

Kitty Wood (editor/continuity) 25/4/22 - ?

by [admin](#) — last modified Jul 27, 2008 02:48 PM

BIOGRAPHY: Kitty Wood worked at the Hulton Press on magazines such as Picture Post before entering the film industry in 1941 as an assistant to Donald Carter at Gaumont-British Instructional in Shepherd's Bush. She quickly graduated to film editing, although she also sometimes worked as a continuity girl. After the war she worked on a freelance basis until joining the Coal Board film department in 1958. She also worked for a period during the 1960s on commercials at World Wide Pictures Limited. She describes some of the films she was involved in making as being 'on the very bottom rung of the feature world,' - short films, second features and children's films. **SUMMARY:** In this interview she talks to Jim Connock about the working culture at Gaumont-British Instructional under figures like Bruce Woolfe and Mary Field, she discusses the important relationship between the work of the continuity girl and the film editor, her memories of working with Lewis Gilbert, and she mentions some of the difficulties of working as a woman in the industry.

BECTU History Project - Interview No. 6

[Copyright [BECTU](#)]

Transcription Date: 2003-05-25

Interview Date: 1987-06-09

Interviewer: Jim Connock

Interviewee: Kitty Wood

Tape 1, Side 1

Jim Connock : This is an interview with Kit Wood. I'm doing the interview, I'm Jim Connock and we're doing it in London on the 9th of June 1987. It's a great opportunity to do this while you're in London, and I know you've been very busy, but it's obviously much easier for us to do it while you're in London than send a crew up to Nairn in Scotland, which is where you are now living. We'll start this at the beginning, where and when were you born?

Kitty Wood : I was born on April 25th 1922 at Betchworth in Surrey, of Scottish parents.

Jim Connock : And what sort of schooling did you have?

Kitty Wood : I went to Whiteleaf Grammar School, a really excellent school, but I had to leave there at sixteen. I got my matric. but my mother was a widow by that time so I left school at sixteen.

Jim Connock : And did you then have any further training, or did you have any training for the film industry, or did you...?

Kitty Wood : No I didn't. I wanted to go into the film industry from the age of twelve, and I went to see Jimmy Ritchie [James Ritchie], who later became the head of British Transport [Films]. But he was a young man, himself starting in the film industry at that time. And he was very discouraging and said that it was quite impossible to go into the film industry, there were far too many unemployed and so on. So, [chuckles] suitably discouraged I went back home and my mother eventually was persuaded, by the family solicitor actually, to send me to a typing school so that I could learn shorthand and typing, and I went to Clarke's College in Chancery Lane. And then I got a job with 'Picture Post' and the 'Lilliput', 'Farmer's Weekly' - Hulton Press - at a very interesting time when there were people like Bert Hardy and Anne Scott-James who was a very beautiful young woman then. And I enjoyed that, I worked very hard, it was wonderful training. And I was a member of NATSOPA, the Hulton Press [indecipherable] And then during the war people were getting called up at a great rate and it occurred to me that I might try going to see if I could get into the film industry. And my, sort of, guardian - my mother's solicitor - was a solicitor for Gaumont-British Picture Corporation. And he wrote to Bruce Woolfe and Bruce Woolfe of Gaumont-British Instructional interviewed me and eventually agreed to give me a job.

Jim Connock : Tell me, I'm not quite clear in my own mind, you were already at Shepherd's Bush when I went there and I worked for Gainsborough Pictures, which were the sort of 'feature' arm. There was, also on the same floor there was GB News, and then there was G-B I.

Kitty Wood : Hmm.

Jim Connock : Now were you in the cutting rooms from the beginning or were you on the production side? It's always a little vague - or did you do a little bit of both in those days?

Kitty Wood : I did a little bit of everything in those days. You see I'd been earning three pounds five shillings at 'Picture Post', which was quite a good sum in those days. But when I came to G-B I, Bruce Woolfe offered me a pound a week, which was frightfully little, and I had a very thin time for the first six months. But what he wanted me to do, I think he had in mind that I could do shorthand typing and I would be useful to Donald Carter. He assigned me to Donald Carter's office and I worked with him as an assistant. Which meant I typed all his scripts, helped him in the cutting room, helped him arrange locations and - you know, arranged his trains and fares, all sorts of things like that, an incredible variety of things one had to do for him. And he was working on army training films and he was really a very quick worker. At one time he turned out forty reels in a year, and in those days before mag. film that was an awful lot of work...

Jim Connock : An awful lot of work, yes.

Kitty Wood : I mean that was really quite exceptional in those days. People wouldn't think anything of it now, but it was then. And it was a very useful experience for me because I had to work very quickly with him, and he used to cut a reel of film in an afternoon. And then we would go back to the office and - oh, well he would go back to the office, I had to clear up the cutting room! And then perhaps the next day I would be typing letters or scripts or something.

Jim Connock : Well to cut that much in a day in those days was quite hard work, because it all had to be clipped together. I mean it wasn't the days of tape joiners and he obviously did get through an awful lot of work.

Kitty Wood : Hmm.

Jim Connock : Am I right in thinking at that period that probably G-B I were one of the leading documentary firms, or was it just because they were the only ones that I knew shall we say?

