd done silents.

**Roy Fowler:** He was an old-timer wasn't he.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Things like The Old Curiosity Shop and so on. And Tommy Bentley was really a very gentlemanly sort of type and a very nice old boy. I only worked with him I think a couple of times. But of course the firebrand of them all was Mario Bianchi, alias Monty Banks, who I saw a Hollywood picture subsequently called Bell for Adano, where he was credited as Montague Banks [laughs]. And he played an Italian who could speak English, you know. But instead of reverting as you would have thought, under the circumstances he would have... Montague Banks, I thought that was great. Well he was a real madman. He lived at the Dorchester and he a couple of Sotto Fantini[?] cars. And he had a chauffeur called Bert and he used to literally get down in quarter of an hour in the morning because he had, shall I say, colourful social life and he'd always have a couple of chorus girls up at the Dorchester and things. Bert would have been in there saying, "Come on Mr Banks, we've got to go now - it's quarter past eight." Anyhow, quarter of an hour from the Dorchester down to Borehamwood wasn't bad in those days [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** We've gone dead again.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh, just as well perhaps.

**Mary Harvey:** Have you got your left foot on the...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I hope not... [Break in recording]

**Roy Fowler:** NO that's all right. Well, I'll turn the gain up a bit. Would you give me a level please Smed.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh I'm sorry.

**Roy Fowler:** No, that's okay.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Is that all right?

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, that's fine. We could spend all day, clearly on BIP. You also mentioned T. Hayes Hunter - your recollections of him.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I didn't really work, I only just mentioned the name because of Beaconsfield Studios and the fact that that was the first place I ever went, the first studio I ever entered. And he had done several of the Edgar Wallace pictures there. But I had no connection.

**Roy Fowler:** Right, okay. So the time is coming when you are about to leave Elstree then, or Borehamwood.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes well, I did various things like this girl called Dolly Haas who came over and we made a picture. That was Varnel, the first time I worked with Marcel Varnel. Girls Will be Boys and we had people like Esmond Knight and Cyril Maude and people like that in it. And that was quite interesting because Varnel had got such a more flexible idea of directing (having been away), than the two camera technique of the Harry Hughes, Tommy Bentley school, with long shot, mid shot and two close up shots.

**Roy Fowler:** They had two cameras simultaneously did they on a scene?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, yes. Oh yes. In those days two cameras were always allocated to a production and you very often had it. Which made it very difficult for the lighting cameraman.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh. Now I didn't know that. This is when the cameras are blimped, not when they're in their booths.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no, this is blimped cameras. I fortunately never was there in the booth days. And the first film, this one with Binnie Barnes, we had two cameras all the way through on that, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** So that account to some extent then for the sort of television quiz show lighting [laughs] that one gets!

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well yes because if you've got an actress who is, as I say, needing quite a lot of delicate lighting to smooth things out, and you've got a somewhat younger leading man, and you've got two cameras like that, it does make it awfully difficult for the lighting cameraman.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. And it's also very ugly, you get all those multiple shadows and that high light level - yes. Oh I didn't know that.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well no, I think you'll find that at Elstree at any rate at that time, that was more or less the standard practice. But as I was saying, old Varnel had an entirely different thing and of course he was very good, we had quite a lot of exteriors and we went into I think Burnham Beeches or somewhere like that, and he was awfully good at getting people going out the right way and coming round. And you'd suddenly say, "Oh is that going to match?" and so on. But he was way ahead of the game.

**Roy Fowler:** A fast worker by the sound of it.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes he was. No he had this extraordinary sort of accent, rather high-pitched sort of thing. And if things were going wrong, instead of saying, "Cut" he'd put his fingers in his mouth and do a loud whistle, you know [laughs] to bring everybody down to earth. But I think it's only fair to say I did one film with Will Hay called Dandy Dick, which I think Beaudine directed, which was quite interesting. Then I got my break with Arthur Woods on Drake of England, and having done that I was then given this very...well for those days...expensive thing, complete with Montgolfier balloons and things like that, of DuBarry,

which was finally shown as I Give My Heart, because that was the name of one of the tunes in it. But it was a stage play, the DuBarry [N.B. Grafyn DuBarry], which was very successful in, I think, His Majesty's in the West End. And there was a Hungarian actress called Anny Ahlers and she committed suicide and so she couldn't do the film, so he got somebody from outer space or somewhere, called Gitta Alpar. And she was not so good on English but she had a very good singing voice, and so she played the DuBarry, which was quite a big production.

**Roy Fowler:** I'm looking at a still, an exterior still, a large crowd, elaborately costumed. Where was that? Is that on the back lot?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, that's Aldenham Park, which was a country club, just up the road in Elstree. If you go from Borehamwood, you hit Watling Street and you turn left up to Elstree village. Well if you go straight on, that was then Aldenham House Country Club, and that was in the grounds there. Very nice rolling acres with trees and so on and so forth.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you get off the lot much?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Um, no, not a lot. These Southern Maid things has sort of South American villages and nights fiestas and all that, those were all on the lot. The lot was used quite a lot, quite extensively, I would say quite a lot, and you didn't get out. But the extraordinary things was that the pictures that you saw of myself and Arthur Woods and Ronnie on Plymouth Ho with Drake of England, as I said previously, production managers were unknown, location managers had never been heard of, and on this occasion we had got permission from the Plymouth Council or whatever it was, for us to shoot on Plymouth Ho. But as far as making pre-advanced things, I went down on the Saturday morning, and the unit came down, arriving at 6 o'clock Saturday evening. And during that time I had to do the whole of the hotel accommodation for the unit and have all the local facilities in the way of transport ready for us and we had to shoot on the Sunday morning, which we did. So the First Assistant [laughs] was doing really three jobs - Production Manager, Location Manager...

**Mary Harvey:** [inaudible]

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** What?

**Mary Harvey:** When you went down to Plymouth were you alone, or did you have a...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I had one assistant with me to do some of the legwork, yes. I think Peter, yes, I think it was myself and Peter Bolton went ahead, and Cecil, the Second Assistant, brought the unit down on the two o'clock train or something and we met them at about six o'clock, yes. So that's the way it was done in those days, and none the worse for it really. But still, I certainly wouldn't fancy anybody trying to do it again [laughs]. However, to get to the end of the BIP era - having done I Give My Heart...incidentally, I got married on that film. It was during the lunchtime at Barnet, I got an extra half hour because we went to Barnet Registry Office which was about ten minutes' drive. So I spoke to Stapleton, he said, "Oh well that's all right, Cecil can carry on. You can take an extra half hour for your lunch." Which I thought was pretty good for those days, you know.

**Roy Fowler:** Did they dock you?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no, no, they didn't. That was the frightening thing, no.

**Roy Fowler:** Tell me, your wife was doing what at the studio when you met her?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well she wasn't at the studio, no, no. She was...she had actually a little restaurant called The Manx Cat strangely enough you see. So that was it, but as I explained - her sister, she was actually living with her father at Hordshaw[?] Hendon, I think it was Hendon. But her sister was married to Frank[?] and they lived up Furze Hill Road, which as you know is part of Borehamwood. So that's really how it happened. And then, after I Give My Heart, I did Once in a Million which I think was at Welwyn. And then Someone at the Door, which was...I can't remember, I think it was Billie Milton or somebody. But there was an extraordinary character called Ernest Milton, who I think was a stage producer, who'd done a few films somewhere, and he was completely bald and he had sort of reddish sideburns but otherwise...and the unit christened him 'Sunrise Over Beverly Hills' for reasons I never quite understood. But anyhow, he was one of these many odd characters that arrived at Elstree. I think Mycroft was fairly easily persuaded by certain agents to take someone on if he felt they weren't going to cost very much. And I think there was quite a lot of that, whereby some agent who he was obviously anxious not to offend because they had a lot of stars which were necessary for that...they were able to flog unknowns to him as directors.

**Roy Fowler:** I've heard, with what truth I don't know, that Mycroft did occasionally take kick-backs.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I wouldn't be at all surprised. I always felt that, yes. I had no proof whatsoever, none at all. But there were rumours to that effect and I think they weren't unjustified, no. Yes I would think that is quite likely. But he was an extraordinary little chap because he had certain merits but he was very devious and - okay, it's so easy to be beastly to a dwarf I know - but he was somebody who I wouldn't trust at all and as I said, Stapleton was my particular boss and I was thankful for it. But Frank Launder, who is one of the most un-guileful people I know and one of the least people to tell tales or tittle-tattle, he had said to me later several times about Mycroft and the fact the certain things that he'd done and maybe Frank had thought up something or suggested something and Mycroft of course would take the credit for it and that sort of thing.

**Roy Fowler:** Was credit...I mean Hitch is accused of that so many times...was that an industry activity then - nicking someone else's credit?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I think in some cases the more ambitious people and I'm sure in Hitch's case it's probably true. But the thing was that in those days [laughs] when I was on the floor I didn't have much time for studio gossip. Okay you'd make time for a drink in the Red Lion and very occasionally there might be a week between pictures when you were preparing the next rather than on Friday night. But the job in hand was such that this...one didn't have the time or the energy to pursue these things, which probably would have been very interesting if one had. Well the last film I did at Elstree was a thing called A Star Fell From Heaven, and this was

another Austrian import called Paul Merzbach I think his name was. What happened to him afterwards I don't know. But I think again this was a case of somebody flogging a chap who'd probably made a couple of shorts in Vienna because he was cheap to Mycroft. And the star of that, because Tauber's pictures had been such phenomenal successes, was a little tiny, about the size of Mycroft, Austrian Jew called Joseph Schmidt. And he had the most beautiful voice, but he was a recording artist and you couldn't possibly show him. And there was an American girl called Nora McKinley [sic] I think or something like that, and she was available for the female lead on this thing. And of course she was about five foot three you see, which was not odd for a girl to be five foot three, but Joseph Schmidt was about five foot and a half inch, so every scene they had these bloody flat pancakes all over the bloody set [laughs] and you could only do certain movements because he had to be at least up to there with a girl. And I think that was the final blow...I think that was really why I left Elstree [laughs]. It really became such a thing.

**Roy Fowler:** What was the audience for those pictures, because it's inconceivable that people like Tauber and Kiepura and Schmidt were playing romantic leads isn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I mean Tauber could just about get away with it, and Kiepura was probably slightly better but as you say, Joseph Schmidt, definitely not. I don't know how this did happen because anybody...he looked like a little monkey anyway, apart from his height problem. So it really was crazy. If you could get a copy of that film and look at it, you would say what you've just said, "How could people possibly expect the public to put money down and see something like this?" But you see, before television, the cinema was the only thing. They had probably three cinemas in the town. Some kids would go five times a week you know, and that was it. And just as you say, mass production, factory technique. That's it.

**Mary Harvey:** Audiences weren't very critical.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** They were not very critical in those days. No, no, exactly. No. But it was an extraordinary era because we did work hard but we did get quite a few laughs out of it. And I wouldn't have wished anything better really because as I said earlier on, I had this yen to get into films and with a bit of luck I was able to do so. And I don't think one could have had a better grounding than BIP. Gaumont's were much more sophisticated I think you'll find if you talk to anybody who'd gone in there as an Ostrer trainee or something like that. I think they even had Production Managers there. Well at least they certainly had when I got there but anyhow...

**Roy Fowler:** What were your career objectives? They were defined by this time I suppose.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I never wanted to be a director. To get up at the crack of dawn and talk to a lot of actors all day was my idea of hell. But to produce...the thing that appealed to me was to get a subject, find the right writer and just coax them along and then get the film into production. The great thing was, make certain you've got the right director and leave them alone and once the director got going, you'd see rushes together and make certain comments and so on. But these producers who are on the floor all the time and whispering and this sort of thing - oh god I think this is dreadful. And all sorts of things happened and in one stage of my career when things were rather duff, when a couple of pictures one hoped were happening blew up, I had to work for film finances as a nark on the floor [laughs] when they got behind. But John Croydon

was the main one but I think there were a couple of films which will be nameless in trouble at the time, so Bobby Garrett asked me if I'd do it and I said, "I don't really know if I'm a narkish type but I'll have a go." I needed the money so I did! And it was most interesting I must say. But not the sort of thing I'd make a career of.

**Mary Harvey:** You wouldn't have been the most popular man...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no, no.

**Roy Fowler:** The word spreads doesn't it.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Particularly in this one case...the director and the producer weren't on speaking terms and they would get you on one side and say, "What's he done now, what's he done now." And the other's saying, "Well..." So one had to be a bit of a peacemaker as well. Oh well. How are we doing for time?

**Roy Fowler:** Well, you have I would think 45 minutes before I leave you.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well we've left Elstree now and...

**Roy Fowler:** Well we haven't quite. One final thing we haven't touched on - the arrival of ACT. You say you were part of the arrival of the Union at the studio.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh no, I can't claim that, oh no.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh I thought you were when you mentioned - when you talked about Arthur Graham.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no, no. The fact was I was signed up by Arthur Graham I think it was, so that if I'm right, somebody said that ACT records were housed at Stanmore during the war, and because of Fighter Command Headquarters being nearby, there'd been a bomb and is this true that most of the records were wiped out?

**Roy Fowler:** The early records seem to have been - yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh well anyhow. I was not at all, let's get this absolutely straight, I was not at all helpful, I was not at all an ACT activist or anything. But I realised that the way that we were being exploited, a union was going to be a very good thing, so I enrolled with Arthur Graham who was...there was another man, I can't think who it was who was with Arthur as the pioneers there. But I can't think who it was now. But I certainly just put my name down but I didn't contribute anything really in the way of getting members or doing anything about it.

**Roy Fowler:** Do you remember your number?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No I can't say I do, no.

