

The B&C Kinematograph Company and British Cinema

This book sheds new light on the under-researched subject that is early British cinema through an in-depth history of the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company—also known as B&C—in the years 1908–1916, the period of its foundation and rapid growth, when it became one of Britain’s leading film producers. It examines the company’s development; changing production policies and practice; the genres produced; how the biographies of its personnel contributed to the material; ‘staging’ and the films’ formal properties; as well as methods of distribution and publicity.

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The B&C
Kinematograph
Company
and British Cinema

*Early Twentieth-Century
Spectacle and Melodrama*

GERRY TURVEY

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For Hazel, with love



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Introduction: Rediscovering British and Colonial

In the summer of 1914, the fan magazine *Pictures and the Picturegoer* ran a series of enthusiastic articles under the general title ‘Birthplaces of British Films’. The first dealt with ‘The House of Hepworth’, the second with ‘The London Film Company’ and the third and fourth with ‘The British & Colonial Film Company’—a concern the periodical’s predecessor journal, *The Pictures*, had featured seven months before in a long article headed by a similar title, ‘Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films’.¹ These three enterprises were clearly being presented as the front runners amongst the country’s film production companies, and yet their relative statuses in later accounts of British cinema history have been noticeably variable. The Hepworth Company has fared best. Founded in 1899 at Walton-on-Thames and for years Britain’s most prolific pioneering producer, it has been accorded considerable respect in all histories that have paid some attention to the early years—in part, perhaps, because Cecil Hepworth, its driving force, was shrewd enough to issue an autobiography in 1951, *Came the Dawn*.²

The London Film Company was a relative newcomer in 1914, having only been set up at Twickenham the previous year, but was regularly accorded favourable mention in the wave of single-volume cinema histories that appeared in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. For its part, the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company (popularly known as B&C), whose origins fell midway between the other two, failed to gain similar recognition, either being ignored or meriting only a glancing reference in the same accounts.³ Yet, as this study will demonstrate, B&C was universally recognized in the years before and into the First World War as a major, well-established production company, with a fine track record of creditable films to its name. Its existence, therefore, has been

in need of reinvestigation and its contribution to the expansion of early cinema in Britain has long called out for reinstatement.

The important exception to this neglect of B&C is Volumes 2 and 3 of Rachael Low's *The History of the British Film* in which ample attention is given to the company, the author recognizing it as one of the major producers of the 1910s.⁴ But those books were first published in 1948 and 1950 and are currently in need of revision and supplementation. Low's original work is inevitably coloured by the theoretical assumptions that were being made about cinema and film in the aftermath of the Second World War, but more recent film historiography has become increasingly sophisticated, and investigations into the film industry of the USA have come up with a range of concepts and perspectives that can be fruitfully directed to the British situation. Consequently, the present book has taken advantage of these approaches. Further, Low's early volumes are based on a somewhat limited data source, essentially copies of *The Bioscope* trade journal, but there were other trade and fan periodicals published during B&C's years of existence, several of which proved more enthusiastic supporters of the company and which devoted more space to its activities.⁵ Add to this material information from the popular press of the time and business data lodged in the National Archives, and a far more detailed and accurate account of the company becomes available. Furthermore, whereas Low assays a wide-ranging general history, more specific histories, such as this study of a particular production company, are also of value.⁶

In more recent years, research attention has begun to find its way back to the early years of British cinema, to a large degree because of the investigations encouraged by the series of British Silent Film Festivals put on annually from 1998 with the support of the British Film Institute. Six volumes of papers presented at these events have been published, and the research into aspects of British cinema in the 1910s by Jon Burrows and Michael Hammond has resulted in major studies.⁷ One consequence of all this activity has been a growing awareness of the existence of B&C, although the occasional references to the company, with the exception of items produced by the present writer, are still too often dependent on Low and are therefore subject to the shortcomings of her initial investigations.⁸ This book is an attempt to provide a fuller and better-founded account of the company's story, its personnel, films and working practices.

PRESENTING BRITISH AND COLONIAL

B&C began in 1908 as a very modest producer of short films, but expanded dramatically to become one of the foremost British manufacturing companies in the mid-teens—only to decline, even more dramatically, in the latter years of the First World War. There was a brief post-war revival before the business finally went bankrupt in 1924. Table 1.1 charts the company's annual output of new film for the years 1909–1917 based on the company's dramas, comics, actuality materials and animations—but not its topicals and film locals.⁹

Table 1.1: Annual Output of New Film at B&C, 1909–1917

Year	Total output (in feet)	Total duration (in hours and minutes)
1909	3,295	0:55
1910	13,887	3:51
1911	18,819	5:14
1912	51,131	14:12
1913	85,175	23:40
1914	110,975	30:50
1915	78,650	21:51
1916	28,445	7:54
1917	9,052	2:31
TOTAL	399,429	110:57

The output here is dramas, comics, actualities and animations, but excludes locals (films made for a particular exhibitor) and topicals (newsworthy national events). Duration in hours and minutes is calculated at 1 foot per second.

The years 1909–1912 witnessed a steady rise in output; 1913–1915 were the years of greatest production and stability; they were followed by a precipitate collapse in 1916–1917. The year of peak output was 1914, when the company issued almost thirty-one hours of film, and a comparison with later, more familiar British production companies reveals something of B&C's considerable productive capacity at this time. For example, in 1949, Gainsborough Pictures released thirteen films (its top output) lasting nearly nineteen hours; in 1937, Alexander Korda's London Film Productions and associated companies issued ten films at something over fourteen hours' duration; in 1959, Hammer Films was hitting its stride with nine films lasting just over twelve hours; and Ealing, in 1949 (its best post-war year), released six films at a little over nine hours.¹⁰

Thus, B&C's increase in output during its first six years represented no mean achievement.

The company's experience both contributed to and reflected general developments in British cinema at the time. Rachael Low characterizes the years 1906–1911, when B&C was starting up, as a period of stagnation in production and the 1912–1914 period as one of a revival in film-making.¹¹ The firm contributed substantially to the latter. Denis Gifford's fiction film catalogue tends to confirm Low's conclusions: the number of British films released annually increased steadily by 47 per cent between 1906 and 1911—from 278 films to 409—and then accelerated by 102 per cent between 1911 and 1914—from 409 films to 826. Thereafter, numbers fell markedly, with 343 films released in 1916 and only 143 at the end of the war in 1918—though, by this time, individual films were much longer because of the increasing number of multi-reel releases from 1913 onwards.¹²

The history of B&C as a film-making enterprise, however, fell into three distinct periods, each differentiated by the managerial personnel in charge, the creative staff employed and consequently in terms of general policies, cultural aspirations and types of film made. Period One lasted from 1908 and into 1913, during which time the company was set up by Albert Henry Bloomfield and established as a progressive enterprise within the British film industry. Period Two was from 1913 to 1918, when John Benjamin McDowell assumed control, carried the company to its greatest successes and then presided over its sudden contraction. Period Three began with Edward Godal taking over in 1918 but proved, despite an optimistic opening, a rather undistinguished time that ended with the company going into receivership in 1924.

However, the company's development is probably best understood by locating it within three determining contexts, of which the first was the wider 'cinema institution' that was under development in British cinema's second decade.

BRITAIN'S CINEMA INSTITUTION

This concept can be usefully approached through a more sociologically informed reworking of André Gaudreault and Phillipe Marion's theoretical suggestions regarding early cinema's 'double birth'.¹³ They propose a model based on three phases, beginning with a 'first birth' that was the consequence of the appearance of a new technology designed to record moving images. A second phase was the emergence of an initial culture of 'moving pictures'. That phase was followed by a third, the cinema's

‘second birth’ as an established media institution, with its own autonomy, identity and economic resources.¹⁴

If the first thirty years of British cinema are periodized by decades, these propositions can be given particular specificity. Invention and initial use of the basic technology of camera, film, projector and screen by such pioneers as Birt Acres and Robert Paul took place in 1895–1896. The following decade witnessed the emergence of a culture of moving pictures as other inventors, early film-makers and showmen projected their short films as part of the programme in music halls, presented them in hired urban halls or toured them round the country’s fairgrounds.¹⁵ A second decade of British cinema from *c.*1905 into the mid-teens witnessed both the growth of B&C and the setting up of the cinema institution that determined the subsequent shape and organization of the country’s film industry. A third decade—falling outside Gaudreault and Marion’s concerns—ended in crisis in the mid-1920s with a dramatic contraction in film production, the closure of studios and the bankruptcy of B&C.¹⁶ The latter part of this third decade coincided with B&C’s troubled Period Three, whilst the company’s growth and success in Periods One and Two coincided with the institutionalization processes of the second decade. In those years, a dialectical relationship developed between the production company and the emergent institution, the former both contributing to and helping shape the latter but also being, in turn, a product of it, conditioned and defined by it. The new institution encouraged activity at B&C whilst, at the same time, setting some of the boundaries within which it was constrained to operate.

A mass lower-class public eager to consume films had been created during cinema’s first decade by the itinerant showmen visiting local halls and touring fairgrounds, but these audiences were occasional, depending on the periodic arrival of a show. The formation of a *regular* mass audience depended on the establishment of permanent premises exclusively given over to the presentation of films. The establishment of such fixed-site cinemas was a phenomenon of the years 1906–1914 and constituted a decisive move towards the setting up of an autonomous cinema institution. They could be either converted shops and halls or, from around 1909, purpose-built cinemas.¹⁷ The speculative boom in cinema construction led to increased attendances, cinemagoing becoming a weekly habit for many working- and lower middle-class populations, and to a heavy demand for new films. This led to a proliferation of production companies concerned solely with film-making and B&C’s own expansion between 1908 and 1914 was premised upon servicing this demand for new product. Each company—and especially larger ones such as B&C in

the teens—established a studio with an increasingly complex division of labour. Clearly, these developments in exhibition and production represented a substantial economic investment in the burgeoning industry.

Initially, cinema programmes, which would change every three days, followed music hall precedent and emphasized variety, showing several different films of less than one reel (or around ten minutes) in length—that is, newsworthy items, actuality material, comic films and short dramas. Consequently, between 1908 and 1910, B&C expanded its range of production to cover each of these genres. Then, from around 1913, both nationally and internationally, the production of multi-reel feature films started up and B&C proved one of the British pioneers in this tendency with the epic *The Battle of Waterloo* in September 1913. These longer films led to a demand for writers able to develop coherent narratives, directors with competence in increasingly complex matters of film form and performers with professional acting skills. At B&C, this produced the dramatic changeover between Periods One and Two as the personnel and policies of the early years were displaced by those adopted by McDowell from spring 1913. Further, longer films could be individually promoted by a growing apparatus of advertising and publicity. These were regularly undertaken by another entrant into the cinema institution, the agencies that specialized in selling and distributing the films of a particular production company. B&C was serviced by three of these in succession, its promotional profile taking on a particular visibility from 1912 when the Motion Picture Sales Agency (MPSA) assumed this task. Allied to this promotional apparatus was the rise of the star system, whereby favoured performers were featured to attract audiences to their films. B&C quite specifically embarked on this strategy at the start of 1912.

Parallel to establishing studios and cinemas, a distinctive ‘film culture’ began to grow up around production and exhibition, extending the cinema institution into commentary on films, film-making and the film business. Trade periodicals circulating information between producers, agencies and exhibitors had been launched by 1907 and proliferated in the teens, several giving enthusiastic mention to B&C. Fan magazines for cinemagoers commenced in 1911, first retelling film stories and then naming stars and picture personalities, circulating their photographs and writing about their escapades whilst filming. To this was added, in 1914, a discourse concerned with discussing film as an art form in which film-makers and film journalists began to discuss best practice in books and magazines. Two key figures at B&C were in the forefront of these debates, the director Harold Weston and the scriptwriter Eliot Stannard.

In addition, specific moves were made to control the industry, yet another dimension of its institutional arrangements. Safety in the proliferating cinemas was supervised by local authorities from 1909, after the passing of that year's Cinematograph Act. And in 1913, the British Board of Film Censors, set up by the industry itself, began operation, censoring film content and thereby regulating the films of both B&C and its competitors, with Harold Weston's B&C pictures being particularly subject to its scrutiny.¹⁸ Even audience behaviour was disciplined. Cinema managers began to discourage noisy responses in auditoria, and the longer feature films that B&C and others were producing themselves encouraged a quieter spectator involvement in the development of their plots.

Thus, British cinema's 'second birth' in its second decade played an unavoidable part in determining the history of B&C. But there were two other sets of contextual arrangements that also served to shape company development, one of which was the commercial popular culture that had grown up in British cities throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in B&C's own home base of London.

COMMERCIAL POPULAR CULTURE AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

The new cinema institution was, in fact, the latest addition to a succession of cultural initiatives that had been creating a lower-class field of profit-oriented popular entertainment since the introduction of cheap reading matter in the 1830s. The forms and institutions of this steadily expanding field operated in Victorian and Edwardian Britain as an emergent, alternative culture.¹⁹ It was 'emergent' in so far as it developed to cater for the growing leisure interests of the expanding urban population of manual and low-level white collar workers and 'alternative' in that its values and preoccupations were different from and often at odds with the dominant culture of longer-established social classes. Its component parts multiplied throughout the nineteenth century as a series of commercial ventures were launched to provide amusement for new audiences and reading publics. Together, they constituted a rich intermedial field, ranging from penny blood fiction, through the melodrama theatres and music halls, to the mass circulation newspapers and periodicals of the century's close. In turn, the whole field was characterized by complex processes of intertextual interdependence and reciprocity, freely borrowing, interchanging, duplicating and adapting each other's stories and imagery, themes and ideas, even personnel. Cinema, as a late addition to the field, was, in consequence, able to draw on the established traditions and practices of

this rich and broad-based popular culture. For its part, B&C proved particularly diligent in taking up and reworking these resources, particularly in Period One.

Cheap reading matter had been available since the second quarter of the nineteenth century, first as the penny bloods of the 1830s and 1840s and then as the penny dreadfuls of the 1860s and 1870s. These were series publications issued in weekly parts, each with a sensational story episode accompanied by a lurid illustration on the front cover. Regular characters were folk heroes such as Robin Hood and Dick Turpin and popular villains such as Sweeney Todd and Charles Peace.²⁰ B&C quite consciously inserted itself into this tradition, successfully taking over the series format in its early years and becoming one of the film industry's specialists in the form. Further, its films carried over from their printed predecessors a gallery of popular characters (such as Dick Turpin), various standard storylines (such as the ride to York), a repertoire of visual images with an established currency in lower-class culture (such as a masked Turpin astride a noble Black Bess) and a received set of thematic preoccupations (such as anti-authoritarianism).

In parallel with cheap fiction's creation of a popular reading public, theatrical melodrama was establishing mass audiences for staged spectacle. In the early nineteenth century, there had been a withdrawal of upper-class audiences from theatre attendance yet, at the same time, there was an increase in the number of London's theatres.²¹ Many of these were built in the East End or south of the river Thames on the transpontine 'Surrey side'. Their audiences were largely working class and their repertoire was almost exclusively melodramatic. These developments had begun in the 1820s and 1830s but were further encouraged by the 1843 Theatre Regulation Act that abolished the monopoly on the staging of drama held by a very few 'patent' theatres and allowed the newcomers to put on spoken drama. Central to stage melodrama was visual spectacle, taking advantage of the latest developments in theatre technology to display lavish scenery, effect startling scene changes and produce virtuoso lighting transformations. Further, fights and last-minute rescues, fires, shipwrecks, train crashes and even horse races became essential parts of storylines that foregrounded moments of sensational action. Plots were largely conventional but emphasized powerful emotions and a charge of social criticism. Therefore, villains were regularly upper class and heroes of humble origin, authority would be challenged and good would triumph once the complications of the plot had been resolved. Although the years of greatest success for the working-class theatres was the middle years of the nineteenth century, such material remained popular with audiences

into the first years of the twentieth and so, unsurprisingly, it was transferred directly into the early cinema. For its part, B&C adopted many of the stock characters and situations of melodrama for its initial short film dramas and then, in 1914–1915, turned a number of established stage melodramas into longer feature films.

Another popular leisure institution to materialize in the mid-nineteenth century was the music hall.²² Initially, pubs and supper rooms had encouraged the bringing together of song and music with drinking and eating. Then, in the aftermath of the 1843 Act, increasingly large, purpose-built concert rooms or ‘music halls’ were constructed, with singers and comic performers providing the entertainment. Such halls proliferated in the lower-class parts of London in the 1850s before, from the 1870s, the business began to transfer to buildings adopting a theatre model, with a proscenium stage, rows of stall seats in the body of the hall and drinking removed to adjacent bars. These were the ‘palaces of variety’ and they boomed in the last two decades of the century and in the years before the First World War. Comics and singers were top of the bill, but the offer of ‘variety’ was extended to include the routines of acrobats and animal acts, dancers and magicians, monologists and even short plays and sketches. From 1896, the halls became a major site for the first film shows, as one item on the bill of fare; and consequently, variety performers began to appear in the one-shot films of the time. Inevitably, personnel from the halls migrated, with their established performance styles, into the cinema, and several of B&C’s earliest players and directors came from that background.

In the 1890s, a further component was added to the field of lower-class commercial culture, namely cheap mass-circulation newspapers, magazines and comics.²³ These were launched by the innovating media entrepreneurs Alfred Harmsworth, George Newnes and Cyril Pearson, who built large newspaper circulations through advertising and clever promotional stunts and whose press empires extended through women’s magazines, popular periodicals such as *Tit-Bits*, *Pearson’s Weekly* and *Answers* to the comic papers. In Period One, B&C managed to establish links with Harmsworth’s *Daily Mail*, *Evening News* and *Comic Chips* as well as with his rival Pearson, through *Pearson’s Weekly* and *Pearson’s Magazine*, and both the business’s *Evening News* and *Pearson’s Weekly* proved sympathetic promoters of the film company. Further, the technique of the comic papers in telling a funny story in pictures was readily transferred to film by pioneer film-makers, and B&C’s film comics clearly learned from their contemporary graphic competitors.

Thus, as B&C was establishing itself within the cinema institution and exploring different modes of film production, it drew on forms and practices developed in the chain of commercial cultural institutions that had generated a lower-class urban culture in Britain—an allegiance that promoted a decidedly populist approach to cinema. Yet this was the orientation of the company's early years for, in Period Two under McDowell, there was an attempt to move upmarket and appeal to more polite, middle-class, publics. In pursuit of these ends, a third determining context became relevant to company development, the more established cultural institutions of the middle and upper classes.

MIDDLE-CLASS CULTURE AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

The dominant bourgeois culture offered B&C different and more respectable cultural materials to aspire to and work with. One of these more prestigious resources was the polite theatre of the West End.

Nineteenth-century melodrama was a popular form performed in theatres widely dispersed across the metropolis, but the last decades of the century were to see the theatre's own move upmarket, with the creation of the 'West End' and a return of middle- and upper-class audiences to playgoing.²⁴ From the mid-1860s, certain dramatists began to write a new kind of play, the so-called cup and saucer dramas presenting the lives and manners of the well-to-do and following the tight construction of 'the well-made play'. Set in more refined social worlds than most melodrama, they would sometimes address contemporary issues. At the same moment, central London was being redeveloped, with new roads such as Shaftesbury Avenue being driven through. This process was accompanied by a spate of theatre-building, the erection of small, high-priced venues that created the modern West End theatre district. These changes won a new respectability for the theatre institution, encouraged back 'society' audiences and drew in the conventional middle class, so that the years from the 1890s to the First World War witnessed 'the full flowering of fashionable theatre'.²⁵ Cinema's drive to go upmarket in the mid-1910s, therefore, was an attempt to replicate the move theatre had successfully made in previous decades. B&C's own gesture in this direction in Period Two meant recruiting actors and directors with theatrical experience and employing writers prepared to adapt successful plays for the screen or draw upon theatrical models of play construction in their screenplays.

However, the more ambitious of the company's directors and writers in the mid-teens began to look towards rather more challenging theatrical

precedents—namely, the New Drama.²⁶ This was a product of the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century, the work of such playwrights as George Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy, and it was particularly associated with the progressive productions of the Court Theatre. The philosophy underpinning the New Drama involved a belief in theatre as a social force, the desire to make the theatre reflect everyday life, the intention to create a literary drama more intellectually demanding than conventional West End fare and a willingness to experiment with new dramatic forms differing from commercial theatre's well-made play.²⁷ When its film-makers aligned themselves with this tendency, B&C productions were tipping towards the theatrical avant-garde.

If the middle class had vacated the theatre in the mid-nineteenth century, they nevertheless formed the backbone of the novel-reading public in those years. Through the century, the institutional arrangements for the provision of literature embraced publishers, circulating libraries, booksellers and serial publication in respectable periodicals so Victorian publishing became a highly profitable venture, with the novel as its dominant form and print runs of bestsellers achieving the tens of thousands.²⁸ By the end of the century, firms such as Chatto and Windus had begun to further extend the reading public by issuing 6d (an equivalent of around £2.84 at today's values) paper-covered reprints of novels that had originally sold as hardbacks for 3s 6d (or £19.84).²⁹ Like the penny dreadfuls at the more disreputable end of the market, they drew in potential readers with their brightly coloured cover illustrations. Ambitious producers of the longer films from 1913, such as B&C, were quick to adapt these more successful novels and take over their emphasis on coherent narrative and credible characterization.

Further, film directors who had begun to think seriously about film as an art form, such as B&C's Maurice Elvey, started to model the staging of certain scenes directly on particular Royal Academy paintings, or to draw on academic painting in general for lighting effects and the arrangement of characters within a frame.

One consequence of drawing on resources from both popular 'low' culture and those aspiring to pass as more respectable 'high' culture was that there developed a contradiction at the heart of B&C's operations. On the one hand was a pull towards spectacle, sensation, melodrama and comic incident, fed by the nineteenth-century's commercial popular culture, and on the other was a drive towards longer, high-quality, narrative films relating themselves to more bourgeois cultural norms. Over time, the movement was from the former towards a rapprochement with the latter, and the chapters that follow will trace that trajectory.

The book is divided into five broad parts. Part One (Chapters 2 and 3) offers a company history covering the years 1908–1918. Part Two (Chapters 4 and 5) examines the production processes in B&C's plant and studios. Part Three (Chapters 6 and 7) relates the biographies of company personnel, both on screen and behind. Part Four (Chapters 8 and 9) studies the films themselves. Part Five (Chapters 10 and 11) investigates the often neglected area of distribution, promotion and publicity. Chapter 12 brings the account to a close by detailing the rather separate Period Three history of the years 1918–1924.

Part I

*British and Colonial:
A Company History, 1908–1918*

The Bloomfield Years: Period One at B&C, 1908–1912

Albert Bloomfield founded B&C in 1908. John Benjamin McDowell joined him as a partner in 1910. By 1912, they had established a thriving production business, with its own studio, processing facilities and stock company of performers, and were able to supply a full range of film genres to the growing network of newly opening cinemas. In just over four years, the company made itself into one of the leading firms in the emergent industry's production sector. This is Period One of its history.

1908: BLOOMFIELD FOUNDS THE COMPANY

Bloomfield was in his mid-twenties when he set up B&C to produce film locals and topicals. These were short actuality items depicting either local events of interest to audiences in particular districts and usually ordered by a local exhibitor, or newsworthy national events such as the Derby or the State Opening of Parliament. Previously he had spent eight years as a topical cameraman with the British Biograph Company, where he had worked alongside McDowell, and then two years in charge of the darkrooms at the Walturdaw company. After these preparatory experiences, he decided to open 'for himself ... at Twickenham, with a small place in the West of London' where his fledgling business could try out 'its wings in a modest way'.¹ He seems to have begun there at the start of June.²

However, there is an alternative 'myth of origins' that made an appearance rather later. In November 1913, the *Evening News* ran an article asserting:

The early spring of 1908 saw the birth of the most enterprising and successful film-producing concern in the United Kingdom. It was then that Mr J.B. McDowell began to put into practice his ambitious

plan for the production of All-British Kinematograph films. The [company] ... as founded in the modest environment of a basement in the vicinity of Oxford-circus, rented at 6s weekly. In those early days the firm had one camera and one operator, and the films were washed and dried in Mr McDowell's private house.³

The same account was repeated in other publications over the next few months, on each occasion with any mention of Bloomfield erased from the company's foundation story.⁴ Significantly, this 'revisionist' version appeared only after McDowell had assumed sole responsibility for the enterprise, consequent upon Bloomfield's stepping down in the spring of 1913. It appears that Bloomfield was 'written out' of the company's history at the same time as McDowell got 'written into' the account of its beginnings. In fact, the latter was working for the Warwick Trading Company in the summer of 1908 and was still with them as late as October 1909.⁵ Claims regarding his responsibility for founding B&C therefore appear to have been a later invention—although the characterization of the initial primitive production arrangements probably contains a considerable element of truth.

Bloomfield's experience at Biograph and Walthamstow had been with topical and actuality materials, the prime product of both organizations. Therefore, setting up on his own as a maker of these genres was a logical strategy for his new enterprise, given the preponderance of non-fiction films in the cinema industry at that particular moment. He would have acted as his own cameraman and functioned as a one-man enterprise, but the relatively low economic costs of entry into this field—basically involving outlay on a camera, film and rudimentary processing facilities—would have made production of locals and topicals a feasible prospect for a newcomer with limited resources. Moreover, his existing contacts as, in effect, a veteran figure in the field would have been used to secure early commissions, as the *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly (KLW)* later observed: 'From the first, B and C ... had a wide and appreciative clientele for their topical subjects.'⁶ Further, Bloomfield began issuing films just before the cinema boom generated a demand for the *mass*-production of particular titles. Initially, therefore, his films would have followed an earlier pattern of exhibition that did not require multiple prints but where locals were made for individual purchasers and newsworthy topicals were featured as one part of the programme in a limited number of music hall venues. In addition, the demand for film locals remained high until around 1912, which meant he was servicing a still flourishing market.⁷

Nevertheless, Bloomfield was entering a highly competitive field where he was going up against several larger and better resourced rivals. One

contemporary survey indicates there were twelve leading British kinematograph firms at the start of 1908. These included the Charles Urban Trading Company, established in 1903 and producer of around 300 actuality subjects in 1907; the Warwick Trading Company, established in 1898 and specialists in topical subjects; the Walturdaw Company, begun in 1896; the Gaumont Company, operating in London since 1898; and the Hepworth Manufacturing Company, set up in 1899.⁸ A feature of several of these firms was that they manufactured and supplied equipment as well as making films. Urban, for example, sold printers, perforators and arc lamps, and both Warwick and Walturdaw supplied projectors. B&C, however, typified the cinema institution's emergent division of labour by specializing, from the outset, solely in the manufacture of films.

Denis Gifford's list of non-fiction releases for 1908 provides material for outlining a tentative picture of that year's situation—although his catalogue severely underestimates the number of topicals made and omits the elusive locals entirely. Consequently, he lists only 309 films produced by twenty-one manufacturers, five of which issued ten or more items and seven—including B&C—releasing just a single title.⁹ Urban was responsible for around 52 per cent of the total, Gaumont and Hepworth released 10 per cent each and Walturdaw 9 per cent. Warwick, a major specialist in topicals, was credited only with eight films—evidence of the limited access to topical titles in Gifford's research. Nevertheless, one conclusion seems clear. In 1908, film production was tending towards an oligopoly situation, where a few larger concerns were dominant and a variety of very small firms were competing to become part of the action. Therefore, it is no small tribute to the business acumen and cinematic ingenuity of Bloomfield and McDowell that they were able to negotiate B&C from its somewhat unpropitious beginnings into a prominent place in the industry in a relatively short period of time.

1909: B&C MOVES INTO THE PRODUCTION OF FICTION FILMS

Bloomfield's first eight months proved a success for, on 1 February 1909, he moved to new premises at 8 Denmark Street in London's West End, a little to the north of Cecil Court or 'Flicker Alley', London's earliest centre for the film industry—both on the east side of Charing Cross Road. There, he had three rooms and a workshop where he could develop up to 6,000 feet of film a day.¹⁰ This allowed him to increase and speed up his release of topical subjects, such as the Boat Race and the Lord Mayor's Show, which, he observed, all 'sold well through being promptly published'—that

is, by being quickly processed and distributed to exhibitors.¹¹ The firm now began to take advance orders, and its first advertisement in the trade press appeared in the *KLW* at the moment the new building began operating, inviting orders for a topical of the forthcoming State Opening of Parliament.¹² Speed of processing was imperative, and B&C was now able to promise delivery on the evening of an event—as for its film of the Derby in May.¹³ In September, the *KLW* reported Bloomfield's act of courtesy to a rival when he 'spontaneously offered his dark room' to Will Barker so that he might have access to proper processing facilities after his return from filming *Dr Cook*, the discoverer of the North Pole, in Copenhagen.¹⁴

Also in 1909, Bloomfield made a decision that would have a powerful effect on the future development of B&C. In the autumn, the company entered a new market when it began to issue fiction films—comics and dramas—alongside its topical releases.¹⁵ The first item in the new programme was released in September and, taken together, the new pictures suggest a carefully planned strategy designed to attract both industry and public attention—even though they amounted to a little less than an hour's output. The first drama, *Her Lover's Honour*, was a costume picture emulating the recent prestigious French Film d'Art series of historical films. Next, two episodes in *The Exploits of Three-Fingered Kate*, released in October and December and featuring a lively female thief, began the company's first film series, shrewdly designed to bring back audiences to view Kate's successive adventures.¹⁶ In addition, a short-lived comic series to feature the character of Drowsy Dick was initiated with *Drowsy Dick's Dream*, in December. The production values of these films were noteworthy, and several drew attention to themselves by being tinted, toned or hand coloured. Oceano Martinek was brought in to direct *Her Lover's Honour*, and stayed on to become B&C's most prolific director during the Bloomfield years. His wife, Ivy, like her husband a performer with a background in circus, took the lead part, as well as assuming the role of Three-Fingered Kate, and was quickly established as the company's leading player. Both husband and wife already had experience of film-making at Pathé Freres in France, and so were able to supplement Bloomfield's expertise in topicals with their knowledge of fiction practice.

This policy was enthusiastically endorsed by the *KLW*, a periodical that henceforth championed B&C through its early years. The magazine welcomed *Her Lover's Honour* as a film that 'substantiated in a remarkable manner' the defence of English film manufacturers that it had recently advanced—though, it was suggested, with a glance towards the main competition of the time, that it might have been 'assume[d] from inspection that this subject was of French or Italian manufacture, particularly

on the score of the acting'.¹⁷ A later report recalled the excellence of the film's staging and photography in order to contend:

That the standard then reached was by no means in the nature of a happy fluke has been amply proved by the later subjects of this firm, and in the second adventure of Three-Fingered Kate the capabilities of their stage manager [Martinek as director] are again admirably displayed.¹⁸

At this moment in the company's development, the two tendencies that were later to characterize its drama productions were already beginning to manifest themselves. On the one hand, the Three-Fingered Kate films drew on existing traditions in popular culture, cheap fiction and melodrama. On the other, *Her Lover's Honour*, in its gesture towards Pathé's prestigious Film d'Art productions, pulled in the direction of bourgeois culture and 'serious' drama. The former tendency, with its emphasis on thrills and sensation, was the more significant in these years, whereas the latter tendency came to be increasingly emphasized in the second period of company development under McDowell.

Up-to-date topical and local films were ordered direct from the manufacturer but sales of comics and dramas were handled by specialist film agents. So, in September, the Cosmopolitan Film Company was contracted to sell and distribute B&C's fiction films and continued to do so until the end of 1911. This, in turn, led to the more systematic advertising and promotion of the company's productions.

The considerable progress Bloomfield had made in a matter of eighteen months—and after only six short fictional releases—was attested to in an end-of-the-year assessment in the *KLW*, which asserted:

The legend ... of the inferiority of English subjects ... seems not a little ridiculous in the face of the excellent work at present being done by Messrs. Hepworth, Cricks and Martin, and other English producers. It is our candid opinion that the general level of these films is quite up to that of the average American or Continental subjects, without either the padding of many of the former, or the doubtful taste of some of the latter. It is also gratifying to note that the old established firms ... are being supported by newcomers into the English manufacturing field, and by no firm with more credit than the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company, who, beginning in a very modest manner not a great while ago, have now a right to call themselves one of the most prominent of home producers.¹⁹

1910: McDOWELL JOINS BLOOMFIELD AS A PARTNER

On 3 February 1910, the *KLW* ran an article headed 'J. B. McDowell joins the B. & C. Company'.²⁰ It suggested there were 'few men better known in London film circles' than McDowell, observed he was 'an old associate' of Bloomfield at Biograph and reported he was concluding a 'long stay' with the Warwick Trading Company to join 'as a *partner* in the progressive British and Colonial Kinematograph Company'.²¹ McDowell, who was six years older than Bloomfield, had a reputation as a leading actuality cameramen, rather than an administrator or businessman, so his contribution to the new partnership was expected to be in the topical field. However, by December, one report was observing how 'since with Mr Bloomfield, he launched the British and Colonial Kinematograph Co., [McDowell] has turned part of his attention to the commercial side of the business with no little success'.²² Apparently, he had rapidly assumed the entrepreneurial role that was to characterize his later years at the company—as well as already becoming part-credited with its inception.