Kitty Wood : Yes. They were quite a well known firm. Bruce-Woolfe was very interested in film and he used to make 'The Secrets of Nature' which went into the cinemas and were done by Mary Field, she was the producer. But they were a well-known firm, the other well-known firm was in Merton Park. I can't remember really what they were called - Strand Films!

Jim Connock : Strand Films, that's right.

Kitty Wood : They were very well known, that's right. And there are a number of Strand Film people still about. And the man who was in charge of the Merton Park people was named Frank Hall and he and H. Bruce Woolfe were considered very hard employers, and indeed he was very near the bone.

Jim Connock : Yeah well of course you say that you took a reduction in salary to a pound a week. I went to The Bush as an assistant in features and I was only getting two pound - two pound ten, as it was then.

Kitty Wood : Yes. Well don't forget that I then typed for him, I mean I did a double role and to that extent they did quite well. But very soon after I arrived - I started there on October 6th 1941 and soon after I arrived, about six months, or maybe even less than that, we were ordered a cost of living bonus...

Jim Connock : That's right, yes, I remember that.

Kitty Wood : And that was eleven shillings, and my goodness it was a help!

Jim Connock : Well I remember I turned down work because it wasn't enough to get there, and when I started of course this eleven shillings a week, or whatever it was, made the difference.

Kitty Wood : It did with me too. You see my mother had to buy my first season ticket, which cost six pounds, I had to borrow that and then pay it back later.

Jim Connock : Tell me, at what stage - you were in that, so for... At what point did you join the union? Because Shepherd's Bush was really, they didn't encourage you to be in the union, they didn't necessarily discourage you but...

Kitty Wood : Well we were not at all encouraged by Bruce Woolfe and I, being a NATSOPA member, of course I expected to join another union, and I enquired, "Oh yes, there is a union, oh

yes, we've got ACT," and so on, but nobody seemed willing to get me into the union. Well I then discovered that the shop steward was in fact Frank North and he was on location, he was a cameraman, you remember...

Jim Connock : That's right, yes I remember Frank.

Kitty Wood : And eventually I did manage to get into the union, but not until February 1942. Probably in the normal way it would take the best part of two months, it would now wouldn't it, really?

Jim Connock : Oh yes, yes.

Kitty Wood : So you see that isn't all that long. But I had to make the - I had to press for it, [chuckles] as nobody was very keen to enrol me.

Jim Connock : Oh no, no, certainly nobody was very keen. And I was encouraged to join by Charlie Wheeler of all people...

Kitty Wood : Oh yes!

Jim Connock : ...who was there, who was one of the great people in the union, a very good man. And he more-or-less unionised Shepherd's Bush. I mean there was a studio called Teddington, where if you were known to be a union member you didn't get a job!

Kitty Wood : Well the following Christmas, in 1942, H. Bruce Woolfe paid a Christmas bonus - but only to people who weren't in the union!

[JC laughs]

Kitty Wood : And his secretary said to me, "Now you're not in the ACT are you?" And I said, "Oh yes I am!" She said, "Oh well then, you don't get the Christmas bonus!" And she was terribly pleased about that! [Laughs]

Jim Connock : It's hard to believe in these days...

Kitty Wood : I know, hmm...

Jim Connock : ...but these were the facts of life.

Kitty Wood : That's right.

Jim Connock : I mean Gainsborough Pictures, as you say, G-B I were one of the leading documentary firms, Gainsborough pictures were making probably the biggest box office successes that had been made at that time, and yet we were all working for nothing.

Kitty Wood : I know, yes.

Jim Connock : How long did you stay at G-B I? I'd lost track of you between G-B I and Realist.

Kitty Wood : Well I wanted to leave G-B I as soon as the war was over, but I was in the middle of a lengthy Naval film and I - the director virtually blackmailed me into staying. And I wasn't able to go at a time when it would have been advantageous for me to go and work as an assistant in a feature cutting room, and I was a bit peeved about that. So I adopted my second string which was continuity. I became a continuity girl in peculiar circumstances. Donald Carter had agreed to let me cut a film in about September, October 1943, and really only because he was so busy he couldn't do it himself. I said, I thought I could do it, and 'Smithy' Morris, E. Smith Morris, who joined the firm, he was directing this film. He was a Welshman, and we went off to the coast of Wales and shot these rocket projectors. And when we started to cut it I said to him, "How do you cut in a close-up?" [Laughs] And he told me roughly how to do it. He said, "Well what you've got to remember is that if the worst comes to the very worst, you can always get the stuff printed up from the negative." But in actual fact that was very difficult in those days because film was rationed and we only had a certain amount.

Jim Connock : That's right, yes.

Kitty Wood : But it gave me a sort of feeling of, "Well if the worst comes to the worst, they can get it all printed up and fire me, so I better just have a go." And I cut this thing and I had my first dubbinh session with the - in B. C. Sewell's theatre and so on. And I was getting towards the end of the film when one Saturday morning - you remember we always worked Saturdays then -

Jim Connock : That's right yes.

Kitty Wood : Donald Carter came...

Jim Connock : Without getting paid!