**Roy Fowler:** It would be very, very low.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes it would be yes.

**Roy Fowler:** I'm told that the first sixty numbers were assigned to Elstree and Arthur gave himself number 1, and you would have been in the first sixty then.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes I suppose I would, yes. It's quite plausible, yes. Yes. Is Arthur still around?

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, yes. I won't talk about him on tape because it's difficult, but yes. And in good shape too.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Actually we came together after the war, he photographed a picture for me and he also did a television series with me. But anyway, when I had my falling out with Mr Elder, I....

**Roy Fowler:** Ah now, you haven't mentioned that. I was going to ask you why you left the studio and...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I thought I'd told you. I think as far as I can remember it was over some petty, petty thing over some expenses with Elder.

**Mary Harvey:** Over half a crown.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** That's right, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** You said that did you?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh. Forgive me.

**Mary Harvey:** And aside wasn't it.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. Maybe the tape wasn't running, but anyhow. I'd left with no job to go to, which was pretty stupid having been married.

**Roy Fowler:** Can I be sure though we have that account, just for the record, because it sounds interesting why people moved. Could you describe that again please?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I had been quite happy working under Stapleton and when he left and Elder took over there was a distinct change of attitude, there was a distinct change of things. And I never liked him when he was supervising the art department. He was one of these very domineering Scots, an ideal man after Maxwell's heart I would say. But he didn't go down very well with the ordinary lads. And so as I said it was entirely my fault and I was very stupid but it

was something like a petty cash thing that I disputed and he threw it out or something and I just said, "Oh well, I'm off." [Laughs]. And I was. But we managed to survive a few weeks and then I was lucky to get, in May 1935, this job with Raoul Walsh at the Bush. The thing was that they were making a lot of pictures at that time. Gaumont's had a tremendous number I think, about six on the go, including I think one in Canada and one somewhere else. And this was to be an Army recruiting film with Jimmy Cagney playing the lead. It's called O.H.M.S., which sounded like an Income Tax demand to most people. Raoul Walsh was contracted to direct and Cagney was to star and of course at the last moment Cagney had this big court case with Warners and they put an injunction, or whatever they call them in America to stop him leaving the country, so no Jimmy Cagney. And we had to fall back on a character called Wally Ford who was not exactly star material.

**Roy Fowler:** Was he brought over?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Pardon?

**Roy Fowler:** Was he brought over for it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes. You see a lot of films now where he plays not just the hero's buddy but the buddy's buddy, that sort of thing.

**Roy Fowler:** He was B list.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, that's right. So that was our star name. And we had various other odd Americans like Grace Bradley and a few others like that. But Anna Lee I think was the leading girl in it, and Johnny Mills was in it I think as well. And we had locations down at Tadworth and Salisbury Plain and we built a Chinese village in Amesbury just outside Amesbury. And it was really incredible because there was a picture which Walter Forde made called Orders Is Orders where an American film director comes over and they make an Army film and everything goes wrong. [Laughs] Well, what happened with us was much funnier than that but it did give me a chance to meet Raoul.

**Roy Fowler:** The film was...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Hmmm?

**Roy Fowler:** I'm sorry.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, I did get to work with Raoul Walsh, who I had the highest regard for and when you see these action films with Errol Flynn and Jimmy Cagney, that Michael Curtiz and Raoul Walsh who were the two big action directors for Warners. And he was...I think the best director I ever worked with. But he was very relaxed, he wasn't at all the sort of Hollywood megaphone type, he was fairly quiet. Roy Kellino was the cameraman and we had a lot of location on that and it was extraordinary because we had literally hundreds of Chinese...the number of Chinese restaurants in England at that time was pretty small and they were confined to places like Liverpool, Cardiff (where there were docks) and London East End. In the West End,

Leon's and the one upstairs in Piccadilly and I think two others. About four Chinese restaurants in the whole of the West End but there were quite a few still down in Limehouse. And so the entire Chinese population of London working waiters etc. were transported down to Amesbury to play the... [break in recording].

**Roy Fowler:** Smedley Aston, side, er, tape 2. We will just have to go back on that I'm afraid, the tape ran out. I was listening rather than paying attention. Back on the Chinese waiters.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Right well, this story is set with some fictitious thing where there is a Chinese insurrection or something, which I really can't remember the details now.

**Roy Fowler:** Let me say this, the film was on Channel 4 two weeks ago, at three o'clock in the morning.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Two weeks ago, oh I saw it about two years ago on Channel 4 I think it was. Oh I didn't realise that.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, quite recently I saw it for the first time. It's the climax of the picture when Wallace Ford gives his all for the sake of the British Empire.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** That's right, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Well art-directed that sequence I thought. Where did you build the sets?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well this particular thing with the Chinese rooms and things, I think it was one of these many continental art directors, I think it was a man called Metzner, Erno Metzner does that ring a bell?

**Roy Fowler:** Was it Junge, Alfred Junge?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Junge? No, he was at the Bush, I said they had six pictures...

**Roy Fowler:** He got the credit.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Junge got a credit on it? Did he really? Well he...I knew Junge subsequently at Denham with Mickey Powell and so on and so forth but I don't remember him very much on that. But obviously I think he was in charge of the thing so he got a credit. But the chap who really was on the job was this Erno Metzner who was I think Viennese or Hungarian, I can't remember which. But he was a funny little man but he was very good. And as you say, he did produce very good results.

**Roy Fowler:** Was that out at Northolt?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** We did shoot some stuff at Northolt, where as you know Gaumont British had a lot there. And we did several night exteriors, I can remember that. But the scene with the Chinese thing on the skyline, that was done at Amesbury. But we had a retired General as

Technical Adviser called Larkin. And he apparently had read the script earlier on, several things he didn't like. So he went to see Mickey Balcon I think at the Bush and said he couldn't stomach certain things and could they be put right. And Mickey in his usual tactful way said, "Oh well I'll have a word with the writers and see what we can do." Anyhow, he apparently walked out of the office rather displeased. And so I was going up in the lift with Raoul Walsh a few minutes later and he said, "Gees Smedley, is it true the Colonel's quit?" I said, "Well I think General Larkin was rather distressed about certain things but I don't think he's thrown it in yet. And he didn't, he was with us. But as I said, Roy Kellino photographed it and we were down at Baister[?] in Amesbury itself and it was very pleasant because the extraordinary thing was, as I think I told Mary, I had got this job...Victor Piers was the equivalent of Stapleton at the Bush at that time, and he was very nice indeed and he said, "Well here's this job." And I said, "Well that's marvellous." And then suddenly, suddenly, suddenly I was told that Raoul Walsh had brought his own assistant with him from America and I thought, "Jesus, this is going to be really difficult." But it happened to be David MacDonald and we became great friends ever since, right up to his death, after the war and things. And he was in the Army and I was in the RAF and we met just...I think we sort of celebrated VE Night together at Rank's. He was a Lieutenant Colonel by then [laughs] and I was a mere Flight Lieutenant. But anyhow, Dave was a great lad and we had a tremendous rapport and we had never a cross word the whole time through because he was so easy to get on with. But it could have been a very nasty situation.

**Roy Fowler:** Anything specific...oh one comment, which is the picture struck me very much as being a recruiting...almost as being an official recruitment film.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh it was, oh yes absolutely. Oh yes.

**Roy Fowler:** So what official input was there?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, the War Office had gone to the Ostrers or Mickey and said, "Look, this business about Hitler and all that. There is going to be a war and we're going to be a bit short of lads. Will you make us a propaganda film?" Oh yes. No...

**Roy Fowler:** No secret about that.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...No beating about the bush, no.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. And did they put any money into it do you know? Or was it purely...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh no, I don't think so, no. I think...

**Roy Fowler:** ...that it was the Ostrers and Balcon being very patriotic,

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, oh yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Interesting that so early the War Office was becoming aware.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, er...I don't know the ins and outs of that, that's a good question, yes. I can't contribute anything to that but it is, in view of some of the alarming things one heard of happening in 1936 and 1937 in the way of unpreparedness, it's extraordinary that in May 1935 as you say, somebody could have been aware. But yes I hadn't quite thought of that. Anyway.

**Roy Fowler:** How about Walsh himself? Any thumbnail sketches of him?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. He was very unassuming. He had a very attractive French wife, I can't remember what her name was, Gabby something or other. And I read subsequently, there was an extraordinary story that he'd been to Berlin, or he'd been to Germany and he had apparently got some friend or somebody in the State Department and he'd said about what was happening in Europe because America didn't want to...in the days of isolationism didn't want to know. And apparently Walsh had sort of said to them, "Look, these bloody Krauts aren't kidding." And he had quite a lot to do and somebody said that he'd gone back as near the war as 1938, supposed to be a holiday, in order to bring up to date his comments about the general situation there. But he was very unassuming and he had a ranch and I remember we were on location at Guildford because the Buffs [N.B. The Royal East Kent Regiment] I think we used the Buffs and their headquarters were at Guildford in those days. And it was a very duff day with clouds and very few chinks of light and so on. We had been sitting around for a hell of a long time and I'd said to Raoul, "Look, shall we get call for lunch?" And he said, "Well I don't know, there's a chance. Look what is it now, only it's only quarter to, no, let's give it another half hour." So I said, "Okay." And so then suddenly, about five past twelve Roy said, "Hey look, there's going to be a break." And I looked round, Walsh had disappeared, no sign of Walsh at all. "God" I said to my assistant Ken [?], "Where's he gone?" He said, "Well he went down, I think he's gone down to the cattle market." And I said, "For Christ's sake get him back!" And so he comes back just in the nick of time. I said to Ken, "What was he doing?" He said, "He was chatting to some old farmers about a certain make of Freisian cattle." [Laughs.] And he had this eye patch because apparently it was a stone...car accident and he was driving and a stone came up, cracked the windscreen and the glass took out his left eye.

**Roy Fowler:** A jack rabbit he says.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh jack rabbit was it? Oh. Well anyhow, you've got a more up to date thing on that but I know it was due to a driving accident. But he was a very, very pleasant man and he didn't worry much about the rushes. After he'd seen about the first week's work and he knew what Roy's standard of lighting was and he was quite happy with that, he didn't really worry. But he brought over also a chap who'd done what you might call striking matches on, called Bert Hanlon who was really a sort of gag man, who used to do bits of script and God knows what. And I'd seen him in one or two pictures. I think Walsh was in Twentieth Century - do you remember a company called Twentieth Century, before it became Twentieth Century Fox? They made about eight films. And one of them was called On the Bowery [N.B. The Bowery]. And I think Bert was in that, playing a piano in a brothel or something. And Bert was around just to do bits of script and tidy up bits and so on. But Walsh was very relaxed but he knew exactly what he wanted, he knew exactly what was going to cut and what wasn't. I mean he most economical as far as not doing cover for this and cover for that if it wasn't necessary. He knew exactly what he would want.

**Roy Fowler:** He worked with Griffith you know. He'd been on Birth of a Nation and Intolerance.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Did he really? Did he get in as a prop man? Somebody said he'd got in as a prop man.

**Roy Fowler:** I think it was something like that, yes, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, I think he did yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Very modest beginning, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But he was a very genuine sort of chap and so far removed from what one thought in those days was a typical Hollywood director.

**Roy Fowler:** The picture has great pace still, which is not something that British pictures had in those days.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh no, no, this is exactly my point, this is exactly what I was trying to say. He did understand things so well from the point of view of temp.

**Roy Fowler:** Did he work in the cutting room or...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I think you know, he'd see a first assembly and he'd make certain comments and that sort of thing. I can't even remember who the editor was. Was it Bob Dearing?

**Roy Fowler:** No idea. I can't recall.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I can't be sure, no, no. But I worked with six or seven Hollywood directors but he was really a very pleasant man, very nice. And he really knew what he was doing, but the last person to start throwing his weight around, the last person to say, "Well I'll show you so and so's how a picture should be made." Nothing like that. And it was a very happy picture as far as I was concerned, although one had this awful thing before on started, knowing that one wasn't getting a second best, one was getting a third best in the lead, which didn't help things. But he'd never say, "Oh gee Wally what the hell, Jimmy Cagney wouldn't have done it like that" or something. No that wasn't him at all.

**Roy Fowler:** Cagney would have been great, he really would have been marvellous.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, yes. That was the whole thing, you know. But the Warner Brothers at that time, they carried so much weight that they'd get onto the Justice Department and say, "Stop this guy" and that would be it [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** Well all their actors were suing though, Davis did didn't she? And de Havilland to break their contracts.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, oh yes.

**Roy Fowler:** It was the slave contract in those days, seven years.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Absolutely, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** So what after that then? O.H.M.S.?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well it was a question that by the autumn of 1935, the old banks were starting to hammer on the Ostrer's doors, and with six pictures, I imagine that must be several million pound even in those days out in production money. And they said, "Hey, hey, hey, you've got to pull things in a bit." So as last in, I was first out.

**Roy Fowler:** How long did you spend there?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I was only at the Bush for six months you see.

**Roy Fowler:** That's all.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** For that picture. And Victor said to me, "Well look, this is what's going to happen. And as you were the last person on..." And I said, "Well this is good because I'm going to be ahead of the field." And I was. And I got a job with George King down at Shepperton whereas a lot of the others came a few months - got sacked a few months afterwards, they were out for quite a long time.

**Roy Fowler:** How would you compare Gaumont British with BIP at that stage, in terms of professionalism?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh it was a much more sophisticated operation. Okay, as far as studio, the actual studio set-up. The actual...was absolutely ridiculous, where everything had to be done on a lift and you had to come down and you had to move over from one set to the other with this lift, and if the lift jammed you had to do... That was absolutely criminal. But as far as the organisation...as I said they had Production Managers at the Bush, the whole thing was done on, not on a penny-pinching basis. It was done on a proper...they were trying to make pictures as good as anything. I think Rome Express was the first one when they re-opened the studios, and that had a certain sort of polish to it. And there was a very marked difference, even though they were operating - I mean the studio layout at Elstree was so much superior, but the management and the actual facilities at the Bush were so much better.