As part of the February announcement, Bloomfield revealed plans for a large glass-covered studio B&C was proposing to erect in May. What exactly happened is unclear, but, when B&C opened its studio at East Finchley the following year, they were reported as having moved from a studio at Neasden in north-west London; and in the film *Playing Truant* of July 1910, a breeze disturbs the tablecloth of an interior scene, suggesting the company was then using an outdoor site.²³

Nevertheless, the February plan underlines Bloomfield's ambitions to develop the enterprise more strongly in the direction of the fiction film. To this end, he already had the services of Martinek who, he observed, was supervising 'the production of the scenes for all our subjects, and we regard him as one of the best men in London at the work'.²⁴ In January, he had been joined by Charles Raymond, who had 'previously done good work for the Warwick, and [was] recognised as one of the foremost English producers [or directors]'.²⁵ McDowell had also transferred from Warwick, but Raymond came with experience of the world of popular theatre, having been a dancer and producer of pantomimes.

Another policy emphasis was developed at this time, presumably as a result of McDowell's ambition to produce 'All-British' films. The promotion of B&C's pictures now began to assert their 'Britishness' in what was possibly a ploy to vindicate the company's name. Thus, in September, in its first big advertisement since the launch of the fiction programme a year earlier, a full page promotion for *Every Wrong Shall Be Righted* (released in

October) declared the company's films to be 'British Films' with 'Acting, Staging, Quality, all the Best' and advertising for *Trust Those You Love* (also October) proclaimed: 'Another Topliner!/A BRITISH subject performed by BRITISH actors, and produced by a BRITISH firm/A Stirring Plot with many affecting incidents.'²⁶

Topicals and actuality films

Even so, the company continued its initial embrace of topicals, so McDowell's success in such work was seen as something that 'promise[d] well for the future operations of Messrs. McDowell and Bloomfield in the same field'—a field that 'the B and C Company has already exploited, and intends to cultivate on a still larger scale'.²⁷ As Bloomfield explained, 'We are going in very strong for topicals' because the Denmark Street building was especially organized for that class of work.²⁸ However, McDowell's first success at B&C was in securing an exclusive of a train disaster near Brighton. The accident occurred on Saturday 29 January; he was filming at the scene by five the next morning; and it was projected at the Circle-in-the-Square cinema on Sunday evening, going on to generate considerable demand as the only record of the catastrophe.²⁹ In May, B&C scored a hit with its film of the funeral procession of King Edward VII. Fifteen companies were in attendance, including rivals Warwick, Gaumont and Kinemacolor, but McDowell was the only operative to be personally praised in the *KLW's* review of the films.³⁰ In June, demand was such for the firm's Derby topical that some orders for delivery on the evening of the race had to be turned down, evidence, it was suggested, for 'the reputation their subjects of the boat-race, etc., [had] secured them'.³¹

Alongside the locals and topicals, B&C moved into a fresh area of non-fiction production, the actuality films dealing with subjects of more general interest. Thus, in mid-October, the *Film House Record*—a weekly periodical listing the new films released by Cosmopolitan and other agencies—wrote of McDowell's film on bee-keeping, *The Bee Hunter* (released in November): "'B&C" dramatic and comic numbers already [enjoy] an admirable reputation with the public, and in this subject they enter yet another field.'³²

The year 1910 also witnessed several films promoting the 'colonial' dimension of the B&C trademark. An article in the *Evening News* in 1913 recalled how '[i]n 1909, Mr. McDowell was commissioned by the *Daily Mail* to film the Canadian Pacific Railway system. At the same time, he took pictures of the paper works at Grand Falls, Newfoundland,

and a series for the Government of the Island.³³ In fact, McDowell travelled to Canada in late March 1910, after he had joined B&C that January. A letter dated 31 March 1910 written by Valentine Smith, who was in charge of the *Daily Mail's* Circulation Department, noted how '[o]n Friday last, I sent out Mr B. Hooper and Mr McDowell to take ... pictures of the Newfoundland Development Company for exhibition purposes at the White City and in other parts of England. We hope to be able to sell several copies of this film to various theatrical people.'³⁴ *Pictures and the Picturegoer* later provided rather more information about the trip:

Then came a never-to-be forgotten and hustling tour of 15,000 miles when, during a brief period of seven weeks, Mr. McDowell filmed the Canadian Pacific Railway and took a series of moving pictures for the Government of Newfoundland. He was back in London in time to superintend the filming of the funeral of King Edward VII [in late May 1910].³⁵

In July, the *Daily Mail* reported how cinematograph photographs had been taken at Greenwich of the unloading of a large cargo of paper from the Development Company. This film was to be added to existing material in order to 'form a remarkable series of moving pictures of the production of a newspaper', from the making of the paper at Grand Falls to the publishing of the *Daily Mail* in London and Manchester.³⁶ In March, Smith had been keen to retain the *Mail's* copyright to the planned film, for he was aware the Tyler company also had a man in Newfoundland and wished steps to be taken to 'prevent anyone else securing living pictures of the Newfoundland business, as it would spoil the effect of our men's work there' and 'the value of the copyright would be nil'.³⁷ The completed film was *From Forest to Breakfast Table*, and it was shown exclusively in thirteen cinemas in London, Dublin, Plymouth and Edinburgh before McDowell and Bloomfield took a large order for its wider release in August.³⁸ In October, B&C released *From the Old House to the New* through Cosmopolitan. This film included McDowell's footage of the CPR and, according to the *Film House Record*, offered 'quite a novelty in travel pictures, illustrating the journey of a large party of emigrants to Canada, from the time they leave Liverpool until they reach their new home in the far west'.³⁹ This subject made the film typical of most pictures made in Canada before 1911, because government, commercial companies and the CPR had long been encouraging foreign firms to produce films promoting emigration and settlement.

Fiction production

B&C's first full year of fiction film production was 1910, and, as Table 2.1 shows, a reworking of the data in Denis Gifford's *British Film Catalogue* allows a statistical comparison to be made between the new company and its competitors.⁴⁰

Table 2.1: British Companies Releasing Ten or More Fiction Films in 1910

Company	Total output (in feet)	Total duration ¹	% of total footage ²	Number of films	Average length (in feet)	Average duration (minutes)
Hepworth	71,751	19:56	37	136	528	8.8
Cricks ³	23,705	6:35	12	45	527	8.8
Clarendon	22,857	6:21	12	39	586	9.8
Walturdaw	11,820	3:17	6	22	537	9.0
B&C	11,734	3:16	6	23	510	8.5
Gaumont	9,702	2:42	5	16	606	10.1
Acme	9,015	2:30	5	19	474	7.9
Kineto	7,052	1:58	4	13	542	9.0
ALL ⁴	192,347 ⁵	53:26		366	531	8.9

- (1) Duration in hours and minutes, calculated at one foot per second.
- (2) Company's percentage of the year's total footage (all companies).
- (3) Cricks and Martin.
- (4) Totals for all twenty-two production companies.
- (5) Four films in Gifford lack lengths.

That year, a total of 366 fiction films were produced by twenty-two production companies. Eight of these, including B&C, released ten or more films, whilst three concerns accounted for only one each. Average duration of the films was 8.9 minutes, with all firms staying close to that norm. Only five films were over 1,000 feet (or one reel), including two each from Hepworth and Gaumont. Hepworth, who had begun in 1899, was overwhelmingly the market leader with 136 films, totalling almost twenty hours of screen time and taking a 37 per cent share of

the year's footage.⁴¹ Cricks and Martin, who had come together in partnership in 1908, issued forty-five films and Clarendon, who had begun in 1904, issued thirty-nine. Each released around six and a half hours of film and so lagged far behind Hepworth but each provided 12 per cent of the year's output. Walturdaw and B&C came next, each with a 6 per cent share of the year's footage or three and a quarter hours of film—made up, in B&C's case, of twenty-three films. In all, the eight leading firms released 87 per cent of all new fiction material—another oligopolistic situation. Acme put out only comics and the majority of Clarendon's product was also comics, but the other companies offered a mix of both comics and dramas. In 1910, therefore, B&C had become a serious player in the field of fiction production, one of the top five companies. Further, its reputation as a maker of comics and dramas was rising steadily.

Production of the former was fairly slow in the first half of the year, although the *Film House Record* pointed out in March that the company's comics were to be found in all representative picture programmes.⁴² By June, however, the magazine was announcing: 'It will be welcome news to both buyers and hirers of films that the British and Colonial Co. have made arrangements to considerably increase their output of comic subjects.'⁴³ So, in the second half of 1910, comic production rose, and the *Record* was able to claim that the new comics were 'by common consent the present feature of the trade', whilst admitting that 'since the increase of their number to an average of one weekly, we have been hard put to it to supply the demand'.⁴⁴ The films themselves drew on another area of popular commercial culture, the illustrated comic papers that had first gone into mass circulation in the 1890s. They also introduced a second regular member to the stock company that was growing up at B&C, the 'house comic' William Gladstone Haley, popularly known as 'Snorky'. He first appeared as a comic policeman in a March release, *The Baby, the Boy and the Teddy Bear*.

Over the year, the company produced six dramas, one of which it clearly felt merited special attention. *Every Wrong Shall Be Righted* (October) was directed by Charles Raymond, and was forcefully promoted in the *Film House Record* as:

The strongest and best staged subject ever produced by an English maker. In every respect equal to the best American and Continental subjects. A technically perfect ENGLISH SUBJECT, acted by Artistes from a leading West End Theatre. Among English manufacturers the British and Colonial Company already occupy an almost

unique position for the high standard of their acting, and the depth and realism of their staging.⁴⁵

The film also became B&C's first appearance in the *KLW*'s 'Notable Productions of the Week' section where, it was claimed:

If any special attractions were needed to take film buyers to the new and convenient offices [of B&C's agent, Cosmopolitan] ... this film should admirably serve the purpose—in fact it has already brought about, we believe, special visits, not only from buyers, but from showmen anxious to see a possible headliner ... The chief merits of the subject from the point of view of the English showman, is that it is English from start to finish, staged by an English firm, and acted throughout by English artistes—artistes, be it said, of a standing only too rarely met with in the motion picture film in this country. It is quite as finished a production as the work of the best European and American firms.⁴⁶

Such commentary restated B&C's own assertion of its films' 'Britishness' or, here, 'Englishness', and indicated the film's qualities stood comparison with existing European and emergent American competition. This was important because that competition considerably constrained British film-making, and Rachael Low has calculated how, in 1910, 57 per cent of the films released in Britain came from Europe (predominantly from France) and 28 per cent from American studios. Only 15 per cent were British—less than the 22 per cent issued by Pathé, the world's market leader.⁴⁷ In the next few years, European competition was to contract, but that from America was to expand into the position of dominance it has retained ever since. B&C's agent, Cosmopolitan, associated the company's productions with the European films it was also handling in 1910, whereas from 1912, the MPSA began to release B&C films alongside those of leading American producers.

In an article of early 1911, it was suggested the costs of production for an ordinary comic picture at Hepworth averaged £100 and that expenditure on certain films might be as high as £1,000.⁴⁸ Adopting this as a rough guide, it can be estimated that B&C's 1910 costs for fiction production might have been as high as £3,100—if *Every Wrong* is assumed to have approached the £1,000 maximum and the rest of the films cost £100 each.⁴⁹ Alternatively, in 1912 and 1913, both Frederick Talbot and Valentia Steer suggested that a simple modern comedy might cost only around £50 to produce.⁵⁰ In which case, a lower estimate for B&C's 1910

costs would be £1,100. However, expenditure on sending McDowell to Canada would have increased the year's expenses considerably—although the *Daily Mail* probably assumed some of the responsibility—as would sending out teams of cameramen to film important topical events.



Figure 2.1 Cartoon of B&C's John Benjamin McDowell and Albert Henry Bloomfield.
The Bioscope, 5 October 1911

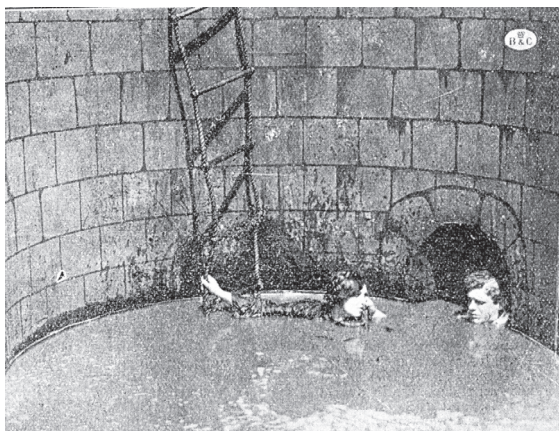


Figure 2.2 Three-Fingered Kate encounters danger in *The Case of the Chemical Fumes*.
The Pictures, 17 August 1912

Thus, by the end of 1910, B&C had extended the range of its production to encompass locals, topical news events, actuality subjects, comic films and dramas. This would have been a considered response to the expansion in demand for films. The number of cinemas—both penny gaff (venues such as an empty shop where films might be shown) and purpose built—was then increasing spectacularly, and the demand was for *variety* in programming, a series of short items in different film genres. B&C was clearly attempting to maximize its income by covering them all. Even so, in that year it still only released less than four hours of material outside its local and topical subjects.

1911: INCORPORATION AND EXPANSION—NEW PLANT AND A NEW STUDIO

Business developments

On 3 March 1911, Bloomfield and McDowell moved to have B&C legally incorporated as a private company with limited liability. The first item on its formal Memorandum of Association stated its object was ‘[t]o institute, enter into, carry on, assist or participate in any business or operations connected with the business of amusement caterers, providers of entertainment and cinematograph pictures’.⁵¹ Here, therefore, the company was declaring its prime object to be one of providing entertainment and amusement. Limited liability meant the finances of the business were legally distinct from the personal wealth of its directors, and opting for the status of a private corporation allowed the number of directors to be limited to two. These were McDowell, of 65 King’s Road, Willesden Green, registered as an engineer, and Bloomfield, of 72 Hunsden Road, New Cross, in south-east London, also an engineer. The company’s nominal capital at incorporation was a mere £100, divided into one hundred £1 shares. Significantly, sixty of these were allocated to McDowell and only forty to Bloomfield, which suggests the balance of power in the company had already shifted in McDowell’s favour. By opting to become a private company, B&C denied itself the opportunity of appealing to a wider public for finance through the issuing of further shares in the business—a strategy adopted by film producers only when London Films set up as a public company in 1913 and Broadwest followed in 1914—but they did gain the security of limited liability. The company could raise further money through the issue of debentures. These were acknowledgements of indebtedness for a loan to which the debenture holder had no other rights than payment of interest on the loan and repayment of the principal. In other words,

debenture holders might put up money but could not exercise control over a business—and B&C were to make only limited use of such loans. McDowell and Bloomfield, therefore, were keeping B&C firmly in their own hands and under their own direction. Such decisions meant the business was expanding through the management's careful husbanding of company resources, the ploughing back of income, the reinvestment of profits and, presumably, through whatever loans it could secure from a bank.⁵² Thus, the firm's growth so far had been endogenous and was to remain so, depending on the good business sense of its directors.

A further change came on 8 June when the company moved premises from Denmark Street to 'more commodious, convenient and central offices' on four floors at 33 and 35 Endell Street, Long Acre, in central London, secured on a twenty-two year lease.⁵³ At the same time, an open-air studio was set up at Newstead House on the Great North Road in East Finchley, north London, where 'a large house with circumambient grounds, eminently suited to the production of pictures, was secured for a period of five years'.⁵⁴ In an article presenting them as 'A *Leading* British Film Company', the *KLW* suggested B&C had 'every reason to be proud of their own progress during the last three short years' and that Bloomfield, 'who founded the company at Twickenham in 1908', could have 'hardly anticipated that its growth would be so rapid as to entail, in 1911, the acquisition of new premises for both the production and development ends of the business'.⁵⁵ Film-making was to take place at Finchley, and Endell Street would accommodate the company's head office and processing facilities.

Non-fiction films

During the first part of 1911, topical work continued apace, and it was anticipated that the improved facilities at Endell Street would further extend topical production. As *The Bioscope* put it, "First in the Field and First on the Screen" is the motto of the indefatigable heads, Messrs. McDowell and Bloomfield, who are now out to beat their own records, an easy matter with the fine plant and organisation at their command.⁵⁶ That June, the new set-up was put to good use in preparing films related to the coronation of King George V, and in October, company advertising was still announcing: "The only firm for good topicals and interesting locals. *Quality* always good. *Promptness* always guaranteed. *Interest* of picture unequalled."⁵⁷ However, by August 1911, there was the novelty of four twice-weekly gazettes or newsreels, each containing several topical items, circulating to cinemas and these were tending to displace the intermittent single-subject topicals B&C had specialized in. Therefore, despite the promise offered by Endell Street,

the firm's topical production began to contract and become more occasional. As McDowell explained two years later, a 'great change ... came about by the introduction of cheap gazettes and chronicles, and the directors decided to gradually branch out more in the dramatic film'.⁵⁸

However, in the wider non-fiction field, this dropping off of B&C's news-oriented topical work was compensated for by increased attention to actuality film-making on subjects of more general interest, regularly photographed and directed by McDowell himself. Only four of these were distributed in the second half of 1911 before the new policy was firmly bedded in, but numbers went up to nineteen releases in 1912 and reached a peak of thirty-one in 1913, before dropping back to seventeen in 1914. Also in 1911, B&C's chief camera operator, William Bool was dispatched on the company's second visit to Canada, where he filmed seal hunting and whaling.⁵⁹ After a 7,000-mile round trip, he returned to England in June, having been away for over three months. He claimed it cost B&C roughly £500 to get the sealing pictures and—on the assumption they would play for ten minutes—observed that this represented 'cinematography at £50 a minute'.⁶⁰ At 860 feet, *The Seal Fishery of Newfoundland* (March 1912) was one of the company's longest actualities. In it, the *KLW* proposed, they had 'an exclusive in every sense of the word, for it forms the only picture of the hazardous industry of Seal Fishery off Newfoundland ever portrayed on the screen', and W.G. Faulkner in the *Evening News* asserted that the film would place B&C 'in the top line of great film producers'.⁶¹ The company's whaling film, *The Great Whale Hunt*, was shorter and released in December.

Interestingly, it appears the company was still taking the occasional order for film locals. Hence, in a letter of appreciation quoted in an advertisement promoting the service, Ralph Pringle of Pringle Picture Palaces in Bristol congratulated B&C on the results of a film taken exclusively for him in the city, declaring: 'Considering the early hour at which the picture was taken, great praise is due to you for the quality of the work produced and the quick development and despatch of the film also reflects great credit on you.'⁶²

Fiction films

In September, the *KLW* observed that 'it is [in] regard to the production of staged subjects that [B&C's] recent progress has been most marked', for that area of activity was increasingly coming to dominate the company's schedules.⁶³ The dramas in particular had begun to get more considered attention, especially after the appointment of Harold Brett

as full-time scriptwriter in the autumn, whereas comic production remained a relatively low-cost and staple component of output. Earlier, the *Weekly* had returned to its favourable comparison between foreign films and those of B&C, suggesting the good work of the latter was impossible to overlook and that 'the reproach that English firms are afraid to spend money does not apply [to them]'.⁶⁴ So, the dramas were bidding increasingly to become the 'topliners' designed to head a cinema's daily programme. Taking Hepworth's production expenditures as a guide, if the making of B&C's seventeen comics and three shorter dramas are calculated at £100 each and the eight longer dramas (of over 700 feet) at £1,000 each, then the year's fiction outlay may have approached £10,000! And even if Talbot and Steer's costing of comics is adopted, outlay may still have been around £9,150.⁶⁵

These fictions were still one-reelers, but the latter part of the year was important for the introduction of B&C's second and most successful drama series, *The Adventures of Lieutenant Daring, RN*. This move confirmed the adoption of a series policy for the major drama releases over the next couple of years. Daring was an intrepid naval hero upon whom his faithful sailor 'blue jackets' regularly danced attendance. His first adventure, *In a South American Port*, was released in September, a few months after one of B&C's actuality films, *Under the Union Jack* (April), had shown the training of boy sailors. For his second adventure,

BOOK YOUR CUP FINAL FILM NOW!
APRIL 19TH 1913
B & C. CO.
33 ENDELL ST. W.C.
 'PHONE. CENT. 4494'. 'GRAMS. KINDIS'. LONDON.
 LENGTH, 350 - 400 FEET.
 PRICE, 4^D PER FOOT NETT.
 FOUR COLOUR POSTERS, 6^D EACH.

Exhibitor, BRAVO! B & C: FIRST AGAIN !!

G MITCHELL 1913

Figure 2.3 Advertisement for B&C's 1913 Cup Final topical.
The Cinema, 9 April 1913

Lieutenant Daring and the Secret Service Agents (December), the role was taken over by Percy Moran, many of whose earlier performances had been in fairgrounds and music halls. He became the company's third lead performer, following Ivy Martinek and Bill Haley, and his popularity with the public was immediate. In an article of late December, purportedly written by Daring himself, it was claimed that 'on an average, my adventures are being shown to 30,000 people nightly, or in a week, including matinees, it is assumed that I am being brought before the gaze of no less than 270,000'.⁶⁶ As a consequence, B&C went on to issue various films with the popular Moran in the lead until September 1913.

Another performer to come forward at the end of the year was Dorothy Foster—in *Lieutenant Daring's* first adventure—and she became another of the company's leading players through into 1913, often alongside Moran and somewhat overshadowing Ivy Martinek.⁶⁷ She also participated in another of the company's new ventures of the year, its first touring stock company. A group travelled down to Cornwall to film three melodramas in which she took the lead.

Picture Theatre News ended 1911 with a distinctly upbeat prognosis for B&C's future. The magazine felt there was every reason to believe 1912 would bring a vastly increased output. The Daring films had already caused a considerable stir in London, and the company's up-to-date studio and developing plant meant it was now set up to produce the best possible films.⁶⁸ The forecast proved correct for, whilst the company released around five and a quarter hours of fiction and actuality material in 1911, in 1912 there was a pronounced increase in output—almost tripling to fourteen and a quarter hours.⁶⁹

1912: TOURING COMPANIES AND SERIES PRODUCTION

Business developments

On 1 January 1912, B&C switched agent, transferring to the MPSA at 86 Wardour Street in central London. The agency was already handling the US producers Biograph and Lubin, and was also responsible for *The Pictures*, the first British fan magazine selling to cinemagoers rather than the trade and running promotional material on the films it was handling. Overall, the MPSA developed a sophisticated advertising and sales operation, which helped boost B&C's business considerably over the course of the year.

The MPSA also acted as creditor for the two debentures B&C issued to generate extra finance that year. The security offered for the loans was

the B&C business itself, 'the undertaking and all the stock in trade goodwill bank debts and furniture and all the other property and assets present and future'.⁷⁰ A first debenture for £500 was raised on 30 March, shortly before McDowell took a company touring in North Wales, and a second, for a further £500, on 16 May. The £1,000 principal of these two loans was repaid on 5 June 1913, shortly before B&C left the care of the MPSA.

In June 1911, John O'Neill Farrell had been appointed to take charge of a Publicity and Advertising Department located in Endell Street, and he became, according to the *KLW*, an 'indefatigable worker on behalf of the industry'.⁷¹ In July 1912, he contributed to an account of the current economics of the British film industry in the *Evening News*. The newspaper itself began by claiming:

There are at this moment ten British firms producing films. Six of them have attained eminence, and are winning their way to the top of the ladder ... There's Hepworth, with real good drama, the Clarendon the same, the B.&C. which has made 'Daring' world famous, Charles Urban and Kineto, who have given us fine films ... and Barker's which produces topical with lightning rapidity.⁷²

This was followed by an analysis of the current terms of trade in the international film business, an account acutely aware of the rising competition from the USA. W.G. Faulkner for the *News* maintained it was impossible for British producers to fight overseas firms, including the Americans, on terms of equality in the home market because a foreign businessman could 'dump his surplus films here at no cost to himself'.⁷³ Further, even though Britain was a free trade country, its exports abroad were up against tariff walls, and in the USA, against the formidable barrier of the film trust—the protectionist Motion Picture Patents Company set up in 1908—even though the latter was a diminishing power. O'Neill Farrell's own observations underlined the growing threat from US producers and, in particular, their current move towards making films in Britain. The latter development represented a direct challenge to B&C's 1912 production programme because the Americans were proposing to explore similar scenic spots around the country to those the company's own stock companies were currently visiting. He explained:

The reason why there is a preponderance of American films in British picture shows is because there are so many American companies producing regularly day after day. The Kalem Company, for instance,

has seven stock companies always at work. One of the Kalem companies is in Ireland, there is a Vitagraph company now in England, six Edison players are here, Lubin's, I believe, are coming, and possibly Essanay and Selig; all coming to this country for scenery.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, there was some room for optimism:

For all that, British films are going wonderfully in the Colonies, and London has become during the last year or two the greatest film distributing centre in the world. What we want now is more British capital put into the British business. The Americans know there is money in it and spend accordingly.⁷⁵

For their part, B&C had already gained a reputation for expenditure and high production values, and incurred the further and not inconsiderable expense of sending stock companies around Britain and as far away as Jamaica in 1912. An enthusiastic year-end report in *The Pictures* suggested the company had been operating the very strategy of investment and enterprise advanced in O'Neill Farrell's comments. The magazine maintained that, of recent firms producing in Britain,

[t]he best have survived, amongst them being the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company, whose recent advances in the quality of their films testifies to a live appreciation of the wants of the public. Experienced and enterprising Directors, supported by a clever staff of artistes, have made the position of the B and C pre-eminent amongst British producers ... Mr J.B. McDowell and Mr Bloomfield are live wires whose example infect[s] their staff with the spirit of enterprise ... To B and C at least, the reproach that English firms are afraid to spend money does not apply ... [and visitors to their studio] can appreciate the care and attention to detail, to say nothing of the large amount of money expended, in making the scenes a success.⁷⁶

The company's policies for the year saw a further withdrawal from topical production, although this was again offset by a greater attention to actuality subjects, the core of which were a number of scenics made up of views taken during excursions to a variety of attractive locations around Britain. These paralleled the attention to location work in the year's drama productions. But the firm also seems to have undertaken some special non-commercial actuality film work, because in November the *Evening*

News reported that the company had ‘well earned their title to “Colonial” by the work they have done in the colonies and for Colonial Governments’, and McDowell himself recalled how ‘[c]ontracts for the *Daily Mail*, Canadian Pacific Railway, the Governments of Newfoundland and New Brunswick [had] followed in rapid succession’.⁷⁷ Consequently, the company made a film for the latter to show the colony offered opportunities equal if not superior to those provided further west.⁷⁸ This would have been B&C’s third contact with Canada, following Bool’s visit in 1911 and McDowell’s in 1910.

Travelling stock companies

However, the main thrust of production was now directed towards the fiction films that had gained ascendancy in cinema programmes, and increasingly towards drama. Inexpensive comics remained a standard part of production, making for a regular supply of programme fillers, but with the dramas, a novel strategy was introduced at the beginning of the year in order to differentiate B&C’s films from their competition. Given the success of the recent tour of Cornwall, the company ‘decided to work on an even more extensive scale’ in 1912 by engaging *three* stock companies to travel round the British Isles so that ‘a most interesting and picturesque series of dramas will be taken’.⁷⁹ Thus, from February, B&C had begun to address O’Neill Farrell’s proposal to operate several companies in parallel in order to survive as a modern film producer. The travelling strategy also signalled a pronounced expansion in production. Stock Company Number One was to proceed at once to the South Coast, where naval dramas featuring Lieutenant Daring were to be enacted on a large scale. He had been the great success of 1911, and five further adventures were released through 1912. Stock Company Number Two was to go to the West Country, ‘where a series of prettily set domestic dramas will be staged among the real scenery, which despite continental advertisement, cannot be beaten—the English Riviera’.⁸⁰ But this visit was delayed and instead, during April, McDowell took a company on a film tour ‘in the shadow of Snowdon’ in North Wales.⁸¹ The second trip to Cornwall took place at the very end of the year, although an anticipated second outing to Wales did not materialize.⁸² Company Number Three was to operate in the North Country, making dramas of mill life and the domestic experience of the mill hand. This plan remained underdeveloped, for only one film on an industrial subject was made and that was filmed later in Wandsworth, London—*A Factory Girl’s Honour* (February 1913). Nevertheless, B&C

did travel north, not to urban locations but to yet another scenically distinguished part of Britain. For a month in late September and October, a company filmed in the Derbyshire Peak District. There, Charles Raymond directed himself as the Spanish bandit, Don Q, with McDowell acting as cameraman.⁸³ Percy Moran was also filmed in *The Mountaineer's Romance* (December). Finally, in December—in an ambitious venture quite unanticipated when the touring policy was announced at the beginning of the year—B&C dispatched a company to Jamaica, under the leadership of Bloomfield. As *The Pictures* put matters, ‘The enterprising British and Colonial Cinematograph Company have taken the bold step of sending a big company of artists on a four thousand mile journey to Jamaica, in order to produce good pictures during the winter months’—the season when production outdoors in Britain was limited.⁸⁴ The whole trade press covered the departure, impressed—like the *Evening News*—by the fact this was ‘the first time any British film firm has sent a company of artists abroad’.⁸⁵ O’Neill Farrell was of the company, and for him, perhaps, the visit constituted a riposte to that American ‘invasion’ of Britain he had been pointing out in July. This policy of touring to seek out picturesque locations for dramas was used in B&C publicity to distinguish the company’s films in the marketplace. Here, it seems, the regular itineracy undertaken by the company’s topical and actuality cameramen was being used as a model for the mobility of its performing stock companies.

Series production

As they settled into major fiction output, B&C’s key approach seems to have been directed by its earlier embrace of the series policy. Approaching production in terms of sets of films in series had its own economic rationale, that of inviting the public back for ‘more of the same’. Here, the company was applying to film a fundamental economic practice developed across the range of nineteenth-century commercial popular culture—that of repetition with variation. Cheap fiction, mass-circulation periodicals, the songs of the music halls and the stock characters of melodrama all functioned by providing their publics with something they were already familiar with, but also by making the current version a little bit different in order to create a sense of novelty and freshness that encouraged the return of readers and audiences. In February, B&C’s thinking had proposed a naval series, a domestic series and a mill series for the touring companies. The Daring naval films realized this ambition, but the other location dramas became series of a rather different kind.

The Welsh visit resulted in four films dwelling on Welsh topography. According to advertising in *The Pictures*, *The Belle of Bettws-y-Coed* (June) was '[t]aken amidst some of the finest scenery in Great Britain'; in *The Smuggler's Daughter of Anglesey* (also June) '[b]eautiful Welsh scenery enhances the value of this really home-made picture'; *The Pedlar of Penmaenmawr* (June) was '[t]aken amidst sublime Welsh scenery'; and *The Witch of the Welsh Mountains* (August) was also filmed 'amidst gorgeous mountain scenery'.⁸⁶ The three Cornish dramas made late in 1911 were similarly released with an emphasis on their local scenic values, and in 1913, the Peak District background for the Don Q films was also taken as one of their major selling points. As one advertisement put it, the adventures had been filmed amidst 'Derbyshire's rugged and picturesque hills'.⁸⁷ Part of the draw for the Jamaican films was to be the novelty of their settings. Thus, the scenic beauties of sets of films taken in the same location were deployed to lure audiences into return visits to cinemas. Their scenic attractions were taken as part of their drawing power.

B&C also operated the more conventional series policy in which particular fictional characters would return for various adventures in a succession of self-contained film episodes. Here, the popular culture model was the heroes and heroines of the lurid series-issue periodicals that had first flourished in the 1830s.⁸⁸ Bloomfield had tried this approach with *Three-Fingered Kate* in 1909. Now she was revived for further exploits—three in 1912. *Lieutenant Daring* had opened with striking success in 1911 and more of his adventures boosted company income through 1912. The firm also added further series. In July, Percy Moran, already a big draw as *Daring*, began to feature in *The Adventures of Dick Turpin*, and October saw the first film in a proposed series on Robin Hood—though, in the event, there were no follow-ups. Commenting on these films, *The Cinema* observed how B&C had 'given exhibitors ... some good things in the past, notable amongst them the Lieut. Daring series, and the wideawake showman looks to them in the future to provide them with other equally sure money drawers'.⁸⁹ For their part, the Don Q dramas were filmed as a set of four; and the series approach was also extended into comic productions when Bill Haley was set up as the father in a short-lived series featuring the hapless Bliggs family. Even as late as 1914, when drama series had been discontinued, B&C had another shot at a comic series featuring the Hurricanes, a group of naughty children.