Kitty Wood : Hmm?

Jim Connock : Without getting paid.

Kitty Wood : Well we were on a forty-seven hour week weren't we? So that included Saturdays then, if you work it out.

Jim Connock : Certainly I always remember you came in on Saturdays and you worked until the rushes were ready and then you showed the rushes and went home, usually at about three o'clock in the afternoon.

Kitty Wood : Yes, ah hmm. Well we usually got out by lunchtime if Bruce Woolfe was gone. Anyway I was working away at this little epic and Donald Carter came over and said, "Oh well you'll have to go and do continuity on Monday at Islington because Mary Field hasn't got a continuity girl." I said, "Well what on earth will happen to this film? And I don't know anything about it really!" [Chuckles] And he said, "Oh well you'll soon find out, and I'll finish the film." [Laughs] So it was as simple as that! So I arrived at Islington, and you can imagine the staff

there, the 'chippies' and the electricians and so on, said, "Oh fancy having a continuity girl - no watch," and all this sort of thing. [Chuckling] And in fact one of the grips was a great deal of help to me, he told me roughly what I should be doing and what I should be looking for!

[JC laughs]

Kitty Wood : I had an idea what I should be looking for from cutting, it was really good from that point of view.

Jim Connock : Of course Islington studio was sort of - was the other branch of The Bush.

Kitty Wood : Yes it was Gainsborough Pictures' other studio, yes.

Jim Connock : It was all the same operation and it was - it was in an old power house or something wasn't it, with the big tall chimney?

Kitty Wood : Yes and it was all in black paint with one red stripe up and down the staircase, do you remember that?

Jim Connock : That's right, and with one stage above the other and all the camera gear had to go up and down in the lift.

Kitty Wood : That's right, yes.

Jim Connock : I'm surprised you ever got in there because there used to be somebody from NATKE on the door normally, checking all union passes.

Kitty Wood : Well I had a union pass by then.

Jim Connock : Of course you were a union member. But I wonder they didn't query the fact that you turned up to do continuity! [Chuckling]

Kitty Wood : Well by that time I was shop steward in any case.

Jim Connock : Oh I see, well obviously...

Kitty Wood : Which must have helped! [laughs]

Jim Connock : ...that eased the situation!

Kitty Wood : Yes, hmm.

Jim Connock : So you earlier said that you had intended to leave and go into features at the end of the war, but you were kept on at G-B I. When did you actually leave?

Kitty Wood : Well I took on the job of doing continuity on 'The Little Ballerina' which was directed by Lewis Gilbert.

Jim Connock : That's right, I remember that, yes.

Kitty Wood : And that started shooting about the end of November, and we completed it the beginning of January some time, and I left after that to freelance.

Jim Connock : And that was still with G-B I was it?

Kitty Wood : 'The Little Ballerina' was a children's film with Mary Field producing.

Jim Connock : Was Lewis permanently employed in those days by G-B I?

Kitty Wood : He was then - he left after that though, and so did I.

Jim Connock : That's what I was going to say, because he obviously left very soon after that.

Kitty Wood : Hmm.

Jim Connock : Now I was never quite clear. He used to work with a company, or may be he was the company, called 'International Realists'...

Kitty Wood : Oh that was sometime after that wasn't it?

Jim Connock : That was some time afterwards...

Kitty Wood : Hmm.

Jim Connock : Where did Lewis go immediately after - or don't you... I'm more interested, really, in where you went, but I had a feeling that obviously I've missed a few years out, because I was under the...

Kitty Wood : Well he freelanced. At that time he was interested in talking to anyone and everyone who was in the business - don't forget he had a lot of contact, he'd worked with William Wyler and he had a lot of contacts, including with Alexander Korda. And he just was busy in rustling up all his contacts so that he could get further films to do.

Jim Connock : Yeah. Now obviously I have missed a period out, because when you left G-B I you worked freelance, and did you work mainly in documentaries or did you...?

Kitty Wood : Not at that time. I chose a terrible time to go freelance because we had the freeze - do you remember the freeze?

Jim Connock : Yes, yes.

Kitty Wood : When we had to work with generators because there was no electricity. And I went to work on a film that was directed by Douglas Cleverdon and had Esme Pursey in it - now whatever was it called? It's gone out of my head at the moment... [NB Possibly 'Death in the Hand (1948) Directed by A. Barr-Smith and written by Cleverdon]

Jim Connock : That was a feature or...?

Kitty Wood : It was a second feature.

Jim Connock : Second feature, yeah.

Kitty Wood : And it had a four-week schedule.

Jim Connock : Yeah, and you were working as continuity?

Kitty Wood : As continuity on that, ah hmm.

Jim Connock : Did you continue to sort of go from continuity to editing?

Kitty Wood : Well I couldn't get any editing then - which wasn't very surprising because I wasn't very experienced, and I used to do continuity when I couldn't do editing. The union had no objection to this at all, except that if you did both at once...

Jim Connock : Yes, yes.

Kitty Wood : ...I mean obviously if you'd done continuity during the day and cutting at night, they wouldn't have cared for that and I wouldn't have cared for it either! So I never I did that but um - in fact I think I only - only once or twice cut films that I had done continuity on - and then I never expected to cut them afterwards. In exceptional circumstances I did this.