**Roy Fowler:** How apparent was Michael Balcon?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Not to me because I was only a humble First Assistant. I only met him once but I did work for Mickey during the war, I'll tell you that later if there's time. But I was...he was the big, high, muckity-muck and the 'Polish corridor' littered with Ostrers and so on. No, it was very interesting to me after Elstree because you couldn't have had greater contrast.

**Roy Fowler:** There was an even stronger European influence I think on the Bush at that stage than at Elstree wasn't there?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Right, yes. All the makeup department, they were all Germans I think. And quite a few cameramen of course. And was there an editor or not? I think I'm thinking of Ealing and they had American ones, I got on well with Ludwig who was American of course. Yes, oh yes, they had a very, very strong Continental thing there, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. So we're talking '35. What state is the British film industry in? You say the Ostrers had to retrench. They made some expensive pictures that didn't sell in the States didn't they? I guess that was their problem... Things like Jew Suss.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well they did, that's right. They made too many and they were costing too much.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. But they over-extended themselves primarily with Jew Suss did they not?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes... With what?

**Roy Fowler:** Jew Suss, was...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Ah yes, well that...quite right. That was made beforehand, that was probably made in '34. And I think the receipts from that were not as good as they expected. It wasn't...it had cost a lot and it didn't get what they thought it would gross at the box office. And there'd been one or two others so that with this additional over-expansion they did take quite a big knock so that the Bush really by December '35, the Bush had been cut back to virtually nothing.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. Did your paths cross at all with Hitchcock at this studio? Or...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well no, I was only employed for one picture and I was there for O.H.M.S. and that was it. And when that finished...

**Roy Fowler:** So you didn't mix at all?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No.

**Roy Fowler:** No, right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** And I hardly got to know anybody there, you know, because there was so much location and so on. So I can't say, but the impression one got was it was a well-run studio and it had - when you walked into the bloody foyer you got the impression [laughs] - whereas at Elstree it was really nowheresville, you know. But Elstree had from...

**Roy Fowler:** Shall I stop? [Break in recording]

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I'll try and be brief. I went then to George King as First Assistant Director. And during that time his Production Manager was Hal Richmond and he got a job with Jack Buchanan. Do you remember Jack Buchanan started in film.

**Roy Fowler:** Very much so.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well Harold Richmond got a very good job with Jack Buchanan as PM and so George promoted me to PM and that's where I got my first chance as a PM. Although, you will say, I had been doing the job at Elstree unpaid and uncredited, so I did know something about what the job was all about. But anyhow, George was a delightful person to work with and although the pictures were all quota quickies, and they really were pretty rubbishy...

**Roy Fowler:** He lived in a manor house on the banks of the Thames?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, he lived in a very delightful house on the bend of the river at Laleham...no not Laleham, Laleham's the other direction. What's the place between Shepperton and Walton, there's a very nice curve in the river looking across and this is a house which overhung that. Very nice house indeed. And he was married to a very attractive woman who I think was half Javanese. And her sister was Olga Bernett[?], was married to the air correspondent on the Daily Express, who was killed very early on in the war. But he I think divorced her and George, I don't know whether he married again, but she remarried, and somebody quite good and I think she went to live in Ireland. But George was an extremely urbane character and he did very well. The old gag whereby if you could make them for 14 and 6 and sell them at a pound a foot, you were laughing. And this what happened. And every three weeks we knocked out a picture and George was very happy.

**Roy Fowler:** It was a continuous operation?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Pretty well, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** We made for Paramount, we made for MGM and we made for somebody else, I forget. I don't know whether you would like to have - I mean the other day I noticed one of them was on. Brian has actually taped it, was on at two o'clock in the morning, week before last. The Ticket of Leave Man.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** With Tod Slaughter.

**Roy Fowler:** The Tod Slaughter ones are always turning up aren't they? Who's making the money out of them now do you know?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I don't know who took over George's estate because I saw George, he lived in the manor in Davis Street after the war and he offered me a job and I'd already gone

to Pinewood. And so I couldn't. But he was ideal to work with because he didn't fuss and he let you get on with it and that was great. But if you'd like me to just give you a few of the titles as the sort of stuff we did. The Elder Brother, Wanted, It's Never Too Late to Mend (Tod), Merry Comes to Town...now that was Zasu Pitts do you remember...?

**Roy Fowler:** Oh yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...a comedian with a sort of...you know....

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, a funny voice.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well the trouble was that as soon as she came on the screen of course everybody burst into laughter and this was supposed to be a straight part. So the die was cast before we began [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** I think it was her voice more than anything that got the laugh wasn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, I think so, yes. Well she couldn't do much about that. [reading off a list] Double Exposures...god knows...Love's Young Dream[?], yes that was really something. The Bells of Saint Mary's...not Trinian's though! Under a Cloud, Riding High...now that was a most extraordinary thing. It was a period piece and I know among those was Claude Dampier, do you remember a comedian called Dampier? And we had some genuine penny farthings and we were actually shooting some location work on, I think it was Farm Common, somewhere down just past Chertsey and...I can't remember...we had to move I think, it was rain or something, and we parked the penny farthing there in the middle of this common and nobody in sight and no traffic of any sort, and we went back a quarter of an hour later and it had completely disappeared. And so how do you get rid of a penny farthing in the middle of a common with nobody about? This was a definite UFO encounter [laughs] but it was quite extraordinary because George always to say afterwards, "Lost any more penny farthings lately?" [Laughs]. And they weren't too easy to come by in those days, and I'd imagine nowadays there's probably even less. And then Riding High, that I think was what that picture was, yes. Then Sexton Blake and the Hooded Terror, which is the one that Brian taped last week, Silver Top, I can't remember what that was...and then John Halifax, Gentleman...that was a good one yes, very good. And then when that all finished up I decided that I had done enough by then and I got a call from MGM to work for Sam Wood on Goodbye Mr Chips. Now the picture had started, they'd done their location up at Repton in Derbyshire and I don't know what happened, whether the First Assistant was fired or whether he was ill and had to leave the picture, and I can't even remember who it was but the fact was that I took over, having missed I think about the first four weeks of shooting and went right through to the end with Sam Wood, who was pleasant...but not quite in the same class as a Walsh. And so then, when Chips finished I worked...the only time I did a documentary, with a writer called Jim Williams. It was for the Port of London Authority. It was most interesting. We covered all the docks on the river then for the PLA. And their domain was right from Tilbury, right down to Teddington. And all these extraordinary warehouses with everything you can think of: tobacco, liquor, everything you can think of. And Jim was suddenly called off by Carol Reed to write the script for The Stars Look Down, so left me to direct this documentary [laughs] which I'd never done in my life, I'd never had any ambition to direct. But as it was ships and not actors I

was able to cope. And it was apparently quite successful and the PLA were quite delighted. And then George called me up in July '39 and said, "We're going to do The Chinese Bungalow. Can you make it?" And I said, "Certainly." So I went back to George and I think we were based at Beaconsfield. Paul Lukas played the wicked Chinaman, and after that, September 1939 and I was in Ben Goetz's office, I'd gone back there for Busman's Honeymoon which was going to be directed by Richard Thorpe, as you know, subsequently it was done by Arthur Woods, the last thing he ever did wasn't it?

**Roy Fowler:** I think it was, yes, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well Richard Thorpe was over from Hollywood to direct it and I went back there in August '39 to get prepared, and then suddenly 1st September, Friday, Poland. And 11 o'clock announcement in Ben Goetz's office and blah blah blah, and, "Don't come in on Monday morning." And so that was it [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** And they were 'gone with the wind' after that!

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** That's right, absolutely, yes. But there's a lovely story on that. There was a very.....I think you must remember Dora Wright, do you remember? One of the early female Production Managers. She was - She used to work with Victor Saville a lot - Dora Wright. And I think she went to the Crown Film Unit.

**Roy Fowler:** She did, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Anyhow, she was a great character but suddenly when the war finally came, Victor, who'd been in Hollywood quite some time then, had still got his house up at Highgate, right in Highgate village, very nice house indeed really. So he rings Dora up in the small hours of the morning and says, "Look Dora, this is true isn't it about the war?" She said, "Yes." He said, "Well for Christ's sake get all the furniture together, get everything out of that and take it down to West Country." Apparently he had some connection with somewhere outside Bristol or somewhere to put everything in store there. And he said, "For heaven's sake there's a very valuable port - don't let them shake up the port whatever happens because that really is worth a lot of money." And that was Victor's bit for the war effort.

**Mary Harvey:** That was his first reaction was it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** "Save the port." Smed. I know it's approaching time when you have to be off.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I'm afraid so, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** It seems to me criminal that we can't have a second session at some stage - right?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** What - post war you mean?

**Roy Fowler:** Well, even pre-war. I'd love to talk about Shepperton, I'd love to talk about Denham.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, well we haven't done much about...I can give you quite a bit about Shepperton because actually Frank went down there straight from BIP. He was offered a job there at Sound City [N.B. 'Shepperton Studios' and 'Sound City' are synonymous in this period] by Norman Louden and they were making...trying to be better films like Captain Blood [N.B. Actually, Colonel Blood] and things like that. And then subsequently of course he went from there when obviously the programme wasn't going to work out, to Warner Brothers where he was very successful with the Max Miller films and God knows what. So that was that. But Shepperton was...they'd built these two big stages because when originally I went down to Sound City when Frank first went there, it was very, very crude and you had the glasshouse exterior, going back to silent days and a little tiny stage and another thing. But then, when they'd built these two big inter-connecting blocks A, B and C and D, John Stafford had one and George King had the other. And so there was quite a lot of work going on there. But as I say, time is a-pressing... [break in recording]

**Roy Fowler:** It's May 1st, election day actually...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, it certainly is.

**Roy Fowler:** ...and we're continuing...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I don't have to worry, I don't get a vote.

**Roy Fowler:** You don't get a vote in...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I'm ineligible, we voted last November [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** Neither do I actually because I still have an American citizenship.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Are you really? How extraordinary. Well, where do we go from here?

**Roy Fowler:** We're going back to the BIP days because you want to add a few words about editors there.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** We're on air are we?

**Roy Fowler:** We are.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well as far as the cutting rooms are concerned, it was quite an interesting set-up because the supervising editor was a character called Bill Hammond, who had the nickname Bill 'Drumbell' Hammond, for reasons I'll go into later, the main editors under him were Les Norman, Bert Bates, Walter Stokvis, Jarvey, who I presume was called Jarvis, but I never knew what his Christian name was, he was always Jarvey to everybody...and a man called Brown [N.B. possibly John Neill Brown] who I seem to remember went on to Merton Park. I

can't remember too much about him, but of course Les Norman and Bert distinguished themselves very, very much in later life and although Bert never became a director, he did I think become what you might call the leading editor working for Carol Reed and others of that ilk. When he died he got a very big obituary I think in The Times, but I never discovered what he died of. But anyhow, that's by the by. But the cutting rooms were kept pretty busy because, as I explained, they were churning out so much footage a week. And I think in those days editors only had one girl assistant and the only girl that really comes to mind as an assistant was Flora Newton, who subsequently became an editor in her own right. And she stayed on there when most of these other characters, like Bert and Les had moved on to higher things. I think while we're back at BIP I'm going to just hastily mention the fact that the [break in recording]

**Roy Fowler:** Something's happened, I don't know why.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh, perhaps it's me.

**Roy Fowler:** No...would you say something? [break in recording]

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...it was quite extraordinary the way that departments were run with the absolute minimum personnel. For instance, the wardrobe. Well we had quite a lot of costume pictures, naturally most concerned with Drake of England which had really a big budget for clothes. And I think it was Sophie Harris who was responsible for the costumes. It was quite well done as I think you will agree from the stills that you've looked at. But a character called Fred Pridmore[?] he ran the whole thing with I think occasional part-time help from some local girl from the village. But I mean that was really a pretty big job and yet he did it very successfully, covering probably as much as four or five pictures at a time. And then of course you had on the other things you had the carpenters' shop which is quite a big operation, with Gerry Moss [? Possibly Gerald Moss] who I think we all know, his father, Arthur Moss, was the head of the carpenters there. And I suppose there at peak time they'd employ as much as 50 carpenters and stage hands. And the electricians, there was a character called Cecil Craig[?] I think it was, who used to come round about half an hour before shooting and look up at the rails like that and then he'd make a signal like that [laughs] and they're not wanted tomorrow because they're moving onto a smaller set and they had two hours' notice and that was it in those days - "Don't come tomorrow." But by and large it was quite extraordinary, and even when you came to the financial side, there was a funny little, I think he was a Scot, called Ingles[?] and he was the Chief Accountant for the studio. And underneath him, all he had was a chap who was the Chief Cashier, who paid out all the extras and things and did all the salaries, whose name began with an S - Seymour[?] or something like that. And then I think there were two ledger clerks in the main accounts office. So it was all run on an absolute minimum basis. And it's quite extraordinary the fact that with so much going on, so few people were really at the top. And nowadays when you see a unit list where everything including the apprentice this that and the other are listed, you realise that the actual heads of departments and key personnel at Elstree, where five pictures might be on the go, was probably about twelve people, you know.