The series principle also came forward in another promotional area, for in 1912 the MPSA and, in particular, *The Pictures* began to draw attention to the lead players in B&C's films. The 'picture personality' came to be foregrounded in publicity work.⁹⁰ Consequently, another kind of

series—also encouraging fans and audiences to return for more—was the sequence of films offering audiences the pleasure of responding to a unique charismatic performer. Percy Moran, Dorothy Foster, Ivy Martinek and even Bill Haley were given special attention that year and through the early part of 1913. Moran and Foster were the particular favourites. She was the emotional and dramatic centre of both the Cornish and Welsh films, whilst he provided dash and panache as Daring, the law-upholding naval lieutenant, and as the transgressive highwayman Dick Turpin. The backgrounds of these performers, with the exception of Foster, was in the field of popular entertainment—such as circus and music hall—rather than the orthodox theatre that was to characterize those personnel recruited somewhat later. On the drama front, 1912 was also significant for the release of the company's first two-reeler, *The Great Anarchist Mystery* (September), a mystery drama.⁹¹

For B&C, 1912 ended on Saturday 14 December with a Farewell Dinner for forty people, hosted by the company's directors at the Café Monico, Piccadilly, to say goodbye to the party about to embark for the West Indies.⁹² McDowell occupied the chair, with Bloomfield as vice-chair. Both were presented with silver-mounted walking sticks. Charles Raymond devised a musical evening of songs and sketches, whilst dancing continued into the early hours of the next morning. Present were B&C's loyal advocates in the film press: Low Warren, editor of the *KLW*, and the *Evening News* columnist W.G. Faulkner. *The Bioscope* and others sent congratulatory telegrams, and T.H. Davison of the MPSA made a speech—to which Bloomfield replied—praising the company for how, in the past year, they had 'forged ahead in a truly remarkable manner, and [for how] their productions had made a lasting impression on the picture-play patron'.⁹³ In four and a half years, Bloomfield's B&C, with the energetic input of McDowell, had established itself as a major and innovative British production house. In the course of the next year, significant changes were to be introduced.

McDowell in Charge: Period Two at B&C, 1913–1918

The years 1913–1915 were a time of sustained success for B&C, its years of peak productivity and its moment of greatest industry prestige. However, Period Two witnessed major transformations. At top management level, McDowell displaced Bloomfield, and amongst the ‘talent’ grades of acting, direction and scriptwriting, new people replaced former employees. There was also the addition of a big new indoor studio and policy changes promoting longer film ‘exclusives’ that drew less on traditions of popular entertainment and more on such socially respectable sources as the West End theatre and the middle-brow novel. Disappointingly, these developments were followed by a sudden falling off in production and a serious contraction in company activity through 1916–1918.

1913: THE CINEMA OF SENSATION AND THE CINEMA OF QUALITY

In its annual survey of 1913, *The Kinematograph Year Book* wrote triumphantly of the recent ‘stupendous growth and far reaching influence’ of the film industry and of how the year had ‘broken all records in making [the industry] a permanent institution for the entertainment and education for the people of the world’, with at least 8 million people in Britain estimated to visit picture houses weekly.¹ B&C made its own contribution here with the firm’s output of new fiction and actuality film jumping up yet again, from a little over fourteen hours in 1912 to almost twenty-four hours in 1913.

McDowell assumes control

However, 1913 was the year Bloomfield forfeited his involvement in the business he had founded. He ceded power to McDowell who, as managing director, assumed personal control of the company for the next three years. Bloomfield had led the touring company to Jamaica, but this proved to be his last major venture. Most of the party returned to England at the end of February but he, Percy Moran and Dorothy Foster came back a few weeks later, possibly in mid-April.² Shortly afterwards, he was gone in a reorganization of the company's directorships, stepping down to be replaced on 27 May by Paul Christo Yannedis of Featherstone Buildings in Holborn, central London. In a 1914 document, the latter was listed as an architectural brass founder, which suggests a man with no direct experience of cinema.³ The cause of Bloomfield's departure was nowhere specified, but from this time on, his name is never mentioned in connection with the company—and so an acrimonious separation might be suspected. Moreover, looking back, the impression grows that McDowell's influence had long been eclipsing that of his partner. Henceforth, he became the dynamic force, taking strategic decisions, implementing specific initiatives and driving the company forward. His prime intention seems to have been to make B&C a leading producer—primarily by concentrating on high-cost spectacular dramas and quality actuality films.

This strategy was launched as soon as he took control when, in early June, he put into production the epic war picture *The Battle of Waterloo* (September), an expensive 'event' film designed to raise the company's profile, as two memoirs of the project testify. The *KLW's* Low Warren later recalled how 'an enterprising manufacturer—who, be it said, was also an astute showman—seeing the moment was ripe for a big experiment, went "splash" on the making of what was then regarded as a great British picture'.⁴ Robert Humfrey offered a more dramatized reminiscence. He pictured McDowell 'lying in bed thinking out new schemes and plots' and deciding *The Battle of Waterloo* 'would not be too small a subject to satisfy his ambitions'.⁵ His friends tried to dissuade him but he remained obdurate, and so it was

no exaggeration to say that Macdowell [*sic*] now found himself the pivot of a real-life drama. The venture would cost him every penny he possessed and failure would spell ruin but he felt confident and went straight ahead with the job. His success was ... a fine example of resource and pluck, and, indeed, downright cheek ... The whole

film was a record success at the time and may be regarded as a milestone in British production.⁶

Contemporary estimates of the film's cost varied between £3,000 and £6,000, with the former probably the more accurate.⁷ Nevertheless, the budget exposed the fact that a bidding-up in production expenditure was under way—in part to compete with expensive imports such as the incoming Italian epics and the current crop of American battle films, and in part to gain an advantage over other British producers. It was also evidence of that 'introduction of a greater amount of capital into the business' by film manufacturers that Low Warren observed to be characteristic of the whole industry in 1913.⁸ In June, *The Cinema* reported McDowell had become B&C's 'controlling spirit' and that '[t]he partnership which had existed so long between ... [him] and Mr Bloomfield ha[d] recently been dissolved', and went on to observe that *The Battle of Waterloo* was certainly 'the most ambitious' film produced since the split and how '[s]uch a stupendous task would have proved beyond the resources of most men'.⁹ Script and direction were made the responsibility of Charles Weston but McDowell, assuming the role of studio head of production, initiated the project and secured its financing.

The latter seems to have necessitated fresh borrowing for, on 5 June, just as the film was entering production, a debenture was issued to secure a loan of £2,000. Interest was payable to Charles Henry Stafford, a lithographic printer whose address was the Netherfield Printing Works near Nottingham—a specialist in entertainment posters. He was appointed an additional director of B&C and had fifty of McDowell's £1 company shares transferred to him.¹⁰ This debenture was paid back ten months later—in March 1914—after the company's successes of the previous autumn. Stafford acted as a director only until this repayment, whilst Yannedis remained McDowell's co-director until May 1916.

Walthamstow and Endell Street

Towards the end of July, McDowell announced B&C was planning to establish a new studio at Walthamstow in north-east London, and on Tuesday, 14 October it was officially opened at 317–19 Hoe Street as 'one of the most spacious and efficiently equipped studios in the country'.¹¹ The building was a former roller-skating rink; and the *Picturegoer* wrote of the development:

One firm at least can scarcely increase staff and premises fast enough to keep pace with their business ... The company ... have for over two years turned out all the stage and many outdoor scenes at their Finchley Studio ... But large as the Finchley Studio is, their business increased by leaps and bounds, and made it imperative to more than double their facilities for dealing with it.¹²

Whilst Finchley was an open-air studio, that at Walthamstow was enclosed. Ernest Batley was appointed director in charge at Finchley and Charles Weston at Walthamstow. The new site represented a considerable expansion of the company's physical plant and raised it to its maximum fixed film-making capacity, although its actuality work still depended on the mobility of the travelling cameraman-directors. Yet, '[i]n spite of the immense facilities afforded by the two studios', company ambition was for further expansion, and it was 'arranging to open a third large in and out door studio in a London suburb in quite another direction'.¹³ This third studio never materialized but B&C operated the Finchley and Walthamstow studios in tandem into July 1914 at least.¹⁴ The cost of setting up the new studio would have been high, as is evidenced by other ventures undertaken at around the same time. The London Film Company was founded at Twickenham in 1913 and, like B&C, took over a former skating rink as its studio. The start-up capital raised for that venture was £40,000.¹⁵ The Neptune Film Company was incorporated in January 1914 and erected a new studio on a 7-acre site in the hamlet of Boreham Wood, north of London, at a cost of a little over £40,000.¹⁶

Unfortunately, on Wednesday 22 October, one week after the new studio was opened, there was a damaging fire at B&C's Endell Street headquarters that caused a serious setback for this 'leader of the cinematograph industry'.¹⁷ It began in the cleaning room and blazed away for some twenty minutes before the fire brigade could get it under control, badly damaging the top floor of the building where negatives were stored. Luckily, no other department was harmed and nor were any of the staff hurt—although one man, working in the darkroom on the floor below and not hearing the shouts of alarm, 'thought it was getting a bit warm' before he was hustled out by a workmate.¹⁸ The company's losses proved heavy, as months of work were destroyed in a few minutes when its precious stock of film negatives ignited. Overall, something approaching a million and a half feet—or 417 hours—of film prints went up in flames, and the damage was believed to have cost upwards of £50,000, not all of which was covered by insurance. This figure gives some hint as to how B&C's assets had appreciated in recent years. At once, in an act of industry

solidarity, McDowell was contacted by all the London film-makers to offer his company unrestricted access to their processing facilities. Consequently, by the end of the month, he could state business was going on as usual and that there would be little delay in keeping to announced release dates. In the event, B&C was back to full operation by February 1914—thereby facilitating that year's production peak.¹⁹ In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, McDowell and his staff determined to re-film all the recently produced lost photoplays so those who had booked them would not be disappointed. Work began on this task, with *The Tattooed Will* being reshot in December, but some of the material—such as mountaineer Frederick Burlingham's actuality of his ascent of Mont Blanc—was irrecoverable.²⁰

The introduction of an 'exclusives' policy

In autumn 1913, a further development effecting the business side of operations was another change of agent. T.H. Davison had worked at the MPSA for several years before going it alone and opening for himself as Davison's Film Sales Agency on 1 September.²¹ In this move, he took the B&C account with him as his first client, and went on to handle both the company's standard open-market films, which were bought outright, and its new venture of the moment, longer films issued as 'exclusives'. These were pictures with higher production values, for which leading renters would pay a manufacturer large sums in return for the exclusive right to distribute them to cinemas.

Issuing film exclusives represented one of the major policy initiatives taken by McDowell in 1913, alongside other leading firms in the industry. As *The Kinematograph Year Book* explained, 'The most important situation created this year [1913] has been the utilisation of long or exceptionally attractive films as features or exclusives', mainly because enterprising manufacturers had 'made stupendous efforts to provide subjects which would stand high above the ordinary run of films'.²² Debate raged in the industry over what the value of these longer and more expensive films might be to exhibitors, and McDowell adopted a pragmatically economic stance on what he designated 'the vexed question of the exclusive'.²³ He explained that his company's perspective was one wherein it was necessary to

consider the whole question from a commercial standpoint. In the ordinary way films are sold at a standard price but when the manufacturer takes the risk of producing a film costing thousands this ordinary standard price must temporarily be forgotten, as by selling

this class of film in this way it would not be a commercial success, so that automatically the exclusive film was born. If this expensive film was placed on the open market the price necessarily would have to be double and treble the ordinary, but this would so operate that the ordinary renter's business would be upset for the time being. The large renting firms have therefore actually competed to obtain the big production and rent it as an exclusive subject to one theatre in a town at the best price procurable, and in most cases everyone has made money when the film is ... a winner ... [I]t is the old, old story, if the goods are right ... it will be a success commercially, which is what the exhibitor, the renter and the manufacturer are out for.²⁴

The Kinematograph Year Book noted 'the enormous prices paid for exclusive rights' in 1913, when £6,700 was put up for *Quo Vadis* and £8,100 for *Anthony and Cleopatra*, two of the new genre of Italian epics.²⁵ *The Battle of Waterloo*, B&C's first gamble on the new practice, was sold to the two companies that were to combine as Ruffell's Exclusives for £5,000, the highest exclusives price paid for a British film to date.²⁶ *The Bioscope* was enthusiastic and offered its 'warmest congratulations to the British and Colonial Company on their admirable courage and enterprise in attempting this big national production'.²⁷ However, *The Battle of Waterloo* did not open until 8 September, which meant that *To Save Her Dad*, in July, became the first B&C exclusive to be released. It was succeeded by Percy Moran's last outing as Dick Turpin in *Dick Turpin's Ride to York* (August). Three other exclusives followed in September, October and November, one of which was an exciting aerial rescue drama, *Through the Clouds* (October). It was welcomed as 'another notable instance of the steady advance made by the B. and C. Co., who are now following success with success, and it is interesting to note have secured for this marvellous photo play a price higher than has ever been paid for a similar length of film'.²⁸

One corollary of the exclusives policy was a shift to longer films. Here, B&C was moving in parallel with other leaders of the British industry to meet the competition of longer films from Europe and the USA. The numbers of single-reel British fiction films in 1912 and 1913 remained broadly similar at 456 and 449 respectively, but the total number of films issued in those years rose from 581 in 1912 to 663 in 1913.²⁹ Most of this increase was in films of over 1,000 feet. Further, whilst in 1912 only four films over 3,000 feet were issued, in 1913 this figure shot up to thirty-nine, including several over 4,000 feet. *The Great Anarchist Mystery*

of September 1912 had been B&C's first move into the two-reel market, followed by the final Cornish film, *A Fisherman's Infatuation*, in January 1913. The next two-reeler was *To Save Her Dad* in July, which was followed by three more films of similar lengths. *The Battle of Waterloo* was an impressive 4,500 feet, and two attention-grabbing exclusives—*A Tragedy in the Alps* (September) and *Through the Clouds*—each reached 3,000 feet (or around fifty minutes' duration). Thereafter, through 1914, whilst B&C comics stayed under 1,000 feet, all the company's drama exclusives were at least 2,000 feet long and often more.

A cinema of sensation or a cinema of quality

The new exclusives policy also led to a greater emphasis on visual spectacle and, as a further novelty particularly characteristic of B&C, on *sensation*. Here, *The Battle of Waterloo* led the way, encouraging *The Cinema* to declare it to be 'the most stupendous picture ever attempted in this country' and one on such a colossal scale that it was hard to conceive an English firm had ventured to make it; whilst, for the *Illustrated Film Monthly*, it was 'probably the most stupendous film production in the world'.³⁰ In turn, it paved the way for the two well-received autumn spectacles. *A Tragedy in the Alps* was a mountaineering drama filmed on the majestic slopes of Mont Blanc, while *Through the Clouds* involved balloons, an aeroplane and a heroine who apparently climbs a rope from aeroplane to balloon at 3,000 feet in order to rescue her father. For one review, it had 'sensation enough and to spare', whilst for another, it demonstrated the company was '[d]etermined not to be outdone by any of their business rivals'.³¹ McDowell's innovative policies, it seems, were beginning to pay off. Even the sentimental *The Broken Chisel* (October) featured a convict escaping from Broadmoor prison, the seizing of another balloon to go to a child's rescue and his saving her from drowning. And Walturdaw's advertisement for the retitled *Dick Turpin and the Death of Bonny Black Bess* promoted it as 'the famous Two-Reel sensation'.³² For *In Fate's Grip* (December), a couple escaping from a blazing liner were rescued by a hydroplane. This emphasis on moments of cinematic sensationalism continued into 1914.

There was, however, another policy emphasis emerging late in 1913, an anticipation of what later British cinema history has thought of as 'the cinema of quality'. Unsurprisingly, 'the cinema of sensation' and 'the cinema of quality' have coexisted in a certain state of tension, drawing as they do on significantly different cultural traditions. The 'cinema of sensation' has been the inheritor of the nineteenth-century commercial culture that was located in the cheaply published fiction of the penny bloods and

penny dreadfuls, and the East End and transpontine melodrama theatres, where a scenically spectacular ‘sensation scene’—such as a train crash or a burning building—was a standard component in the attractions on offer. The ‘cinema of quality’, on the other hand, has drawn on the rather more polite middle-class cultural worlds of the West End theatre and the literary texts of both middlebrow fiction and the canonized ‘classics’ of the national literature. These populist and bourgeois traditions have long structured the historical development of film-making in Britain, and in 1913 had already begun to generate a contradiction in the film-making practices at B&C.

The company’s new direction began to clarify at the year’s end when McDowell put into production what was planned as a ninety-minute prestige film recounting *The Life of Shakespeare*. It was intended as another ‘event’ production to follow the success of *The Battle of Waterloo* and was budgeted even higher at £4,000.³³ Although Frank Growcott was appointed director, McDowell initiated the project, remained closely involved and even participated in its direction. His justification for the undertaking was that B&C believed they were producing a ‘class of film which they hope will improve the tone of the picture theatre and prove to be an educational subject for the younger generation ... This production, it is hoped, will be of world-wide interest, as the name of Shakespeare is a household word throughout the civilised countries.’³⁴ This was a deliberate attempt to raise the cultural status of cinema and to address a more sophisticated audience. Further, McDowell was offering an ‘educational’ rationale for production to supplement the stress on entertainment and amusement of the 1911 Memorandum. So, cultural ambitions for the film were high, and at its release *Illustrated Films Monthly* rather helpfully approved the strategy in terms directly echoing those of McDowell: ‘Such endeavours as these merit the utmost praise ... the film is of the kind that tends to elevate the picture theatre, and create a subject of the greatest educational value for the younger generation.’³⁵

Recruits from the theatre, child performers and American imports

The emergence of a ‘cinema of quality’ was not unique to B&C as it had characterized Hepworth’s productions for some time, and 1913’s newcomer to production, London Films, was to make such material the centrepiece of its production schedules by adapting a succession of well-established novels and plays. For B&C the move was more of a novelty, but proved part of a wider tendency that *The Kinematograph Year Book* referred to as ‘borrowing from the “legitimate”’, or the association

of actors and stars from West End theatre worlds with the cinema, 'a profession they had previously looked down upon'.³⁶ The term 'legitimate', of course, carried powerful status connotations, for in theatre it had once referred to the distinction drawn between the theatres of the spoken word officially licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, and therefore 'legitimate', and the less respectable, 'minor' theatres avoiding his licensing regulations by accompanying speech with songs and music—the antecedents of popular melodrama. In 1910, the theatre performers who appeared in B&C's *Every Wrong Shall Be Righted* had remained anonymous, but 1913 saw a stream of named individuals from the stage join the company as performers and even as directors. In the first half of the year, films were still being released that featured the company's original picture personalities, Foster, Moran and Martinek; but by the second half, following McDowell's reforms, these performers had left to be replaced by newcomers from the theatre. In June, Ernest Batley was recruited to play Napoleon and stayed on to act and direct. He was joined by his daughter, Dorothy, and his wife, Ethyle. She too acted, but was also acknowledged as Britain's first woman film director. In August, pre-publicity for *Through the Clouds* made much of the previous theatrical experience of its young actress, Marie Pickering, and for the rest of the year she was being groomed to succeed Foster as the company's leading female player.³⁷ In December, *The Bioscope* observed the company had made yet 'another theatrical capture' in the former Lyceum actress Ethel Bracewell, who was joining the stock company to appear in Batley's productions.³⁸ Her 'more than ordinary share of physical charms' was expected both to gain her new friends in the world of pictures and to draw in the patrons of drama from the towns where she had formerly appeared.³⁹

Another policy strand opened up in 1913 with what McDowell described as 'the class of film which appeals to the audiences of picture theatres throughout the world, and that is the drama with child actors'.⁴⁰ Their attraction, he maintained, was that they

invariably reach the heart of the people. In dramas of this kind, which are ever popular, the story generally depicts some incident which happens in every man or woman's life, or that they have witnessed it happen to people whom they know well or with whom they are in contact daily, and so appeals to them.⁴¹

This sentiment-promoting development was encouraged by the arrival of the eleven-year-old Dorothy Batley. She was already an experienced

performer in theatre and on film, and so was, at once, teamed with her real-life father in the crime drama *To Save Her Dad*, where, disguised as a boy, she came to the assistance of her screen father, an ex-detective. Other films followed, often with Ernest in the cast, scripted by him and directed by either Dorothy's father or mother. In consequence, this girl player became one of B&C's leading picture personalities for a period. Other children were recruited into the stock company, with the result that, in 1914, Ethyle Batley was put in charge of a Juvenile Department wherein she was responsible for the selection and training of the company's child actors.⁴² Pictures with Dorothy appeared until the end of 1914, when her parents left the company, but other films featuring children continued into the first half of 1915. Dorothy's vehicles included feature dramas, but most of the children's films were comics, including those of the Hurricane Kids, a feisty trio of two inquisitive girls and a boy whose series entered production late in 1913.

Another move made by McDowell that year was the recruitment of figures from the US film industry—another means of defusing that 'infiltration' O'Neill Farrell had bemoaned in 1912. Other production companies were also introducing American staff. In January, whilst Bloomfield was in Jamaica, Frederick Burlingham, a former journalist and established Alpine mountaineer, was taken on to make actuality films around Europe. He became B&C's premier cameraman-director until he left in June 1914, after which actuality production ceased.⁴³ In May, the month in which McDowell assumed responsibility, Charles Weston was appointed to direct film dramas, including the strategically important *The Battle of Waterloo*. He had already worked for several American production companies, and he and Batley took over directorial responsibilities from Oceano Martinek and Charles Raymond who, like the actors, had left during the initial phase of McDowell's reforms. The American actor Arthur Finn was recruited in October, and appeared in several of Weston's shorter films before the pair moved on. Later in 1914, the Native American James Youngdeer joined B&C to direct a trio of thrillers.

Topicals and actualities, comics and series

On the topical front, B&C's 1913 contribution seems to have been restricted to the major events it had regularly covered, such as the State Opening of Parliament, the Cup Final and the Boat Race. However, in September, they filmed the end of the *Daily Mail's* round-Britain Aerial Derby at Southampton Water, which may have encouraged their featuring of aeroplanes and seaplanes in that autumn and winter's sensation dramas,

Through the Clouds, In Fate's Grip (which featured a hydroplane race) and *Lieutenant Daring, Aerial Scout* (February 1914).⁴⁴

On the other hand, 1913 was a notable year for actuality subjects with thirty-one releases—all but one single-reel items. These were mainly scenes filmed at sites of scenic interest around England, several shorts taken during the visit to Jamaica and Swiss films made by Burlingham, including his first important mountaineering film, *Ascent of the Matterhorn*, released as an exclusive in August. Much of the English material from the first half of the year may have been filmed by McDowell, but as the year wore on, Burlingham's films came to the fore so that in 1914, he operated as the company's sole, and highly acclaimed, actuality cinematographer.

One-reel comics continued a basic component of production so that, in November, the *Moving Picture Offered List* could still assert the company was 'noted for the production of bright and sparkling comics'.⁴⁵ But B&C gave most attention to its drama productions, and it was in this field that the company's most arresting developments occurred. The Jamaican trip resulted in a number of films released between April and September, allowing *The Pictures* to suggest they demonstrated the firm's title of 'Colonial' was 'no shibboleth'.⁴⁶ But after this venture, the 'colonial' aspect of the company's identity ceased to hold its attention, whereas, with the outbreak of war in August 1914, its allegiance to 'Britishness' came to be asserted with renewed vigour.

Releases in the first half of 1913 continued the programme that had been developed with Bloomfield, and only in the second half did the changes initiated by McDowell begin to bite. When they did so, the series policy drawing on popular culture traditions was quietly abandoned. There had been no Three-Fingered Kate films since October 1912, Dick Turpin made his last ride in August 1913 and the final exploit of Don Q was played out in the same month. One further series, *The Master Crook*, was initiated late in 1913 to run for three episodes, but his persona reflected the broader policy changes of the turn to a 'cinema of quality' and the search for politer audiences. Unlike the attractive anti-authority rogues, Kate and Turpin, or the rebellious Don Q, the Master Crook was an upper-class 'gentleman thief' in favour of establishment values. Only the patriotic Lieutenant Daring series continued until the eve of the First World War, with his last adventure being released in June 1914. Presumably he was retained because of his well-established popularity and the lucrative income he brought in, although in his last three adventures other players substituted for Percy Moran. A further shift was a discontinuation of 1912's policy of touring companies, although one did make a film in the Alps in July 1913 and another filmed in Derbyshire in September

1915. But with the opening of the Walthamstow studio, much of the company's film-making moved indoors.

Despite the Endell Street fire, therefore, 1913 ended on a note of triumph. *The Cinema* observed how the company had worked with untiring energy for the previous six months—that is, since McDowell had taken charge—thereby doing ‘a great deal to establish themselves as being one of the foremost of English manufacturers’.⁴⁷ The *Evening News* rightly declared that ‘Mr. McDowell has proved that films of the very highest class can be produced in Great Britain’, and McDowell himself rather smugly but not unreasonably declared: ‘The B and C, I venture to say, ... has shown more enterprise than any other British firm in the improvement of the film, both in technique and staging.’⁴⁸

1914: FILM PRODUCTION PEAKS

Despite the onset of the First World War in August, 1914 proved to be B&C's peak year of production with a total of almost thirty-one hours of film released. The two studio set-up established in 1913 seems to have been operating at full capacity and the company sustained its reputation of having, at Walthamstow, ‘the largest and best equipped cinema studio in the United Kingdom’.⁴⁹ To further facilitate its activities, the company raised £4,000 through the issue of two new debentures—though these represented the last resort to this tactic under McDowell's management. On 6 March, the sum of £3,000 was received from a certain Plateras Lawson Jacques of Selsdon, near Keighley in Yorkshire. The other £1,000 came from Charles Stafford, the Nottinghamshire printer who had advanced a loan the previous June. He had acted as a company director for the previous few months, but now stepped down to be replaced by William Frith, a solicitor at Bank Street, Bradford. Frith and Frith had been acting as solicitors for B&C, it appears, since June 1913. The capital on these two debentures was finally paid back in June 1921, long after the company had passed out of McDowell's control.⁵⁰

Developments in company policy

In 1914, he continued as the driving force behind the company, developing policy and initiating production. Yet in June, a curious item appeared in several trade journals explaining that McDowell had asked them ‘to emphatically contradict the rumour to the effect he has left the company’.⁵¹ Subsequently, in September, *The Cinema* countered with the assertion that B&C had ‘reached the proud position it holds in Filmland today as a

result of the directing hand of *one strong man*, and that, from small beginnings, the company had now 'become a power in the trade'.⁵² Perhaps it was unsurprising, therefore, that in mid-August, McDowell's immediate response to the outbreak of war was optimistic. *The Cinema* reported he was 'of opinion that the war [would] not have an adverse effect on picture palaces, but would be really a blessing in disguise for the British film manufacturer' as the 'demand for films at the moment was bigger than ever'.⁵³ That claim may have been informed by the widespread expectation that the war would be of short duration, whereas the reality proved to be much more inimical to the growth of British film. McDowell and B&C, it transpired, had under two years of active production to come. Initially, however, he remained sanguine, declaring: 'Our output will not be reduced, and we are prepared to guarantee to deliver. We do not propose to put up prices. We have plenty of film and chemicals to carry on with for a considerable time ahead.'⁵⁴ For some while he was as good as his word, and B&C sustained its output until the spring of 1916. Even so, the big studio already seems to have developed some spare capacity, for in June, the Burns Film Company, which had secured the services of George Robey, the famous music hall comedian, was renting space at Walthamstow to film him in *The Amateur Anarchist*, the first in a series of comedies.⁵⁵

On the policy front, McDowell continued with the programme he had put into operation the previous year. Thus, the trend towards longer exclusives was sustained. In the second half of 1913, the company had issued six of them, but in 1914, it made fourteen. Thirty-three shorter, open-market pictures were issued between January and June, but between July and December, output of this type of film contracted to nineteen as studio investment was increasingly directed towards the more expensive feature dramas. Hence, that year, 21 per cent of the firm's fiction output was exclusives—in 1915, the proportion rose still further to 43 per cent. But their public impact would have been greater than these figures suggest for the exclusives were the better promoted films featuring the company's leading performers. The first exclusive of 1914 was *The Life of Shakespeare*, but it was the features directed by Maurice Elvey, released between August and December, that gave particular distinction to the year's output.

Theatre people and 'intellectuals'

Throughout 1914, McDowell strengthened B&C's involvement with the socially respectable world of the theatre. The Batleys were already in place and were joined, in April, by Elvey, whose experience before he turned to film direction in 1913 had also been the stage. He brought with him

Elisabeth Risdon, who over the next fifteen months featured in all the major films he made at B&C and became the company's foremost picture personality. Like Elvey, her early formation had been in the theatre. Other performers with orthodox theatrical backgrounds also joined during the year, their previous stage experience being duly referenced in the trade press. For example, there were Fred Groves and A.V. Bramble, who became B&C's male leads—although they never achieved the fame of their predecessor, Percy Moran. Further, in a departure from the company's earlier stock company practice, particular stage performers were recruited for specific productions, and their theatrical associations were used as prestige publicity.

Furthermore, 1914 was also the year in which personnel who might be characterized as 'intellectuals' entered the studio. In previous years, most of the staff recruitment and much of the cultural input into B&C had been from the field of popular culture, but this year witnessed the arrival of a director and writer who were beginning to consider film not just as a commercial entertainment but as an art form. Once again, the company were contributing to a more general tendency for, as *The Bioscope Annual* observed, throughout 1914 the picture play had been 'taking its position as an art entirely distinct from all others'.⁵⁶ The film director with these aspirations was Maurice Elvey, who quickly became B&C's chief director, and the screenwriter was Eliot Stannard, who joined him in August and became his close collaborator over the next few years. A later intellectual input came from Harold Weston, who was with the company from March 1915 until April 1916, and became its premier director once Elvey had moved elsewhere. The background of these three was not the worlds of music hall, circus and popular show business that had provided training for B&C's first film-makers but the 'legitimate' theatre, journalism and fiction-writing—intellectual domains they were able to draw on in their approaches to film. All three, in fact, thought carefully about the state of contemporary production in order to promote film as a distinctive art, with Stannard and Weston writing some of the earliest theoretical pieces on what the latter's 1916 book called *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*.⁵⁷ Given the input of these newcomers, B&C's films began to display even greater ambition from the latter half of 1914, and to generate more thoughtful commentaries in trade press reviews.

Actuality films and sensation films

The actuality film programme began well, with the company adopting the novel tactic of releasing Frederick Burlingham's recording of his

Descent into the Crater of Vesuvius—at the extended length of 1,500 feet—as an exclusive, to widespread public interest and acclaim. Subsequent actualities were Burlingham films presenting wealthy leisure venues in southern France, Switzerland and north Italy. Then, in early June, having made twenty-three films over the last seventeen months, he broke off to set up on his own as an independent producer. B&C continued to release his pictures until mid-August, at which point its production of such subjects terminated. So, having already abandoned most topical production—it only seems to have attended the Cup Final and the Derby in 1914—B&C withdrew from actuality film-making at the beginning of the war.