Jim Connock : But of course it wouldn't be possible to do that on a feature.

Kitty Wood : No, oh no. On a second features or...

Jim Connock : But it is - most documentaries are shot and the shooting finishes before the editing starts.

Kitty Wood : Oh that's right, yes.

Jim Connock : So really you had the opportunity to do it quite reasonably and there is a big link, let's face it, between continuity...

Kitty Wood : Very much so...

Jim Connock : I always look upon the continuity girl as being the sort of editor's representative on the floor.

Kitty Wood : Hmm, that's right.

Jim Connock : In fact there was a time, I don't think it happens quite as much now, when continuity girls used to type on the bottom of the script, "I didn't like this, but the director insisted on doing it this way - note to editor" and things like that.

Kitty Wood : Yes.

Jim Connock : I think that has fallen out a little these days...

Kitty Wood : I'm sure, yes.

Jim Connock : I think that people are more interested in getting jobs. The period that - when I met you again was when you were with International Realists...

Kitty Wood : Yes.

Jim Connock : Did you stay with them permanently at that time?

Kitty Wood : No, I used to do jobs for them...

Jim Connock : Freelanced in the same way?

Kitty Wood : That's right, I freelanced really extensively. There were a lot of little jobs that you could get then in sync. sound jobs you could say - children's films or second features things like that you see, and I worked on those. I worked on the very bottom rung of the feature world.

Jim Connock : Which director do you think had the biggest influence on your career? Or which person did you think that you profited through working with? I don't mean by profit, financially, I mean profit, career-wise.

Kitty Wood : I don't know, a lot of people helped me. Really and truly it was very helpful to work with Donald Carter. He wasn't a great film director, [chuckling] but the way he worked so quickly was useful because it sharpened me up. It's very useful for people to have to work quickly and to think quickly, at any age up to twenty-three.

Jim Connock : Yes, yeah.

Kitty Wood : You see, you know yourself, and I can remember years afterwards when I would take on an assistant as a trainee, if they were more than twenty-three or four I wasn't really interested, because I knew how difficult it was to train them. I'd had experience by that time of training them. Though I didn't realise at the time, I was so fortunate to have had to work very hard and quickly.

Jim Connock : Did you stay as a freelance right up until you went to the Coal Board or did you have any other jobs?

Kitty Wood : No, no, I was a freelance.

Jim Connock : And when you went to the Coal Board, this was purely as an editor was it?

Kitty Wood : Yes, oh yes, by that time...

Jim Connock : By that time you were not working any longer doing continuity?

Kitty Wood : No, though I did do continuity in 1966, and again in 1967 on one picture - a picture with er [pause] oh dear - David - his father was something to do with films.

Jim Connock : David Eady?

Kitty Wood : That's right, exactly!

Jim Connock : Yes, David Eady, whose father in fact of course was the inventor of the now defunct Eady Levy [Chuckles]

Kitty Wood : Exactly! That's right, that's why I was trying to think of his surname.

Jim Connock : And David of course, I think he still does quite a lot of directing now.

Kitty Wood : Oh yes, I believe so.

Jim Connock : But certainly I remember the first time I worked with him was on 'The Third Man' where he was one of the many assistants.

Kitty Wood : Hmm...

Jim Connock : Sorry, I'm supposed to be interviewing you! But I think that it is of interest to sort of mention these things in passing. You're talking about 1960...?

Kitty Wood : '67 then...

Jim Connock : But when did you actually go to the Coal Board?

Kitty Wood : Well I went for my first stint in 1958. I was working at the BBC and I'd been working on commercials before that. And this is where Donald Carter was a relevant influence - you see, most documentary people worked terribly slowly, much more slowly than feature people.

Jim Connock : Yes, yes.

Kitty Wood : And also they weren't so well trained, they weren't so meticulously trained and that sort of thing. And so if I had been a person who'd only worked in documentary cutting

rooms, I think that when commercials came along I wouldn't have been able to work on them because I wouldn't have been able to work quickly enough - even in 1955.

Jim Connock : Yes that's true.

Kitty Wood : You had to work quickly, because as you know, there was a great call for editors in those days.

Jim Connock : Oh there certainly was, I wish there were now!

Kitty Wood : Yes that's right.

Jim Connock : But you went there in 1958 you said?

Kitty Wood : Yes well between 1955 and '58 I worked on commercials, and in 1957 I went to work for a company that belonged to Jim Garrett[?]. It was a documentary company and Frank Wells...

Jim Connock : That's right, yeah...

Kitty Wood : ...you know, who used to be something to do with The Children's Film Foundation, and he was an art director at one time - he was in charge of this outfit and he employed me there. And due to my name being Kit Wood, Jim Garrett[?] didn't realise that I was a woman, and he didn't like women working... [JC chuckles] Yes that is quite true! And his production manager, David Pierce[?] interviewed me and told me that it was nothing to do with my work, but simply that I was a woman and I would have to go. So I left there, and I didn't have any work to go to at the time, and this was by the spring of 1958, and I fell ill - I was hardly ever ill in the industry fortunately, as you know a freelance can't be ill and can't be late. But I did have flu three times running in that spring and I felt very, very low, and I injured my foot! Anyway, eventually I went to the BBC, and I'd been earning twenty-seven pounds ten a week, or whatever they paid in those days, and the BBC offered me eighteen pounds a week, and I couldn't believe it! I thought there'd been some terrible mistake, you see. So I started working there and went on working and tried to get this put right, and then found that [chuckles] that was what they'd really intended. And I thought, "Well this is no use," I mean even a documentary company will pay more than that!