**Roy Fowler:** Was there any 'shaping up' at the Studio gate for sparks or extras. Did they turn up in the hope of work?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes. Well I mean, extras certainly yes. There were two gates. The one where as I think you mentioned, Joe lived on the job at a little lodge, that was the gate where the hourly boys clocked in. There was a NATKE and ETU had their time clocks in there and that was it. The rest of the staff came in on the first gate, which is next to the casting office. And therefore the extras came through a little thing, a little wicket gate by the casting office, and were checked in through the gate where alongside, behind the casting office, was the studio transport department, which consisted of mainly a fleet of clapped out Armstrong Sidney cars. I think you saw a picture of Stanley Lupino on the bonnet of one of them [laughs] which was used as a camera car. But they were the most heavy and unwieldy vehicles. And Vaughn Breche[?] who I think must have originally have been a Dutchman, he certainly had a rather odd accent, and he has an assistant, sort of ran the studio transport, which consisted I think of about two prop vans and a rather clapped out generator. But it was all rather extraordinary how it all happened. However, I think perhaps that we've done enough of BIP now.

**Roy Fowler:** Well, a question I think I forgot to ask yesterday was, was there any intention of seeking an American release for...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...any what?

**Roy Fowler:** Was there an intention on Maxwell's part of seeking an American release for his pictures?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh I think when we got on to better pictures like Tauber there certainly was. And if you may remember, why I mentioned Tauber, because I saw it recently, I didn't see the actual screening of it, but it was shown on television. An extraordinary picture made by Tauber with Jimmy Durante in it as an agent [N.B. Land Without Music]. And I think you know the idea was in the back of somebody's mind that maybe [laughs] this was the key to the American market. But I think with Bebe Daniels pictures like The Southern Maid there were more hopes that they would go into America and I think that was it. But in those days, as you know, the situation was so tight as far as anyone getting in without considerable clout. Which although Maxwell had the cinemas, I think he'd probably figured that he could do some sort of deal with the Americans whereby ABC, which I think was the largest circuit then, slightly more houses than Odeon, he could perhaps do something with the Americans. But I don't think they were really interested with the product they had. However, while on the question of distribution, there's one character who I didn't mention yesterday. I did mention Wardour Films, which the release outfit, but the Managing Director of that, was a character called Arthur Dent, who really was to any cartoonist the epitome of a film salesman, complete with cigar and what have you. And he came up with some very natty slogans to sell pictures, the only one of which I can remember, which will forever stick in my mind, was some film which I think was with Stanley Lupino, which was splashed in the trade press as, "Another juicy box-office pippin from the same stable as..." and some other previous picture. And so we always used to think, "Oh here comes another pippin from the stable!" [laughs] But anyhow, Arthur Dent only came down to the Studio periodically, but he was always very affable and always very keen to chat to the director and say, "Last one did very well" and all this, that and the other. But as I said, in those days the distribution arm was kept very far away from the actual production.

**Roy Fowler:** When I was fiddling with the equipment I overheard you and Mary talking about Sidney Gilliat's bete noir John Courtney Appleby Thorpe. You said you had a final thought...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well no I think what I was saying to Mary was that thinking of him last night reminded me of Arthur Dent and that's all it was. And I think the fact that Thorpe's name still appeared as a director on the notepaper when I first went there, but I had no further...

**Roy Fowler:** The Wardour Street contingent. Because I think Sidney always talked about meeting him on Wardour Street.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes well you see Sidney had far more access in that sort of way than I did as a mere runner, which I was at the first - 1933 - stage you know. And gradually one worked up and gained considerable experience over fifteen films. Each one being different. But another factor that I should mention when we were talking about the smallness of staff running the Studio was, although the First Assistant and the Production Manager were the same thing [laughs] when on a thing like location at Plymouth on Drake [Drake of England], the cashier as well didn't come down. The cashier was done by the Second Assistant. The First carried the money but all the paying of bills and all that thing was done by the Second Assistant. So you had...nowadays you'd have a small army of this that and the other but you didn't have a location cashier, that was all done by the Assistant Directors.

**Roy Fowler:** Do you have any memory of what people were paid?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** [Laughs] Well I suppose bloody little, yes. But I think as a First Assistant to start with I think I was only getting a fiver on the first one and that goes up to about eight when I left. But that I suppose in those days when the average industrial wage would be what - about two fifty or three pounds a week.

**Roy Fowler:** No overtime and no perks at all I suppose?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Not really, no. I think you got Sunday. I think you got a day off, a holiday day if you worked Sunday. But certainly I mean Saturday, it was a six-day week and that was it. But I think on the very, very, very few days that one did work Sunday, I think they gave you a holiday off in lieu. I don't think they'd give you any money.

**Roy Fowler:** And what sort of notice could they give? A week? A month?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** A week's notice.

**Roy Fowler:** A week, right. How about extras? How much would they be paid?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh it was a guinea a day in those days. Evening dress extras got 10 bob extra. So in other words for [?] or something, if you were lucky. And they did get overtime.

**Roy Fowler:** Right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** They were able to the FAA to get overtime. So they did an eight-hour day and I think they also got paid a meagre pittance for costume fitting. So they were comparatively well-off [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** Right. Were they a motley bunch?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Very, yes. But there were one or two very loveable ones and Terry-Thomas I remember well, when his name was Hoar. His real surname was Hoar. And he was always one you'd have for well-dressed extras or evening dress extras. And it was very interesting to me because having left him as an extra, and one which you could always rely on because if you put him behind the principals you'd know he'd be able to do the business without looking in the camera or doing anything silly. He'd look as if he was enjoying himself, and he was always immaculately turned out. But he'd always say, when you knew that the last scenes had been done and all the long shots covered, that there'd be a cutting-down tomorrow, he'd say, "We're going to be all right tomorrow aren't we?" Even if he wasn't behind the principals, which he was generally shrewd enough to manoeuvre his place there. But it was very interesting to me that I left Elstree and I don't think I worked with Terry again at either the Bush or Shepperton, and then of course during the war he became a star and after the war here was this guy who was now a big West End star. But he was quite the same because I worked with him, one of the last pictures he did was a rather disastrous film with an American director called Sam Gallu who was a charming man. And the thing was that Terry has a part in that and that was quite late in the '50s but this was before he was really seriously ill. And we were talking about the old days and things and an extraordinary thing happened because we were shooting in a place up the road here, in Avenue Road, no, next one to Avenue Road, the one where the barracks are in St John's Wood. And it was - Young's Brewery had this rather novel idea of having a trattoria pub. And it was the first of its track pubs where you had an Italian restaurant on the first floor and a normal, rather sophisticated pub downstairs. And we were shooting in there and there was a scene with a dog and it wasn't a Rottweiler, it was a Weimaraner. Are you an expert on dogs? But there is a German breed called Weimaraner. And this dog was from one of the people who supplied well-trained and highly efficient dogs for film work. And I said to Terry beforehand, "Look, do you want to sort of have a thing[?]" He said, "Oh all dogs love me, don't worry at all. I'm sure he'll do his stuff." Because they'd done the scene with a stand-in and the dog had done whatever it did, picked up the thing and moved from the table...and the most extraordinary thing happened because it was a woman in charge of the dog and Terry got in, sat there and suddenly she gave the order and the dog attacked Terry [RF laughs]. And I was absolutely, completely frozen to the spot. And fortunately she then dashed in and seized him. And I said to her, "What on earth happened?" And she said, "Oh I gave the wrong command." They'd obviously been doing a picture last week where he'd had to that and unfortunately Terry was somewhat shaken, but he went back and he did it again and it was all right. But a lot of actors would say, "Oh thank you very much, I'm off!"

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, I've seen...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Not Terry, he was a proper trooper in that respect. But it was a very funny thing, having known him all those years and as far as we were concerned, chatting in the corner, it was back in the old days. No big star nonsense about him at all.

**Roy Fowler:** Menace of dogs and children. Mary, you had a point.

**Mary Harvey:** I had a thought when Smed was talking about the extras. My first memory of things was extras was '40 pr '41 roughly. And there was a wonderful man called Captain Cricket, do you remember him?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, he was in charge of FAA wasn't he?

**Mary Harvey:** He was the secretary of FAA.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, that's right. I remember the name but I can't say I remember much about him, but I remember the name.

**Mary Harvey:** In those days, because you...a lot of the extras had been called up, so you got very strange assortments when you asked for so many extras. You got really all sorts and Captain Cricket came down to Denham one day I remember, just to see how the lot were doing you know. And he was a very dapper little man, with white hair, frightfully well-dressed, very elegant. I remember he gave me a lift back to London in his car.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh my God in those days that was really something, yes.

**Mary Harvey:** But he was a charming old boy. I think he was quite old, really. But do you remember him?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I remember the name well, but as you say, he probably started functioning about '39 onwards and I just sort of missed him. But the name certainly rings a distant bell.

**Mary Harvey:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But can I just, if we're talking about extras, if you want a bit of coincidence...what was the name of the propaganda picture which Larry Olivier made as a Russian, at Denham. [NB The Demi-Paradise]

**Mary Harvey:** Oh yes.

**Roy Fowler:** It's a quote from Shakespeare, isn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** I want to say This Happy Breed, but it's...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** ...very much in those lines, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** It was Two Cities. I remember that.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well if you want a quick [break in recording]

**Roy Fowler:** We're now on side 4, yes. I'm sorry for that break. Can you resume that story Smed?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Right well, very briefly...at St. Atton[?] which was a vast place there. I went on a technical training course and much to my horror I passed out 'AC1', which was considered pretty good because they were of course all the top chaps who were all leading aircraftsmen. But having got over 50 percent I was then assigned to Hurricanes, who had suddenly been called in because there'd been a lot of bombing on the Cardiff and Barry docks where a lot of food was coming in. And so I was servicing these Hurricanes and suddenly my Flight Commander called me in said, "I've just noticed you've had considerable administrative experience." I said, "Well yes, I was a Production Manager." "Oh really?" I said, "In films." "Oh well that's very interesting isn't it?" So he said, "Well they're desperate for people who've had administrative experience in civilian life. As you're unfit for aircrew I'm going to put you up for a board to the Air Ministry." Which he duly did. And I can't start to describe this board because at that time, everybody who was any good in the Air Force was doing responsible jobs, and these were the deadbeats of the deadbeats and I don't think they were all from the Air Force. I think there were a couple of old naval commanders who were asleep at the back or something like that. Anyhow, I went up to this board and much to my horror I was told to get a medical, which I'd already had two beforehand. But that was the thing to show that you'd got through. So anyhow, there I was, I had no course or anything and I was suddenly given money to go to Simpsons and buy myself a uniform and although I could not claim to be a gentleman I was now an Acting Pilot Officer. So I was at home on leave and suddenly I got a postgram to report to a station in Shropshire called Turnhill. And I was supposed to be there at seven o'clock but there was an air raid on the way and the line just short of Shrewsbury had been bombed. So by the time I staggered into Turnhill it had gone ten o'clock at night. And the orderly officer was a charming old boy with Boer War ribbons because in those days, this was before the RAF regiment was formed and so what they entire aerodrome defence was, these unfortunate lads who had come from overseas, be it the Argentine or Sri Lanka or God knows where, who'd come in for aircrew duties. The bottleneck was such that there was no chance of training them for months. And so they had little white flashes in their hats and they manned guns, most of which didn't work, on the perimeter of airfields, under the command of officers who nobody would have in the Army or anywhere else. But he was a charming old boy, and I said to him, "Look, can you tell me, why am I here?" And he said, "Oh hasn't anybody told you?" I said, "No. One minute I was servicing Hurricanes, the next minute I've got fitted for a uniform, I haven't been on a course and what am I doing here?" He said, "Well it's very hush-hush. But you're going to Canada." I said, "Going to Canada? But I don't want to go to Canada." "Ah" he said, "that's the whole point. You're taking the place of somebody who doesn't want to go to Canada." So there I was, and within two weeks I was on the boat. However, the point being that I was in Canada for two and a half years going like this all the time. I come back, by that time there's an absolute surfeit of people who've been trained in America, Canada, South Africa, you name it. So I was tossed from pillar to post, from a bloody place, West Kirby in Cheshire, to Filey camp, where I've never been so cold in my life, in one of these bloody clap-board Butlin things. I was colder there than in winter in Canada, it was absolutely dreadful. Wind from the North Sea coming in right across you and cuts you in half. Anyhow, eventually I got so fed up that I went down to London on some leave and I went

round to see if something could be done. And I did, I got a temporary release to work with Cavalcanti on a training film. But in the meanwhile I'd done a quick tour of studios and I went to Denham and there, on the set of this film whose title escapes me...

**Roy Fowler:** ...Demi-Paradise.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Demi-Paradise - right...was a West End Club. A very nice looking set, I forget who the Art Director was naturally because I didn't work on the film [N.B. It was Carmen Dillon]. But there was this thing with very good casting type extras. And you can guess among the extras was Mr Haddoe, who'd been there the first night, but minus his Boer War ribbons. He was in an ordinary civilian suit because the RAF Regiment has been formed about 6 months later and naturally, as soon as they'd got people who were, as I say, service minded and fit and able, I'm afraid these old boys had been given their cards. But it was a funny coincidence that he was the first person I spoke to as an officer and then coming back after two and a half years, and seeing him as an extra in a West End club, which he looked absolutely right for.