Figure 3.1 Lillian Wiggins in James Youngdeer's sensational *The Water Rats of London*. *The Cinema*, 28 May 1914

Some comic production continued throughout the year, but these films remained short, usually featuring the children trained by Ethyle Batley. B&C's main interest continued to be their longer dramas. In January 1914, Ernest A. Dench, writing in *The Cinema*, claimed that '[j]ust at present the film companies seem to have split themselves up into two camps. One set produce practically nothing else but refined stuff, whilst the remaining crew devote their energies to undignified humour and melodrama.'⁵⁸ He associated refined plays only with London and Hubert von Herkomer, the Royal Academy painter who had recently turned his attention to film-making, and the unrefined with Hepworth, Barker,

Cricks and Martin, Motograph and B&C. But this sharp distinction rather misrepresented several of the latter companies, and, in the case of B&C, the contradiction between its embrace of a 'cinema of sensation' and its pursuit of a 'cinema of quality' developed further during the year. The former tendency was evident in *The Adventures of Charles Peace, King of Criminals* (July), dealing with the audacious adventures of the notorious house-breaker of the 1870s, and in three films made by James Youngdeer, each based on the exploits of a violent criminal gang—*The Water Rats of London* (July), *The Queen of the London Counterfeiters* (August) and *The Black Cross Gang* (October). The lead in the latter films was Lillian Wiggins, a 'beautiful and accomplished picture-actress from New York' brought to B&C by Youngdeer as another of its American imports.⁵⁹ Three of these four sensation titles were awarded a cautionary A certificate by the recently established British Board of Film Censors. Advertising for *The Water Rats of London* set the tone these films aspired to when it offered 'Two Thrilling, Throbbing Reels of Sensation, Passion and Human Emotions' and a diet of 'Hate, Greed, Love, Pluck'.⁶⁰ These films featured crime and criminality, and were contributions to an emergent industry-wide genre that provoked the sort of public response that has dogged the history of film—the blaming of real criminal acts on the malign influence of popular films. From the point of view of *The Kinematograph Year Book* at the year's end: 'Much harm has been done by the attempts of magistrates and clergy to place a stigma on the industry by suggesting that it was responsible for crime.'⁶¹

The cinema of quality and adaptations

In the first half of the year, the 'cinema of quality' was represented by two prestigious exclusives, *The Life of Shakespeare* and *The Midnight Wedding* (May). Like the former, the latter was widely publicized, being presented as the 'revival in cinematograph form of ... one of the London Lyceum's greatest successes'—the film of 'Walter Howard's Grand Romantic Lyceum Melodrama'.⁶² Writing on these two films, *The Cinema* observed, 'We have always associated the B. and C. Co. with acts of daring and sensationalism, but *The Midnight Wedding* and *The Life of Shakespeare* will stand out as criterions of what the company can do in other directions.'⁶³ Taken from a West End theatrical melodrama, *The Midnight Wedding* also placed B&C within another of the year's industry-wide developments. As *The Bioscope Annual* pointed out, '[B]y far the majority of important films produced during 1914 were adaptations from previously existing plays, poems, novels and magazine stories.'⁶⁴ This innovatory practice was

also taken up in several of Elvey's films to strengthen B&C's 'cinema of quality' tendency.

In its early years of producing short fiction films, the company had made negligible use of adaptations. It had filmed Tennyson's poem *Dora* in 1912, had drawn on the novel *Tom Cringle* when on location in Jamaica in 1913 and had used Hesketh Pritchard's stories from *Pearson's Magazine* for its series on Don Q. It had also adapted the characters Weary Willie and Tired Tim from the comic paper *Illustrated Chips* for a set of films in 1911. But only ten out of 152 films had used material taken directly from other sources. However, 1914 proved to be the year for adaptations, and between then and 1917, twenty-two out of 112 releases were forms of adaptation, with 59 per cent of the major productions—defined as exclusives or films over 3,000 feet—either wholesale adaptations or involving elements of adaptation. In these years, films based on 'secondary' sources became the company's premier productions. They received high budgets, underwent careful preparation, showcased the firm's star players and were subject to enthusiastic advertising and promotion.

The adapted materials drew on various sources. Thirteen were play adaptations, mainly melodramas, including five by Charles Darrell. Five were from novels, including three by John Strange Winter—the nom de plume of Henrietta Eliza Vaughan Stannard, Eliot Stannard's mother. Books of biography were the basis for two pioneering films in the biopic genre—*The Life of Shakespeare* and Elvey and Stannard's *Florence Nightingale* (March 1915). Three short stories from Robert Louis Stevenson's *The New Arabian Nights* were combined in Elvey's *The Suicide Club* (August 1914), and a poem by Sir F.H. Doyle was a basis for Elvey's shipwreck film *The Loss of the Birkenhead* (also August 1914). However, as a new form in a new medium, the longer narrative feature film could not be a direct transcription of these sources, which is why Elvey, Stannard and Weston had to think seriously about the process of adaptation and to develop some kind of best practice as they endeavoured to establish film as an art form.

Much of this adapted material drew upon middlebrow fiction or the West End theatre rather than the cheap, sensational fictions of the 'penny blood' tradition or the more lurid melodramas staged in the East End and on the Surrey side. Consequently, films based on the newer sources offer further evidence for the company's stepping back from populist cultural traditions and its attempt at greater engagement with more conventionally esteemed and more socially acceptable cultural resources. In turn, the project of Elvey, Stannard and Weston to promote film as an art could be construed as their attempt to raise the status of film and

to place it alongside such established bourgeois forms as drama, literature and painting. Put bluntly, the 'cinema of quality' programme was a strategy of embourgeoisification, a concerted attempt to take B&C upmarket to address those non-manual groups who, thus far, had failed to become part of the cinemagoing public but whose support exhibitors, producers and distributors were eager to engage.

Britain entered the war on 4 August, and whilst this did not impact the volume of B&C's output until later, it did have an immediate effect on the content of the company's films. As a producer, it was in a position to directly provide ideological support for the war effort, and initially did just that.⁶⁵ However, the war-inspired films were largely concentrated into the seven-month period following the outbreak of hostilities, with nine of the eighteen films released between September and December 1914 being on war-related subjects. For example, Ernest Batley's *An Englishman's Home* was released in October. As a West End melodrama, the play had been a fashionable success at Wyndham's Theatre in 1909. With its stark presentation of the ease with which the citadel of an Englishman's home might be penetrated by enemy forces, B&C's screen adaptation came at an appropriate time—just after the German armies had swarmed over Belgium and entered northern France. In December, Elvey's *It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary* was designed to encourage recruits to enlist. Stannard's script was organized to incorporate the words of the popular song, and presented the rivalry between an Irish Nationalist and an Ulster Loyalist as something to be put aside in order to answer Britain's wartime need. War films, with their battles and explosions, spectacles of heroic action and displays of enemy cruelty, served to further sustain B&C's enthusiasm for the 'cinema of sensation', now ideologically inflected not only to uphold the company's trademark 'Britishness', but also to embrace the pro-war sentiment and rhetoric of the British state.

Production costs

Some sense of the year's possible costs of production can be gleaned from an announcement that appeared in the *Daily Mail* of May 1914.⁶⁶ It proposed the formation of a company to produce films in Canada, and consequently outlined current production costs and possible profits to potential investors. The average production layout for a standard three-reel (3,000 feet) subject, it declared, was £3,736. This broke down into expenditures of £721 15s (19 per cent of costs) on actors, supers, labour, properties, etc., £515—10s (14 per cent) on administration and overhead charges, £24 15s (0.7 per cent) for the negative and £1,979 10s (53 per

cent) for eighty positive copies of the film. When sold—according to the prospectus—at an open-market price of 4½d a foot, the eighty copies would realize £4,435 15s, giving a profit of £783 10s. Production costs for short comics would clearly be far lower and those of certain exclusives somewhat higher—although the latter would be sold at a negotiated price to renters who were prepared to pay beyond the open-market price for their greater production values and drawing power.

If these kinds of expenditure have any validity, B&C's costs in 1914 would have been considerable. The company released eight films at around 3,000 feet or more, which, on these figures, would each have cost £1,756 just to produce, if the high cost of the rather optimistic run of eighty positive prints is excluded from the calculation. These films, therefore, could have taken £14,048 to make. *The Life of Shakespeare* added a further £4,000 in production charges. Perhaps the twenty-two one-reel comics were still costing an economic £50 each, and so may have added only a further £1,100 to the year's expenditure. The thirty-five shorter dramas would have generated variable costs, but I will assume they averaged £900 each or half the cost of a three-reeler, giving an overall expenditure on them of £31,500. Thus, in 1914, B&C may well have been paying out something in the region of £50,648 on the production of its fiction films, which suggests a figure some fifteen times greater than that which may have been laid out four years earlier in 1910.⁶⁷

Once again, the company ended the year with its reputation for sustained expansion intact. The *Film Censor*, for example, bore witness to their 'remarkable growth' over the past year and declared that, 'During no period of this company's history have they produced such a constant stream of first class photoplays.'⁶⁸

1915: McDOWELL RETAINS THE INITIATIVE

In 1915, film output dropped back a little, and, at around twenty-two hours, was also somewhat below 1913's output. However, McDowell continued to take the initiative, and a range of new policies was launched, designed both to sustain company business and develop it further.

B&C's status in the production industry

Even so, 1915 turned out to be B&C's last year of full production, and Table 3.1 provides a comparison between the company and its competitors that sets out the overall position it had achieved since 1910.⁶⁹ In 1915, a total of 627 fiction films was produced by eighty-six British

production companies. Fifteen of these, including B&C, released ten or more films whilst twenty-nine of them released only one each. Davidson's issued eight films, but as these were all quite long, the company has been included in the table. Compared with 1910, the number of films produced had almost doubled, but more significantly, because of the expansion in the length of films, the output of total film footage had undergone a near sixfold increase, from something over 53 hours to almost 308 hours.

Table 3.1: British Companies Releasing Ten or More Fiction Films in 1915 (plus Davidson)

Company	Total output (in feet)	Total duration ¹	% of total footage ²	Total number of films	Average length (in feet)	Average duration (minutes)
London	118,058	32:48	11	28	4216	70
Hepworth	99,350	27:36	9	56	1774	30
B&C	75,752	21:03	7	35	2164	36
Barker	63,759	17:43	6	19	3346	56
Clarendon	48,802	13:33	4	22	2218	37
Martin	47,916	13:19	4	56	856	14
Neptune	43,425	12:04	4	26	1737	29
Bamforth	43,419	12:04	4	67	649	11
Piccadilly	40,705	11:18	4	45	905	15
Samuelson	40,616	11:17	4	14	2901	48
Phoenix	26,573	7:23	2	30	886	15
Cricks	22,286	6:11	2	28	825	14
New Agency	22,075	6:08	2	24	920	15
Horseshoe	9,213	2:34	0.8	18	512	9
Folly	8,115	2:15	0.7	10	812	14
Davidson	21,225	5:54	2	8	2653	44
ALL ³	1,108,062 ⁴	307:48		627	1674	28

- (1) Duration in hours and minutes, calculated at 1 foot per second.
- (2) Company's percentage of the year's total footage (all companies).
- (3) Totals for all eighty-six production companies.
- (4) Ten films in Gifford lack lengths.

The average length of a film had tripled from around nine to twenty-eight minutes. The British production effort of the early 1910s, to which B&C made a significant contribution, had, therefore, paid off in a remarkable period of growth. In 1915, Hepworth was still a major player, even though

the company's percentage of the year's total footage had contracted markedly from 1910's 37 per cent to 1915's 9 per cent. On the other hand, B&C had moved ahead of its earlier rivals Cricks and Martin—who had split into two companies in 1913—and Clarendon, whilst Walturdaw had dropped out of production. At the same time, newcomers—such as London, Neptune, Samuelson and Davidson—had entered production, and London had quickly become the industry front-runner with 11 per cent of the year's total output.⁷⁰ Between 1910 and 1915, the number of companies engaged in film production had also tripled from 29 to 86, but another oligopolistic situation had developed. Thus, the sixteen companies listed in Table 3.1 can be broken down into a top three, including B&C, that each released over twenty hours of film, seven intermediate companies each releasing between eleven and eighteen hours, and a bottom six releasing fewer than eight hours each. Thus, the market leaders in 1915 were London, Hepworth and B&C who, between them, were responsible for 27 per cent of the year's full output. London had overtaken Hepworth's formerly dominant position and B&C was catching up.

Further, as *The Bioscope Annual* observed of the previous year, film producers had begun to divide films into 'two distinct classes' according to their length, with many manufacturers devoting themselves 'entirely to the production of "long" films of 3,000 feet or more' and other firms concerning themselves solely with short films.⁷¹ In 1915, Martin, Bamforth, Cricks, Horseshoe, Piccadilly and Folly were all companies that continued to specialize in short, one-reel comics, but the *Annual's* dichotomy may be modified by introducing information dependent on when a company had begun its operations. Table 3.2 lists the eight firms specializing in longer films of 2,000 feet and over. The first four companies—London, Barker, Samuelson and Davidson—were basically making only long films in 1915. Three of them were relative newcomers, having been founded on the eve of British cinema's third decade, whilst the veteran Barker had cannily changed with the times. Well over half the production at Clarendon and B&C was longer films, but their output was mixed as they were still releasing numerous shorts. These two were somewhat longer established companies, having been set up in British cinema's second decade. With the newcomer Neptune and Hepworth, founded in the first decade of British cinema, only about a third of production was longer films, but the bulk volume of the latter meant its output of long films still compared favourably with that of B&C and Barker. So, whilst the more recently founded companies largely specialized in feature exclusives, longer established companies such as B&C produced a mix of features and shorts, the latter being an inheritance from an

earlier period of manufacture. In a sense, B&C was a ‘middle period’ company, having begun after the pioneer decade when companies were concerned with both cinema ‘hardware’—that is, cameras and projectors—and cinema ‘software’—that is, films—but before the London and Broadwest companies at the onset of the institution’s third decade provided an anticipation of the public company financing and vertical integration to come. B&C was a ‘transitional’ enterprise, with Period One, under Bloomfield, characterized by policies producing short films and variety, and Period Two, under McDowell, moving into feature exclusives with a bias towards drama.

Table 3.2: Companies Specializing in Longer Films in 1915¹

Company	Average duration (minutes)	Total number of films	Number of longer films ²	Longer films as % of total films	Operating since
London	70	28	27	96	1913
Barker	56	19	18	95	1909 ³
Samuelson	48	14	14	100	1914
Davidson	44	8	7	88	1914
Clarendon	37	22	14	64	1904
B&C	36	35	20	57	1908
Hepworth	30	56	19	34	1899
Neptune	29	26	8	31	1914

- (1) Ranked by average duration of a company’s output.
- (2) That is, films of 2,000 feet and more or over thirty minutes in duration.
- (3) Barker actually set up his first company in 1901.

So, in 1915, the top three producers were London, Hepworth and B&C. The former’s ascendancy proved short lived as the company ceased production in 1917, but both Hepworth and B&C carried on until 1924, when they went out of business in the mid-1920s watershed that saw the last of the old order of British cinema finally give way to a new generation. Back in the mid-teens, other evidence confirmed these three as market leaders and underlined B&C’s achieved status as a major production company. In the summer of 1914, *Pictures and the Picturegoer* ran its series of articles celebrating ‘The Birthplaces of British Films’ and, from the perspective of the industry, selected Hepworth, London and B&C as appropriate subjects.⁷² In November 1915, the fan-oriented magazine *Picture Palace News* launched a competition that asked its readers, ‘What is your Favourite *Brand* of films?’, offering a list of sixty-two

British, European and American production companies to choose from.⁷³ The results were published as a top-twenty list in January 1916. The US companies Famous Players, Vitagraph and Keystone occupied the top three positions, thereby confirming the inroads American producers had made into the British market. Hepworth came in at fourth place, London at eighth and B&C was the third British company to be listed—in eighteenth position, just below American Biograph.⁷⁴ The contemporary significance of these three was therefore confirmed, this time from the perspective of the cinemagoing public. Further, in an item headed ‘Famous Film Makers of the World and their History’, the *Evening News* in 1913 had singled out the British firms of Hepworth and B&C for attention, alongside Cines of Italy, Pathé of France and Vitagraph of the USA.⁷⁵ A final confirmation of the company’s significance was provided by the popular magazine *Pearson’s Weekly* when, in June 1913, it ran an article on trademarks to explain ‘How the Great Film Manufacturing Companies Label Their Wares’.⁷⁶ B&C was the only British firm cited, alongside references to a French, an Italian and a number of American companies. B&C were felt to deserve this special mention because it was credited by *Pearson’s* as one of the few concerns specializing in ‘British films for Britishers’.⁷⁷ Thus, in a few years, it appears, Bloomfield and McDowell had managed to establish B&C as an identifiable, high-profile front-runner in British production.

Policy developments

However, in November 1915, a full page advertisement in the *KLW* betrayed what was, perhaps, the beginnings of a more problematic situation. Presenting itself as ‘The Leading BRITISH Film Producers’, the company offered interested parties a wide range of services for *hire*.⁷⁸ These ranged from the provision of good stories and the preparation and production of scenarios, through good photography and the developing and printing of negatives, to hire of a whole studio. Further, in a reaffirmation of its very beginnings, the company also offered to make local films. This opening out to a wider range of users suggests there existed some underused personnel and capacity, both at the Walthamstow studio and the Endell Street plant. Resort to such public appeals had rarely been adopted before, but was to become a lifeline in the future. Perhaps, after fifteen months of fighting, the war was beginning to have an effect, and the expanded facilities of 1913 were becoming too generous for current purposes. In the parallel case of Hepworth, wartime profits apparently dropped precipitately from £9,900 in 1914 to £2,800 in 1915, and were

to plummet to the abject level of a mere £17 in 1917—by which time B&C itself had been obliged to cease production.⁷⁹

In May 1915, a report in *The Cinema* suggested that B&C was ‘about to change its policy and to launch out into an entirely new field of action’.⁸⁰ To this end, McDowell was currently ‘in communication with many of our well-known novelists and West-End playwrights, in order to discuss the filming possibilities of successful plays and novels’.⁸¹ Further, with future melodrama adaptations, ‘only those of world-wide reputation will be placed before the public’.⁸² This strategy was confirmed in July in a promotional piece by Davison that announced McDowell had ‘mapped out for the immediate future an ambitious programme ... [that promised] some striking new features, including the dramatisation of famous books and stage plays’.⁸³ In many ways, this was a nuancing of existing policy rather than a totally new initiative. *The Kinematograph Year Book*, however, clearly approved of such culturally ambitious policies, for it declared the industry’s ‘filming of masterpieces from another medium augurs well for the improved taste of the patron in things filmatic’.⁸⁴

Further, alongside any possible cultural justification, the adaptation of previously successful books and plays had an economic rationale. The very fact of their success in other media meant they had been, in effect, market-tested and so had a greater potential to be profitable films. As *The Cinema* expressed matters with respect to *Her Nameless (?) Child*, adapted from a play by Madge Duckworth and released in May, ‘No one could accuse the B. and C. Co. of not catering to the popular taste. With always a strong partiality for melodrama, and particularly that which has already claimed public attention, either in book form or on the stage, they have seldom failed to choose the right subject.’⁸⁵ Similarly, the novels of John Strange Winter had been middlebrow bestsellers before they were bought up to be adapted by Stannard as the films *Beautiful Jim* (November 1914), *Grip* (July 1915) and *Jimmy* (March 1916). B&C also seem to have held exclusive rights to make screen adaptations of plays by the popular melodramatist Charles Darrell.

Davison’s July statement also explicitly explained that B&C had adopted a *mixed* programming policy. So, alongside its ‘regular issues of three and four part exclusives’, the company was also ‘entering the market with a strong series of single and two reel dramas in consequence of a keen demand expressed in many quarters’.⁸⁶ Thus, the company’s commercial policy was to continue addressing the contracting open market with shorter films, as well as catering for the expanding exclusives market with its longer, more expensive features.

More changes in personnel

These initiatives were accompanied by further changes amongst B&C's creative staff. Davison's announcement also claimed the company had 'consistently forged ahead' under McDowell's able direction, that its trademark had 'become synonymous with the highest standard yet attained in moving picture *art*', and that McDowell had 'gathered round him a notable company of artistes and producers'.⁸⁷ However, Elvey left in May to go to the London Film Company, where he was to be allowed greater autonomy. There, he claimed, he would be 'assisted by many of the artistes whom I engaged when producing for the B&C'.⁸⁸ Elizabeth Risdon moved with him, and his comments hinted his move would impact markedly on his old employer. But Harold Weston was promptly promoted to become B&C's principal director, the actor A.C. Bramble was retained and given a chance to direct, the actor Gray Murray's contract was extended and Stannard was appointed scenario editor. B&C's major films thereafter were either based on Stannard-scripted adaptations of existing plays and novels—such as *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (December) taken from a best-selling novel by Fergus Hume—or were filmed by Weston from his own original scenarios—as was the case with *Shadows* (August) on the provocative subject of prostitution. Fay Temple was introduced in the latter to replace Risdon as the company's female lead.

Rather surprisingly, in August, Oceano Martinek made a brief return to direct 'a sensational new exclusive', *At the Torrent's Mercy* (January 1916), with his wife—now called Ivy Montford—and Percy Moran.⁸⁹ Further, for this film, rather in the spirit of 1912's touring companies, McDowell led a company onto location at Dovedale in the Peak District where a further series of films was contemplated.⁹⁰ This venture, however, proved to be a one-off. Nevertheless, the brief return of earlier B&C personnel perhaps indicates the serious gap left by the departure of Elvey, who had been responsible for the string of recent successes.

At the year's end, another initiative was launched that indicates McDowell was carefully planning for the company's future. Just as Elvey had gone to London Films to produce for himself as Diploma Films, so at B&C Harold Weston was given the go-ahead to produce his own series of exclusives under the title of Pall Mall Films. It was expected he would write and direct these features 'under the auspices' of B&C.⁹¹ The first film to enter production in December 1915 was released in five reels as *The Climax* in April 1916. It was the only Pall Mall film to be completed, because Weston broke with B&C the following spring. However, proposing to base the appeal of a film series on their director's

contribution rather than organizing them around the appeal of an attractive leading actor suggests a new willingness to trust a director's artistic competence.

Sound films and animated films

In terms of films produced, 1915 witnessed two experiments that would have contributed little to the overall economic viability of the business. These ventures were not central to company output and were more a matter of keeping up with what was going on elsewhere. They were essentially initiatives made by people brought into B&C to supplement its mainstream production. In June, the company offered what were, quite literally, 'talking pictures'. There had been a rash of sound-on-disc experiments in around 1907–1908 that had attempted to synchronize records and films, and similar experiments were repeated in 1914–1915. B&C, however, revived the earlier procedure of live performers speaking or singing as accompaniment to projected films.⁹² The company called the two talking pictures they made Voxgraph Films, and they were the responsibility of Arthur Backner and his sister Constance, both experienced West End performers. Each ran for about half an hour. One was called *Bluff* and the other evoked the prestigious name of Shakespeare, being made up of two scenes from *The Taming of the Shrew*. As *The Bioscope* explained, each scene was

reproduced ... as a synchronised talking-picture. The players taking part in the film spoke the complete text of the scene, and on its presentation the same artists repeat the words in absolute synchronisation with the picture. After a single rehearsal it has been found that any operator can project the film in complete accord with the speakers, and the effect is strikingly realistic.⁹³

Rather appropriately, the *KLW* called Voxgraph Films an experiment in the genre of 'speaking to pictures'.⁹⁴ Constance declaimed Katherine's words and Arthur those of Petruccio in scenes of the latter's wooing and the couple's lively exchanges. The *KLW* found these 'a little too harsh and strident', but observed that the large evening audience for their first public exhibition at the Alexander Theatre, Stoke Newington, showed a keen interest in the innovation and rewarded both producers and performers with a sustained ovation.⁹⁵ It later described the films as 'extremely clever and amusing', and admitted that 'this unique entertainment proved highly popular in London and the provinces'.⁹⁶ *The Bioscope* anticipated 'a prosperous future for this novel attraction', but the reality seems to have been

that it had few presentations, dependent as it was on the presence of the speakers.⁹⁷ The films returned to a West End cinema in July 1916 and, in May 1917, the *KLW* wrote of them doing well at the Brick Lane Picture Palace in East London.⁹⁸

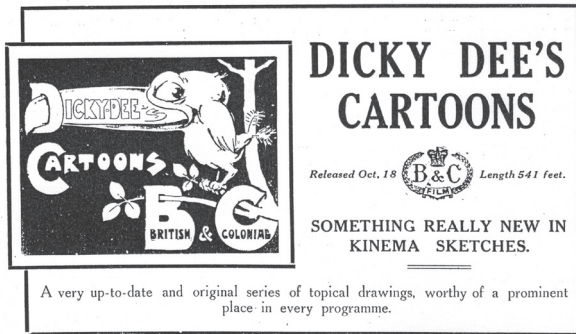


Figure 3.2 Advertisement for Dicky Dee's Cartoons.
The Cinema, 26 August 1915

B&C's other novelty was a brief flirtation with the new genre of the animated film. Some limited animation had been attempted in Britain as early as 1906, but it was the war that generated an enthusiasm for animated propaganda shorts. Lancelot Speed, working at Neptune Films, was first off the mark here, issuing eight Bully Boy cartoons between October 1914 and May 1915.⁹⁹ He was followed by, amongst others, Anson Dyer at B&C in the summer of 1915. Dyer was then thirty-nine years old, and put his skills to cartoon production after he was rejected for army service and because his stained glass design work had ceased owing to the war.¹⁰⁰ Like other wartime animators, he used a distinctively British method of lightning sketches derived from music hall routines, animated cut-outs, exaggeration and caricature.¹⁰¹ B&C had issued an animated film, called *Magic Squares*, in September 1914. 'Produced by a famous illusionist', it presented a quarrelling couple, skirt dancers, cats and prehistoric monsters.¹⁰² Dyer's films were called *Dicky Dee's Cartoons*, released in a series of three between October 1915 and January 1916. A Davison advertisement proclaimed them to be 'Something Really New in Kinema Sketches/A very up-to-date and original series of topical drawings, worthy of a prominent place in every programme', and the *Moving Picture Offered List* characterized them as 'very original and up-to-date, and humorous in the extreme, being produced with much clearness and definition by the B&C Co'.¹⁰³ The subject matter was patriotic and hostile to Germany, and had its parallels in the ridicule

offered in the wartime comic papers. In the first release, a bather whose clothes are stolen is given a uniform as replacement by a recruiting sergeant, whilst in the second, a Zeppelin raid is dramatized and the Kaiser satirized.¹⁰⁴ Two more cartoons in the same vein, called *Alick Richie's Frightful Sketches*, were distributed through B&C in March and August 1916. Richie had previously worked as a poster artist. His second film begins with a hand writing words on the screen, and then moves on to blow up the Kaiser and show an inefficient German sailor sinking his own ship.¹⁰⁵ However, this short-lived experiment with animation petered out as company production faltered in 1916.

B&C genres in 1915

Just as B&C had already withdrawn from the production of topical and actuality films, so by July 1915, it had ceased to make comic shorts, the last few having featured a girl performer called Winnie Dangerfield. With this move, it further contracted the range of film genres it had once offered cinemas in order to come into line with the emergent programming policy of presenting longer films rather than a variety of shorter ones. However, in February, the company released *A Honeymoon for Three*. At around 4,000 feet, it was almost the only humorous B&C film to exceed the one-reel format. Designed as a 'romantic comedy', it drew on all the amorous conventions and misunderstandings of that particular West End theatrical genre. This placed it at some distance from the slapstick routines and comic disruptions of the comic output of the past few years. The new film, therefore, might have mapped out a fresh policy direction, but it was not followed up.

There was minimal production of films about the war in 1915. Indeed, as early as March that year, the Star Film Service, who were handling B&C's crime film about opium dens, *London's Yellow Peril*, proposed in their address to cinema showmen: 'A Little Advice/Don't bore your patrons with too much war stuff. Give them a change ... A film that does not contain any reference to the war.'¹⁰⁶ Thus, the company's most important war film adopted an indirect approach by locating itself in the Crimean War. It was a biography of *Florence Nightingale* (February) and proved to be Elizabeth Risdon's most successful film for the company. Other major films that year took Star Film's advice and avoided the war entirely.

Sensation films, whilst not eliminated from the schedules, further gave way to the 'quality' fare for which Elvey, Stannard and Weston were responsible. Elvey's releases dominated the first part of the year, whilst Weston's were issued from August onwards. Elvey's were McDowell's

favoured adaptations from other media, whereas Weston preferred to film his own original scripts. The former's adaptations tended to be based on established melodramas, including the Charles Darrell subjects, but the latter tended to favour the more progressive subjects introduced by the New Drama in the previous decade. Elizabeth Risdon, Elvey's regular lead, was reported to be 'no believer in the "sensational" picture', and in seriously meant films from the pair, such as *Florence Nightingale*, the emphasis was placed on drama rather than spectacular action.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the year had its share of crime films, though, apart from the Elvey–Stannard *London's Yellow Peril* and Weston's *Strategy*, these moved away from the underworld gangs of Youngdeer's 1914 films into more upper-class and aristocratic environments. These latter films shared the same social world as the society dramas that made up the bulk of the major productions—films such as the Darrell–Stannard–Elvey *From Shopgirl to Duchess* (April). Thus, B&C's rapprochement with more bourgeois theatrical models—whether mainstream or progressive—had, by the end of the year, moved even closer.

1916–1918: THE WARTIME SUSPENSION OF PRODUCTION

The year 1916 seemed set to continue as had 1915. In February, *The Bioscope* offered the sort of praise that B&C had latterly grown accustomed to:

It is always a pleasure to record the progress of those manufacturers of British films who show a consistent and systematic desire to elevate the standard of British production, and none has worked more untiringly for this object nor achieved a more gratifying measure of success than the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company ... a studio from which much of the best English work has been issued.¹⁰⁸

Yet 1916 saw the release of only seven films, all in its first five months. Just two new films were released in 1917 and none in 1918.

Fatal Fingers was in production in March 1916, and was reputed to be 'the biggest thing that this well-known English company have yet done'.¹⁰⁹ It was adapted from a novel by William Le Queux, a best-selling 'writer of sensational fiction', and the story was typical of its author, 'a sensational plot abounding in powerful situations of real human interest'.¹¹⁰ Thus, B&C had not completely abandoned its reputation for film sensationalism. The picture was scripted by Stannard, with A.V. Bramble one of the cast, and both men taking responsibility for direction. At 6,423

feet, it was by far the company's longest film to date and its production values were high, as when it recreated the old quarter of Naples on the floor at Walthamstow. Released in May 1916, it, rather than the two 1917 releases, may be considered McDowell's valedictory production at B&C. One 1916 film dealt directly with the war—*The Blind Man of Verdun* (May)—and war formed the background for two others—*A Soldier and a Man* and *Jimmy* (both March)—but this was the year war impacted directly on the B&C production process itself.¹¹¹

Ironically, it was the company's continued low-key connection with topical film-making that provoked a hiatus in studio production. The firm was one of the seven companies—alongside Barker and the newsreel producers—to be represented on the Trade Topical Committee of the Kinematograph Manufacturers Association. In the summer of 1915, the War Office agreed a scheme with this body that resulted in two cameramen leaving to film the war in France.¹¹² When one of them was invalided home, his volunteer replacement in June 1916 became McDowell, returning to his original craft of cameraman. In France, he helped film the material that became the feature-length documentary *The Battle of the Somme*, and thereafter spent the rest of the war in uniform, serving as an Official War Office Kinematographer. Consequently, most of his time was taken up at the Front. Given this situation, whilst he retained the title of managing director of B&C until 1918, he was no longer in a position to supervise the business, and so its film-making activities faltered before grinding to a halt. The positive, forceful coordination he had given the firm suddenly ceased. It was unsurprising, therefore, that in January 1917, the *Moving Picture Offered List* should observe that B&C had followed the lead of the London Film Company and 'closed down for the duration of the war'.¹¹³ Like other producers, B&C had suffered a steady draining away of staff to war service, and the various head counts made by the *KLW* indicated that six staff had gone to the Front in the first month of war, another eight had joined up in November 1915 and a further thirteen in January 1916. McDowell himself had joined the Voluntary Training Corps at the start of 1916.¹¹⁴

Even so, two films did get released in 1917, one being produced as a result of rather special circumstances. A debate had been under way in *The Bioscope* to which McDowell, on one of his periods of leave, felt provoked to respond. Sidney Morgan, who had already scripted and directed *The World's Desire* for B&C in 1915, had replied to the suggestion that the scenario writer was a non-entity in British studios by commenting that production companies were handicapped because they were obliged to handle only stories known to the public, and that he had



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Figure 3.3 B&C promotes its services to the industry in November 1915.
The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 25 November 1915

three original scenarios that he was currently making no attempt to produce.¹¹⁵ This ‘insinuation that British producing houses had no concern for art promptly brought Mr. J.B. McDowell on the scene’.¹¹⁶ He read one of Morgan’s scripts and, although ‘precluded from giving his personal attention owing to his official duties’, had the film put into production at Walthamstow.¹¹⁷ *Auld Lang Syne* (October) was well received by *The Bioscope* as

a good example of the new kind of British film, which does not ask for indulgence on account of its dreadful origin, but can afford to seek comparison with foreign work on even terms. We are indeed a long way ... from the old style film made in England, in which the background flapped in the wind and the super took the leading part.¹¹⁸

Unfortunately, B&C’s other release of 1917, *When Paris Sleeps* (March), taken by Stannard and Bramble from Charles Darrell, was reproached by *The Cinema* for its retrogressive populist sensationalism.¹¹⁹ So, despite its drive towards the former type of film, B&C ended the McDowell years with its cultural allegiances still unresolved, divided between quality

and sensation, an artistically aspirational bourgeois culture and a robust popular culture; understandably so, perhaps, because cinema remained a popular medium dependent on a mass public.