Jim Connock : Amazing isn't it?

Kitty Wood : Isn't it amazing, yes! And so I heard that the Coal Board wanted somebody, and I thought I could go there and do a stint. And I went to see Donald Alexander and he said, "Tell me, what do you think of magnetic sound?" I said, "I think it's fine." He said, "Oh you've worked with it?" I said, "Oh yes! [Chuckles] I wouldn't like to work with anything else now." And anyway I gather that the interview went well and anyway he offered me a job. But he called me Kitty from then on, and I was particularly thrilled with this job really - it didn't pay me very much - but I suddenly discovered that they went home at five-thirty. This was the first day I was there. I said, "We can't be five-thirty - what every day?" And my assistant said, "Oh yes, that's

our hours - nine to five-thirty." I'd never worked such a short day in my life! And this, I started to enjoy the work. Anything to do with coal mining is really extraordinarily interesting, coal-miners are interesting and the work itself was interesting. It was difficult to master what happens in a mine. There's an awful lot that happens and you have to get to know it. And after I'd been there about three months they asked me if I would continue, because I said I'd stay for three months. Because they'd taught me an awful lot about what happened, and I could work quickly. This was the chief thing, they were terribly pleased to find somebody who could get rid of the backlog, really. And so I worked there for quite a while, and then I started a sort of private life. I used to go out in the evenings to theatres and cinemas and dinners and all sorts of things. And it seemed to me so wonderful after [chuckles] having had very little private life when I was young. But I stayed there rather longer than I think I should have done. I stayed there for about six years. And then I didn't think I could stand another piece of coal going over a conveyor onto some other conveyor, so I left and went to do commercials at World Wide for rather more money. Not all that much more money, they did pay me quite well at the Coal Board, by those days' standards - the documentaries.

Jim Connock : Where did you work on commercials for World Wide?

Kitty Wood : At Cursitor Street.

Jim Connock : At Cursitor Street?

Kitty Wood : Hmm.

Jim Connock : Because when I first went with World Wide doing commercials I think it was at Clapham somewhere, and then - or am I getting it wrong? Certainly I worked at Cursitor Street because Ken Morgan was there.

Kitty Wood : That's right, yes.

Jim Connock : And um...it was quite a modern building in Cursitor Street wasn't it?

Kitty Wood : Well yes, the production offices were rather handsome, but when you went into the cutting rooms of course they were pretty squalid and not very well equipped.

Jim Connock : Not very big hey?

Kitty Wood : Not very big.

Jim Connock : And they were on the ground floor weren't they, the cutting rooms? Or were they upstairs?

Kitty Wood : Well up a sort of short flight of stairs.

Jim Connock : Maybe it didn't seem very long in those days.

Kitty Wood : And they had documentary editors, and the person in charge there, Arthur Stevens, he wouldn't employ women as editors, he was very much against. But the commercial people were allowed to, so...

Jim Connock : It would be interesting to know whether I was there before you or after you. I don't - Arthur Stevens wasn't there when I was there.

Kitty Wood : Oh when were you there, can you remember?

Jim Connock : I don't know, quite honestly I don't remember. I find my life in the film industry, without having a notebook is very difficult to...

Kitty Wood : Did you keep notes?

Jim Connock : I did at one time.

Kitty Wood : Yes I know Daryl Catlin[?] did. I had such a good memory that I didn't keep notes, but now my memory is starting to go.

Jim Connock : Well I don't even remember...

Kitty Wood : You may be getting this just on time! [Chuckles]

Jim Connock : [Chuckling] I don't even remember you doing commercials, to be quite honest...

Kitty Wood : Well I did, yes...

Jim Connock : ...but there's no reason why I should you see.

Kitty Wood : No of course not. You weren't there when I was there, for certain, I mean we'd both remember that wouldn't we?

Jim Connock : But certainly I remember - obviously when I started you were already there, and in those days there was sort of quite a camaraderie between the people working...

Kitty Wood : You mean at Shepherd's Bush?

Jim Connock : Yes.

Kitty Wood : Oh yes. And Bob Wilson, now this was a person who was very helpful to me - the editor, assistant editor or...

Jim Connock : I remember Bob Wilson, yes.

Kitty Wood : But you remember Bob Wilson.

Jim Connock : Yes.

Kitty Wood : Alf says that he's died, but um, he went to the BBC at some point.

Jim Connock : That's right.

Kitty Wood : Now he was really terribly helpful to me because if I would ask him a thing about how to cut this or that, he would tell me. And he also gave me two examples from the film 'Caravan' of how not to direct a film, [laughs] because it wouldn't cut! And these two examples I have used to innumerable people, assistants, to tell them of the difficulties and how you have to keep your cutting and your script and everything absolutely on the chief point of interest at the moment...