**Roy Fowler:** 'Dad's Army'!

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But if I can just quickly say that there's a funny tie-up with Brian, my son, who did his national service in the Navy, because Hal Mason, who was a very good friend of mine, who we'd used at Elstree when we needed an extra wardrobe assistant for instance on Drake of England, we had a lot of sort of 'pike men' and God knows what, and you'd got people who were extras but who had had a bit of experience in doing things like dishing out halberds or helping on this that or the other. And Hal had been doing a lot of good work as a sort of temporary assistant so I'd known Hal many years and he was now head of the production department at Ealing. And he said, "What are doing?" And I said, "Well sweet F.A. because I've come back and nobody wants you and I've put an application to go into the Film Unit but I've seen Derek Twist and he said, "Well of course we want you but I can't get the establishment through. So back to Filey for you." And I thought, "God, anything's better than that." So Hal said, "Well look, I think we can help because we've got absolutely no resources here, everything's stretched on normal production and they're always trying to pinch people to call them up. We'll get you a temporary release." And I said, "Can you really?" And he said, "Yes, I think we can." Of course this is a war training film and John Paddy Carstairs was for the Navy, and I can't remember who the Army one...and I was meant to be for the Air Force. And so I got I think it was two months off and I went with Cav up to Scapa Flow and we filmed there and then we went down to Newcastle and went to Chatham and so on. And anyhow, this film was made and it was called Ship Safety and it was the idea to show that when you had a collision or when a shell penetrated the thing, the best thing is to shut the compartment door so that the ship...the water was contained to that particular section. And so it was to show people that if they are going to do the job properly they'd got to make certain that water-tight doors were shut - as simple as that. But the joke was, twenty years after, they were still showing it to recruits when Brian first joined the Navy and they called it Please Adjust Your Hats Before Leaving [laughs]. And that was it. And he said, "You know daddy they showed us the most terrible training film and I think it was the thing that you made with Paddy Carstairs in 1943." So that was that. But anyhow, that was my filmic war effort.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. One, I hope, final thing about BIP and the very early days of ACT which you were recalling yesterday - do you have any recollection of the mysterious Captain Cope of ACT?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Cope?

**Roy Fowler:** Cope...Captain Cope. He was the first General Secretary.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No. Can't say I did.

**Roy Fowler:** And he retired under a cloud and his name is seldom mentioned.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh I see, he finished under one as well did he? [Laughs.]

**Roy Fowler:** Well it all began in a cafe in Shepherds Bush which he ran apparently.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Really?

**Roy Fowler:** Behind Shepherds Bush Green.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, I'm sorry, the name doesn't register at all.

**Roy Fowler:** Well as I say, so little is known about him, I thought maybe you...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** You were hoping that I might be able to scratch something out [laughs]. No I'm afraid I can't, no.

**Roy Fowler:** Pity. Okay. Well then, we didn't do justice I think to Denham and Goodbye Mr Chips yesterday. We rather skated over that.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I'm afraid as I started just now, there's not a lot I can add because I was just there for the actual, I suppose two thirds of the production and when that finished, as a First Assistant temporary employed I was out and I went back to George King I think.

**Roy Fowler:** Well how did Denham as a studio strike you, coming from poverty row?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I mean it was a custom-built premises compared with what one had had before because as I explained, BIP was something very different to Gaumont's and Denham was certainly a few notches up from - bloody - the Bush. So that although it had these disadvantages of these endless corridors and so on, it was a design studio and it really did have department, it was properly departmentalised and it really did work. You got the impression as soon as you got there that this was a film studio.

**Roy Fowler:** And the personnel? Were they...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, yes, I was only concerned, as I said, with part of one film. But I mean, you had this impression. I'm always very impressed, wherever I go, whether it's a hotel or a training station or whatever it is, with first impressions. And the initial impact at Denham was extremely good from that point of view. I mean it was better than anything you had. The only thing afterwards of course was when MGM built or took over the studios which that extraordinary man had built - what was his name? Um...

**Roy Fowler:** You mean at Borehamwood.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Um...Paul Soskin.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Soskin, that's right. When the Soskin Studios were refurbished by MGM, that again, you got the impression that this was a film studio. But to one who had never been to Hollywood or even in those days to anywhere like Villencourt[?]or Prague or anywhere subsequently as one has been, the fact was that the entry into Denham was a film studio as one imagined it should be.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. How did you find that long corridor, was that a bane and a bore to you on production?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I was mostly on the set but I should think my third assistant had more to say about that [laughs] than I did. I was more or less steady. I got out of the car, walked onto the set, said to Sam, "Now what..." this that and the other, and I had to walk to the Studio canteen at lunch and back again, and that was about my limit you know.

**Roy Fowler:** The editors down in the stables always moaned.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, that was extraordinary, yes, all those little adaptations, yes. But I remember, yes, Mickey did quite a lot of the early Korda pictures didn't he, yes...Mickey Powell. He was involved in a lot of them.

**Roy Fowler:** Um...not the early ones, not the very early Korda pictures I don't think.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, but the early Denham ones were for Korda I think. Because don't forget Korda made pictures at places like Wembley and things before he got to Denham.

**Roy Fowler:** Um, I think that the early Powell pictures were either at Wembley for Fox, or at Twickenham for Julius Hagen. I think it was around '37 probably he went to Denham.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** As early as that?

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I honestly can't remember when Denham opened. I can remember going over to Pinewood when that first opened.

**Roy Fowler:** Um...'36 I think.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But I can't be absolutely certain when...

**Roy Fowler:** I think it was '36.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Was it?

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, I think. Um...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But the man who was supposed to have been responsible was an architect called Jack Okey wasn't he? An American who...

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, Korda brought him over.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** That's right. And wasn't it used for sugar storage [laughs] during the war?

**Roy Fowler:** That's right, yes. And then Xerox, Xerox machines.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes.

**Roy Fowler:** And I think the US Army or the US Air Force was in there for a while too.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh really? I didn't know that.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, after they closed it. Moved everything to Pinewood. I suppose I should ask you about Ben Goetz because we touched on him yesterday too and how quickly he left after war broke out [laughs].

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, well, I had naturally, very little to do with him because as I said, if I had been on the film from the beginning presumably he would have presided at some of the pre-production meetings which they were all at which naturally I didn't have. But he used to come on the set and be quite affable and so on and as I said, really on Chips I saw very little of him. It was only because I was preparing Busman's Honeymoon that one had dealings with him then because I had no pre-production on Chips.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. And Victor Saville? How evident was he?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No I didn't really know Victor at all because he'd gone from Gaumont to MGM and did he go to Hollywood and then come back and then go to Hollywood again? I can't be sure.

**Roy Fowler:** Well I think they made the trip. Was any of the ill feeling apparent after Balcon's being fired?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Not to me. As I've said I really...

**Roy Fowler:** The politics and the gossip passed you by.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, I was too down the scale to really participate in any of the heavy stuff.

**Roy Fowler:** And you didn't go to Waterloo Place at all, where the office was?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I might have called up there to get some script alterations or something if the writer was working there. But not really.

**Roy Fowler:** I ask only because it was an interesting little activity they had there for a while and I don't think it's been very well documented - MGM British in those days.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, I can't really help. I knew of it but I didn't participate.

**Roy Fowler:** Final question about Sam Wood. You were saying yesterday that he was very quiet. Is self-effacing a good word to describe him or what?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** A which?

**Roy Fowler:** Well, self-effacing is clearly not a good word, but as a director...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Again, he was very different to Walsh but again he was not the idea of somebody who had never been to Hollywood had of the traditional Hollywood director who was, "Gee, get me my megaphone and my riding crop" and all that sort of business.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** He was a comparatively docile director and not one like these people like Mike Curtiz and things that you hear about. So he was quite easy, quite pleasant but I found him sort of...I don't say dull, but he wasn't the type that you immediately took to like Raoul Walsh but he was very pleasant and I don't think we ever had any harsh words or anything like that. And I think was Freddie Young the cameraman on that? I think he was.

**Roy Fowler:** I think he was. Yes, yes. Sam Wood of course became one of the most active McCarthyites in Hollywood after the war.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh did he?

**Roy Fowler:** No sign of that then? His political...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh God no. I mean he was in a foreign country let's face it. Just over for the one film and staying at the Dorchester and things. He was probably as disinterested in British politics as the average Englishman is now.

**Roy Fowler:** And L.B. Mayer? Any sign of him? He was over for Yank at Oxford.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Possibly. Well of course that was Sidney's territory wasn't it?

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, yes [laughs].

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, certainly no. Ben Goetz was the highest I ever got to an MGM executive you know.

**Roy Fowler:** Okay. And that was what, your last picture before the war?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well no I went back with George King to do Paul Lukas in The Chinese Bungalow. That was definitely the last.

**Roy Fowler:** I suppose I should ask you about Robert Donat and Greer Garson on Chips. Or were they just players in a film?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** As far as one could see yes. And interesting character to me on that was Paul Henreid who later became a director I gather.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Did a lot of television work in the States. But they were just quite normal people and of course I didn't discover until years after that the typical Englishman was really Polish wasn't he?

**Roy Fowler:** I didn't know he was Polish. I knew he was...I thought he was Dutch? He was European anyway.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** You may be right. To me the two epitome Englishmen were Leslie Howard, who was Hungarian of course, and I always thought that Donat was Polish but he might have been Dutch. Anyhow we can agree that he was continental [laughs].

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** He was very pleasant. And afterwards I did work with him under very unhappy circumstances with Frank. And that was on Boycott [Captain Boycott] which was the first film I did after the war and we had to have this big scene of Parnell's big speech at Ennis and they wanted a big actor who was not going to be billed doing a sort of guest part which...a guest part in those days was quite rare but there had been one or two precedents. And Chris Mann who was Frank's agent and Donat's agent, said, "Well look, I think if you talked really...had a real heart to heart with Bob, he might do it because he's got the stature and he's got

the voice and he's got everything." And it was before he got his bad asthma attack, but it obviously had started and so he came down and did it and it wasn't right, it didn't grip you in the theatre so we had to re-cast with an Irish actor.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Which was rather disappointing, but I think the actual last film he appeared in was the Inn of the Sixth Happiness with...

**Roy Fowler:** Bergman was it? Was it Bergman?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Bergman, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, and he says a farewell in the film doesn't he, which one takes to be his personal farewell.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** I've never seen the film.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Very touching. No I saw it in the cinema I think and I've seen it since on television. Yes it was quite pathetic, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** So, well then we come to what someone called 'the late unpleasantnesses' and you were in the Air Force.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, we've done all that.

**Roy Fowler:** Right...and picking up with your demob.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well the thing was, I did mention, I did try very hard to get into the Film Unit and Derek was quite genuine I think in saying he wanted me.

**Roy Fowler:** That's Derek Twist.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. After this slight break with the Ealing crowd, I did meet Mick then quite a lot and he said, "Well of course you know..." I took over a couple of days, they had an assistant with a weak chest and on a film which I saw again on television recently Halfway House was it called? A sort of mystic thing in Wales. A lot of smoke effects and God knows what and poor old Mick McCarthy was carted off to hospital with acute asthma and so Mick said would I step in for a few days as assistant? I said, "Certainly." I was very glad to do it. And so I worked on that for a bit and then afterwards, as I'm leaving to go, he said, "Well I do hope you will join us after the war." I said, "Well I'd be only too happy." But in the meanwhile of course I said, "I'm hoping to go to the Film Unit." But I went back to Filey and got so bloody fed up that Jack Davies, a scriptwriter you may know who'd been with me at BIP and I've known for years and years and years said to me...he I think was working at Stanmore, something to do with the

historical section or something. And he said, "Well Transport Command is expanding because of what they expect to happen, needing extra supplies in Europe and also the Far East. I think if you're lucky you might well get a thing in it." So I got into Transport Command. And it was then, behind the Kodak factory at Harrow, Wealdstone I used to go out there by tube everyday. And then we moved down to Bushy Park when SHAFE went across the continent, we took over Bushy Park which was also very handy. And so there I was at Transport Command and I thought, "Well this is all right." And suddenly I get a posting to the Film Unit. So I said, "This is marvellous." So I walked into the SASO's office and said, "Oh I'm sorry I've got this thing." And he said, "Oh no you haven't." I said, "Sir, this is me, I'm a film man and I've been biding my time and pestering people to get this and now you mean I can't go?" "Oh no," he said, "We're quite pleased with you here. You stay here." And actually I was involved in some of the invasion plans in a very, very far-flung peripheral way. So I think he figured that if I'd left it would have been quite a mark against him for letting one of his people who were...I don't say in the know...but who were concerned with the operation, go. So he said, "I'm sorry, you stay here." And that was it.

**Mary Harvey:** That was his orders!

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, exactly. And what could I do, just a bloody Flight Lieutenant and he was an Air Vice Marshall. Very pleasant chap but...

**Roy Fowler:** Mutter under your breath I suppose.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** [Laughs.] Yes. I came out and I said to Davies, "The bastard won't let me go." But anyway, to get more up to date...meanwhile, living in London as I was, I saw naturally quite a lot of Frank and Sidney. And Frank said, "Well why the hell..." I told them actually about what Mick had said. He said, "Tom White (who naturally I'd known from Wilcox days) go and have a word with Tom because I'm sure they'll want people." And so I slipped out to Pinewood and Tom said, "Oh yes, we'll definitely be wanting you in '46." I got out in December '45 and I spent my demob leave in Dublin, which I'd never been to before. And it was all very pleasant, you know, no rationing and so on and so forth. And suddenly, I'd been there I think a week and a half, and I suddenly got this telegram from Tom saying, 'Please report immediately to Denham.' No, sorry, to Pinewood, they hadn't moved to Denham then. So I did and it was Norman Spencer being taken ill with pneumonia, or suspected pneumonia, on David Lean's *Great Expectations*. So there I was pitched in at the deep end as Production Manager with Ronnie, who fortunately was producing, so one had a great ally in the camp, and David Lean. And that was absolutely great. The only thing I regret now is I suppose they'd have given it to me if I'd really asked, is I could have shared a credit with Norman Spencer because I did...I forget how many weeks at Pinewood and then Denham had been refurbished and we moved over to Denham and did the Miss Haversham scenes and all those things at Denham. We were the first people back at Denham. And so one had great fun. David was awfully sympathetic, I don't know whether he felt anybody having been in the service had wasted six years of their film life [laughs], or needed a bit of encouragement, but he was really nice. But I mean, people have got all these extraordinary stories about David, but perfectionist he certainly was but he went about things the right way. I always remember the set of Herbert Pocket's apartment. He went on the night before, I took him on the set saying, "Is this all right?" And he looked at it and he said, "Very good" and he called

the head painter over and said, "Look, which of you chaps did this, because it's bloody good. You've got the texture absolutely right, the feeling is absolutely right. It's not just a question of slapping paint on a flat. You've really got it absolutely right." And they were terribly pucked at the idea that somebody had taken the trouble. But they had done a good job and it was only right. How few people would do that? But I believe old Korda had this facility and he'd go round the studio six months later and say, "Did your wife have that baby okay?" And this means an awful lot. But that was a very, very happy picture which was what...December '45 'til I don't know when Great Expectations finished...I suppose about early March the following year. And then I went to Frank on Boycott [Captain Boycott], which was mostly on location in Ireland.