The pressing problem consequent on McDowell's commitments elsewhere was company survival, and this seems to have been handled by resort to the strategy first adumbrated the previous November—hiring out the firm's facilities and expertise to other users. Thus, in spring 1916, Harold Weston, having just broken with B&C, was, nevertheless, back working at Walthamstow where he was filming *Cynthia in the Wilderness* for the Pioneer Films Agency.¹²⁰ In July, Sidney Morgan was there again directing a film version of Guy Boothby's master-criminal *Dr. Nikola* for the Renaissance Company, and in November, Ideal leased the studio in order to cope with an increase in its production work.¹²¹ B&C itself occupied the studio briefly in 1917 to film *When Paris Sleeps* and *Auld Lang Syne*. Then, in December 1917, the International Exclusives production company took over the studio leasehold until October 1918.¹²² The company's plan was to put out a film a month, and production was given over to Maurice Elvey, who in June and July 1918 made a return to Hoe Street to film his epic *Nelson*.¹²³ Meanwhile, the Endell Street plant was again offering its services to a wider public. In October 1916, it ran an advertisement promoting its printing facilities: 'Notice/For the very best/FILM PRINTING/Apply:-/B&C ... Prompt Deliveries ... Estimates on Application.'¹²⁴ It repeated the offer a year later: 'Are You Satisfied With/Your Film Printing?/We have one of the most up-to-date/Film Printing Works in London/Attractive and Distinctive Titles a Speciality/A Trial Order Will Convince You.'¹²⁵

In June 1918, four months before the war's end and with McDowell still in uniform, B&C underwent a major reorganization that saw him step down from a leading role. Back in May 1916, Yannedis had resigned as company director leaving, once again, just two directors—McDowell, as managing director and Frith, the Bradford solicitor, as his partner. This was still the situation in October 1917, with the one hundred £1 shares divided equally between the two of them.¹²⁶ Then, on 29 May 1918, McDowell, registered as an army lieutenant, resigned his directorship, to be followed on 3 June by Frith. On the same day, McDowell was replaced by Edward Godal and Frith by Nigel d'Albion Beauvais Black-Hawkins.¹²⁷ From this moment on, with McDowell having relinquished control, Godal became managing director and B&C entered its post-war Period Three.

Part II

Plant, Studios and the Production Process

Making Films at East Finchley and On Location, 1911–1914

B&C was in the business of manufacturing and retailing films and, to further those ends, the enterprise needed physical plant, both a factory for processing—that is, to develop and print film stock—and, with the rise to dominance of the fiction film, a site for film production—that is, a studio. Consequently, as the company expanded between 1908 and 1913, its productive resources grew from the tiny, home-based arrangement of its start-up months to the complex of offices, processing departments and studios at Endell Street, East Finchley and Walthamstow that were in operation through the peak year of 1914.

PROCESSING FILM AT DENMARK STREET

The tiny business that Bloomfield first launched at Twickenham specialized in the production of locals and topical films shot out of doors as the particular events took place. So, the initial resources he needed were for developing and drying film negatives and printing release copies for showmen. However, his early success soon allowed him to move to his first substantial premises at Denmark Street in central London in February 1909.¹ Somewhat later, he told the *KLW* how the firm was going strongly for its topical work, proudly explaining that the three rooms and workshop were

specially fitted for this class of work ... we have arrangements for speedy drying, etc., which enable us to produce 6,000 feet of film per day. As an instance of quick work, we recently received an order for 4,000 feet of film at 12 o'clock. The completed subjects, cleaned and spliced left the works at 6 o'clock, and were delivered on the

Continent next morning. But you will see that we are in a position to turn out the stuff quickly from our own subjects of Henley Regatta, the Boat Race, the Opening of Parliament, the Derby, the Lord Mayor's Show, and others.²

Six thousand feet of film accounted for a projection time of around one hour and forty minutes, so processing the 30,000 feet of film for the bulk order of the *Daily Mail's* promotional actuality, *From Forest to Breakfast Table*, in August would have taken five days.³ In topical work a premium was placed on speedy delivery, and Bloomfield clearly felt the business was able to meet that challenge. Thus, by April 1911, because the firm had 'further elaborated their processes for turning out quick work', their 250 foot film of the Boat Race was projected the same evening in over fifty cinemas—all over London and at venues as widely separated as Cardiff, Oxford, Southampton and Eastbourne.⁴ Later in the same month, a B&C advertisement proclaimed: '*Another* Topical Record/Cup ... Final/ Shown at 65 Halls by Monday/Usual B&C Quality. Prompt Delivery and NO DISAPPOINTMENTS.'⁵

However, when fiction films joined production, this placed heavier demands on the processing facility, and the pressure this new venture began to exercise meant that by July 1910, the 'great increase in the number of comic releases ha[d] already taxed the capacity of the Denmark Street darkrooms'.⁶ After the move to larger plant at Endell Street in June 1911, the *KLW* nevertheless recalled how, even though at their old premises 'B and C may be said to have been "cribbed, cabined and confined"', the firm was 'so often able to set up records in topical delivery' that it spoke 'volumes for their skill and promises great things for the work sent out from Endell Street, where there is improved machinery and infinitely greater space'.⁷

THE EAST FINCHLEY STUDIO

Fiction film-making raised the issue of owning a studio, and for a while B&C seem to have used a site at Neasden. But their first significant production facility was opened at East Finchley in June 1911, at the same time as the processing side of the business moved into Endell Street. From this moment on, an increasingly complex division of labour and hierarchical organization came to characterize the firm's operations.

Here, concepts developed by Janet Staiger regarding the emergence of various systems of film production in the USA may be redirected towards understanding the production methods deployed by B&C in its growth



Figure 4.1 The B&C organization: 'A Leading British Film Company'.
The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 21 September 1911

years.⁸ Her concern was with fiction films, and these were initially made under what she identifies as a 'cameraman' system of production, whereby the cameraman would select, stage and photograph a subject, directing the whole work process. B&C did not adopt this practice for its fictions, but the system did characterize the activities of those 'cameramen-directors'—such as William Bool, Frederick Burlingham and, early on, McDowell himself—who were responsible for the company's actuality subjects. According to Staiger, between 1907 and 1909, the 'director' system of production established itself. At this point, following the model of the theatre director, the film director—commonly referred to at the time as a 'producer'—assumed responsibility for the production of comics and dramas. He managed a group of workers—including a cameraman and actors—whilst following a pre-scripted outline of the narrative. This was the system, with Oceano Martinek in charge, that B&C adopted for its first drama, *Her Lover's Honour*, in 1909, and it was the system that was established at

Finchley. As the American studios' weekly output increased between 1909 and 1914, the practice was extended into the 'director-unit' system. In this case, several directors would work in parallel, each in charge of his own production unit or 'stock company'. In turn, the units were supported by the more specialized departments—such as carpenters building sets—that were emerging to service the new studio factories. Director-units also went on the road—rather in imitation of touring stage companies—but travelling to attractive locations for filming rather than from theatre to theatre to perform. B&C had its own director-unit touring stock companies exploring Britain and beyond from the latter months of 1911 and into the first half of 1913, but the director-unit system also characterized the organization of the two studios at Finchley and Walthamstow when they were operating in tandem in 1913–1914. Next, from around 1914, Staiger contends the 'central producer' system began to develop. With this, overall studio production was placed under the centralized control of a production head to whom the staff directors and all other company personnel were answerable. He operated as the general manager of a well-organized mass production facility turning out quality multi-reel films. His office was at the heart of company business activity, determining and planning the production programme, estimating costs and overseeing the functioning of the studio's proliferating craft departments. This arrangement came to typify B&C in Period Two, after McDowell assumed control as managing director in May 1913.

The studio at Newstead House

The East Finchley studio was set up at Newstead House on the Great North Road, a highway heading north out of London. According to *The Bioscope*, it was in 'a very romantic spot', even though 'what with electric trams and the like, it ha[d] lost much of its ancient glamour'.⁹ For *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, it appeared 'one of the most charming of all London suburbs', offering 'a panorama of hill, valley, and wood, an ideal centre obviously for cinema photography'.¹⁰ The studio was located on the edge of the old Finchley Common and round the corner from Oak Lane, where the local landmark was an oak tree popularly associated with the infamous exploits of Dick Turpin—soon to be the highwayman hero of B&C's film series.¹¹ The local population lived mainly to the southern edge of the studio, where a shopping district had been developed at the turn of the century and where poor and deprived streets existed alongside a newer commuter population living in larger nineteenth-century villas. More practically, a railway station had opened at East Finchley in 1867 connecting it to Finsbury Park, and in 1905, the Metropolitan Electric

Tramway had opened up a line from Highgate north to Whetstone that passed in front of Newstead House. Thus, personnel from London and its theatres had ready access to the studio. Further, as Finchley was on the hills above London, it was clear of the city smogs that might cause cinematographers problems.

The studio was some 7 miles north of the company's administrative offices and situated in a part of north London that became significant for film production in the 1910s. Robert Paul's pioneering studio had been operating since 1898 a mile or so to the east at Sydney Road, Muswell Hill, although production there had ceased the year before B&C came to Finchley. In 1912, the skating rink at Alexandra Palace—also in Muswell Hill—was converted into a film studio by a subsidiary of French Pathé, to issue films under the Big Ben trademark. It stayed there until a fire put it out of business in 1915. Less than a mile further north along the Great North Road, a glass studio was erected in a country house at Whetstone. In 1913, it was occupied by Zenith Films, and in 1914 by British Empire Films—both committed to filming West End theatrical successes—but it was in the hands of the receivers by 1916. Further afield was Royal Academy painter Sir Hubert von Herkomer, experimenting with artistic film-making at his Lululaund home in Bushey in 1913-14, and Neptune Films, established with its own purpose-built 'dark' studio at Boreham Wood, Elstree, some 6 miles to the north in 1913.

Newstead House was a large, old, double-fronted country mansion with 2 acres of land to the rear.¹² From the main road it looked like a private residential house and visitors were still welcomed by a smart maid, but B&C refurbished it for its own purposes. The long downstairs drawing-room was used as a refectory and a space for the company to discuss new productions, and to 'evolve ... from the [director's] instructions their own methods of interpreting the play'.¹³ The upstairs bedrooms were converted into wardrobe stores for costumes and into dressing rooms where the actors put on their make-up. Nearby was a separate workshop the size of a farm barn in which scenery and properties were built and painted. The grounds behind the house were extensively used for outdoor scenes and for the construction of special sets. There was also an apple orchard, a well-kept old-English garden, complete with lawns, paths bordered by flowerbeds and a summer house—albeit all within the sound of passing tram bells.

Filming took place on an outside platform-stage measuring 50 feet by 30 feet, built over a tennis court. By 1911, this was a rather old-fashioned arrangement, and B&C was the only production company still dependent on an open-air studio. Such outdoor stages had characterized

early production by Hepworth at Walton, Bromhead for Gaumont at Loughborough Junction and pioneering film-making at Brighton, but producers had quickly followed Robert Paul's example and erected glass-covered studios, offering protection from bad weather and providing some sort of control over sunlight through the use of blinds and calico diffusers.¹⁴ Bloomfield was aware this arrangement had become standard, for in February 1910, he had shown the *KLW* ambitious plans for 'a large glass studio' 100 feet long and 40 feet wide, although these remained unrealized.¹⁵ At Finchley, the stage area of 1,500 square feet was larger than the individual indoor stages that Hepworth, Britain's foremost producer, had erected at Walton—these were 1,250 and 875 square feet respectively—but smaller than the glass-covered stages of Cricks and Martin—with 1,950 square feet—and Clarendon—with 2,800.¹⁶ Nevertheless, B&C's outdoor platform stage could hold up to a hundred players and allow directors to stage big scenes 'in depth', with actors arranged at various distances from the camera. All the company's interior scenes were filmed there. They were taken in natural light, so the company, as yet, had no need to own special lamps for filming. Summer was the busy time of year, when actors had to be ready to perform the moment weather conditions were right—but when they could expect long waits between takes. Sets were erected on the platform and dressed with appropriate properties. A very basic set of a room might just be a background, lacking sides and roof, set at an angle to the camera. Other sets, such as that for the Duchess of Richmond's pre-battle ball for *The Battle of Waterloo*, were much more solidly built.

Film-making at East Finchley

The working day at Newstead House began at eight in the morning and often went on until eight in the evening. There, Staiger's director system of production was in operation, with the film director topping the studio pyramid of power. He was responsible for staging the script prepared by the scenario writer; he instructed the cameraman, chose the sets and costumes and directed the actors' performances. Thus, at this crucial moment in the development of narrative film-making, the director was being assigned a key coordinating role in the organization of the film-making process.

Oceano Martinek was director in charge of scenes from *Robin Hood Outlawed* in August 1912 when W.G. Faulkner from the *Evening News* observed him at work. In one scene, Maid Marion was to struggle in her chamber with an over-familiar knight, and this scene 'was rehearsed twice before it was perfect. Out of the range of the camera, Mr. Martinek ...

stood directing the players as to position, attitude, display of emotions at this point and that. When the needful fire had been put into the actions the handle of the camera was turned, and the scene filmed.¹⁷ Other scenes were rehearsed several times before they too were ready for filming. Even so, in one, the knight, having been struck between the shoulders by an arrow, at first fell awkwardly, ending with his face looking away from the camera, whilst, in another, the men removing his corpse carried it clumsily and went off into fits of laughter. Studio policy was that 'when perfected' a scene was 'always filmed *twice*, so that the manufacturers [might] judge which of the two makes the better picture'.¹⁸ Complete scenes were filmed in a single shot. Other scenes were taken in the gardens and open spaces round the house, and the unit was later to film in a forest and at a real castle, as near as possible to the actual spots of the legend.

In turn, *The Bioscope* also visited the studio in the summer of 1912, to cover the filming of a boxing match for a Lieutenant Daring picture. Its reporter felt that, if 'the peaceful inhabitants of ... Finchley could have known what fearful happenings were going on in their midst ... we rather think their wonted calm would have been sadly disrupted', but then reasoned that 'perhaps, ... the B. and C. Company have accustomed them to the spectacle of strange doings'.¹⁹ This may well have been the case for, long after, one local resident recalled the company 'doing some scenes for a "Wild West" film over the "rough lots" [on the Common]. I was watching them one day when they had a canoe on one of the ponds. It capsized and several "Red Indians" on board were thrown into the water. As they scabbled out covered in mud and leeches, their language was not of the Wild West.'²⁰ In 1914, Fred Dangerfield of *Pictures and the Picturegoer* witnessed the filming of an explosion and also reflected on the studio's local impact. He reported: 'Later I learnt that the explosion was heard for miles around. It slammed doors and rattled the windows of residents in the immediate neighbourhood, but apparently many of them are used to the "awful doings" up at the studio, and have long since ceased to be really nervous. If an earthquake actually happened in Finchley they would probably think it was another "B and C" production.'²¹

One of the first films to make use of the new studio was Lieutenant Daring's opening adventure, *In a South American Port*. In commenting on his forthcoming series, the *KLW* observed how the Daring films were 'capital examples of the new English methods of generous expenditure and careful attention to those little details of costume, acting and scenery, upon which so much depends'.²² For its climax, a subterranean chamber was built on the Finchley stage. Bandits carried in the bound and captive hero and placed him in a wall cavity. A moveable slab with protruding

spikes was then lowered towards his inert body before a last minute rescue was effected by his faithful blue-jackets.²³ A week later, the periodical returned to its theme, arguing film manufacturers had begun to realize the necessity for larger expenditure on decent settings and that B&C in particular had recently made good progress that way. Having witnessed one of the company's pictures in the making, the writer could well

appreciate the immense amount of care and attention to detail, to say nothing of the expenditure in time and money which goes towards the production of one of their recent ambitious naval and military stagings. In some of these as many as seventy people are employed for, perhaps, two or three days, while the hire of costumes also amounts to a considerable sum, and the expense of taking the entire caste to the sea (as has more than once been done) is no small one.²⁴

One Saturday at Finchley in June 1912, the filming of *Lieutenant Daring Defeats the Middleweight Champion* was turned into a special occasion when Moran's opponent was Jack Danner Stokes, a genuine American ex-champion. That day, '[q]uite a considerable number of gentlemen well known in the film trade had been asked down for the occasion' so future spectators would 'be likely to recognise many familiar faces amongst the "audience" at the ringside'.²⁵

Two productions made at East Finchley reveal how, at times, the imperative for speed of production characteristic of B&C topicals was applied to fiction films that had their own element of topicality. During the coal strike of March 1912, the company was almost alone in seizing on the event as the subject for a comic skit and rushing it into production. The plot for *How Mickey Dooley Survived the Coal Strike* was handed to its director, Sidney Northcote, at 4 p.m. one Thursday; it was produced on the Friday; and copies were with the M.P. Sales Agency by noon on Saturday.²⁶ Similarly, in September 1913, McDowell decided to produce *Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot* in time for the November celebrations. The idea came to him on Saturday 27 September and, at once, he called in Ernest Batley. The plot was quickly written, artistes and properties were obtained and all was ready the following Tuesday when the trade papers were advised. That Wednesday, on the basis of just the script by Batley and his wife—but on condition the film would be ready for viewing on Monday 13 October—Birmingham's Royal Film Agency offered a high figure for its exclusive rights in Great Britain.²⁷ The thirty-eight minute film was completed by the 15th, and copies of it were already with the Agency before B&C's fire on the 22nd.

Scenes from The Black Cross Gang and The Loss of the Birkenhead

Fred Dangerfield was present for the filming of an exciting moment in the sensational crime drama, *The Black Cross Gang*, in July 1914. By this time, James Youngdeer had taken charge of the Finchley unit, and a large building of wood and glass had been erected in the grounds to serve as the gang's headquarters. In the morning, a fire scene had been filmed, and in the afternoon, the reporter was to witness the blowing up of the building as the flames reached its gunpowder store. In preparation, a barrel filled with 12 pounds of gunpowder, earth and sawdust and with a five-minute fuse had been prepared. Two operators, one with a film camera and the other behind a half-plate stand camera for still images, stood ready beside Youngdeer, who promptly ordered everyone to lie face down and to look out. The rest of the company present

had just managed to get among the apple trees, some four hundred feet back, when the earth shook with a roar like thunder; the sky went black with pieces of wood, and the house was blown to splinters. A whole crowd of chickens in a near-by fowlhouse stood on their heads with fright; several dogs barked, and the noise of falling glass and timber rent the air.²⁸

When everyone had hurried back to the site of the blast they

found it covered with smoking *débris*. Where I [Dangerfield] was standing less than a minute before the explosion a piece of wood three feet long was actually embedded *two feet* in a wooden staircase. It must have killed me or any human being standing in its path. Portions of the gang's house were found in all parts of the grounds, and some of the trees looked like Christmas-trees, so loaded were they with 'splinters.' One man was struck on the leg, though not hurt. The 'half-plate' operator had his camera smashed and was knocked over, but the moving-picture man, who never dropped the handle until it was over and stood his ground in the midst of flying timbers, like a battle hero, was not even scratched. 'I only thought about the picture,' he said to me afterwards.²⁹

Youngdeer had been hit in the back, his face was black, his hands were covered in tar, his clothes were dirty and his right arm was scratched, but he was pleased with the result. He was, apparently, 'never so happy as when he [was] burning down or blowing up something or somebody',

and in the previous month, for another adventure of the Black Cross Gang, *The Water Rats of London*, he had filmed a fire scene for its second reel—‘as fine as anything ... seen recently on the screen’—and an explosion in a cellar for its final reel.³⁰

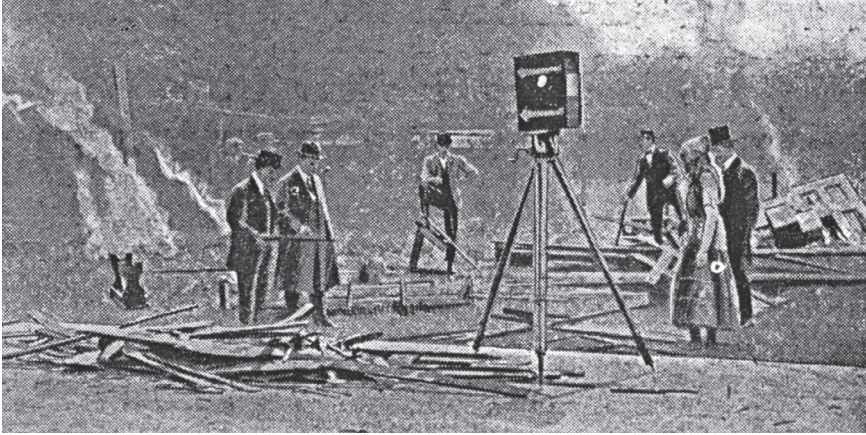


Figure 4.2 Destruction at the East Finchley studio after James Youngdeer’s explosion for *The Black Cross Gang*.
Pictures and the Picturegoer, 4 July 1914

In late August, *The Black Cross Gang* was followed by the filming of scenes for *The Loss of the Birkenhead*. Maurice Elvey, the company’s bright new directorial hope, was in charge, Youngdeer having moved on. By this time, the company had become increasingly oriented to expensive exclusive productions. *The Loss of the Birkenhead* was an historical drama set in 1852 that climaxed with a troop ship bound for South Africa striking a rock and sinking. The *Film Censor* claimed of the completed film:

The portrayal of the disaster ... is wonderfully depicted and masterfully staged. Boat after boat is got away with its freight of frail humanity, women and children. And then the awful moment arrives for the men, standing at attention, to go down to a watery grave. The swamping of the boat and its attendant horrors, with its ill-fated occupants struggling for life, is a thrilling but awful scene ... the extraordinarily good quality of the production is worthy of special comment.³¹

The ‘awful moment’ was staged in the grounds at Finchley where an army of carpenters had been employed for six weeks fashioning tons of timber for the shipboard scenes and where 18,000 gallons of water had been poured

into a tank, specially built for the flooding of the deck.³² The latter was constructed of tarpaulin and stood 8 feet deep, with the ship's deck built inside it. Much later, Elvey recalled that a paddle wheel had been strategically placed to obscure a neighbouring building and that, because the Finchley site was so high up, it 'appeared to overlook infinity'.³³ He explained:

There were props under the ship arranged so that when they were removed, one side of the thing sank into the water, about five feet. This was very effective because the water swished in and the unfortunate extras ... representing the British troops and their wives acted most realistically and naturally, not knowing what was going to happen.³⁴

This scene was later integrated with shots taken from an oyster hoy—a large open barge—moored in shallow water at Whitstable. Elvey remembered:

The extras were paid their fares and their food to go out there. They had to jump off the deck wearing night clothes—the men in trousers and shirts, the women in night-gowns, with bathing dresses underneath—into four feet of water ... and then get into the right position, sit down and wave their arms about as if they were struggling or drowning.³⁵

Suitably modified real ships were also deployed in the film. Publicity claimed around 650 performers were employed—some recruited from the local labour exchange—and that soldiers were brought in to represent the troops. Elvey based the film, in part, on a well-known painting by Elizabeth Butler, a Royal Academy artist specializing in scenes of military life.

FILMING ON LOCATION

From 1910, run-of-the-mill B&C comics were shot in the streets, parks and other urban settings of Neasden and Finchley. So, for example, on a Monday in February 1913, the premises of a local shop, the Finchley Gallery, was used as a setting for *The Antique Vase* (April) because of its 'attractive display of antique and modern furniture, china and other artistic lines'.³⁶ But, in fact, throughout Period One much of the company's fiction film-making took place away from Newstead House. This out-of-studio activity can be differentiated into everyday *filming on location*, where film-makers went out and about to get shots that would later be combined with studio-based material, and special *location films*, shot in their entirety at scenically

spectacular sites visited for that purpose by the touring stock companies. This predilection for outdoor filming may, of course, have been encouraged by the experience of the company's managing directors and their travels as cameramen to places of interest for good topical and actuality subjects.

London and beyond

B&C was a London-based firm and so, unsurprisingly, London and its environs offered numerous attractive spots at which to film. For example, the Thames and its bridges provided opportunities for characteristic moments of thrilling B&C spectacle. Thus, the hero of *The Drawn Blind* (June 1914) was filmed racing along Hungerford Bridge to make a daring leap 40 feet into the river, striking the water hard.³⁷ The escapologist Harry Lorraine—bound hand and foot—was tossed 30 feet from Walton Bridge in *Lieutenant Daring and the Mystery of Room 41* (November 1913), only to be rescued by a bargee's daughter.³⁸ There was another leap from a Thames bridge in *Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot* (November 1913), and Waterloo Bridge served as a setting for scenes in *Queen of the London Counterfeiters* (August 1914) and for the gang's ramshackle headquarters in *The Water Rats of London* (July 1914).³⁹ Lorraine also dashed into the Thames at Tilbury on a motor-bike going at 40 miles an hour in October 1913 for another crime drama.⁴⁰ As a company member observed after a jump from a high wharf at Gravesend, the Thames truly was 'becoming increasingly popular as a stage-setting for moving pictures'.⁴¹

Well-known Central London locations not far from Endell Street were used in *Broken Faith* (March 1912), where a village blacksmith is shown at the Changing of the Guard, Whitehall, his estranged lover is seen near Cleopatra's Needle and the couple's reconciliation is shot at another spot on the Thames Embankment.⁴² Similarly, the heroine of *The Fisher Girl of Cornwall* (March 1912) was filmed arriving at a London terminus, selling violets in the Strand and reunited with her lover in front of the fountains in Trafalgar Square.⁴³ Elsewhere in London, B&C filmed scenes in Camberwell for *How Mickey Dooley Survived the Coal Strike* (March 1912) and at a large gas-mantle factory in Wandsworth for *A Factory Girl's Honour* (February 1913).⁴⁴

Outside London, *The Bargee's Revenge* (November 1912) took players to the city's north-west and a lock on the Grand Junction Canal at Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire.⁴⁵ The same location was used for *Lily of Letchworth Lock* (January 1913) in which Dorothy Foster, as one of B&C's plucky heroines, rode a saddleless horse along the towpath, dived into the canal, swam to her lover's aid and rescued him from a burning barge.⁴⁶

Purley Downs, to London's south-east, was a location for *To Save Her Dad* (July 1913). In this sensation drama, a car was filmed dashing over the downs before pitching headlong over a high chalk cliff and smashing to pieces as it hit the ground.⁴⁷ To London's west, Sunningdale near Windsor was visited regularly and, to the east, Broadstairs was a setting for *The Broken Chisel* (October 1913) and Whitstable for *The Tattooed Will* (March 1914), where a rough sea at times seriously endangered the actors.⁴⁸ Purfleet in the Thames estuary was the site for scenes of battle featuring heavy field guns in a Balkan war drama, *The Crossed Flags* (May 1914),⁴⁹ and 'a fine stretch of the "white cliffs of Albion", with a picturesque seashore' was used in *Home* (October 1915).⁵⁰ Trouville in France—a recent venue for aeroplane contests—became a location for *In Fate's Grip* (December 1913), in which Marie Pickering spent hours in the sea, waiting to be rescued by hydroplane and carried across the water, lying precariously on one of its floats.⁵¹

Percy Moran on location

However, it was the two adventure series featuring Percy Moran at the height of his fame as Daring and Turpin that took B&C film-makers out and about most frequently. For his first outing as Daring late in 1911, he dived from an Admiralty pinnace at Southampton, and in March 1912, he was tossed over a cliff at Rottingdean near Brighton, where he sustained a painful accident.⁵² In June, he was rescuing Ivy Martinek from drowning in the Thames near Staines, where 'the placid water, riverside bungalows, punts and skiffs, produce[d] a very cool and refreshing feeling'.⁵³ On *Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Minefields* (November 1912), the final chase took him from London's Charing Cross station to Folkestone harbour, onto a channel steamer and to a final showdown in Boulogne.⁵⁴

Dick Turpin was a folk hero in the East Finchley district, and this fact was exploited in the series released between July 1912 and August 1913. It was designed as a succession of episodes offering ample opportunities for vigorous horse riding, location filming and audacious escapades, but from the outset, as *The Bioscope* noted, the films aspired to a sort of historical accuracy by having the various incidents 'reconstructed on the spots where they actually took place'.⁵⁵ *The Evening News* approved this strategy, declaring that the 'growing custom of filming picture plays in the original and natural scenery promises to add considerable interest'.⁵⁶ Consequently, the first adventure, *The King of Highwaymen*, was accepted as 'charming merely as an intimate study of English scenery'.⁵⁷ Later adventures took units to the Bath Road and Epsom for places traditionally associated with the highwayman and to Great Bookham, where the

Royal Surrey pack of hounds and their master were hired to pursue Turpin, in the company of ladies and gentlemen in Georgian costume.⁵⁸ In another film, according to the *Film Censor*,

the 'local colour' ... [was] correct to a detail, for the major portion of the subject was produced at the well-known Spaniard's Hotel, which lies on the famous promenade that connects Hampstead Heath with Highgate. To show that there remains absolutely no doubt as to this being the authentic spot where the gallant Dick [would drink] ... visitors to this ancient hostelry will still find some of Turpin's relics hung upon its walls.⁵⁹

The Spaniard's was at no great distance from the East Finchley studio and its landlord was enlisted to play the host in the film.⁶⁰ Finally, for the exclusive that concluded the series, *Dick Turpin's Ride to York*, the filming retraced the places visited along the famous ride, beginning not too far from the studio at Crouch End, and passing through Hornsey and Edmonton, before going on to Huntingdon and beyond. The *KLW* decided this was

the real thing. No longer do we have to imagine the incidents on that great ride, with all their attendant dangers. We see them enacted before our eyes ... The incidents which go to make up this great romance of the road have been admirably handled ... Many of the backgrounds are exceedingly picturesque, and all of them have been well chosen.⁶¹

Filming Through the Clouds

One particularly successful film from autumn 1913 was *Through the Clouds*, in which the audacity of the sensation scenes made a considerable impact. These were filmed on location at the Welsh Harp reservoir, Hendon, some 3 miles west of the studio, and with the help of an aeroplane and flier from the nearby Hendon airfield. Flying was a new thing at the time. The first powered flight in Britain had been at Salisbury in October 1908 and the Frenchman, Blériot, had flown the Channel as recently as July 1909. In 1910, land had been bought at Hendon for an airfield, which was putting on regular flying spectacles for a paying public by the summer of 1912.⁶² Thus, B&C's 1913 films featuring aircraft were presenting what was, in effect, 'the latest thing', and *Through the Clouds* offered spectators an exhilarating chase of a balloon by an aeroplane,

a thrilling aerial rescue and the spectacle of a man hanging perilously from the balloon's basket. To film these scenes, two balloons—provided by Messrs Spence Brothers—were used, tethered together by a 30 foot rope.⁶³ In one was George Foley as the villain, Ernest Batley as the trussed-up detective and Bert Berry, who was to carry out the stunt. In the other was the film's director, Charles Weston and Isidor Roseman, his cameraman. As the latter explained:

The balloons had ... to be tied together, and therein lay the great danger. But for the rope connecting the netting of the two envelopes the balloons would have caught slightly different air currents, and soon have drifted apart; yet it was important they should not collide ... In the meantime, Mr Ewan, the well-known aviator, was waiting at Hendon aerodrome, for the signal to give chase ... The first time we went up the balloons caught different air currents and there was such danger that we had to cut the ropes. The next time the aeroplane flew too high and I could not get it and the other balloon on the film at the same time.⁶⁴

He succeeded on a third attempt, although, on landing, one balloon caught on a tree and was nearly upset. For Berry's stunt, it was reported, the balloons rose to 8,000 feet above the Welsh Harp. He then leaped from the basket of his balloon, held on to the side ropes attached to the basket edge by one hand and posed 'for some 30 seconds in an attitude of despair while the operator in the other balloon set his machine busily to work'.⁶⁵ Then Berry pulled himself back into the basket. The shot was filmed by Roseman from a point below Berry's balloon. Asked about his sensations by a *Daily Citizen* reporter, the stuntman replied 'laughingly and briefly: "I reckon I had none; I've done the same sort of thing in a gymnasium hundreds of times, and seeing I'm not cursed with any of those things you call nerves it was just the same to me 8,000 feet up as it would have been on dear old mother earth. Nerves are no go if you're to do any good in the cinema business nowadays."⁶⁶ In the film, Marie Pickering, playing the detective's daughter, was seen to shoot the villain from the aeroplane and then climb up a rope to the balloon's basket to save her father. In an interview with *The Cinema* to promote the film, she spoke of being 'horribly nervous' and declared:

I had never been in an aeroplane before, and the wind caught my cloak so that I felt I was being strangled. For a while, I must confess that I felt frightened ... After three hours in the air Mr Ewen brought

the aeroplane to within the proper distance of the balloon. It was then for me to jump out on to the rope ... Never shall I forget that moment. Thirty feet above was the balloon, and 3,000 ft. below was the earth. The sense of this all caused a curious feeling to clutch me somewhere inside, and there was a little pain in my throat. But I kept my eyes on the balloon above me and began to climb, swaying in the air with the movement of the rope. Hand over hand I went. I thought I should never reach the basket ... and then I felt the lasso encircle my body, grow taut, and then lift me upwards. That was a most lovely moment. I felt safe, and could draw my breath easier once again! I was then drawn into the balloon. A great gush of gladness came over me, and a wonderful feeling of security.⁶⁷

The reality of filming, however, was a little more prosaic, for the 'incident took place at a very low altitude, and a net was fixed to prevent injury to the actress should she have fallen'.⁶⁸ Even so, Pickering still had to bravely make her ascent of the rope. Berry's stunt too is likely to have been filmed at rather less than 8,000 feet.