Jim Connock : Oh yes!

Kitty Wood : ...you see. Well he was able to demonstrate how not to do this [chuckles] and it was very useful. And he was generally very helpful and nice.

Jim Connock : Well I think there probably...

Kitty Wood : So was Alf, by the way...

Jim Connock : Yes, everybody there was very helpful, and also everybody worked to the same system. In other words, if an assistant on a picture at Gainsborough fell sick then the other assistant would be able to come in and do it...

Kitty Wood : Yes exactly...

Jim Connock : ...because everything was done to the same routine, and I don't think possibly - I never worked at Ealing - I would think possibly it happened like that at Ealing. But now what different editors require of their assistants and how they organise things, it just has to be seen to be believed you know.

Kitty Wood : Oh really?

Jim Connock : Then, we always worked on the same sort of system and then - and we were all interchangeable, we could walk in and pick up the rushes if somebody went sick.

Kitty Wood : Hmm.

Jim Connock : And I think it was a marvellous training ground, The Bush.

Kitty Wood : It was.

Jim Connock : I remember Johnny Goodman, he's sort of president of BAFTA or chairman of Bafta...

Kitty Wood : He started at G-B I as a clapper-boy.

Jim Connock : He started - he was a page-boy.

Kitty Wood : Well, he was a clapper-boy at er...

Jim Connock : He originally was a page-boy.

Kitty Wood : Was he? Oh well that's what he was with us.

Jim Connock : He used to go and get my 'What's On' on a Friday morning. And a lot of people started there, it was a way in.

Kitty Wood : Oh yes of course, to be a messenger was a very good way in. But also it was a way in because if you were a keen and good messenger, you knew that you had a youngster who was keen and bright, and it was a very intelligent way of...

Jim Connock : Oh yes, and they were able to work out which department they wanted to be in.

Kitty Wood : Yes that's right, oh yes, we used to do that. And Jimmy Allen, I think he works with Merchant Ivory or in India now, he was a camera assistant at G-B I, and he started as a messenger boy.

Jim Connock : I have um... I'm probably not a great believer in film schools. I feel that the way we did it at The Bush - you know, I mean when you and I started - we probably had a better opportunity, quite apart from the fact of course that there was more career opportunity at that time, due to the fact that you didn't really worry about getting a job, it was a question of which job you would get.

Kitty Wood : That's right, yes.

Jim Connock : Which of course is a great advantage, and you then - you more-or-less decided yourself whether you would aim high or whether you would stay on a level plane.

Kitty Wood : Yes of course.

Jim Connock : And of course you having the opportunity to do continuity when you weren't experienced enough to obtain editing work.

Kitty Wood : I became quite a useful continuity girl.

Jim Connock : Oh yes!

Kitty Wood : I remember one editor told the production manager that she couldn't find a continuity error in the whole film - it was a little four reel film or some kind or another.

Jim Connock : I'm sure you were, Kitty, I can't imagine for one moment that...

Kitty Wood : But that was partly because the director was responsive. If you spoke to directors very quietly and tactfully they would often take up the hint and you could get the thing looking right.

Jim Connock : You say you left the Coal Board and went back to doing commercials?

Kitty Wood : Hmm and I did um, commercials - what else did I do? Oh various little freelancing jobs, and then I went back to the Coal Board again in 1970, because they'd moved into Soho and I thought that would be quite pleasant. Well they very quickly moved out, it wasn't quite so pleasant, and also I had a house in the country at that time, that I was very interested in, with nearly an acre of garden, and I didn't want a job that would be too demanding.

Jim Connock : When you - you moved to Scotland...

Kitty Wood : In 1980.

Jim Connock : And did you, when you moved to Scotland were you expecting to work in Scotland?

Kitty Wood : Oh yes I was! If it hadn't been for the recession, which was so sudden and so complete. I knew the man who arranged productions in BBC Glasgow and he was delighted to think that he had somebody experienced to call on. I could have lived with him in Glasgow, or in Aberdeen, I could have lived with my cousin, and just done short jobs to fill in holidays and things like that. But the BBC suddenly started drawing in their horns and getting rid of people, and they wouldn't have any freelancers and I couldn't get any work. Well then things changed a bit and my mother became ill and you know, very old, and so on. So I haven't really tried to do much work lately. And of course video has caught up so quickly and I'm not a video editor. I'm sure I could be quite quickly but um - it's quite simple but er...

Jim Connock : Yes, I mean it's a different conception, but basically there's no difference at all.

Kitty Wood : I'm sure, I'm sure, if you know how to put... [JC talks over]

Jim Connock : I mean you can hire equipment in here and put it on this table and do an offline edit the same as you would across the road in the cutting room. There is no difference, but of course it is a little difficult at - the later stages of your career to sort of change the whole ball game.

Kitty Wood : And another thing is that there are so many young people wanting to get into the industry or wanting to progress in the industry that it's really hardly fair when you're sixty-five to be doing this, you know, I think.

Jim Connock : Well I would [chuckles] hate to think that...