**Roy Fowler:** A picture like Great Expectations - from your point of view as Production Manager - was it an efficient operation? Because the schedule was - and the costs, even...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, it was very efficient [laughs] because I hadn't done any of the schedules.

**Roy Fowler:** Well no, I didn't intend that as an implication. But they do talk about the extended schedules in those days in the Rank Organisation.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes. I mean screen time, two and a half to three minutes a day was considered norm, you know.

**Roy Fowler:** What as much as that? Because actually that's a Hollywood average isn't it, or was in those days.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, let's face it, Guy Green was the cameraman, who wasn't one of these sort of people who fiddled around with lights and said, "No not quite right" or "I can't do that." He was an extremely, I would say, efficient cameraman, but at the same time he had the necessary artistic touch to it.

**Roy Fowler:** Indeed.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Which is unusual. And of course John Bryan had everything absolutely right. You didn't have all these awful dramas where "Send for the Art Director and get that changed" and so on. It was a very efficient unit. And I think that was why. I think if you look back I think you'll find it was about that, because it was a long film. I forget what it ran in the cinema but God knows what the actual rough cut was. I should think about three hours.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. And an awful lot of sets too. And quite a lot of location.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well and of course they did all the location before...like on Chips [Goodbye Mr Chips], they'd done all the location down at Chatham, long before I came on the scene. I can't remember the first set I was on, but anyhow, they'd been in the studio about a week when I joined them. But there again there was a lovely story about this marvellous American set up which you may have heard of called IMCOS. Does that ring a bell?

**Roy Fowler:** No.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, the lads who were in the American Army, the meteorological office were supposed to forecast right before the invasion and all that. And as you well know the invasion had to be postponed by 24 hours. But IMCOS were absolutely white hot geniuses, they could get the weather...in those days you just sent up a balloon and that was it, all this sort of thing about RADAR what have you had never been adapted as far as weather forecasting in the '40s. But these chaps thought, "We might be able to do a good thing here. Let's set up a company to supply weather forecasts for films." And this is what they did. And they went to Rank [laughs] and they got a big contract to do the weather. And of course I need hardly say that when various things were needed, like some matching up shots for the location down at Rochester with this steamer coming up and things, where the wind had to be a special way and the tide had to be a special way and things and they were waiting for weeks because every time IMCOS said "Yes that's fine" they got it wrong. Either the tide was out and the wind was in the wrong direction [laughs] or something like that. And so unfortunately IMCOS had a fairly brief spell as far as the film business. Whether they went into industry and changed their name I don't know, but film-wise I'm afraid they were not quite as white hot as they thought they were.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. [Interruption from Mary]. Mary?

**Mary Harvey:** I was just going to say, I do remember it.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh you do?

**Mary Harvey:** Yes, I remember they had a brief life.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** [Laughs] Yes it did.

**Mary Harvey:** I thought it might help, I can't remember, what are the initials for? Something Meteorological...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, International and Meteorological something something.

**Roy Fowler:** It was the time the Rank Organisation would try anything wasn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes exactly, that's exactly what it was.

**Roy Fowler:** It's expansive mood.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** And they were sufficiently shrewd to say, "Look, they've just fallen for that one, let's try and see if we can do it. And they did.

**Roy Fowler:** It's an enormously important period in the history of British films. Now - are you still freelancing or have you been taken on by Independent Producers?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I'd been taken on by Independent Producers.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. Could you tell us about that?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, very briefly, as I said, I had a few weeks after Great Expectations before I started the preparation work for Captain Boycott and I was over in Ireland doing preparation work where one had to get the Irish Army to agree, because of the horses, and there were certain scenes in that like Henry V. [Laughs.] Not quite on the same scale as Henry V but the fact was, having had a precedent with the Irish Army assisting on that, whether they'd had unfortunate experiences there, I don't know. But it wasn't quite as easy as I thought it was going to be. And it took a little time and quite a lot of persuasion and fortunately my wife was with me, who was very charming and being a Celt of course, Hugo McNeil[?] who was then in charge of the Irish Army, and we got what we wanted all right. But it did take a little longer, which was probably just as well because it prepared me for the Irish tempo when we actually got to filming in County Mayo, where the phones shut down at six at night prompt, and didn't come on until 8.30 the next morning. So you can imagine what was happening at Pinewood when I was supposed to be giving them a report on the day's shooting and you know [laughs]. You just sent a pigeon, that was all you could do. But it was quite an experience that and the great thing of course was Jimmy Granger was a great horseman and he could tell the Irish exactly what horses were all about, which intrigued and amused them intensely. But the thing we didn't realise that Captain Boycott wasn't allowed to ride [laughs]. Poor Cecil Parker had had some accident and injured his spine years previously and had been told medically never to get on a horse [laughs]. So that again presented a few problems, but we got round it all right. But that was a very happy picture because naturally it was Frank. The fact was that it was the first one I'd been able to go right through and finish up. And of course, immediately after that I got Leslie Gilliat had been on a location scouting routine - he'd been to the West Indies and the Seychelles and everywhere and came back and said, "Well Fiji is the best." So Blue Lagoon was done in Fiji. So we went out in December...where are we? '46 would it be...yes I suppose it would be. And we stayed out there 'til about end of February, beginning of March.

**Roy Fowler:** So within the unit you worked mostly, or entirely with Frank rather than Sidney. Did you do anything with Sidney?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes I did with Sidney a very happy picture with...Mary will remember this...when I saw Caroline yesterday - what was it?

**Mary Harvey:** Caroline Wright, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no, Caroline Gilliat she was...now Brown, sorry.

**Mary Harvey:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I'd said to her last time we met she was playing a sequence in that film of a home movie wedding. Well of course camcorders hadn't been invented then so anybody who had a movie camera, a 16mm. camera, was very sophisticated. And the idea was that one of Rex's many weddings in the film was done and the two Gilliat daughters played the bridesmaids.

**Roy Fowler:** We're talking Rake's Progress aren't we?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes...no. The Ideal Husband ..sorry.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh...right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** The Constant Husband...sorry, what am I talking about.

**Mary Harvey:** Yes, that's right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I've gone Wilde I should say with the Ideal Husband. The Constant Husband, yes.

**Mary Harvey:** Rex Harrison.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Which was called The Notorious Gentleman in the States? That was A Rake's Progress?

**Roy Fowler:** That was A Rake's Progress, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I think The Constant Husband had a change of name in the States too, but I can't remember what it was.

**Roy Fowler:** Right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But that was a very happy picture and Bob Day who subsequently worked with me as a director, and became a great friend before he went to Hollywood, he was the camera operator and he said, "Well I never want to be a lighting man, I want to direct." And he was the operator on that, I think Ted Scaife lit the picture. And of course that was one of the last ones that...oh no I think no, Genevieve was the last one wasn't it? Kay Kendall, that's why they were getting really together then, before they actually got married.

**Roy Fowler:** A couple of questions Smed. I'd love to hear more about how independent producers operated, not just individual pictures, but...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, yes, I can tell you a bit about that because there were four separate entities. There was individuals, we know, there were Archers, with Mickey and Emeric, there was Dalrymple which are called Wessex Films I think.

**Roy Fowler:** Wessex, yes that's right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** And the other one...was Cineguild, I think more or less still there?

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Just I think, David and Ronnie. So it was really those four which I think you'll agree, were four entirely different people with entirely different styles and of course Tom White was really the one who kept everything together. He was terribly good, I had great admiration for Tom. And I sort of thought, without him things would have been extremely damned difficult [laughs]. And of course the nominal head man was George Archibald, who was a nice enough chap but he spent most of his time in London and apart from board meetings, which again I didn't attend because I wasn't a director, but I must say, it always intrigued me that for some reason Chris Mann was somewhere there on the board. Being an agent and being Frank and Sidney's agent, if they sort of said, "Well look, we must have Alistair Sim for this" of course Chris would then go off and jack the price up [laughs] so when they came back and said, "You know Chris we want Alistair" he said, "Yes but unfortunately he's just done this picture down at Isleworth, his price has now gone up considerably." I thought, well you know...[laughs]. "Once and agent, always an agent!" [laughs]

**Mary Harvey:** He was a very good agent wasn't he?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes he was.

**Roy Fowler:** Was Arthur Rank perceived as someone to be taken as old moneybags?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I don't think anybody wanted to take him. I think everybody was very thankful that he was still coughing up you know. But the eminence gris there was of course John Davis who people did sort of object to. And I had known early on, through my Birmingham connections that he had been an accountant at BT-H [British Thomson-Houston] at Rugby, you know, the electrical firm I think originally. And then I don't know whether he was with a firm of accountants and moved out but he was involved I think with Oscar Deutsch and got into the Rank hierarchy through the...

**Roy Fowler:** He was on the Odeon board wasn't he?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, through that, yes. But he was a very unpleasant man.

**Roy Fowler:** I've never heard him mentioned as being at BT-H. Do you have any information on that?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I've just heard people say that. But I can't prove it, but I think it's probably correct. But I must say that the story of Frank and Sidney leaving Rank to go to Korda was a scene in itself, but you've probably already heard it.

**Roy Fowler:** No, let's hear your version.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** You think I should?

**Roy Fowler:** Oh please.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. Well Frank and Sidney had got rather, shall I say, [coughs] pissed off with the fact that certain things had happened with obviously Davis taking more and more control of things. Because when they'd first got there everything had been very easy and smooth and so on. And I don't know whether Archibald was still with the organisation or what, because I think he'd acted as a sort of in-between for quite a while and kept things on an even keel. But after a while Frank and Sidney I think thought, "Well, we're going to get shafted sooner or later." And Alex had been making encouraging noises and things, so they said, "Okay, let's go to Alex." So they went up South Street to see J. Arthur, and just break the bad news to him, because they'd always had a very pleasant relationship with him. And he was sitting in this vast office in South Street and sitting in the corner, reading the Evening Standard was John Davis you see. And they started to talk and of course Arthur wasn't absolutely with it with all the titles and all the things going on, so he sort of would say, for instance, "Oh yes, well of course Sidney you've just finished *The Invisible Man*." And from behind the paper a cue from John Davis, "No it wasn't, it was *The Constant Husband*." And all going right through everything that happened was this voice from behind the evening paper of John Davis and Frank and Sidney came out and they looked at each other and said, "Well now we know we've done the right thing." [Laughs.] Talk about puppet on a string, poor Arthur, he didn't like the situation anyway because naturally, anybody losing Frank and Sidney weren't exactly going to go out and rejoice [laughs]. But this character - oh God...thank you very much.

**Mary Harvey:** ...the only time I can remember there was any affection or...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, but did you see that thing on television recently on John Davis? About six months ago?

**Roy Fowler:** I heard about it, I didn't see it.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh it was fascinating. When did he die then? I hadn't realised he was dead because they couldn't have shown it while he was alive, he'd have gone and injuncted it.

**Roy Fowler:** About two years ago.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Ah. Oh no, this was only about six months ago. But it was fascinating. Roy Boulting of course I think was on it. And Ronnie Neame was on it I think too. But oh boy! Well look Roy, how are we doing?

**Roy Fowler:** Well, we've got 45 minutes...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No we haven't...I don't think.

**Roy Fowler:** I thought you said 12.15? Or Brian said 12.15.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well all right, we'll make it that, yes, fine.

**Roy Fowler:** I was keeping an eye on the clock.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Split the difference and make it 12.10.

**Roy Fowler:** All right then well let's say half an hour tops.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No you carry on.

**Roy Fowler:** I've got a question about either the bravery or the insanity of shooting three-strip Technicolor in Fiji.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** What was the mono-strip they did for a while in Technicolor?

**Roy Fowler:** Oh you had Monopack?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, there was a thing where they squeezed the frame and put the soundtrack on the other side. What was that called? Perhaps Brian would know. Do you know?

**Brian Smedley-Aston:** Techniscope... Two sprocket holes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Techniscope, that's right. Yes, the sprocket holes changed.

**Roy Fowler:** On thingummy...?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** On Technicolor?

**Roy Fowler:** No, no, no, I'm talking that one picture that you shot in Fiji.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, I'm saying that Techniscope had not been invented.

**Roy Fowler:** No, no, no.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** So we had no alternative if we were making it in colour.

**Roy Fowler:** Well I'm thinking of the logistics of shooting three-strip in Fiji.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, rather, absolutely. Yes, I mean we had... We had a great army of faithful Fijians with a most marvellous character who'd been a warrant officer in the Fijian Army called Johnny. And he marshalled the troops magnificently and they were lovely, they really were. Of course, the economy in Fiji was run by Indians as you all know, and the Fijians were there but all the things like the stores, the taxis, everything, were the Indian labour which had been brought in fifty years before to work plantations [laughs] and being Indians of course they'd go down to the corner shop.