LOCATION FILMS IN BRITAIN AND ABROAD

During the latter part of Period One, B&C won considerable prestige for the enterprise it showed in sending out travelling companies to visit various spots around Britain in which to film. *The Cinema*, writing from the perspective of the 'revisionist' account of company history, observed that here McDowell 'proved himself a pioneer' because he was 'one of the first English producers who sent his artists any great distances from London in order to get a proper locale'.⁶⁹ However, he had found that 'when he sent his people to such places as Cornwall, Derbyshire, and North Wales he was very soon imitated. So, he determined to minimise the chance of that, and accordingly sent a whole company ... over to Jamaica'.⁷⁰ These touring companies were the clearest form the director-unit production system took at B&C. 1912 was the year in which this strategy was most systematically deployed, and in February, O'Neill Farrell initiated an attempt to get the railway companies to extend to cinema firms the privileges they already provided for touring theatre companies—namely, special coaches at reduced rates to transport properties and scenery.⁷¹ He sought the support of other production companies for this move, but the concession would have served B&C particularly well, given its ambitious travel plans. Professional theatrical touring companies, presenting plays around a circuit of recently built provincial theatres, had

emerged in the late nineteenth century and continued to flourish in the early twentieth. They offered a kind of precedent for B&C's travelling film-makers—though the theatre companies toured to sites of consumption whilst the film companies toured in search of sites for production.

Cornwall

The first expedition was to Cornwall in the latter part of 1911 and resulted in three romantic dramas, each around 1,000 feet long and each emphasizing the Cornish dimension in its title—*A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast* (February 1912), *The Fishergirl of Cornwall* (March 1912) and *A Cornish Romance* (May 1912). There were fifteen in the party, including four women.⁷² The films were directed by Sidney Northcote, who was in control of the unit. He was new to B&C's team of directors and may have been recruited especially for this venture. The acting leads were taken by Wallett Waller and Dorothy Foster, whose rise to prominence these films much facilitated. The MPSA's advertising for *A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast* declared it to be a 'Cornish story of intense dramatic interest, bringing out all the grandeur and scenic beauty of the English Riviera', and explained how the picture had 'entailed the transportation to Cornwall of the whole B&C Co., at considerable expense, and [how] the services of the staff of a Coast Guard Station ... [had been] engaged to assist in this great production'.⁷³ In turn, *The Bioscope* observed the film 'reproduces scenes in the famous English Riviera—pictures which will appeal to all lovers of this part of Cornwall'.⁷⁴ An exciting story had been woven around these scenes but, '[t]aken on the spot, the pictures illustrate the life of the inhabitants, and portray the home of all that is romantic and beautiful'.⁷⁵ The intention behind the films, therefore, was to exploit the scenic beauties of Cornwall, its coastline and an imagery associated with fishing communities. Here, in a sense, the management's experience filming views for actuality subjects was being transferred into their narrative films. Thus, the topography of the English Riviera was incorporated as one of the several attractions provided by the Cornish films—along with Foster's beauty and the vivid action of the stories.

North Wales

After the Duchy of Cornwall, B&C's touring took a company to the Principality of Wales in March and April 1912, with the intention of producing 'films of Welsh stories on Welsh soil'.⁷⁶ This time there were

seventeen in the party, under the leadership of McDowell, but with Northcote, once again, responsible for the filming. Four one-reel dramas, with Welsh references in their titles, were made along with a short scenic presenting *Bettws-y-Coed* (May). Once again, Dorothy Foster was the female lead, but this time she was partnered by Percy Moran. As for the Cornish films, scripts were by Harold Brett. A new ten-seater Philane car eased travel difficulties during the concurrent coal strike, even though it was practically destroyed by a fire when McDowell, Foster and the production staff were returning home. The company stayed at an hotel in *Betws-y-Coed* and from there visited 'the magnificent scenery of North Wales ... [and] such beautiful and historic spots as ... Amlwch, Llanwrst, Holyhead ... and Puffin Island'.⁷⁷ At the latter, 'the artistes were working under extreme difficulties, owing to an exceptionally strong gale, and the undercurrents were so powerful and treacherous that entering the water was a very hazardous task'.⁷⁸ One scene for *The Pedlar of Penmaenmawr* was set in the square at Llanwrst on market day, and the filming so attracted the attention of country people from the mountain districts that the entire trade of the town was brought to a standstill. One large shop closed down to allow the young women on its staff to act as extras, dressed in Welsh national costume, and local children refused to attend school wherever filming was taking place. So the schools too closed down and some of the children took parts in the films.



Figure 4.3 A B&C company touring North Wales in spring 1912.
The Pictures, 11 May 1912

Derbyshire

Next, a director-unit went to the hills of the Derbyshire Peak District in late September, expecting to stay there for about a month. McDowell, once more, led the party and took responsibility for some of the cinematography. Charles Raymond was the director. Five films of up to 1,500 feet resulted—four ‘chronicles’ in the Don Q bandit series (released between January and August 1913) and a Percy Moran drama, *The Mountaineer’s Romance* (December 1912). Raymond himself was persuaded to take on the role of the notorious Don Q, and Ivy Martinek took the female leads.⁷⁹ The scripts, as ever, were by Brett, but Hesketh Pritchard, author of the original stories, was also on location ‘supervising the reproduction of his novel’, and was later to appear in a prologue to the first film.⁸⁰ Raymond described the work as ‘hard and strenuous’ because, from their hotel, the company had ‘a five mile walk—hard mountain climbing—to the scenes we had chosen, and this travelling, together with the running about incidental to the plays, made one very tired long before the day was over’.⁸¹ Initially, there was an attempt to use donkeys to carry the cast into the hills but, as they stubbornly refused, the company had to go on foot. Raymond developed a keen eye for scenery and would spend days searching out suitable locations. Later, he recalled:

Most of our scenes were taken a thousand feet high in positions of extreme difficulty. On one occasion I had to climb on to a flat rock for an outline twilight portrait. From where I stood I had a bird’s eye view of the valley below, and the sight made me so giddy that it was several minutes before I recovered sufficiently to be able to pose. Mr. McDowell was strapped to a tree some distance away holding on to his camera like grim death. It was acting under difficulties, with a vengeance.⁸²

Luckily, no one was seriously injured, although there were plenty of cuts and bruises and a painful attack by a plague of gnats. However, a large displaced boulder did smash a camera into fragments. Further, on one particular occasion, two female tourists, who had seen terrifying figures shooting at one another in the distance, raced off to raise the alarm, only to be reassured by a nearby fisherman that they had been witness to the production of a film. On another occasion, two young women turned up on location to ask if they might photograph the performers—an early manifestation of ‘fandom’.

The script for *The Mountaineer's Romance* was prepared by Percy Moran to include a struggle on a precipice above a 200 foot drop and a fall into a raging river that would exploit his skill as a swimmer.⁸³ *The Pictures* reported that the scenes chosen for this film—as for the Don Q series—‘were so difficult of access that the [camera] operator found it impossible to get good results until he was tied to a tree overhanging a rocky ledge. The position of the operator was perilous and uncomfortable, but the resulting pictures were great.’⁸⁴

Cornwall again

Late in 1912, a stock company of twelve returned to Cornwall led by Walleth Waller, male lead on the earlier trip.⁸⁵ Only one film resulted, *A Fisherman's Infatuation* (January 1913), but, at around 2,000 feet, it was one of B&C's longer pictures. The leads were, as before, Foster and Waller himself, performing yet another Harold Brett script. The location was Polperro, a fishing village with no railway and a population of four hundred. Despite initial problems in securing accommodation because the only hotel was full of artists who had been attracted to the spot to paint, the unit stayed for three weeks. The locals had no prior experience of film work but were eager to help and participate in the production. In the light of his experience, Waller was to conclude that ‘the fishermen were the most natural untrained actors [he had] ever known, and their work as supers [was] worthy of the highest praise’.⁸⁶ But whilst he found the public eager to perform, he had one dockside scene where the local official in charge ostentatiously directed the movements of his employees on the expectation he would appear in the finished film. Waller resolved the problem by subtly placing the camera where it would not film individuals irrelevant to the scene.⁸⁷

As in the Peak District, the company had walks of several miles to get to suitable locations, all the while carrying camera, properties and costumes. On the last day of filming, Moran, the cameraman and Waller were out on a trawler near Plymouth in a rough sea with a strong gale blowing. They were to film a standard Moran action scene in which he was to dive from the boat and swim ashore. However, as Waller explained, first he

dived overboard into the icy water, but the operator was unable to secure the right picture so he had to climb on board and dive again—a process that even he did not relish. For the second time [Moran] dived and missed; and the third time drew blank as well! Seeing the

picture was impossible as I had at first intended it I arranged to portray the dive in two scenes [or shots], and at [the] fourth plunge into the water we got the effect we required.⁸⁸

Jamaica

The company travelling to the West Indies left Liverpool on 17 December 1912 as the only passengers on the SS *Pacuare* of Elders and Fyffes' steamship line, to arrive at Kingston on New Year's Day 1913, with a view to spending two or three months filming abroad.⁸⁹ As *The Pictures* explained, 'the Colonies will be "milked" to provide a series of first class dramas and industrial films. Jamaica, with its wonderfully clear and sunny climate, has been selected.'⁹⁰ The unit of twelve was, this time, led by Bloomfield and had Charles Raymond as director. William Phillips was cameraman and O'Neill Farrell went along as publicity manager. Of the eight actors, five were men—including Moran, Haley and Harry Lorraine—and three women—including Dorothy Foster. The company also took a car with them, as they had in Wales.⁹¹ This highly productive expedition resulted in sixteen films that were released between April and September 1913. Six were short actualities with lengths of from 300 to 610 feet, including scenics from around the island. Two were short comics and eight were dramas of varying lengths, with subjects ranging from horse racing, through cricket, to plantation revolt. Four of the films were taken on board ship, including the actuality *Life on the Ocean Wave* (September), which offered 'interesting exhibitions of life saving'.⁹² The Bill Haley comic *Bliggs on the Briny* (April) and the crime drama *A Flash of Lightning* (also April) were filmed on the two-week outward journey, and *A Flirtation at Sea* (July), a comic written by and featuring O'Neill Farrell, was filmed on the return voyage. Early in February, some 10,000 feet of negative—that is, about three hours of film—were sent home for processing and the company returned around the 27th with still more stock to be developed.⁹³ Whilst resident in Kingston, they put on a well-attended film and variety entertainment at the Ward Theatre on 1 February, the proceeds of which went to a local charity.⁹⁴ Sketches and monologues from Moran, Farrell and others and a handcuff release act by Lorraine were part of the performances, whilst the films were titles the party had taken out with them.

The unit filmed in Jamaica for some six weeks and, as *The Cinema* recorded,

Much of the success of the trip must be attributed to the officials of Elders and Fyffes, Ltd., who were untiring in their efforts to assist the party, placing everything necessary at their disposal, whilst the United Fruit Company, besides giving the use of their offices as a permanent address, gave every facility for securing the remarkable industrial films obtained.⁹⁵

Unsurprisingly, therefore, one industrial was called *A Trip to Bananaland* (August) and showed what the *Evening News* maintained was normally denied visitors to the West Indies—that is, views of the cultivation of bananas and of negroes at work.⁹⁶ A day's filming for the dramas might begin at 5 a.m., with a journey of several miles into the countryside to reach a suitable location, and could continue to seven or eight o'clock in the evening, with company members carrying their own food for meals. Before leaving, Bloomfield had anticipated Raymond would encounter problems over reconnoitring locations, suspecting that, 'instead ... of being able to proceed to a scene of operations before a play was actually scened, [Raymond] would have to get to work immediately on [his] arrival'.⁹⁷ This difficulty seems to have been handled effectively but there was still the matter of what O'Neill Farrell referred to as 'cinematography at 130 deg. in the shade'.⁹⁸ Given such conditions, it was unsurprising that he lost 19 pounds in weight and experienced a touch of malaria, whilst Raymond's increasingly sun-bronzed face took years off his age. On the other hand, the brilliant light offered a sure guarantee of B&C's usual high-quality cinematography. For one film, *The Favourite for the Jamaica Cup* (May), Harry Lorraine performed another of the company's spectacular plunging-into-water stunts. He was caught up in a fight on a railway bridge and was pushed down between the sleepers to fall 30 feet into the torrent below.

One of the dramas was *Lieutenant Daring and the Labour Riots*—released in May with the new British Board of Film Censor's A-certificate, presumably because it showed a black colonial population rebelling and attacking a white missionary and his family. It was filmed over two weeks, but key scenes were taken in mid-January on the United Fruit Company's plantation near Gregory Park. Members of the company, under the charge of Raymond and including young white men from Kingston, who were to act as Daring's loyal naval bluejackets, took a train to the Park before being carried by banana wagon to the 'Pumpkin Ground', where several scenes were to be enacted around the plantation overseer's house that was representing the mission. At ten o'clock a car bringing the lead performers arrived and Raymond set to work directing the crowd scenes, Bloomfield

functioning as cameraman on this occasion. Black plantation labourers were recruited for the mission attack and one, who had been successfully used on the previous day, was selected to die for the camera. Raymond patronizingly chose to call him 'Simpson', and, along with another muscular recruit dubbed 'Jack Johnson', he was carefully rehearsed before the professional actors were put in place and filming began. As *The Cinema* later reported, these men 'proved themselves adaptable to the needs of the camera-man, and appeared to thoroughly enjoy the pastime of "dying" for the pictures. So much so was this the case, that days after a film had been made Mr. Farrell and his band came across groups ... re-enacting the scene.'⁹⁹ Raymond staged one shot with the crowd, armed with cutlasses, approaching under an archway. In front were the three ring-leaders, including 'Simpson' and 'Johnson', carrying lighted torches. Special material had been laid down for them to ignite which gave off 'a thick yellow smoke that, at a distance, [made] the place appear really as if it were on fire'.¹⁰⁰ Shortly afterwards, the leaders fell dead as Moran fired blanks at them, before engaging in vigorous hand-to-hand combat with the rest of the mob. A second scene was staged on the mission veranda, with Daring standing on a staircase to repel another attack and with 'Simpson' and 'Johnson' performing dying yet again. A further scene at this spot had the Kingston men, who were in regulation naval uniform with rifles and side arms, line up and fire volleys at the retreating rebels. Lorraine and another company actor mixed with them as Petty Officers to direct the squad's actions before the camera. For the final scene, 'yellow smoke from the smoke jacks ... enveloped the whole house, which appear[ed] to be well on fire', dead and wounded rioters lay scattered in prostrate positions all around and three women were lifted from the building onto the lawn by the rescue party.¹⁰¹ One particular scene was filmed on a beach near Myrtle Bank Hotel, where Foster was viewed dismounting to signal a semaphore message requesting help out to sea, using handkerchiefs. Apparently, the performance was so realistic that it was 'observed on board HM Surveyship *Ellinor* and at once they sent a party off to the spot to see what had happened'.¹⁰²

The Alps

B&C embarked on a second tour abroad in late July 1913—this time to Europe and the Alps. *A Tragedy in the Alps* (September) at 3,000 feet was one of the feature-length exclusives McDowell's new policies were pushing for. The unit was led by Charles Weston, who also scripted and directed the film. It was photographed by the company's new actuality cameraman,

Frederick Burlingham—himself an esteemed mountaineer—who took time off from his personal projects to accept direction from another man. The lead performers were newcomers Ernest Batley and Marie Pickering, who was shortly to encounter the perils of *Through the Clouds*. Part of the drama was played out on the glacier slopes of Mont Blanc and the climbing stage of the expedition took some eighteen hours.¹⁰³ *The Cinema* received a postcard from Batley in Chamonix dated 21 July that announced: ‘With my toes frostbitten and my eyes nearly closed after three days’ terrible suffering, we have taken a fine dramatic picture on top of Mont Blanc.’¹⁰⁴ The ‘top’ was an exaggeration, for the experienced Burlingham had recently undergone his own difficulties filming the summit for an actuality, but, nevertheless, the magazine congratulated B&C for being the first firm to make an ascent ‘for purely cinematographic purposes’.¹⁰⁵ When the film’s world territorial rights were advertised, H. Winick’s exuberant hype proclaimed: ‘Sensational. Sensational. Is What the Public Demands. No expense was spared by the B&C Company to make the picture the Sensation of Sensations. In Switzerland among the Alps is where the sensational scenes were obtained—something NEW—something different to all other exclusives.’¹⁰⁶ In November 1913, the *Evening News* proposed B&C’s ‘motto is, and always has been, that no matter what the expense, every play of theirs should be taken in its natural setting’, and concluded that with the drama *A Tragedy in the Alps* and the recent Burlingham actuality *Ascent of the Matterhorn*, ‘Mr McDowell has invaded the Continent ... [and] obtained a marvellous series of Alpine pictures’.¹⁰⁷

As things turned out, this was the last expedition by a B&C touring company until the brief return to the policy with the visit to Derbyshire in September 1915. From the latter part of 1913, most of the company’s major productions moved inside the closed studio at Walthamstow.

The Battle of Waterloo: a case study in production

There was, however, one other important location film in 1913, *The Battle of Waterloo*, which proved a real ‘event’ movie, as much in terms of its filming, promotion and distribution as in terms of its subject matter. The initiative towards its making came from McDowell but its realization depended on the organizational proficiency of his company and the director, Charles Weston.

The film attempted a reconstruction of a major historical event and so was, in a sense, a prototype of that careful attention to detail that has become a standard feature of British period pictures. The battle scenes were

filmed at Irthlingborough, an industrial village in the valley of the river Nene, near Northampton, in the week beginning Sunday 8 June. Thus, it was made shortly before Waterloo Day on 18 June, the ninety-eighth anniversary of the original encounter. The time of year chosen was appropriate, but systematic preparation was necessary before filming began.¹⁰⁸

The American-born Weston, whose 'special forte [was] the production of battle pictures', had arrived in Britain only three weeks before shooting took place, but had apparently already completed four films for B&C before undertaking *Waterloo*.¹⁰⁹ For the latter, he contacted a man at the British Museum who recommended books to help him develop the scenario and get the battle details as authentic as possible. This resulted in a script of 112 scenes, each with its own distinct location. Then, working with O'Neill Farrell, Weston 'cornered every Waterloo uniform that could be found in London, because [he] knew that some Americans were on their way to England to do the very same battle'.¹¹⁰ As his aim was realism, accurate uniforms were needed for the hussars, lancers, dragoons and infantry of the British, French and Prussian armies, as well as kilts for the Cameron Highlanders. Various period properties and 'some real cannon said to have been used in the battle' were acquired—some fifty of the latter coming from a dealer in antiques.¹¹¹ A £600 deposit was needed to secure hire of these items. A replica of Napoleon's carriage, which had once belonged to a City sheriff, was bought for another £200. Further, dozens of dead horses were procured to be moved between battlefields on slaughterers' carts to further heighten the film's realism.¹¹²

The leading players were engaged for their resemblance to their historical predecessors. Ernest Batley was recruited to play Napoleon and trimmed his hair to resemble that of his character. Jack Brighten, who was said to bear a striking resemblance to Wellington, took on his first screen role as the duke, after having, for twenty years, played villains in melodrama and emperors in pantomime.¹¹³ George Foley was recruited to play Blucher. Between two and three hundred horsemen constituted the cavalry—some on horses sent up from London by a special train,¹¹⁴ with, at their core, a regiment of one hundred regular cavalry of the 12th Lancers, on loan from the nearby Weedon Barracks and led by their own captain and sergeant-major. Given their expertise in horsemanship, they were to enact both the charge of the British cavalry and, after a change of uniform, the counter-charge of the French cuirassiers. The rest of the extras, forming the infantry, were made up of 300 unemployed men from the Northampton Labour Exchange, supplemented by a number of local men out for the fun of it and by fifty of B&C's regular character actors from London, who were used in the closer, hand-to-hand, encounters.

Robert Humfrey claimed there was ‘a good deal of searching for a suitable site’, but this seems unlikely as Weston had convalesced at Irthlingborough on a previous visit to England and had married a local woman.¹¹⁵ He secured several fields for the company’s use on the Tuesday before filming began.¹¹⁶ The moment of filming was an event in its own right because of the unprecedented scale of the production, the intense local interest it aroused and the way O’Neill Farrell exploited it for publicity purposes. He invited the press to attend and, as a result, a comparatively full account of the shooting can be reconstructed.¹¹⁷



Figure 4.4 A B&C location film: *The Battle of Waterloo*.
Illustrated Film Monthly, October 1913

Weston, with the personnel and properties from London, arrived at Irthlingborough on Saturday 7 June; the lancers came over on Sunday afternoon; and the hundreds of unemployed turned up at dawn on Monday morning. Unfortunately, a hundred more arrived than were expected and, as they refused to go away, they were engaged for the day but, having no uniforms, were kept out of camera range.¹¹⁸ All this demanded complex logistical organization. Men were billeted at a skating rink, a working men’s club and in all the local hotels and public houses. Some even camped out overnight. Weston’s headquarters was a building in the High Street. A commissariat was provided to feed the combatants and special insurance arrangements secured the cast against accidents. Costumes were

put on in a local barn and theatrical dressers were taken on to check their accuracy. The comments of the latter, it was observed, 'would have done justice to any peppery sergeant of Wellington's army'.¹¹⁹ Payment to the extras was made dependent on their handing their uniforms back in at the end of a day's shooting.

Monday was given over to rehearsals and filming took place over the next two days, under ideal weather conditions so that cameraman Isidor Roseman's photography turned out well defined.¹²⁰ On those days, things got under way as early as three o'clock in the morning. The noise of cannon could be heard at seven and the rattle of musketry continued all day long. On Tuesday, '[a]ll the important military displays and charges, needing a large show of men and horses, were completed'.¹²¹ The first scene was a cavalry charge on a farm with infantrymen firing volleys from its roof and from between the buildings. The lancers returned to Weedon Barracks on Wednesday morning, for that day was given over to the 'smaller episodes, such as the meeting of Wellington and Blucher after the victory'.¹²²

The battlefield on which the spectacle was staged 'consisted of three meadows sloping sharply to a brook. Full of small ravines, bog holes and hummocks', and the steep, opposing hills either side of a valley provided the rough terrain over which the rival cavalry formations would make their charges.¹²³ There, Weston took control, working from the typewritten pages of his scenario, restaging unsatisfactory scenes and issuing orders through a large megaphone in such a manner as to gain the admiration of several watching army officers. The *Evening News* recorded part of his performance:

Now then, boys, put some ginger into this, get a move on. Let 'em know you are there ... Don't you run away or you'll run home for good ... You boys that have got to die; mind you do, or I shan't want you tomorrow. Now then, where's that Union Jack? Stick it against the cannon. When I shout 'Fire,' you let go; let 'em have it.¹²⁴

When filming the meeting of Wellington and Blucher, he threatened to throw a brick at any 'corpse' that moved before the end of the shot. He controlled the moment distant soldiers would fire their rifles by having a man wearing a white jacket drop a handkerchief as signal. On other occasions, men wielded long sticks to encourage horses to pass before the camera at an appropriate dash. A report in the *Wellingborough News* provided a revealing explanation of how one particularly dramatic effect was achieved in a scene where French troops, just roused from sleep, fired off cannon and set fire to some haystacks:

The sleeping soldiers have just lain down and jump up in response to the order given by the gentleman directing the affair through a megaphone. The cannons which emit nothing but noise, flame, and smoke, are fired by electric fuses attached to a switchboard standing behind the camera. The stacks—which ... were a wooden structure of a highly inflammable nature covered with hay on one side only—were also electrically ignited judging from what could be seen.¹²⁵

Fire, smoke, explosions and destruction were integral to Weston's staging of the spectacle. The set of farm buildings was besieged and ignited. Napoleon's coach was blown up sufficiently close to Roseman for pieces of wood to cascade onto his camera and for a flying iron fragment to narrowly miss Batley's head. When an unsecured cannon careered down a hill and crashed to pieces in a ravine, Weston immediately had the damaged object photographed for the film.

Of the completed epic, *The Bioscope* suggested: 'The whole picture ... is a series of battle scenes, all of them magnificently carried out, with any number of men and horses. And where gunpowder is concerned, it is a regular Guy Fawkes' Day! There is positively a regular army of "supers", and, as a body, they behave with a sagacity unusual to their kind', though in early scenes the men 'might have been grouped more carefully in distinct regiments.'¹²⁶

Besides watching the filming, the newspaper reporters were also interested in cataloguing all accidents that occurred and in describing the crowds attracted from throughout the local area. St John's Ambulance staff and a local doctor were kept busy attending to various bruises, lacerations and fractures, mainly resulting from the behaviour of wayward horses. At one point, Batley was thrown from the big, mettlesome grey he was riding and a more experienced horseman had to take the animal away to encourage it to be less fractious. The watching crowds were estimated in their thousands and stood several deep around the field, having travelled there by bus, car, cart and on foot. They were martialled by the police and extras in uniform. So many children truanted from local schools that they were closed, and the owners of two nearby boot factories retaliated against the absenteeism of their employees on the Tuesday afternoon by closing down for the rest of the week, thereby laying off nearly 1,000 workers. Local people, particularly the women, also derived great amusement from seeing their menfolk dressed in costume, and everyone learned that in film-making, 'for every two or three minutes' excitement, there was nearly a half hour waiting before the next "turn" was ready'.¹²⁷

After Irthlingborough, a scene of Napoleon in exile was filmed at Rottingdean, near Brighton and, after a private showing of the film, a further scene representing the Duchess of Richmond's pre-battle ball was filmed at the Finchley studio.¹²⁸

The film's status as an 'event' provoked a political sequel that involved correspondence that became public property after it was published in the *Northampton News* and *The Bioscope*. A Member of Parliament was asked by a constituent if he could explain who had authorized the lancers from Weedon Barracks to take part in the making of a film, whether any private individual might 'hire out portions of the British Army for pecuniary gain' and what had become of the cash.¹²⁹ The MP contacted the Secretary of State for War, who replied that the sum of money received by the regiment had gone to the men who had taken part and as regimental prize money for swimming and boxing competitions. The minister also pointed out that, 'Although the display was not a public one, I do not regard the use of the troops for such purposes as desirable, and those concerned have been so informed'—a conclusion the original complainant found eminently satisfactory.¹³⁰

The Endell Street Plant and the Walthamstow Studio, 1913–1917

With McDowell in executive control from May 1913, B&C moved towards something approaching a central producer system of production. In her work on the American industry, Janet Staiger identifies several institutional processes that accompanied such a development, which, in rather less systematic fashion, can also be seen under way at B&C and in the British industry.¹ Central to these was the emergence of an increasingly complex division of labour under a central, corporate manager and the separation of a film's conception from its execution. The former was under way at B&C from at least 1911, after the setting up of Endell Street and the East Finchley studio, and was consolidated further late in 1913 with the addition of the Walthamstow studio. In taking on full responsibility for the formulation of policy, McDowell was in good company, for both Cecil Hepworth at Walton and William Barker were also widely recognized as active heads of production in the 1910s.

Separating conception from execution meant separating the planning phase in a film's production from its execution, the process of its manufacture. On the one hand, this meant decision-making was exercised by a central producer acting as top manager, and McDowell embraced this responsibility by dropping his actuality work to concentrate on supervision and easing mainstream production towards the burgeoning exclusives market. However, in the USA, conception was located primarily in the 'continuity script' developed by the Ince studio, which coordinated production activities in considerable detail. British script preparation seems to have been less systematic, but nevertheless, scripts came to assume increasing importance at B&C where a succession of men were appointed script editor—Harold Brett in the Bloomfield years, Percy Paterson as a transitional figure and, from 1914, Eliot Stannard.²

THE DIVISION OF LABOUR AT B&C

The enterprise's division of labour developed both horizontally and vertically. The former broke the film-making process down into its component parts, dividing them between Endell Street, Finchley and Walthamstow. In the former was located the company's business offices and its works for processing film. At the studios were to be found the director-units responsible for making the films and the craft departments needed to facilitate their work. Formal organization, therefore, was physical—in terms of its layout on different sites and in discrete departments within those sites—and functional—in terms of the specialist contribution each individual or department made to the overall production process.

The vertical division of labour involved an arrangement in which authoritative decision-making was located at the top—ultimately with the managing director—and in parallel hierarchies at Endell Street and in the studios, especially that at Walthamstow. These were differentiated in terms of responsibility, status and remuneration into three levels. First were the managerial roles with administrative responsibilities, which embraced the executive positions filled by Bloomfield and McDowell and the line managers responsible for the day-to-day running of the factory and studios. Second came the studio 'talent grades', including the directors, scriptwriters, cinematographers and actors—each, in turn, with their own hierarchies of senior and junior positions. Occupying a lower position in this middle ground were the departmental heads in charge of set construction, set dressing and costumes. Finally, there were the routine production, technical and administrative staff either working around the studios as, for example, carpenters and electricians, or processing stock in the plant or carrying out secretarial work in the offices.³

One consequence of the deployment of specialized knowledge and craft skills in the new organizational arrangements was some loss of the flexible roles, spontaneity and multi-tasking of Period One. In Period Two, this fluidity disappeared to settle into a more clear-cut demarcation between roles and responsibilities as practices became routinized. Even so, the earlier flexibility had only really characterized certain of the talent grades. Most cameramen were specialists from the start and emergent roles, such as electricians, carpenters, clerks and accountants, which depended on prior training or particular educational competencies, were, by necessity, specialized.

A further component in the departmentalization under way was the distribution agencies. Strictly, an entity such as Davison's Film Sales Agency was a separate business with its own internal organization. But

it was a crucial intermediary between the production company, its renters and the cinemas. The relationship, therefore, was close and collaborative, particularly with the Publicity and Advertising Department at Endell Street. Without an agency's successful promotion and selling of company films, the work of the rest of the enterprise would have come to nothing.

THE ENDELL STREET PLANT

In June 1911, eighteen months after setting up the processing factory in Denmark Street, plant was moved into the far greater space at Endell Street, where new and improved equipment and better organization would increase output to an impressive 30,000 feet a day—or nearly eight and a half hours of film. Initially, the plant was to expedite B&C's topical output. The building was in operation until 1924, with improvements made to the set-up in winter 1913—after the fire—and again in 1918. At its opening, *The Bioscope* observed that the new premises 'ranks as the finest for topical work in London. Well ventilated and splendidly equipped, a putting out capacity has been obtained of five times that of the old premises.'⁴ Three years later, *The Cinema* was still referring to the 'factory' as possessing 'a most elaborate plant' and the 'hundred-and-one things which are necessary for the production of films *on a large scale*'.⁵ This 'works department' was under the 'expert management' of Mr R.E. Gill, who was directly responsible 'for the perfect quality of which B&C films are justly famous'.⁶ Previously, he had been at the Biograph Company, as had been both McDowell and Bloomfield. The combined experience and technical ingenuity of these three men, therefore, allowed them to design the proficient departmental organization—each the responsibility of its own designated head—that facilitated output at Endell Street.

In order to publicize the speed of processing available in the new building, in mid-June 1911, a local of Chelsea Pensioners entering a cinema was photographed, processed and returned for projection within 105 minutes.⁷ Two hundred veteran soldiers were filmed going into the Provincial Electric Cinema, Chelsea at 2.30; by 2.50, a taxi had carried the negative to Endell Street; a positive print was ready by 4:00; it was at the cinema by 4:15. There, the audience showed a lively interest in seeing themselves on screen—rather in the manner of the spectators for the factory-gate films of the previous decade.⁸

The Endell Street building consisted of four spacious floors connected by a lift for speedy movement between levels.⁹ On the ground floor was an office for general administration, with a long counter for receiving

visitors, drawers for filing documents lining the walls and a staff of clerks and typists. Here was where 'all matters connected with the engagement of artistes and production of films generally is attended to'.¹⁰ This floor also held the private office of the senior management and 'a comfortable and well-equipped projection theatre, where the customer may see a film, if necessary, five minutes after it leaves the hands of the workmen'.¹¹ Here too was located the company's Publicity and Advertising Department, which was set up at the time of the move.