Kitty Wood : Well I know there are two ways of thinking of that, and also I've been fortunate in being in an industry where you got the same pay as men, which you didn't have when I was first working, it was really quite exceptional.

Jim Connock : But of course you've also had the opportunity to work in an industry where really most of us are paid to do what we like to do as a hobby.

Kitty Wood : Oh exactly, yes, I used to think that it was very fortunate to work in that industry.

Jim Connock : Well I um...

Kitty Wood : Do you want to know anything about the union - union work or not?

Third Voice (RF): Well er...let's stop... [break in recording]

Jim Connock : Well we've just been discussing the fact that you were able to have the same pay in this industry, which is something that obviously you value. As a man of course one tends to forget these things. What else do you feel about the opportunities given to women in the film industry over the years and in the present time? How has it affected - I mean have you felt that you've been handicapped by being a woman?

Kitty Wood : I wouldn't say really handicapped because if you worked hard and were good at your work, there were some directors who used to say, "Well I like women editors because I know if they can subsist at all in this atmosphere of not liking women" - and quite a lot of people didn't - "that they are probably quite good at the job." And you had to be good to maintain your work, to be able to get work, you had to be up to a certain standard or you would be out.

Jim Connock : That's true of course. Now you did mention earlier, Mary Field. Now certainly Mary Field was a name in the film industry before either of us started in the film industry. You worked in the same company as Mary Field, what can you really tell us about Mary Field, who...?

Kitty Wood : Well I was rather glad that I didn't work as her assistant and that I worked for Donald Carter, because she was vague and slow and - just - I didn't particularly like that sort of way of working. But I did work for her once or twice and I remember Lewis Gilbert was very surprised one time because she had an appointment with me over in the cutting room at two-thirty or something and she didn't turn up and didn't turn up, and eventually I put her work away and got out somebody else's work. And then she came over and said that we were supposed to be working together. I said, "Well as you hadn't come I put away the film and started working on some other film." [Laughs] And he said, "My goodness, fancy saying that, fancy saying that!" [Laughs] He was surprised! But I did have a lot of work to do; they worked me quite hard there. And as you know we were only allowed to have one film out of the vaults at once, so this film of hers had been out of the vaults and was already on the machine and so on and she hadn't turned up, so I simply put it all away and got out somebody else's film - which was a bit of a nerve I suppose but...

Jim Connock : Well...

Kitty Wood : It didn't seem to me so at the time, it just seemed to me practical.

Jim Connock : Practical and sensible and the thing to do as a practical person.

Kitty Wood : Hmm that's right, yes, that's right, hmm.

Jim Connock : You mentioned Lewis Gilbert, now we both knew Lewis Gilbert well and I see him, I used to see him when I used to go to Cannes. He was an amazing character, Lewis, he had a wonderful sense of humour.

Kitty Wood : He was great fun.

Jim Connock : Everything was a bit of a joke and he had this way of sort of communicating with actors and with the unit.

Kitty Wood : Well he was an actor when he started!

Jim Connock : Oh yes of course, he was one of Will Hay's schoolboys wasn't he in the early days?

Kitty Wood : Hmm, hmm.

Jim Connock : But I certainly remember doing a picture when he was directing a picture about a prisoner of war camp and I mean the whole thing, all the actors, they became like him, they were all crazy...

Kitty Wood : Oh yes! [Laughs]

Jim Connock : ...how we ever finished the picture I don't know! But you obviously worked with him long before I worked with him, I used to see him around but I had no working contact with him until probably ten years afterwards. And now of course he has directed Bond pictures and he is a director of repute and he's had a long experience in the film industry, he's done all types of films, he's done documentaries and that. Could you give us just some impressions of your memories of Lewis Gilbert?

Kitty Wood : Yes, he was full of jokes. One time when we went to his flat, there were several of us going down in a car to Walton Studios for 'The Little Ballerina', and of course to get there by eight-thirty you were outside his flat door somewhere around seven-thirty, knocking on the door. Heard a sort of curious scuffle, but he didn't come to the door, and then [laughs] a hand came out from the little hatch where the milk bottles went and grabbed my ankle! [Laughs] He was full of jokes like that you know and interesting ways of making himself felt. At one time he put on a service gas mask, and you know they were horrifying, great big things. And he knocked on the door and I said, "Come in," and nobody came in and - another knock and nobody came in. I thought, "Well what is this about?" So I went and opened the door and he was on his knees so

that he looked more horrifying as you looked downwards, and he crawled in on his knees into the room! There was always um - it may not sound very funny but at the time we laughed a lot...

Jim Connock : No, I think...

Kitty Wood : He was full of practical jokes.

Jim Connock : Yes, he always was and he - I mean I remember, also at Walton Studios, when I was supposed to have a lift home with him and Wilkie Cooper was there - the cameraman - and he'd forgotten that Wilkie was coming home to have dinner with him and it was a toss up whether I as the first assistant didn't get a lift or whether the second assistant didn't get a lift. And I volunteered to not have a lift - the second assistant walked all the way in front of the car [KW laughs] all the way to Hammersmith! And Lewis said afterwards, he said, "Of course I really should have done something about it, but it was no good asking Charlie Hassey[?] to lead, he would have dropped the torch or something!" [KW laughs] He said, "It was the only way of getting home," and he felt so embarrassed the next day. I felt so relieved that I had taken a lift with somebody else who obviously didn't have this problem. But he was a very - he was, and is, a very human person and I think that's probably has...