**Roy Fowler:** It's happening here.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Exactly [laughs]. But it was great fun out there but my God these blimps, these fairly cast iron blimps getting up to the top of a hill. And of course what we had to do in

those days, there were no direct flights to Australia or anything like that, they had to get...we had to arrange for special facilities in Bombay whereby they could fly from Suva to Sidney to Bombay and then the whole lot in these special containers had to be taken off and put on another flight from Bombay to Heathrow and then across the road into Technicolor.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. Well how did you get any kind of reports on the material? How long did that take?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well they cabled us back as soon as...I mean it'd take at least 48 hours to get into the lab. And then once it was through the lab. we got a cable back saying, "Take 16 is scratched" or something.

**Roy Fowler:** Oh. Well even 48 hours seems a very short time given the distances and...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well we'd worked it out to the quickest possible time we could.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. Oh, well you surprise me. I would have thought it would have been much more of a burden but clearly not.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, what it was...it was a film that had to be made in colour and there was no other system which was worth considering. Agfa hadn't really been done, although I've seen some films on telly made in Germany on Agfa which are quite good.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** But anyhow, as far as the UK was concerned, in 1946 or '47, Technicolor was the only thing, and as you say, three-strip was that and there was no alternative. So that was what we had to do.

**Roy Fowler:** The Russians had made off with the Agfa plant anyway [laughs].

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes, exactly, yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Okay, then pushing on. Nothing more to be said about Pinewood at that point?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, the thing was, as I said, Leslie and I worked together, he was location manager on Blue Lagoon. And I went out with the main unit across the States and I was supposed to come back, I was supposed to do a round the world trip because when it finished we were supposed to come back via Australia, I was supposed to have a couple of days in Australia and then fly back from there. But it didn't work that way because various things happened and we were about a week behind schedule. So we came and returned the same way which in those days of course was island hopping because you couldn't fly direct from San Francisco. You had to go to Canton Island, where the International Date Line comes through, and then on to Fiji and then to Sydney. So you had about two stops between America and Australia. But anyhow, it was a very interesting thing and I enjoyed it all very much. But it could have been an awful drag with less happy circumstances. Geoff Unsworth was the cameraman, Arthur Ibbetson I think was the

operator. Can't remember who the sound man was now, he was quite a pleasant one. And of course the Art Director [Break in recording].

**Roy Fowler:** This is the third tape, side 5 of Smedley Aston.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I'll just go back to Tony Inglis in case it hasn't all been recorded previously.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** For the location in Fiji, Tony Inglis came as Art Director. And being Irish he, shall I say, worked in terribly well with the locals and he did really, considering the fact that he'd never done Art Direction on a major picture, a very good job. And of course when we came back, in the studio, he'd act as a set dresser and so on and various little continuity things needed, he knew all about them. But I think on the credits Teddy Carrick was the main Art Director, but as far...I don't remember the proportion of location filming to the studio in the final film, but it must have been, I suppose it must have been almost two thirds location. But there were various things like stuff on the sea, the boat wreck and various other bits and pieces. But Noel Purcell was with us out there, and Jean and Donald Houston. Of course we had great difficulty finding a leading man. Jean of course was set from the word go, being a contract Rank artist.

**Roy Fowler:** Jean Simmons for the record.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. And we tested so many boys I can't remember all. But I remember we tested Richard Todd among others, who subsequently had a long contract with ABC. But Donald did a really good show, considering he'd not really done much acting before. And it was good. But of course we had a couple of local girls, Australian I think they were, as doubles because Jean's legs were like a couple of tree trunks you know. So a lot of long shots of her flitting around in one of these flimsy...what are they called? Sarongs are they? What Dorothy Lamour used to have...

**Roy Fowler:** They're sarongs, yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** It is sarong, yes. So a lot of those were one of these other girls. But it was good fun out there I must say. And we were in Suva, at the, I think it was called the South Pacific Hotel, which I've heard since from people who've stayed there has been completely tarted up and refurbished. And then we went out and we were based on one of the main big islands for some of the sequences there, where we had to live on the boat, which wasn't quite such fun. But anyhow, I'll tell you a little story about Frank as far as Frank's behaviour... We had an Indian chef while we were on this boat, I've just explained that when we were doing the far distant stuff we had to be on this boat which was rather uncomfortable. And this Indian chap was called Bilju and he was good fun and he could understand the unit and ribbing with them and so on. So when everything was finished and we were a week behind because of the weather, we were all set to come back and everyone was packed and everything was on, Leslie got all the equipment off and so on. And I was actually round their hotel with Frank on the last day, and a car came to take us out to the airport. No Frank at all - well where was Frank? I said, "He was here a few minutes

ago? I can't think what the hell's happened." And he was off having a chat with [laughs] Bilju, who we always called him, naturally, 'mildew'. But it was so typical of Frank to be having a final, "Thank you for all you did on the unit," and so on.

**Roy Fowler:** What happened - did you move with them over to Shepperton or did you stay at Pinewood?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, I didn't move with them. I did various things at Pinewood. I worked on a picture with Aubrey Baring, directed by Robert Hamer, called *The Spider and the Fly*. And there was another one I did there with Paddy Carstairs called *Fools Rush In*. And then I did another film, before I did *The Constant Husband*, was some other freelance thing I did...

**Roy Fowler:** AS PM this is?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Pardon?

**Roy Fowler:** As PM...as Production Manager.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes, yes. But I think you'll find...and the first one I got before I was jumping ahead to Sidney on *The Constant Husband*, the first film I did with Frank and Sidney under Korda of course was *The Happiest Days* [NB *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, which I think I explained to you yesterday was something which I had the tip on. And because John Dighton who wrote it, had worked with Frank at Warners, he wanted Frank to do it rather than better offers he'd had from Hollywood companies. So I was back with Frank at Riverside, because Korda hadn't got room at Shepperton. They were very busy. So although it was a London Film, we were completely and absolutely on our own. We had Riverside Studios and a location down in Hampshire at a school at Liss. And we were really completely without any interference at all. Harold Boxall, who I'd known at MGM was then at London Films and he more or less said, "We've got our plates full at Shepperton, I think I can rely on you." And I was, I think, given a credit of Associate Producer on that. But that was a really [laughs], a really happy picture and we had a hell of a time. But I must say, the thing that was interesting on that was that was - with Korda you see you had certain people under contract, including a few Hungarians, and we had foisted on us as Art Director a little guy whose name...Joseph Bato, who'd been a buddy of Vincent Korda's. And being a boys' school and the girls' school you thought, "Well, an international Hungarian, probably, who is marvellous at putting up sets of Paris or Budapest, what the hell does he know about a prep. school and its extraordinary Englishness?" But he was great. He did it all and it all looked exactly right. And I think he was one of these very, very, very pernickety people who was absolutely right on detail and he'd been to a couple of schools and he'd got stills and he'd done everything. And he did a first rate job. But the thing that I really got into a...well I won't say an argument, but I did query...was the editor who was foisted onto us. And that was Ozzy Hafenrichter. Now he is an absolutely charming man, he really was. And I said, "I gather..." *The Third Man* had just opened and was a great Christmas success and I hadn't seen it then but everybody was raving about it. And I said, "Look I'm sure this guy is a brilliant editor, but a British comedy - is it right for a Yugoslavian?" This is it. But Ozzy was fantastic because now and again Frank got carried away with certain sequences where really perhaps one went over the top in a chase round the corridors with the parents one

way and the kids going the other way and stuff. And yet Ozzy was the one who brought us back to earth and he'd say, "But Frank don't you think we should be...?" And Frank said, "All right Ozzy, we'll try." And he'd come back and say, "Yes, you're quite right." So it was...he had an extraordinary leavening instinct whereby if one was going a little bit too far he would get it back into the mainstream. Because Frank was the first person who would say objectively that one of the difficulties with comedy is losing one's thread and going off on a tangent on something which is very funny but having got there. You've now got to get back into the mainstream again.

**Roy Fowler:** How did that work? Did Frank have his editor on the set? Or this was in the cutting room later?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh this was in the cutting room, oh yes.

**Roy Fowler:** In the cutting room. Right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh it was when we were seeing the first rough cut and that sort of thing.

**Roy Fowler:** Right, okay. Have we done this in sequence? Because you were at Pinewood on a few pictures and then you were at Shepperton - right?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Ah yes, well I think...no, I was actually at Riverside. No, I think I've got it more or less right that I did those two films at Pinewood, then we did Happiest Days. Immediately after Happiest Days I did a picture with Cornelius and Danischewsky, called The Galloping Major. And that was at Riverside as well because it had worked very well at Riverside.

**Roy Fowler:** Still for London Films?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No. That was for John Woolf, that was a thing called Sirius Productions. It was made for whatever John Woolf's distribution company was. It wasn't called Romulus and Remus because they were the two production companies. But he had something like 'International something, something, something' [NB Woolf was chairman of Independent Film Distributors Limited and of Lion International Films Limited]. But Woolf had a distribution in conjunction with one of the majors, I forget which it was, which African Queen and all these other things were through. So I did The Galloping Major and then I think I went to Shepperton.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you have much contact with Korda? I suppose one of the most fascinating directors in British Films.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes he was fascinating. No I can't honestly say. I knew actually best of all Vincent. I did know Vincent a bit, but Alex I only met a couple of times and I can't really say I was in the Claridges circle or anything like that.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. Well a few words perhaps about Vincent, who was a great Art Director.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh he was, but he was a very good artist as well, and a charming man. And what he didn't know about art is extraordinary. No, he was one of the most cultured I think I've ever met. But he also was...as I said...he encouraged people like Joseph Bato and things like that. And he was very much an urbane character. He could have gone anywhere, he was the sort of chap who has such natural charm he could do anything.

**Roy Fowler:** Did Zoltan have that kind of charm?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I never had any dealings with Zoltan at all. I don't know anything about him, no.

**Roy Fowler:** Right, okay. Well, we have roughly 15 minutes in which to gallop through the rest of your careers, so we'll have to be selective. Give me then a precis of what happened to you and how you became a producer.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well, that should be fairly simple but the trouble is I've lost my bit of paper [laughs]. However...I think after *The Constant Husband* at Shepperton I think I did one other film there, I can't be absolutely certain. But I had been concerned with various attempts to set up independent pictures, but nothing had really happened. But I had, in the course of those things, met David Kingsley. Now, I wanted to ask you - he wasn't there the other day. Is he still alive do you know, or not?

**Mary Harvey:** I think he's still alive. He's living actually in...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh I knew he lived somewhere in Sussex, yes.

**Mary Harvey:** I know we tried to contact him but we haven't had much success. He retired very soon after...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well he did very well. I know he bought some property in Pimlico before prices started to go up, so I should think he...you know...he didn't... He was a very astute chap. Anyhow, putting it briefly...David Kingsley was responsible, not Frank and Sidney, for my getting a first crack at Producer, because...you remember Group 4?

**Roy Fowler:** Yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Or am I talking about the security firm? What do you call Group 3, people at Southwall?

**Roy Fowler:** I think it was Group 4 wasn't it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I think it was Group 4, yes. Only you know, it's now got to the stage where, as you say Group 4, people think about prison escapes or something.

**Roy Fowler:** Losing prisoners all over the place [laughs].

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Anyhow, Group 4 [NB It was, in fact, Group 3, and has been corrected in the following passage] made a number of pictures, some of them good and some of them bad and some of them just horrible. But anyhow, among them was one of the few successes, which was called John and Julie, which was made at the time of the coronation. If my diction is worse than usual, it's because Mary has just given me a very delicious humbug...no it's not a humbug, what is it?

**Mary Harvey:** It's a pastille.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Pastille, sorry.

**Roy Fowler:** Pastille day.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** [Laughs] Yes, the 14th of...no it's not, it's the 1st. But anyway, we got...Bill Fairchild who'd done a lot of scripts, who'd been in the Navy during the war and things like We Dive at Dawn and so on...had graduated through Group 3 to directing. And John and Julie had been a runaway success because it had two kids coming up to London to see the coronation and a lot of glitz and it was just timed at the right moment. When they had Eddie Calvert and his golden trumpet and God knows what else. And this was considered to be a very good omen for the future. But I can't remember who it actually had been at Group 3 to produce it, but Kingsley had agreed with Bill Fairchild that if he had a suitable subject he could get the backing from British Lion. So everything's going along quite well - Bill produced a script called The Extra Day and it had a part for an American and a continental lady in it but they hadn't got a producer. So Kingsley got in touch with me and said, "Would you like to meet Bill for a drink and see how you get on?" And we met and we happened to live very near each other, because I was living then in the corner of Connaught Square and he was just along the road by the famous pub whose name escapes me...in that little square. And we met, got on and so that was it. And so we made The Extra Day, which unfortunately was made on schedule and everything was fine - budget and so forth, but it wasn't a terribly good picture unfortunately. And so that was that. But it was my start, and I was eternally grateful to David Kingsley, who gave me my final leg up. But then, having done that, I did a television series [NB Assignment Foreign Legion] because I hadn't got anything in the pending tray after The Extra Day because Bill was hoping to do another but as this hasn't turned out quite the way everybody hoped, he had to go back and have another think. In the meanwhile I had to try and earn some money so I, with great luck...I'd met Tony Berkeley through Deborah Kerr because Deborah worked for Frank on I See A Dark Stranger and so on. And Tony Berkeley I had met socially and he'd got a deal with CBS to make a series for television in England, and the host was going to be Errol Flynn. And so they made a pilot some time before, with Errol Flynn, and CBS said, "Yes okay, go ahead." And they had the scripts done, mostly in America, and then of course Errol went off the rails and so it was going to be Yvonne De Carlo, which seems to be a funny switch somehow from Errol Flynn to Yvonne De Carlo, but I suppose stranger things have happened. And so then of course she became pregnant and they said, "Oh well, she's only going to do the introduction, only show her up to here." But she didn't want to come to England and risk having a miscarriage or something like that. So we got dear old Lady Korda in the shape of Merle Oberon to do the openings and closings and to act in one show. And it was awfully interesting for me because I was doing the casting as well. And I got down to Beaconsfield, and that was a great little place then. And we

had just the two stages, but there was a marvellous construction manager called Bert Roberts. And Bert was always saying, "Oh I don't think we can do that" and you knew bloody well that it would be there and be ready. And it was. And it was a very happy time, and Peter Bolton who had been my assistant at BIP, had been all the way round God knows where in the meantime. He was back on that, so I was reunited with somebody who I'd really got great respect and regard for, and was absolutely rock steady and you knew that whatever happened, Peter would be there to carry on with things. So we made, I think it must have been something like...I think we made the first twelve with the pilot so that was thirteen, with, I think I got Associate Producer credit, and then the second lot I got full Producer credit. And we got some extraordinary footage in Paris, from a white Russian called Emoliev[?]. Because the best thing about the series was the introduction, and they had this very stirring sort of San Sevre march, [hums the tune], with the full French bugles and tambour and all this business. And some very good footage of the Legion in action, you know. So then anything after that was made in the four halls of Beaconsfield! [laughs] But we did have a desert location in the sand pits just down the road, [laughs], so the Sahara was then behind a roadhouse called the Bell House on the main Oxford Road, so if we said to the boys, "All right, down to the Sahara" they were five minutes away from the studio, back in the sand pits. But that was great fun too. But as I said, the actual stories were largely American scripts, but we had one or two English ones. They said, "Oh well you'd better get a few English writers in," and we got one or two odd people. But it was awfully interesting from a casting point of view because we had all sorts and sizes and I had a pretty free hand on that. And people like Roger Moore, Anthony Newley and Andre Morrell and all sorts of people who are now quite world famous, had parts in these things. We used to make one a week and that was about it.