On the first floor were three big rooms leading one into the other, given over to the perforating, developing and printing of film stock. Reels of both unexposed negative and positive film needed holes stamped along their length before they could be put to use in cameras, printers and projectors and so facilities for film perforation were essential. Thomas Bedding, writing in 1909, claimed the negative developing room to be 'the most important part of the whole moving picture installation'.¹² At Endell Street, exposed negatives would go directly to the first-floor dark-rooms, lit by ruby lights. There, they were wound evenly onto wooden frames ready for immersion in a series of large tanks. The company used upright tanks because they had 'the advantage of taking considerably less room than the flat type, and making quick movement easier'.¹³ Successive tanks contained developing solution, water for washing, hypo for fixing and, once more, water for washing. Consequently, a ready supply of constantly running water was needed on this floor, along with a method for passing through a current of cool, filtered air. Much skill was required in developing, and Frederick Talbot pointed out in 1912 that an accomplished developer should be able to rectify deficiencies arising during shooting. Different sections of a negative would have been exposed at different times and under different light conditions. The camera operator would indicate the end of an exposure by marking it with a hole punched into the negative in-camera. The developer, who would feel the mark by touch in the darkroom, would cut the film into sections at those points and develop each piece separately, making up for under-exposure and mitigating over-exposure as best he could.¹⁴ Six men worked in the developing room.¹⁵

The developed negative next went up to the second floor where there were three drying rooms that were McDowell's 'special pride' and that, he asserted, 'put the finishing touches to a film with a speed which cannot be surpassed anywhere'.¹⁶ Here, the film was wound tautly onto large wooden drums, each holding 3,000 feet of film. The drums were rapidly revolved by electric motors and the rooms were maintained at a consistent warm temperature so that the film dried in about ten minutes. Further,

the air constantly flowing through the rooms needed to be filtered to keep it clean and free of dust.

The negatives were returned to the first floor for printing in another large darkroom where some five men were employed.¹⁷ There, the negatives—placed in contact with positive stock—were passed through one of several printing machines, lit and run by electricity. In printing, shortcomings of the negative might be further corrected by controlling either the intensity of light in the printer or the speed at which film was passed through the machine—operations whose success depended on a workman's experience and judgement. The positives, in turn, went into the neighbouring developing room, moments after leaving the printer. Later, they too passed up to the second-floor drying rooms.

On the third floor was a small darkroom, the company's negative store, a Title Department and the cleaning and splicing room. In the title room, the inter-titles that would be inserted into the films were got ready. In the splicing room, the different sections of a film were identified and assembled in their appropriate order. This was an important, skilled task. Director Maurice Elvey recalled how, at B&C, 'You did not go to the expense of having a positive print made from your negative. You projected your negative and you actually edited that with scissors and a girl assistant who would stick it together with acetate. You cut the actual negative.'¹⁸ This comment possibly underestimates the responsibilities of the female assemblers or cutters undertaking this role. Bedding commented on the task in 1909, arguing that a negative must be

critically examined with a view to the suppression or elimination of superfluous parts of the film. There may be too much of a particular episode ... or an uninteresting patch or a section showing no action, or it may be desired ... to shorten the film, either at the beginning or at the end. The superfluous piece of film must be cut off or cut out, and the ends then neatly joined up, so that the pictures follow in their proper sequence ... It is quite a nice point of judgement as to the exact amount of subject to be left in the film ... Therefore, the man [*sic*] who examine[s] the film after it is made should, besides his technical knowledge, have some sense of proportion: *a nice appreciation* of the author's and [director's] intention in the making of the film.¹⁹

Such work was undertaken on the top floor at Endell Street, and screen-writer Eliot Stannard extended a typically generous tribute to the women of 'the film-joining staffs' there, 'amongst whom [he] worked for so long'.²⁰ He declared:

I was amazed at the patience, skill and willingness of these girls. It was they who taught me to 'cut,' and it was the head girl who instructed me in the mysteries of negative cutting, sitting for hour after hour, apparently indifferent to the ever-revolving hands of the clock. A moment's thought will show that carelessness or lack of skill on this girl's part, and the work of all of us might be irrevocably ruined.²¹

For him, film-joining was 'essentially skilled labour'.²² Further, as part of his drive for recognizing and raising the status of the unseen trades within the film industry, he asserted:

In my opinion the name of a good negative cutter should be known throughout the manufacturing branch of the Trade, and new negative cutters should be selected only from those girls whose work as 'joiners' was of unqualified and unvarying excellence. Such a rule properly worked would inspire every 'joiner' to become a 'cutter,' and her pay and position should be in accord with her responsibilities.²³

Thus, editing film was already assuming importance, and a distinction in levels of skill between basic 'joiners' and more sophisticated 'cutters' was becoming apparent.

An assembled negative was next cleaned, projected for approval in the ground-floor theatre and then sent for printing on the first floor. After that, the positive prints might be sent again to the second floor, where there was capacity for tinting either a part or the whole. Tinting was a simple matter of bathing the positives in tanks of aniline dye to give whole sections of film a wash of colour. The intention was to match the tint to the mood and subject of the film so, conventionally enough, B&C would use red and orange dyes for fire scenes and sunsets, green for sea pictures and blue for night and moonlight effects. The factory could also tone films. Bedding characterized this as 'a kind of chemical gilding or colouring', which, essentially, was the more complex process of using special chemicals during developing to change the colour of the dark parts of the image whilst leaving the highlights white.²⁴ Stannard, also defended 'the photographic staff of the film laboratories' by arguing that the 'man who develops the negative, the man who makes the first print, and the man who carries out the tinting and toning tests, must all be artists of the first discrimination, and, as heads of their departments, should receive certificates according to the quality of their work'.²⁵ The completed copies of a film would finally be readied for distribution in round tin boxes, each containing a 1,000 foot reel.

THE WALTHAMSTOW STUDIO

Walthamstow was a suburb to the north-east of London, 6 miles from the City on the London–Essex border. Like East Finchley, it offered several advantages to film producers. The Great Eastern Railway had been extended to the area in the 1870s, so the stations at Hoe Street (near the B&C studio) and Wood Street (near other local studios) provided a regular, cheap link into London, making the studios easily accessible to actors recruited from the West End theatres. There was also a tram service. Local industrial development had been limited so that the air of the district was clear enough to be suited to filming. The region also provided good scenery for location work, both around the river Lea and its marshes and out in Epping Forest. Further, local people, recruited from the district's public houses—such as the Duke's Head near Wood Street—provided a ready supply of film extras.²⁶

Given these resources, the Hoe Street studio—rather like that at East Finchley—was part of a cluster of rival production companies. Thus, before B&C's arrival, the Precision Film Company had moved into a purpose-built, two-storeyed studio at 280 Wood Street, somewhat to the east of B&C's future premises. The glass-covered building opened in 1910, but production ceased there in October 1915. B&C came to Walthamstow next, opening at Hoe Street in October 1913. Then, early in 1914, the company owned by I.B. Davidson converted a disused horse-tram shed into a small 'dark' studio at 588 Lea Bridge Road, a little to the south of B&C's converted roller skating rink. It remained in business there until the end of 1924, closing down in the same year as B&C. Another purpose-built studio was set up in Wood Street in October 1914. Initially owned by the Cunard Film Company, it was taken over by Broadwest in January 1916, who remained there until bankruptcy closed it in September 1921. The floor space of Davidson's studio was 2,400 square feet, that of Precision 4,000 and that of Broadwest something over 5,000—each considerably less than the 9,000 square feet available to B&C.²⁷ John Kirk, in his brief history of Walthamstow film-making, calculated that in 1918, almost 20 per cent of British studio space was located in the district's studios—and a substantial part of that belonged to B&C.²⁸

The general layout at Hoe Street

The Rink, at 317–19 Hoe Street had been opened as a roller skating rink in October 1909, during the brief craze for that particular pastime. It was built in nine weeks by the Good Brothers, who had a large builders' merchants business further down Hoe Street and who later supplied paint

and materials to B&C's set-makers. The building was a brick and stone construction with a hard rock-maple floor on a deal foundation that later made it highly suitable for studio purposes. A space lit by electric light gave room for 700 skaters, a buffet and a small orchestra that played afternoons and evenings. In April 1912, with the skating craze beginning to wane, the building was rented out as a factory by Klinger Ltd of Hackney, before being taken over by B&C in 1913 to reconstruct as a modern film studio. This was a moment of business expansion that necessitated taking on a larger, more skilled labour force and establishing a clearer departmental division of labour than had been the case at Finchley a couple of years earlier. The actual number of employees at Walthamstow is unavailable, but Clarendon and Neptune employed between twenty-five and thirty people; Barker at Ealing employed twelve carpenters, five scenic artists, three staff responsible for properties, five cameramen, fifteen labourers and a dozen other personnel, alongside an acting stock company of twenty-two—that is, seventy-four people in all; and the London Film Company had a staff of 130.²⁹ The latter's Twickenham studio was also a converted skating rink and had also opened in 1913 with, according to Baynam Honri, a rather larger studio space than its B&C Walthamstow rival.

The building was entered up a few wide steps from Hoe Street, with a pair of entrance doors to the right and two exit doors to the left, reflecting its original use as a skating rink.³⁰ Inside the entrance was an office—possibly that of the studio manager with overall responsibility for running the site and, therefore, one of McDowell's senior staff. In 1914, J. Bremner was in charge and, later, it was John A. Geeves.³¹ The manager's job was to run the business, supervise the various studio departments and their staffs, control expenditure, check and order materials, and minimize wastage of such crucial resources as film stock, chemicals and electricity.

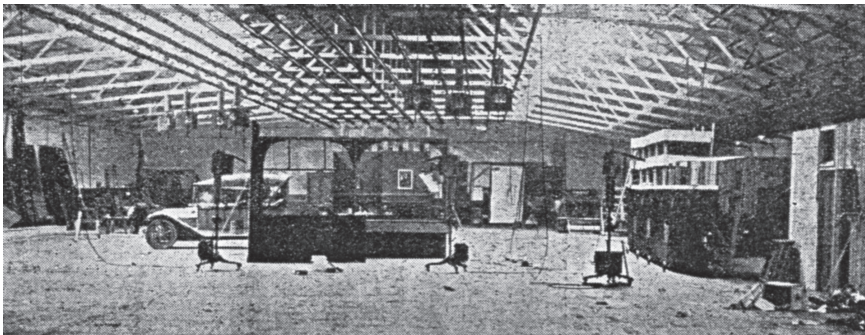


Figure 5.1 Interior of B&C's studio at Hoe Street, Walthamstow.
Pictures and the Picturegoer, 27 June 1914

Dressing rooms ran part of the way down both sides of the studio space. These, Frank Ashen—one of the workforce—recalled as being ‘somewhat austere, with little signs of comfort or glamour, and might at best be described as functional’.³² Beyond them, to the right, were a camera room for loading and developing film, property rooms and a space for the studio electricians. To the left were the scene-docks for storing the company’s stock of scenery. At the far end were the workshops for making and painting scenery and properties. This layout, according to *The Bioscope*, allowed any scene to be ‘produced and set in the shortest possible time’, for speed and efficiency were the byword at Hoe Street as much as they were at Endell Street.³³ The property room, for example, stored carpets, clocks, dinner services, copies of Old Masters and the like, and used a card index system to guarantee no waits in supplying the studio floor.³⁴ Also at the end of the building was ‘ample room for the company’s splendid motor-cars’, whilst a canteen was located to one side of the studio floor.³⁵ In 1918, after Edward Godal had assumed control, the Red House next door was taken over. A seventeenth-century building that had once been the county Court House, it had elegant Adam fireplaces and a Jacobean mahogany and ebony staircase, but was converted to provide additional wardrobe and dressing rooms, a board room and offices, space for carpenters, a big, light room where films might be cut and joined and, on the top floor, the relocated canteen.³⁶ The actress Joan Morgan, who had worked at Hoe Street, provided a rather deprecatory description—with certain modifications—of the set-up from around 1920 in her novel *Camera*:

The studio was long and broad and lofty ... At the back, out in the yard, there was a carpenter’s dock and a scene-dock, also a small dark room for loading cameras. Adjoining the studio was a gaunt late-Victorian house put to various uses. It contained the Wardrobe Department, a rather pompous name for the simple seamstress with her ever-hot iron, the canteen, where treacle-tart followed roast-beef-and-packet-peas as night day, some offices and a few dressing rooms, each containing an immense gilt mirror, a bentwood chair, a couch on which you lay at your own risk, a deep shelf, some coat hangers and a panting radiator ... The canteen was distempered dull green, had a serving hatch, linoleum on the floor, some trestle tables topped with American cloth and a gas-fire that snorted hospitably.³⁷

The Hoe Street site also provided a home for one of the company’s more unique specialist departments, the Juvenile Department, under the charge

of Ethyle Batley. For two years from the spring of 1913, B&C made a number of films featuring children, and she was responsible for recruiting and training them. She undertook to see many of the children whose parents inundated her with letters offering them as performers because 'it would never do to miss the chance of a "star" in embryo'.³⁸ She believed it was 'generally possible to size up a child and decide whether she or he ha[d] picture-playing possibilities', and maintained a plain child had as good a chance as a pretty one.³⁹ Further, she felt that, if a child had the faculty of imitation, it might begin a career as young as age two or three. Even so, girls made better performers than boys because the latter were more likely to be shy and regard the task as silly. Girls, she found, proved less self-conscious and would even relish playing boys' parts, 'the freedom of trousers [being] delightful to them after the shackles of skirts'.⁴⁰

Pre-production specialisms

In 1918, Eliot Stannard recalled his recent experience at B&C with a deep appreciation of the men responsible for the studio's pre-production departments. Walter Tiffin was the head of works in charge of the carpenters and scenic artists engaged in set construction. From him, Stannard 'acquired a sound knowledge of the theory of "sets" and a widened technical know-how'.⁴¹ Tiffin was a master carpenter and the 'scenic genius' who built 'interiors and exteriors in every conceivable period and "school", from Gothic to Adam', who worked on productions that 'owed much of their beauty to [his] discrete taste' and whose opinion on any matter concerning scenery Stannard would readily take against his own.⁴² He claimed he would never forget Tiffin's face when he was asked

to erect a particular set I had roughly sketched, explaining the scenario necessitated the design in question. Pain and disgust mingled with pity as he informed me that my design was architecturally impossible, nor would he allow that 'artistic license' justified a man putting up a room which could never have existed. He was right. I altered my scenario.⁴³

As well as a talent for replicating period architecture and decoration, men such as Tiffin also needed a practical understanding of what would photograph well in terms of paints, wallpapers and furnishings, and of how to arrange a set to avoid its casting unwelcome shadows for the cameraman.

In turn, the studio property master was responsible for dressing the built sets with a range of appropriate properties and decorative items. He would work from sketches and plans but, like the set builder, whose work he complemented, he needed familiarity with the designs and artefacts of different historical periods, a knowledge of antiques and the practical capacity to obtain furniture and items unavailable in the studio's own stock rooms. At B&C, this task was assumed by an Irishman who, according to Stannard, 'could get anything from a statue of Edward the Confessor to a live snake' and who taught the scenarist 'the great art of finding unusual "props"'.⁴⁴ On one occasion, he got the latter 'the run of a gorgeous Georgian mansion and grounds with a staff of servants, butler, footmen, grooms, gardeners, etc., for an absurdly small outlay of money'.⁴⁵

Further, and contrary to Joan Morgan's put-down, there was Mr Davis, the wardrobe master, who was the company's costume expert, responsible for the appropriate appearance of the performers on set. His expertise was such that he would 'shudder with *spirituelle* agony at a cocked hat incorrectly worn, or a cane wrongly handled, and, with a tact that was above praise, [he would] correct these errors without offending the dignity of the erring actors'.⁴⁶

These new specialists, Stannard argued, were the mainstays of the scenario writer and director and, as part of his case for the greater professionalization of the industry, he proposed their creative contribution should be publicly acknowledged in the booklets given away at trade shows and on certificates issued by a director for each of his films they worked on.⁴⁷ Although these personnel were concerned with the pre-production phase in the film-making process, each made a significant contribution to the visual 'look' of the longer, more elaborate films now entering production. Their close creative collaboration with the scenarist—responsible, at minimum, for constructing a film's narrative—and the director—responsible, at least, for staging the actors' performances—was a growing imperative.

The studio and studio lighting

When it opened, Hoe Street was the largest studio in the country, and McDowell and his planners designed a factory-style, assembly-line approach to the production process that aimed at speed and efficiency of operation. In 1914, *The Cinema* observed that 'so far as equipment is concerned the B and C studio has not its equal in the country'.⁴⁸ The facility, therefore, was determinedly up to date. Several reports claimed the floor space to be 280 feet by 130 feet, but others put it closer to

200 feet by 80 feet, and Baynam Honri's survey gave the dimensions as 150 feet by 60 feet.⁴⁹ Photographs of the interior show a vast space with a roof supported by overarching steel beams so that no columns obscure the internal sight lines. According to *The Bioscope*, this meant that McDowell had 'space at his disposal in which he [could] erect a street large enough for the passage of a coach and four, and large double doors at the side enable[d] a motor 'bus to ply between one scene and another'.⁵⁰ These sliding doors also allowed a camera to be set up outside for long shots.

Part of the building's roof was glass and so there was some natural light available whilst filming, but during the war, this was blacked out at the time of the Zeppelin raids. However, the building was, in effect, an enclosed 'dark' studio, and an up-to-date electric plant—powered by the mains supply—was installed as part of the initial refurbishment. Further, McDowell designed his own special arrangement for its lighting. The overhead lamps were hung from cables that were attached to the roof beams and ran the full length of the building. Thus, as the *KLW* explained, 'By an ingenious overhead arrangement the powerful arc lamps can be run along to any position in a few seconds and naturally the time saved by this arrangement is very great.'⁵¹ The electricians on the floor used long poles to manoeuvre the lamps into their new positions. The illumination available was said to be 70,000 candle power or twice the value of sunlight, and Honri records the studio deployed twenty-one Westminster carbon arc lamps.⁵² These were mainly suspended from the roof cables, but a few were mounted on floor stands. The Westminster Arc had been adapted from long-burning shop-front or street arc lights and had been the film industry standard from around the turn of the century. They cast a violet light of great photographic intensity that required actors to wear a light yellow make-up—Leichner Number 5—to prevent their faces looking dark when filmed. In the second half of 1915, a problem arose because the glass cylinder globes for the arcs became hard to obtain in wartime. However, O'Neill Farrell, after considerable trouble, located the glassmaking firm of Messrs J. and W.B. Smith at Farringdon Road who were prepared to take on their manufacture. These were tested out at Hoe Street and proved a satisfactory substitute.⁵³ By spring 1920, in Period Three, there were twelve overhead Westminster arcs in use and fourteen for side lighting, to which were added state-of-the-art lighting imported from America, including four banks of vapour lamps, six duplex Wohl 'broadside' lamps and a Sperry Sunlight arc for illuminating extra-deep stage effects. Their demand for extra power was sufficient to warrant laying a new cable from the nearby power station.⁵⁴

The company's camera operatives at Hoe Street had use of both the British-made Moy camera and the French-made Pathé camera. B&C had used the Moy machine exclusively in Period One—it was popular with topical and actuality film-makers such as McDowell and Bloomfield—whereas the Pathé camera only became available in Britain in 1913–1914. The Moy was a 'rather cumbersome wooden-box affair', whilst Pathé's new camera was 'quite revolutionary with the many refinements that were made available' and had been designed more for studio use: its adoption, perhaps, was another manifestation of the Walthamstow studio's conscious up-to-dateness.⁵⁵

Arranging the sets

The floor space available at Hoe Street finally allowed McDowell to operationalize a method for arranging the sets of different scenes that he and Bloomfield had initially proposed in their unrealized 1910 studio plans. Then, Bloomfield had stated that, in the proposed studio,

we shall be able to stage two scenes side by side. If necessary six scenes can be set up at the same time. At present, most English producers have to take down one scene before arranging another, but we shall be able to take the actors from one to another as required, and so stage in one day, a picture that might otherwise have taken three or four.⁵⁶

Claims about the number of scenes it was possible to set up at Hoe Street at any one time ranged from a rather extravagant twenty, through seven or eight sets, to only two or three.⁵⁷ But the intention was that filming might be carried out on more than one set at the same time or, as seems to have been the more common practice, that filming might move briskly through a succession of set-ups. In either case, the aim—as with the lighting arrangements—was for speed and efficiency of operation and effective use of plant.

A reporter from the *Picturegoer* visited the studio during its first month and provided an account of how it was then operating. At his arrival, two sets had already been built whilst a third was still under construction. The first, to which the scene-arrangers were putting the final touches, was a drawing room that looked 'quite lonesome by itself in the middle of the big floor'.⁵⁸ Once it was lit, however, the director, Charles Weston, rehearsed Arthur Finn and a group of attractive young women in evening gowns in a short comedy scene before having it filmed. The second set



Figure 5.2 Elizabeth Risdon in *Florence Nightingale* filmed at Hoe Street.
The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 1 April 1915

was a dining room ‘containing fine oil paintings and massive carved oak furniture (a scene on a par with any West-end theatre “set”).⁵⁹ It was for a different film, this time a drama involving murder, villainy and death by lightning. Weston was again director with Finn, in a different make-up and adopting a different playing style, the villain. The camera was moved between sets and Finn’s dramatic entry and exit were rehearsed several times—though his smashing of a mirror was reserved for the moment of shooting. There was a pause for refreshment before a move to the third—now finished—set that represented the interior of a Thames-side warehouse at Tilbury. This time the villain was Harry Lorraine who, in a scene filmed a fortnight earlier, had ridden a motor-bike into the river, where he had been shot and from which he was hauled out by a detective. For the Walthamstow scene, he was drenched with water and filmed entering the warehouse supported by dockhands, before falling dead. Another studio visit in July 1915 found similar arrangements, with *The Bioscope* observing how, ‘with several scenes set and in process of rehearsal, [the studio] presented an appearance reminiscent of Olympia during an exhibition, of which model villages formed an important item.’⁶⁰ Similarly, *The Cinema’s* Nestor watched Harold Weston at work and witnessed him ‘taking his company direct from a bedroom scene to a few yards further up, where a magnificent conservatory scene was set up with all the beauty

and effect that one could possibly desire'.⁶¹ Yet such basic sets often provided only a relatively constrained playing area with, perhaps, a space just 16 feet wide to perform in.

But, as B&C's film-making became increasingly ambitious, and with the rise in production values consequent on the adoption of the exclusive film, sets became increasingly lavish and more solidly built. When the company had only the Finchley studio a lot of film-making took place in real locations, but now even exterior scenes might be recreated in the closed studio. Thus, regarding the romantic comedy, *A Honeymoon for Three* (February 1915), *The Cinema* grew lyrical over its studio-constructed forest set and artificial lighting. It invited its readers to picture 'a charming sylvan glade, heavy with luxurious undergrowth, deep mossy grass', to see Elizabeth Risdon alone there 'save for a quantity of rabbits' and to watch as she was kept awake by a strained ankle and the 'caresses of opalescent moonbeams'.⁶² In 1916, the company made *Fatal Fingers* (May), its longest and most elaborate film, and for one scene the whole studio was transformed into an Italian street in the old quarters of Naples. According to *The Cinema*, the set was 'correct in every particular, and [was] typical of the increased attention to every detail now being observed in the production of British films'.⁶³ Italian sunshine was provided by the overhead arcs, and photographs of the set reveal it as receding into the space of the studio—a religious procession passing along the street reinforcing its sense of depth.⁶⁴

Similarly, the arrangement of sets changed as the series of nested environments in use in 1913–1914 gave way in 1915–1916 to bigger, more three-dimensional constructions, occupying a greater area of the studio floor. On occasion, outside firms would be contracted to construct a particular set—as when the Eagle Range Co. built a large modern kitchen for *Jimmy* (March 1916)—thereby conveying a greater sense of authenticity to the design.⁶⁵ The studio also built sets aspiring to historical accuracy for such dramas as *The Life of Shakespeare* (February 1914) and *Florence Nightingale* (March 1915). Further, it reproduced a variety of wealthy environments—such as a Bond Street hat shop, a large drapery emporium, mansions with luxurious studies, nightclubs and gambling dens—through which the characters in the upper class 'society' dramas might pass.

There was even a call for model work on the propagandist wartime film, *The Bells of Rheims* (December 1914). For this, its director Maurice Elvey recalled, 'Rheims cathedral was very cleverly done by a man who worked for me for many years, making wonderful models. He made the façade of Rheims Cathedral in plaster, and we had this wired from the

back and little, tiny charges of gunpowder in different points on the façade; and when these exploded it looked as if the thing had been hit by an enormous shell'.⁶⁶

The process of filming

At the moment of producing a film on the studio floor, responsibility fell on the director, cameraman and actors. At Walthamstow, the unit actually filming was small. Elvey remembered:

There were seldom more than four of us to produce a five- or six-reeler. There were the director, the cameraman and his assistant and one other general purpose man. The cameraman did the lighting as well as the operating. After shooting the first scene the cameraman and his assistant would unload the spool, take the negative into a dark room adjacent to the studio and develop it to see if it was in focus. If all was well, we went on filming, if not we had another go.⁶⁷

The assistant was a general helper who would load the camera and take down whatever notes were required by the director or operator.⁶⁸ In general, Frederick Talbot explained, a director would work from a scenario in which each scene had been allocated a time of between forty-five and a hundred seconds.⁶⁹ The company would arrive on set and the director would give them instructions about their characters, determine entrances and exits, work out the movements and decide on the lines to be spoken. Fred Dangerfield described Ernest Batley going through these routines for *Revolution* (September 1914) in June 1914:

'Everybody on the stage!' now shouted Mr. Batley. A minute later the rehearsal of a splendid costume scene ... was in full swing ... 'A little more this way, Ethel...', requested Mr. Batley, who then proceeded to arrange and rearrange the groups and repeat the various entrances and exits of the royal guests. A footman was required to enter and say to the young king ..., 'Her Highness the Princess has arrived' ... 'Here, Brown, you try that line', said Mr. Batley. And Brown tried it—twice. 'No good at all, old man. Come on, Smith, you try.' But Smith's efforts were turned down as being too 'wooden' ... Then Jones was pressed into service, and this time the line was said in a manner which suited our [director]. I mention the incident as being typical of the thoroughness of Mr. Batley's methods and to show the attention he always pays to the minutest details.⁷⁰

Care was also taken to ensure the performers remained in shot. Elvey recalled how, as director, 'you would ... look through the viewfinder yourself during at least one rehearsal ... and [take] care they were in the picture. You made a mark on the ground. If you were out of doors you would knock two pegs into the ground to show the actors how far they could move without going out of camera view. In the studio of course you had chalk lines.'⁷¹ During his rehearsals, Batley would consult Brice his cameraman, who was focusing the camera, to know if a character on the edge of a big scene was in shot, and would have the limit mark moved to ensure he was. A scene would be rehearsed, with modifications, several times—maybe up to a dozen—before a final rehearsal was held with the cameraman timing its duration. If it went on too long, it was rehearsed again with the action abbreviated. Then, the full lights were turned on and the scene performed for the camera, the director calling out instructions throughout from beside the operator. As Elvey himself recounted:

You directed the actors during the scene. They would be acting in pantomime and you would say, 'No, George, no, no, no, and my dear girl, just a little more, come on more, you love him, you love him, you love him, that's right' and they would be acting and you would be directing all the time. In fact you never stopped talking ... The art of film acting really did not exist until much later. What you wanted was automatic human beings who would automatically do what you wanted at that moment.⁷²

Furthermore, at Walthamstow B&C attempted an 'interesting experiment ... in the form of a small orchestra, which by rendering music suitable to the various scenes in progress, ... [was] to assist the players in their acting'.⁷³ According to Elvey, there were three musicians playing romantic, dramatic and sentimental music whilst he was directing, to make the actors 'feel the atmosphere' of the scene and to cover the noise of the camera.⁷⁴

Child performers presented their own special problems, as Ethyle Batley explained. One was keeping them 'within the scope of the camera' for, as it was 'necessary for them to come out big and clear ... , all their acting ha[d] to be done a few feet in front of the lens, and not more than a yard or so to either side of it', a very limited space for them to keep within.⁷⁵ Further, when she directed from behind the camera there was the danger a child would look towards her when she spoke. Therefore, it was important to preface performance instructions with, 'Don't look at me, Elsie, but just do so-and-so.' Moreover, she found children were



Figure 5.3 *Jimmy*, one of B&C's last wartime films made at Hoe Street.
The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 24 February 1916

probably more willing to enter the spirit of a scene if they knew the story they were taking part in and had had the reasons for their behaviour explained beforehand.

In 1915, a representative from *The Cinema* watched the filming of an Old Bailey scene for *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (December). He wrote of how the director, Harold Weston, 'fairly revelled in the task of swiftly licking into shape the episodes already worked out on paper by himself and Mr. Stannard, the B&C Co.'s enthusiastic scenario-editor. Aided by a camera-artist—one of the best in England—and a few energetic assistants, Mr. Weston gave us a remarkable demonstration of "team-work" in action.⁷⁶ The 'team' here was a trio of creative personnel, the scriptwriter, director and cinematographer.⁷⁷ Between 1914 and 1916, Stannard, Weston and Elvey had begun to think seriously about the cinema as an art form and develop ideas about the most suitable relationship between these three roles. Elvey, for example, asserted that the scenario-writer and photographer were a director's two essential collaborators and, with characteristic self-promotion—but in line with Stannard's professionalization project—claimed to be the first English director to insist on their names appearing beside his own on film titles.⁷⁸ He observed how initially 'the

manufacturers I worked for objected very strongly to giving prominence even to myself; the reason being that by doing this they were pickling a rod for their own backs, and they were afraid that they would by this advertising force my salary higher next time they wanted to engage me'.⁷⁹ So, it appears, negotiations were under way with line management to enhance the status of certain studio talent grades whose creative contribution to the more 'artistically' produced films was of particular importance. Stannard understood the significance of creative collaboration from early on and advocated its merits. The 'ideal combination for making better pictures', he declared, was 'for three men—three of the principal men—to work together. It would be a kind of trinity composed of the [director], scenario-writer and cameraman.'⁸⁰ He allowed the film trade of the time knew the names and achievements of certain directors and scenarists, but noted that cameramen still lacked recognition. Since 1914, the artistic position of the writer had improved, so it was high time for the cameraman to demand recognition as 'one of the three artistic creators' of a film, for he was 'one of the indispensables of the trinity, holding in his hands the power to make or mar the result of their composite work'.⁸¹ Even before he joined B&C in 1914, Weston had already formed a clear idea of the director-cameraman relation. The clever director, he maintained, must be 'an artistic man' but, he conceded, 'few artistic men have the capacity for prolonged scientific study, and that is what the camera demands'; yet, if the camera was not 'manipulated in the right manner', a director would be 'powerless to place his ideas before the public eye'; consequently, it took 'a combination of these two to work out a successful picture'.⁸²

The Life of Shakespeare: another case study in production

Like *The Battle of Waterloo*, the company's production of *The Life of Shakespeare* was intended as another prestige production designed to raise B&C's status within the industry and promote the superior facilities of the recently opened Walthamstow studio. It was also culturally ambitious, dealing with England's venerated 'national poet', and was planned to address a new, more respectable audience. As with *Waterloo*, the initiative came directly from McDowell who gave 'his personal attention and supervision to the production'—although he worked with a 'co-producer', the thirty-one-year-old Frank Growcott, who was brought in to direct.⁸³ It was the first British film to take Shakespeare himself as a subject, and dealt with his youthful experiences in Stratford and early years in London. It might be construed as a premonitory 'heritage film' in its use of English

landscape, ambition towards scrupulous historical reconstruction and orientation towards private life and relationships.⁸⁴

The prestige of Shakespeare's name had already been deployed to raise the cultural status of British cinema and as an indigenous response to the success of the French pictures featuring famous theatre performers released from November 1908 under the Film d'Art label.⁸⁵ Thus, in the autumn of 1910, William Barker—the cinema entrepreneur from whom McDowell seems to have learned so much—filmed an adaptation of the production of *Henry VIII* that the actor-manager Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree had mounted at His Majesty's Theatre. It was released for only six weeks in February and March 1911, before the prints were recalled for burning in a clever publicity stunt. Versions of four Shakespeare plays—*Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Richard III*—were made in the spring and summer of 1910 at the Stratford Memorial Theatre, with the participation of F.R. Benson's Shakespeare Company. Benson was another famous actor-manager, had been leader of a touring company since the early 1880s and had presented the annual Shakespeare Festival at the Memorial Theatre since 1886. The films were released in spring 1911. Over the next two years, two versions of *Hamlet* were also released—the first, made for Barker by Charles Raymond in his time away from B&C, was released in March 1912 and the second, a version of Johnston Forbes-Robertson's Drury Lane production, was filmed by Hepworth and released in October 1913, just before the B&C project got under way.

The proposal to make a film of the dramatist's life, therefore, was opportune, interest in his work having already been aroused. It involved 'two months strenuous work', beginning early in December 1913 and reaching completion at the start of February 1914.⁸⁶ By contrast, *The Battle of Waterloo* had been filmed in less than a week. The production was made on location around Stratford and at Walthamstow. It cost £4,000 to produce and had its private showing on 11 February, before an audience that included various luminaries from the 'legitimate' theatre.