Kitty Wood : Oh yes, yes, he's always interested in the people he works with.

Jim Connock : ...it has been the reason for his success. Because I don't think - I always remember working with him at one time, that whereas everybody else was talking about the latest Italian picture or the latest French picture, he would always be talking about some second feature that he'd seen with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis and thoroughly enjoyed.

Kitty Wood : Oh it would be something funny, yes that's right.

Jim Connock : You know, and he, I think, probably is one of the people who helped to make the English cinema more commercial.

Kitty Wood : Hmm, probably.

Jim Connock : And what worries me a little at the moment is I think we're probably going back in the opposite direction, but I mean that's quite - I'm not supposed to be talking about things like that! [KW chuckles] Now who else did you work with? The Coal Board. Now you've spoken about the Coal Board and how important the knowing about mining and that was. I always remember there was a weekly programme called 'Mining Review' or something that used to be dubbed at er...

Kitty Wood : Yes, I think you better ask people who know about 'Mining Review' because I don't.

Jim Connock : You never did know?

Kitty Wood : I didn't like working on it and I didn't often work on it.

Jim Connock : I see. So you worked?

Kitty Wood : I worked on the documentary and training side of it. That was for the cinema.

Jim Connock : I see. I just always remember that coming up, you see, following me in the dubbing theatre or preceding me in the dubbing theatre.

Kitty Wood : That's right, yes.

Jim Connock : Who else worked at the Coal Board at that time, people of note?

Kitty Wood : Well Kitty Marshall[?] worked there of course, but the best...the real production manager, we had a really marvellous fellow, was David Kenning[?] who afterwards used to produce all the cricket programmes and golf programmes for the BBC, do you remember that?

Jim Connock : No I don't, I didn't.

Kitty Wood : Well his credit was always there and he was a marvellous chap at arranging - he was a very nice fellow. He unfortunately died in a car accident in Spain about a couple of years ago, but he worked there at that time. And Ralph Elton worked there, and he was a wonderful director, because he could remember absolutely everything he took and if he shot any scene it always cut together. He was his own best continuity, he always had the continuity right on every scene he shot. He really should have done a lot better than he did.

Jim Connock : Yes well of course this is...

Kitty Wood : He was in the shadow of his brother, of course.

Jim Connock : Yes, yes, this so often happens. But ...

Kitty Wood : Ferdy Fairfax[?] worked there at the time I was there. In fact he started there soon after he left school.

Jim Connock : Really?

Kitty Wood : Hmm, and then left. He worked in the cutting room for a bit, he was a pleasant chap.

Jim Connock : But of course we miss now the sort of British Transport and the Coal Board.

Kitty Wood : Hmm, we do, yes.

Jim Connock : It was a wonderful opportunity for people to train and to learn and, as you say, the hours didn't put an awful lot of pressure on your time and it did give people an opportunity to enjoy life as well as doing their job.

Kitty Wood : Hmm that's right, hmm.

Jim Connock : One of the problems with the film industry of course is that it can cut so much into your personal life, due to the demands it makes on you.

Kitty Wood : Yes of course, that's right, because things like a night school and so on isn't possible if you're in the film industry, at least it wasn't when I was young, and I missed that.

Jim Connock : Certainly you - I think you have been able to give us a fairly good insight into the into the documentary side of the business and you - some of the remarks you have made, like about magnetic sound. Obviously magnetic sound was somewhat behind the rest of Europe, the use of magnetic sound.

Kitty Wood : Oh yes, but it was so resisted by editors if you remember?

Jim Connock : Yes, yes.

Kitty Wood : They seemed to be terrified of it. I thought it would prove easier and indeed it did. It took a few days to master but not very long did it?

Jim Connock : I mean we used to shoot on magnetic and then transfer the selected takes to optical and send them to the labs at night. It was ten years - I'd been working in Europe in magnetic, ten years before it was ever installed in any studio in this country.

Kitty Wood : I can believe that.

Jim Connock : And why this happened I don't know, I think, as you say, it was the editor's fault, they were the ones who...

Kitty Wood : Well also in the industry we had very few innovations or technical advances from about 1945 to oh - well into the sixties. We had the zoom lens and we had magnetic film, but honestly what else did we have? Very little.

Jim Connock : Well we had 3-D didn't we for a little while, but that was never used very much.

Kitty Wood : Exactly!

Jim Connock : And er - it's difficult - maybe it was too easy, maybe you didn't need to - I mean nowadays of course everything is gimmicks and in the earlier days, and certainly during the war, the cinema was an automatic - it was the only means...

Kitty Wood : Yes that's right.

Jim Connock : And where did you take your girlfriend? To the cinema,

Kitty Wood : Hmm that's right, hmm.

Jim Connock : ...and those things have...

[Tape Ends]

[NB There is nothing more on the original BFI tape, although it is marked that there is a Side 2 of this interview]