**Roy Fowler:** Did they bring over any Americans for...since it was for American television?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Er...no. The only thing was that there were a couple...the one with Merle Oberon, I can't remember who the leading man was but he was one of the American actors over here I think.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you have any of the blacklisted writers on it?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes? Who were they?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I can't remember exactly who they were but they were under nom de plume. But we had...there was a man called Ehrlich who wrote quite a lot of good American scripts round about that time. And I've still got a set of the scripts at home, of them all. But I think two of them at least were nom de plumes. But there was somebody else better known than Ehrlich, Max Ehrlich, who did a couple of them, the first one and another one. I could look it up when I get home and let you know if it's any help. But that wouldn't answer your question because I didn't know who...but they do know that they were.

**Roy Fowler:** Right, ok. Well then moving on, moving on from that series - then what?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Ah. Then what?

**Roy Fowler:** We'll start a prerotation in what - three minutes, four minutes?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Okay, well I'm just scratching my head to think what I did after that because I think I must have gone back to Shepperton...yes I did. And then I did the Peter Sellers picture Two Way Stretch.

**Roy Fowler:** Right. Is that one of your favourites?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes. Yes, it still goes around. And that was directed by Bob Day who I mentioned earlier on as the operator on Constant Husband, who'd said that he never wanted to be a lighting man. And he was very good.

**Roy Fowler:** Did you give him the chance?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Hmm?

**Roy Fowler:** Did you give him his chance?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Yes I think I can say that. Yes.

**Roy Fowler:** How was Mr Sellers in those days?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh well, you see, it was very early days. He'd just done I'm All Right Jack, but it hadn't really come out, it opened as he started Two Way Stretch and so that he was comparatively docile in those days.

**Roy Fowler:** He didn't drive you all mad.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh no. But he did one little thing which might amuse you. The script, two boys, Heath and Warren had worked with me before on various things. They were good. John Warren, whose real name was Warner, was an ex-actor, and he used to do that terrible commercial programme for ATV in Birmingham, Mrs Somebody's Lodger, who was it? Don't you remember? Well you were probably very lucky not to see them. I only saw them because I think John finally wanted me to see how he made a living when he wasn't writing scripts [laughs]. But fortunately ITC or whoever it is stepped in very shortly afterwards and stopped all these terrible advertising things, which were the programmes he was doing.

**Roy Fowler:** It was 'Ad Mags' or something.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** That's it, exactly. And Len Heath was a leading copywriter with Lintas, a big agency who used to do Birdseye and God knows what. And the two of them could only really get together at weekends.

**Roy Fowler:** I did a show with Cicely Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert called Her Excellency and someone called Jack Warren was in the cast. Would that have been the same one do you think?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Could well be, yes, could well be. But he used to pop up in a lot of Boulting brothers' pictures as an actor. And I've seen several of these rather extraordinary comedies in the afternoon, like the original Carry On film, which was Carry On Admiral, which had nothing to do with the series. And I think old John Warren was in that. But anyhow, getting back to the main thread - they'd done this script and there were two good parts, one was the head crook, which was played by Sellers, and the other was the eminence gris which was played by Hyde-White, who was the figure Soapy Soames [NB Soapy Stevens] on the outside who does it all. And so we sent the script to Sellers where the parts were fairly evenly balanced you see, and we thought he'd go for Soapy Soames you see, but no, he came back and said, "Yes I'd love to do it. I think Dodger, I think Dodger's got great things." I even went down to...his family had a sort of seaside bungalow down somewhere near Amering on Sea and I went down there with Bob and we discussed things and so on. And he said, "Yes I think we can really make something interesting out of Dodger." And the two others with him were good...Jelly Knight of course was old...chap who was in so many other bits and pieces.

**Roy Fowler:** Was that Lionel Jefferies?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no. He played the warder. No, but I responsible for the other character, which is Bernard Cribbins, and that was his first break really in a film, because I'd seen him in a stage show and I thought, "Well this guy is awfully good." And he was. The fact that I can't remember Jelly Knight doesn't really matter because he'd been in a lot of pictures and he'd worked with Peter quite a lot and he was a sort of buddy and so on, so that worked, that was very satisfactory [NB it was David Lodge]. However, we started off shooting, everything was going very well and, as you say, it was inspired casting, I think it must have been Bob responsible for Lionel Jeffries playing Crout the prison warder, who was great because, if you haven't seen the thing, it's very simple, everything is marvellous in this very, very, very easygoing prison, with old George Woodbridge as the chief warder who's retired. And then suddenly they get a new character coming in and it's Lionel as this terrible man. And so everything was fine until we were about roughly two-thirds through the picture. And we'd seen rushes at lunchtime and Peter came out and he was looking terribly naughty and he said, "Smed, can I have a word?" And I said, "Yes what's up Peter?" He said, "You know, I think I should have played Soapy Soames. Is it too late to go back and do it?" I said, "Peter, it is much too late I'm afraid." He said, "Well I'm not very happy about it." Well fortunately, Frank was down that day and knowing Frank's powers of persuasion or what have you, I did the cowardly thing [laughs] and passed Peter over to Frank, who after about half an hour's fairly solid talking, said, "No Peter, you did the right choice. Dodger is for you. The other part any actor could have done." And Peter accepted it, you know. But Hyde-White was very good and I think it was a very good team work as far as that was concerned. And I think that was probably my favourite picture, yes. But very briefly, after that, one or two rather unfortunate things. One picture was never even shown, which was a brilliant idea. Great story by Julian Symons, which we called Arthur! Arthur! And it was a man who lost himself or something, one of these double things, which was a very good story indeed. But unfortunately a mess was made of it. It was private finance from America and the whole thing became rather nasty and it was never really shown

and that was a great pity. But then I think the final films I really did before retiring was Ooh, You Are Awful with Dick Emery, which was quite successful. But in the meanwhile I'd given Cliff Owen a chance because he was going to make a picture with Clark[?] at Elstree. And Clark had backed out at the last minute. And I think it was Sea of Sand or something like that, which was subsequently was made somewhere else and quite successful. But Cliff was a chap who'd worked a long time. He'd been with Hitchcock on that film he made with Dietrich and things at MGM. Can you remember what that was?

**Roy Fowler:** With Dietrich...yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Fairly big...Richard Todd I think was in it and a fairly big cast. Anyhow, Cliff I think...

**Mary Harvey:** Set in Russia?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, no, it was very English with garden parties and marquees and things I think. [NB Stage Fright] Anyhow, it doesn't really matter. But Cliff was someone who'd had a lot of experience. And I gave him his break on a very, very small picture called Offbeat, which was quite an interesting little script by, I think it was Peter Barnes. And we had, we managed to get Mai Zetterling to do the female lead. We couldn't pay her any money but I gave a deferment and much to my intense satisfaction, we had enough money to pay her properly [laughs]. I also did it with the composer, who'd done the music for Two Way Stretch, called Ken Jones. But this was made for 28,000 pounds. It's still being shown around and it has been sold abroad, and it made really quite a good profit. And Cliff directed that and made such a good impression on British Lion, particularly the Boultings, that he was given other pictures to do and he did a good one for Rank, with the character who died very early on...tough guy, a Welshman, um...Baker, Baker.

**Roy Fowler:** Stanley Baker, you're right.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Stanley Baker. A very tough lorry driving thing about them being paid so much a load to... and one or two others. And then he came and did Ooh, You Are Awful for me, which as I said to somebody the other day, was an unfortunate title but they insisted on it as that was his tagline. Because abroad it was called Me and the Mafia, which is a much, much better title I think. And old Dick Emery was working I think, weekends he was doing the summer shows at Clacton or something, and he'd do a show for I don't know how many thousand, come back and be perfectly [?] on the Monday morning. He was very good and he was a likeable chap but he was a great womaniser and I don't really know, I think he died of a heart attack or something. But he was no trouble at all, I mean he was always on the job. But we were lucky there because instead of just getting some television tat and stringing it together, this was a definite story written for the screen by screenwriters, so nobody could say, "This is three television acts pushed together." Yes Brian, you're quite right...I'd better sign my....

**Brian Smedley-Aston:** Your release?

**Roy Fowler:** Your release, yes. And then we'll release you.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Please release me, let me go.

**Roy Fowler:** Indeed. Well...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Is that a pen?

**Roy Fowler:** That's a pen, that's a pen. And while you're doing that, let me thank you immensely. Let me say also that there's so much still I'm sure we haven't covered, so...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Can you come back next week? Yes, well...

**Roy Fowler:** Well We'll come up to the Isle of Man or the next time we're in the Isle of Man we'll see you, or next time you're here.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, but seriously, a funny thing has occurred to me during the night, and I can't remember exactly who was responsible for giving it to me, but if it's any good for the archive - It may sound to you rather bizarre, but I've got some extraordinary.. - we were talking about the financial arrangements at BIP and the Chief Accountant and so on - what they paid, the rates they paid to hourly boys from the point of view of electricians and carpenters and things like that and their rather well-worn carbon copies of something, well if they'd be of any interest to you...

**Roy Fowler:** Anything like that.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I mean they're just lying in the drawer and I never throw anything away so I'd much rather...

**Roy Fowler:** Any physical artefacts that come our way we do pass to the National Film and Television Archive.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Where's that - in Bradford?

**Roy Fowler:** No, it's in Berkhamstead.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh.

**Roy Fowler:** It's part of the British Film Institute. But they have...John Paul Getty gave them 17 million quid when they had a....

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** I gathered from Mary...

**Mary Harvey:** [spelling it out] BECT Union.

**Brian Smedley-Aston:** Are you being charged for your reminiscences?

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No actually, I'm making a generous contribution. Well I gather, Mary's tactful what-not said, "Oh well you know, these things like tapes don't fall off trees and things..."

**Roy Fowler:** You are very kind.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** No, it's entirely due to Mary's influence I can assure you. I've post-dated it of course, so that I'll be out of the country by the time you put it in the bank!

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, I was saying, any artefacts whatsoever, we'll be very happy to pass on to them and then they're properly protected, they have temperature and humidity control...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I wouldn't say these would be exactly needing temperature control.

**Roy Fowler:** Well bits of paper do because you know...especially flimsies...

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well these are on the flimsy side.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, right. And the same with your stills. I don't know how we can arrange that.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I think if you take copies and send the originals back here to Brian.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, okay. Well then, what I'd like to do is to...I'll go down to the BFI and say that there's what...about 20, 25? Something like that?

**Brian Smedley-Aston:** More than that by the look of it.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes. Now what would be useful, Smed is if you can very lightly pencil on the back your knowledge of where they are, the pictures and who's in them.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I think I'll just have a quick go. I think most of them have got something.

**Roy Fowler:** Okay. Well I'm going to wrap the tape by saying thank you very, very much indeed.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well no, it's been very pleasant because I love waffling away, but as I said I'm afraid I'm not exactly well organised on this and I've gone off on so many tangents that I feel that you're going to have quite difficulty in finding out really what I'm talking about.

**Roy Fowler:** No, that's...I promise you that isn't so. [EMSA laughs]. The lovely stuff lies always in the waffling.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I suppose yes. But there are wafflers and wafflers aren't there.

**Roy Fowler:** Well you're a good one.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Oh thank you very much, yes.

**Mary Harvey:** I've been fascinated.

**Roy Fowler:** Yes, and so have I. This is why I kept letting the tape run out [EMSA laughs].

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Who's got a quick pencil?

**Roy Fowler:** Well that's going to show I think, it's a pen.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Well I'll do this evening.

**Roy Fowler:** Soft pencil would be ideal. Well can I pick them up from you?

**Brian Smedley-Aston:** Oh yes.

**E.M. Smedley-Aston:** Or Brian could dump them in somewhere for you in the West End somewhere?

**Roy Fowler:** What I'm going to do is to...I'm going to stop the tape.

**Document Actions**

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