During the pre-production preparation of the script, a press report explained how '[g]reat care ... has been taken to ensure historical accuracy, and the works of all the leading Shakespearean authorities has been consulted with this end in view. The opinions in many cases differ and at the outset it has been necessary to decide which authorities the ... film should most closely follow.'⁸⁷ This turning to outside sources for authoritative advice became a characteristic of B&C's practice regarding certain films. Charles Weston had already consulted the British Museum in preparing *The Battle of Waterloo* and Stannard would turn

to Sir Edward Cook's biography in preparing his screenplay for *Florence Nightingale* in 1915. In the case of the Shakespeare biopic, '[a]fter careful consideration, and having regard to the pictorial character of the work it was desired to produce, it was decided that the guiding authorities should be the works of Sir Sidney Lee, Halliwell and Captain Curling'.⁸⁸ Lee had written the entry on Shakespeare for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, of which he became editor, before releasing what became the standard Shakespeare biography in 1898. The *Dictionary*—under compilation between 1885 and 1900—was one of those late nineteenth-century ventures—like the National Portrait Gallery, which gained a permanent home in 1896—designed to establish a pantheon of important Englishmen, and some women. James Halliwell was a wealthy literary amateur who nevertheless became a foremost editor of the plays and who, after research into local records at Stratford, had become another accepted authority on the playwright's life.⁸⁹ Thus, McDowell and Growcott were basing their script on some of the most recent and socially prestigious sources provided by the English cultural 'establishment' and they came up with a 'many paged manuscript' for a film of 150 scenes.⁹⁰

Sir Sidney Lee, as chairman of the Shakespeare Memorial Trust, was also integral to the 'Shakespeare industry' that had turned Stratford into a site of cultural pilgrimage by the late nineteenth century. B&C, in turn, plugged into the Stratford complex and drew help from both the Trust's librarian at Shakespeare House and the chairman of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Here, Frank Growcott's role became pivotal, for he was no random choice. At the end of the 1890s, he had been recruited into Frank Benson's Shakespeare Company, and the film trade press was quick to point out that he had spent eight years with them.⁹¹ So, now, B&C, the film company with a reputation for populist 'sensation', was rubbing shoulders with the cultural elite in its attempt to gain social and cultural respectability.

McDowell's ambition was that the film should 'rank as a masterpiece of kinema', and this led to a drive for accuracy and 'authenticity' in both location filming and in the preparation and dressing of the studio sets.⁹² To the latter end, 'special photographs were taken of certain interiors and furniture, and exact replicas were made of them' by Tiffin and his carpenters at Walthamstow.⁹³ Further, the owner of one of Stratford's country houses lent the company a quantity of Elizabethan furniture and other pieces, including a bed actually used in Anne Hathaway's cottage, were brought to London by arrangement with an antique collector and heavily insured against misadventure.⁹⁴



Figure 5.4 A studio interior for *The Life of Shakespeare* (1914).
Collection of Sally Freytag

Studio work was undertaken at Hoe Street in the weeks before Christmas 1913. All interiors and scenes in Old London were constructed on the floor there. These included the streets and taverns outside the Globe Theatre, the auditorium of the Globe, which, according to *The Cinema*, was ‘remarkably well done’, Old St. Paul’s and the queen’s court.⁹⁵ At the film’s release, the *Evening News* suggested it was in its ‘mounting, photography and backgrounds that the picture [became] really great’, that the studio work was ‘especially good’ and that such staging would have been possible in no other British studio.⁹⁶ H.G., for the *KLW*, watched the filming of two London scenes there. The first was the cobbled street outside the Globe. On his arrival, ‘In all corners of the studio were groups of actors and actresses of the sixteenth century, the gentlemen in their picturesque costumes of the period and their plumed headgear, chatting and joking, the ladies, charming in their silks and brocades, strolling up and down waiting their “call”.’⁹⁷ An electrician switched on the lights at the arrival of McDowell, who on this occasion was taking a rare moment of responsibility for direction. Script in hand, he offered his instructions and rehearsed the cast, and two operators at two cameras filmed the scene of Shakespeare’s arrival in the city. Afterwards, the lamps were moved along their cables to a second set, this time a tavern opposite the Globe frequented by actors, where a scene with two horses, hung with elaborate

comparisons, was to be filmed. At this point, an alarming incident occurred. One of the horses took fright when the reins fell over its legs. It reared up, turned over and, in a struggle to recover itself, reduced the tavern entrance to a wreck. It was quietened without injury to anyone, but the company was briefly panic-stricken, except, apparently, for McDowell who 'remained perfectly calm, his only fear being for the safety of his artistes'.⁹⁸ According to a nearby actor, 'he was invariably cool in any circumstances'.⁹⁹ Studio carpenters rapidly reset the scene and filming proceeded.

Location work took place in the Stratford area over two weeks in January 1914, under what proved to be exceptionally fine weather conditions for the time of year. Rather in the spirit of the Dick Turpin series, the intention was to film in those spots the biographies had identified with Shakespeare's youthful exploits. Therefore, once more, McDowell solicited the support of local dignitaries—the Mayor of Stratford, Canon Melville of the parish church, Sir Henry and Lady Fairfax-Lucy of Charlecote Hall and the Reverend F.H. Hodgson of Clopton Hall. Thus, filming took place at appropriate locations around Stratford, where the company's presence raised the usual local interest, both in Charlecote Park for scenes of poaching and at Clopton Hall. Later, *The Cinema* concluded of the film, 'The early scenes are really magnificent and, enacted as they are around the beautiful scenery of the genius's home, we are given a true and effective period of the time.'¹⁰⁰

The film's leading players were recruited from the 'legitimate' theatre, so the major roles were not cast from the B&C stock company. Besides, that company had been undergoing change in the second half of 1913 as new personnel were introduced to replace the pioneer performers of Period One.

Part III

Personalities and Their Biographies

On Screen: Performers and Picture Personalities

As B&C expanded, personnel from a variety of backgrounds were recruited into the company whose earlier careers become significant because they contributed to the cultural resources introduced into the film-making process. Film genres and content at B&C were a product of the distinctive ideas introduced by the company's directors and writers, and were tailored to the particular talents of its lead performers. Significantly, in each period of company history staff from quite different cultural worlds were responsible for direction, writing and performances. In Period One, they came largely from the domain of Victorian and Edwardian popular commercial culture, whereas in Period Two, they increasingly came from backgrounds that would contribute to the company's growing aspiration towards more bourgeois cultural forms and values.

Beyond early references to Bloomfield and McDowell, the promotion of particular film workers only gathered pace after the Publicity Department was set up late in 1911, a move reinforced in January 1912 by the transfer of distribution to the MPSA with its more dynamic approach to advertising. The agency's weekly fan magazine, *The Pictures*, did much to launch B&C personalities through 1912, the year that saw company members emerge from their former anonymity. Information about B&C talent grades was limited in *The Bioscope*, but the *KLW* began to make regular references to them in 1912 and the *Film Censor* offered pictures and commentaries throughout the year. *The Cinema*, which was just beginning publication, took it as a matter of course to identify industry individuals. This personality discourse, however, was mainly around actors, the performers visually present on screen, and the biographical information on them that follows is largely drawn from the trade and fan press, and for that reason, its veracity should be treated with a certain amount

of caution. On the other hand, the very least the journals offer is an account of the public face of its personnel that B&C and its publicists wished to present to the industry and to cinemagoers, thereby serving to construct its distinctive cultural identity.¹

ACTORS AND PICTURE PERSONALITIES

In his account of the genesis of a star system in the American cinema, Richard de Cordova provides insights that help clarify developments in Britain. He observes that a magazine discourse on acting in films only appeared when 'the fiction film became the dominant, standardised product of manufacturers'.² This took place much earlier in Britain, and in the case of B&C, enthusiastic press references to the performances accompanied the firm's first fiction release, *Her Lover's Honour*, in September 1909. But more important was the *naming* of performers, for this contributed to a process of product differentiation in an increasingly competitive film market. Associating a named performer with the films of a particular production company served to differentiate its films from those of its rivals and to encourage product loyalty by luring audiences back to encounter their favourite in other pictures. This naming was the work of all the emergent means of promotion, advertising and publicity—such as magazines, posters and postcards—that were engaged in providing commentary on and images of a performer outside the particular films in which she or he was appearing. With B&C there were *no* press references to the names of performers from the moment the company entered drama production in the autumn of 1909 until the end of 1911. Significantly, publicity for *Every Wrong Shall Be Righted*, released in October 1910, mentioned its leads were established actors from the West End theatre but withheld their names.³ The first reference to a particular performer seems to have been in the *KLW* in December 1911, when Percy Moran was identified as touring London cinemas as Lieutenant Daring.⁴ At the same moment, the magazine also pointed out how B&C had been putting together a 'talented stock company'.⁵ In fact, several of the latter had been with the company since the beginning, but their names did not become public property until the emergence of the full personality discourse. Hepworth too had been setting up a stock company from around 1910, but his first important screen personality, Gladys Sylvani, also only gained nomination in the trade press late in 1911.⁶

In privileging the performer visible on screen, the cinema institution was following the precedent of the theatre and the music halls, in which a star system of performers had been created in the latter part of the

nineteenth century. There was, however, a fascinating moment of equivocation at B&C in the initial moment of naming. Early on, the company had adopted its series strategy, inventing the character of the intrepid Three-Fingered Kate and running her escapades through 1909–1910. Then, in September 1911, the first adventure of a new character, Lieutenant Daring, made its impact. Percy Moran was recruited to play him in the second episode, released in December, and the company had a major success on its hands. But the problem was whether to promote Daring or Moran, the character in the fiction or the performer articulating the character on screen. Mass circulation fiction and the comic papers had thrived on recurring characters, such as Sherlock Holmes, but the music hall and theatre featured performers, such as Marie Lloyd and Ellen Terry. For much of the first part of 1912, ‘Daring’ took precedence over ‘Moran’ in company publicity, until the actor became recognized for his other B&C roles. By contrast, Dorothy Foster, who opened 1912 in the Cornish dramas, was presented as herself from the outset. This character–performer dilemma also recurred in a publicity stunt to promote B&C and other British production companies proposed by O’Neill Farrell in April 1912. *The Cinema* reported that, as the all-British film was currently booming, several English firms were endeavouring to organize a fancy-dress ball or garden party ‘to popularise as well as familiarise the prominent film characters’.⁷ Film buyers were to be introduced to B&C’s Daring, Clarendon’s Lieutenant Rose, Cricks and Martin’s Muggins, VC and Hepworth’s Tilly the Tomboy, rather than to the actors portraying them, Moran, P.G. Norgate, Arthur Charrington and Alma Taylor. Nevertheless, the dilemma was resolved in favour of the performer, so the picture personalities contracted to B&C were promoted to appeal to audiences through their performances in a *range* of company films, rather than having their appearances limited to the recurrence of one particular series character.

Between 1909 and 1917, the names of around 250 actors have been identified as performing in B&C films, though only twenty-eight received more than five nominations and even fewer were designated leading performers.⁸ With respect to the latter, de Cordova demonstrates how in America commentary admitting to the presence of actors in films appeared late in 1907; this was followed by publicity’s construction of a ‘picture personality’ in 1909–1910 and then the emergence of the film ‘star’ in 1913–1914. There were three aspects to the existence of a picture personality: first, ‘the circulation of the name’; second, an “image”, taken in the broad sense to denote both the actor’s physical image and the personality that is represented as existing within or behind it’; and third,

‘a discourse on the actor’s professional experience’.⁹ The star was differentiated from the picture personality in so far as the publicity focused on a player’s existence outside her work in film—on personal life, home and children, on fashion and consumerism, and as someone to endorse products in advertising. By these definitions, all the leading B&C players were ‘picture personalities’. Publicity regularly named them and put their images on offer, but confined any commentary to their professional lives, ignoring the private and personal. Only in 1916 was Elizabeth Risdon’s reputation as ‘the leading Cinema Actress of the day’ used to promote Oatine Face Cream in advertisements in *Pictures and the Picturegoer*.¹⁰ The British industry seems to have been reluctant to adopt the term ‘star’, so a competition in that magazine in 1915 invited readers merely to identify the ‘Cleverest British Film Players’.¹¹ The result put Hepworth’s Alma Taylor in first place, Elizabeth Risdon for B&C second, Charles Chaplin, who was filming in America, third and another Hepworth player, Stewart Rome, fourth. Other B&C performers suggested for possible ranking by the magazine included Dorothy Batley, Ivy Montford (formerly Martinek), Ethel Bracewell, Charles Groves, M. Gray Murray and Ernest Batley.¹²

Implicit in this was a hierarchical division of labour amongst performers. At the top were the picture personalities, secure in audience recognition through their lead appearances in films and the attendant publicity. Subordinate to them were the named players in minor roles and below them were the ‘supers’ or extras who would populate the background of a scene. By September 1912, B&C had over 900 of the latter on its books.¹³ Most of these were from the legitimate stage because the company offered little opportunity to amateurs. Those listed had provided a photograph and statement of their accomplishments, and a director would select suitable individuals from their pictures. Thus, on *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (released in 1915), *The Cinema* observed the director had been ‘fortunate in securing some extremely good types in the way of jurymen, counsel, policemen, and the crowd in the well of the court’.¹⁴ As the work was seasonal, employment was uncertain and few actors were taken on throughout the year. For those in work, pay was 5s a day, exclusive of railway fares and meals, and so was directly comparable to the average male wage of £1 10s (an equivalent of £121 at 2019 values) a week. Beyond these professionals was a second category of super, ordinary members of the public. They were taken on mainly to supplement the touring companies in 1911–1913, although real Belgian refugees were recruited for the 1914 war film on their plight, *The Bells of Rheims*. Finally, there were the ‘specialists’. For the Daring films, the

company employed a Mr Bremner, a former Chief Petty Officer instructor in the Royal Navy, to train the cast and arrange the naval scenes. In turn, the men playing the lieutenant's loyal blue-jackets were the real thing—former sailors on the Royal Fleet Reserve.¹⁵ Bert Berry was the stuntman who dangled from a balloon in *Through the Clouds* and Cyril Taylor-Smith was stuntman at Walthamstow. In his work, the latter 'fell from second-floor windows onto shop blinds, drove motor cars over steep cliffs, leaped from speeding aeroplanes (actually suspended from the studio roof), and fell from furiously galloping cab horses'.¹⁶ For this he was paid £4 10s (or £363.30) a week, plus a princely thirty golden sovereigns for every really difficult stunt.¹⁷

The cultural backgrounds from which the leading performers were recruited in Periods One and Two differed substantially, with the personnel in the former being largely drawn from various fields of popular entertainment and those in the latter regularly coming from the more respectable domain of the legitimate theatre. In turn, their contrasting skills and competences helped to facilitate rather different kinds of film.

B&C PICTURE PERSONALITIES IN PERIOD ONE

Ivy Martinek

The company's first important recruit was Ivy Martinek, who in the summer of 1909, as she later recalled, 'came to London and joined the B. & C. Company. I played in their *first* picture, *Her Lover's Honour* ... the managing director ... invited me to stay with them, and the work was so fascinating that I remained ... under a long contract, playing leading parts.'¹⁸ She appeared in both comics and dramas and was characterized as 'possessed of a remarkable love of daring' and as 'the girl without fear'; she herself considered 'strength of body and limb and nerves of steel [to be] the prime essentials for a picture player'.¹⁹ She had been trained to fence, shoot and box; she could swim, cycle and drive a car; and she had the reputation of being 'the finest rider in British photo-plays'.²⁰ Her film roles exploited these talents, and 'her hazardous feats before the camera' meant she was an action heroine rather than an actress offering psychologically nuanced characterizations.²¹ Her robust stunts differentiated B&C's films from the 'upper-middle-class Home Counties girls' featured in the rival films of Hepworth, in which, according to Geoffrey Macnab, 'if there was a Hepworth type, it was the ingenuous young nymphet with a love of fresh air and the English countryside'.²²



Figure 6.1 B&C publicity postcard for Ivy Martinek.
Collection of Sally Freytag

Ivy began life as Elfride Caroline Bebe Steigerwald, the daughter of a sub-lieutenant in the German Army.²³ She claimed to have been born in Southern France, although the 1911 British Census recorded her as having been born in Merano, Italy. Her birth date is as uncertain as her birthplace because it changes from record to record, but in 1904 she may have been twenty-four (and no younger).²⁴ Her husband, Oceano Martinek, whom she married that year, claimed she left Germany at the age of eight, never to return. It was also claimed she began in the circus at the age of six, where she learned to dance, tumble and climb, the skills of shooting and fencing, and how to ride anything from horses to camels and elephants. She appeared in pantomimes but, from her fifteenth birthday to the age of twenty-one, was primarily a circus rider, travelling widely through Europe, America and to parts of Asia. Unsurprisingly, she spoke five languages. At one point, she toured with the famous Forepaugh's circus, never sleeping in a room, without holidays and rarely staying long in any one place. On one occasion, in Pittsburgh in America, an African elephant proved fractious and, with Ivy seated on his head, ran out of control and into a nearby lake, knocking down tent poles as it went. Her dress was ripped, bunches of hair were torn out by overhanging branches and her face and arms were left bleeding. The animal

had been enraged by a nail embedded behind his ear. In 1904, she and Oceano were part of a troupe performing for Barnum and Bailey in America. She also performed outside the circus environment and, in Warsaw, was the heroine in an outdoor play where she was to be bound to a sledge and sent down a slope into a snowdrift. Unfortunately, on the opening night a nervous assistant sent the sledge in the wrong direction, so that it hit a stone wall. Ivy was hospitalized and took three months to fully recover.

Her first film work was in Paris for Pathé Frères where, because salaries in the early days were low, she would ‘pose for the camera by day and “work the halls” at night’.²⁵ This meant rising early to travel miles to a film location, rehearsing late into the afternoon and finally getting to bed at midnight for a few hours’ sleep after an evening’s performance. In Britain, she was one of the first performers to take up picture playing as a regular profession, and she brought to the new venture all her previous experience in the various fields of popular spectacular culture. She was with B&C to early 1913, moving on just before McDowell began its reorganization. Thereafter, she returned to Pathé whose subsidiary, the Union Film Company, had a studio at Alexandra Palace, Muswell Hill. There, she appeared in films made under the Big Ben Films trademark, and there she changed her name to Montford some time in the late summer of 1913.²⁶ One of her successes for the new company was the Sleuth Hound series directed—as were many of her B&C and Big Ben films—by Oceano, who also acted as her detective partner. The ‘many dare-devil adventures and thrilling escapades’ of these films were a continuation of the performance style she had first developed as Three-Fingered Kate.²⁷ She returned briefly to B&C in 1915 to feature in the Derbyshire-based adventure film *At the Torrent’s Mercy* (January 1916), and after almost a year’s absence from work through illness, she made her final two films in 1917, one of which, *When Paris Sleeps*, was also for B&C (March 1917).²⁸

Ivy’s fencing skills were put to use from the outset when, to save *Her Lover’s Honour*, she took on the villain who had drugged him. They were used again in *The Puritan Maid* (November 1911), where she helped a Royalist escape capture. Her horsemanship was deployed when she played Maid Marion in the first of B&C’s uncompleted series of Robin Hood films, *Robin Hood Outlawed* (October 1912). As Three-Fingered Kate, her most popular role, she made various resourceful escapes from difficult situations and was the active agent in launching her devious projects.²⁹ She acted with Charles Raymond on the Don Q films in Derbyshire and played opposite Percy Moran in several of the Lieutenant Daring pictures.

Journalistic anecdotes regularly reported on the accidents that befell Ivy and her fellow performers in the course of the risky stunts that provided the thrills in these Period One dramas. They served as good publicity for the company, but their incidence also attested to the physically demanding nature of the early performance style. They featured not only in the trade papers but also in fan magazines and occasionally the national press. Significantly, they began in 1912. Thus, when filming on the Thames at Staines for *Lieutenant Daring Defeats the Middleweight Champion* (September 1912), Ivy's punt overturned and she had to be rescued, having been knocked out in the water. On *Three-Fingered Kate: The Case of the Chemical Fumes* (September 1912), she had her worst experience when, to dodge her pursuers, she had to lower herself through a manhole into one of London's main sewers. She was there some time, along with the rats and with the water up to her knees; the stench made her ill for several days afterwards. In *At the Torrent's Mercy*, she and Moran were in a boat that just managed to drift clear of a dangerous whirlpool.

Thus, Ivy Martinek brought skilled physical routines and courageous female adventure into B&C's films. She was not the passive heroine of traditional melodrama needing chivalrous male protection, but an active agent pursuing her own sometimes illicit ends.

Bill Haley

The company's next picture personality was William Gladstone Haley—Bill Haley—who was also recruited in 1909, although his career in films had begun in 1905.³⁰ Like his Period One colleagues, he possessed a range of physical talents—having won prizes for boxing, running, swimming, skating and rowing—which facilitated his routines as the company's foremost comic performer. His pre-film background was probably in popular entertainment, possibly on the halls, and his speciality was physical comedy. Some of his parts had him impersonate the comic old women that appeared so regularly in cinema's earliest comedy films. Thus, before joining B&C, he was playing 'aunties' in a couple of films directed by Dave Aylott for Williamson (released in July and August 1909). At B&C he was 'Snorky'. The name followed models pioneered in French cinema where a comic character with a distinctive name would appear in a series of film escapades. Pathé developed this strategy with 'Boireau' (1906–1908) and then with 'Rigadin'—known as 'Whiffles' in England (1910–1912)—and 'Max', performed by Max Linder (from 1910).³¹ These characters had their British counterparts with Cricks and Martin's 'Scroggins', appearing in January 1910, and 'Snorky', making his

first entry shortly after. But, unlike the others, ‘Snorky’ never lent his name to a series, the character appearing in various comic shorts and as a subordinate character in films featuring other performers. Haley himself authored many of his own comic scenarios.



Figure 6.2 B&C publicity postcard for Gladstone Haley or ‘Snorky’.
Author’s collection

The comedian brought his distinctive physical skills to the energetic, slapstick performance style of B&C comic films. These, in turn, precipitated the sorts of on-location accident used to promote a performer in the press. Thus, when filming *Sorry Can't Stop* for Williamson, he was required to roller skate down a rather steep hill dressed as a woman, but crashed at the bottom and, whilst recovering consciousness, heard a spectator declare, ‘Poor woman, Thank God she’s not dead!’ Elsewhere, a naughty boy had to push him off a steam boat in full drag, but this time his feet got caught up in his dress so he sank to the river bottom and had to be hauled to safety by rope. Another time, when hanging from a branch, he mistook the director’s ‘stop’ in response to a problem with the camera for ‘drop’ and so fell into a cold lake, only to have to wait three hours in wet clothes for a new camera. On another occasion, having been chased up a scaffold by lunatics, he decided to improvise and hang from the scaffold board. Unfortunately, the workmen had not secured it and

so he fell 30 feet into a soft bed of mortar. The openness of location filming in these years also meant entertaining encounters with the public. Once, as he hesitated, dressed as a policeman, before diving into more water one bitter February morning, an old lady asked him the way to Mill Hill Crematorium. She laughed when he replied, 'I'm just going to jump into this pond, and as I shall catch my death of cold I shall probably have the unconscious pleasure of accompanying you.' And, whilst clumsily breaking crockery he and a partner were trying to sell in *A Deal in Crockery* (September 1912), Haley apparently heard a watching coster-monger reassure his wife, 'They ain't doing it for the money. They're hacting for the gramophone.'

The Bliggs Family at the Zoo was released in September 1912, and seems to have been intended as the first in a new series featuring Haley as an accident-prone paterfamilias. A second episode was made on the ship going to Jamaica, but the tour was Haley's last venture with B&C. From that point on, B&C comic films were relegated firmly into second place and child performers often replaced adults. Haley's name appears in association with a Cricks and Martin trick film early in 1913, but thereafter he seems to have faded from view.

Percy Moran

The company's most successful picture personality in Period One was Percy Moran, especially in the guise of Lieutenant Daring. He was born in Ireland in 1886, and was twenty-five when he first assumed the role.³² His father was ex-army and a boxer, known in the ring as 'Professor' Mike Moran, who served for some thirty-five years as a boxing and fencing instructor to the Army and the Navy.³³ He tutored Percy in boxing, fencing and swimming, and the son recalled how 'father's training methods were hard and painful'.³⁴

Like Ivy Martinek, Moran began early in show business and, like her, his experiences were in popular, spectacular entertainments. From the age of ten he had accompanied his father on tours of the country's military towns where the elder Moran would give boxing exhibitions and the younger was expected to take on all-comers as a boy boxer. Mike and Percy were popular with the army officers, and the former was regularly granted permission to put on his shows in military riding schools. One consequence of this was that Percy learned to ride. The boy would help erect the boxing ring during the day and then, already tired out, take on local challengers in evening bouts. This particular talent was later put to use in *Lieutenant Daring Defeats the Middleweight Champion*. The film was



Figure 6.3 B&C publicity postcard for Percy Moran as Lieutenant Daring.
Author's collection

subsequently seen by a pugilist in Jamaica who, on hearing Moran was filming there, offered to fight him three rounds for a £5 note, on the grounds he was 'not a boxer ... only a blooming picture actor'.³⁵ The man bit the floor in round three and apparently woke to ask Moran if he was Irish. The actor answered he was and that he had been boxing all his life, to which the reply was, 'I know that now ... and I guessed you were Irish from your punches.'³⁶ These juvenile bouts lasted until he was fourteen, after which he drifted into Barnum and Bailey's 'Wild West' circus where he took the part of a rough rider. This was followed by engagements at Earl's Court, London, for a show where he performed as a bronco rider and rope swinger. This expertise was also exploited by B&C in the Dick Turpin adventures, with *The Bioscope* claiming to be 'particularly impressed' by their admirable horsemanship and declaring '[n]o "Western" picture, played by cowboy actors on the American prairies, has given us finer riding or more thrilling pursuits'.³⁷

Moran moved on to take small parts as an actor with a travelling theatre company playing at cheap 'penny gaff' venues, and this was followed by a period—lasting over seven years—of touring the music halls as a member of Kate Carney's company. She was a singer and comedienne, specializing in costerwomen and factory workers and was at the height

of her fame when he was with her.³⁸ He was engaged both as a singer and an actor in the short sketches she performed, working his way up, he claimed, until he played 'the leading roles in her greatest successes'.³⁹ It was whilst appearing with Carney that he and a friend went to observe moving pictures being made. Once there, because someone was wanted who could pull faces, Moran volunteered and was subsequently offered employment. This was probably at B&C, for he joined the company early in 1911.⁴⁰ At first, he played everything 'from a wild Indian to a tame poet', but was soon given the chance to specialize when, after receiving coaching in the etiquette proper to a naval lieutenant, he appeared as 'a dashing, fearless young man, who did the most astonishing things with breeziness and success'.⁴¹ This, of course, was his first appearance as Daring. Dick Turpin followed in an attempt to capitalize on his popularity, and various other leading roles were devised to take advantage of his particular talents, often opposite Dorothy Foster. He made some thirty films for B&C in which he functioned as an action hero, whose skills were the physical capacities that Ivy Martinek and Bill Haley were also in possession of and that encouraged the emphasis on spectacular performance that typified most of the Period One films. Moran had been taught by his father or by himself to wrestle, dive from high places, if necessary with his hands tied, to fence and shoot, to skate, row and drive a car, and, in August 1912, he learned to fly at Brooklands in preparation for *Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Minefield*.⁴² The resources he brought to B&C, therefore, were his good looks, his considerable athleticism and an attractive masculine dash and vigour.⁴³

He was with the party touring Jamaica in 1913 and seems to have worked on a couple more films after his return, including B&C's first exclusive, *Dick Turpin's Ride to York*, on the final ride of Dick Turpin, but he left the company that spring, another casualty of McDowell's reorientations of policy. In April, the *Film Censor* reported that, given his reputation as 'a comedian and entertainer of some note', several of the best continental companies had made him offers to feature as 'a knock-about funmaker', but in the autumn he too moved over to Big Ben Films where he played more naval characters.⁴⁴ His time at B&C seems to have strongly determined his career through to 1924, for during those years he directed films for various companies, often featuring himself as a naval lieutenant called Jack Moran. Thus, an advertisement in October 1914 announced, 'Lieut. Moran (Percy Moran) formerly Lieut. Daring presents the first of his new series of sensational films which is entitled OHMS'.⁴⁵ *Our Helpless Millions Saved* was a patriotic spy film—similar to those he had made at B&C—written and directed by himself shortly after the

outbreak of war. In 1915, he returned to B&C to appear in *At the Torrent's Mercy*, and then went on to direct Edgar Wallace's first film script for a privately financed film on the life of Edith Cavell, *Nurse and Martyr* (November 1915). He served in the forces in the latter part of the war before returning to film-making, and in 1924, made a final outing as his most famous character in *Lieut. Daring and the Water Rats*, which he co-directed.⁴⁶

As with Ivy Martinek, accounts of accidents and mishaps during filming became a regular feature of reporting on Moran. Thus, one morning at the beginning of March 1912, Moran and others were rehearsing a scene at Rottingdean near Brighton. In an attack by Spanish bandits, the leader was to throw Daring over a cliff. Unfortunately, the planks placed below its edge to receive his fall gave way because the chalk had been made slimy by recent rain, and so Moran dropped 90 feet into a rough sea. His colleagues made an unsuccessful attempt to save him, but he was a strong swimmer and was rescued with the help of local coastguards, having put his arm out of joint and sustained a gash over his left eye.⁴⁷ *The Pictures* laconically commented that the incident formed 'only one of many which occur in the cinematograph business in search of realism', and Moran himself recalled how, back at the Finchley studio, he underwent a second 'very narrow shave' when a knife blade slipped from its handle to graze the back of his neck.⁴⁸ On another occasion, he sustained a 2 inch wound in the back of his hand from a sword fight; and during another Daring escapade, he dived from an Admiralty pinnace at Southampton, only to be caught in a cross current so that he hit his head on the stern: he managed to get ashore near Nelson's *Victory*, dazed and 'in a somewhat limp condition'.⁴⁹

Initially, B&C had displaced Moran's identity behind the Daring persona, and so there was a delay in featuring his name in company publicity. But later there developed a conflation of Moran and Daring, which led to problems for what might be considered B&C's Daring 'franchise' once Moran had left the company. His final appearance in the role was in August 1913 and, for the last three adventures, two other actors took on the part. But the general enthusiasm the Daring 'brand name' had established generated an awkward situation for B&C because other producers attempted to take advantage of it. For example, Harry Lorraine, who played the lieutenant after Moran, left B&C at the end of 1913 to set up a company featuring Daring as a detective hero.⁵⁰ Small surprise, then, that for the last episode of their hero's exploits in May 1914, B&C rather defensively presented themselves as 'the originators of the Lieutenant Daring series of films'.⁵¹ Following this, in July, it was

rumoured that Messrs Wynne, Taylor and Co. were planning to revive the series, and in September, Moran himself was reported as intending to resume his former role with Moran Films.⁵² At this point, B&C jealously intervened, and he was persuaded to change his character to that of Lieutenant Moran 'as the B&C Co., Ltd. claim the *exclusive rights* to the title of Lt. Daring'.⁵³ This was followed by an 'Important Notice to Exhibitors and their Patrons' in *The Cinema* that declared:

It will be interesting to the public to know that *Mr. PERCY MORAN, RN*, the creator of the *Lieutenant Daring Series*, the man who toured the London and Suburban Halls, and whose personality won the vote for the great competition as the most popular and capable artist in England, is now known as *LIEUTENANT MORAN*, and has relinquished his old title of *Lieutenant Daring* owing to so many imitators.⁵⁴

Dorothy Foster

The fourth figure to be set up as a picture personality was Dorothy Foster. She may have joined the company early on, but it was not until the start of 1912 that her name was presented to the public. She featured as the leading lady in what *The Pictures* called the Cornish and Welsh 'romances' and made regular lead appearances in the Lieutenant Daring and Dick Turpin films.⁵⁵ However, in contrast to Martinek and Moran, her background more closely anticipated those of the performers to be recruited in Period Two. She was born in Devon and began her career on the professional stage, gaining experience playing parts in both comedy and drama. She spent some years touring in *Bootle's Baby*, a play adapted from a novel by the mother of B&C's future script editor, Eliot Stannard. In 1908, she sat for a well-established painter and her portrait was hung in a Royal Academy exhibition, from which it was bought by King Edward. Thus, one resource she brought to B&C was her star 'beauty', just as Moran brought his leading man's 'good looks'. Other attractive personal features listed by Patrick Glynn in *The Pictures* were her 'vivacity, intelligence, versatility and modesty'.

Foster's film work, however, seems to have begun and ended with her time at B&C, although she was allowed to go off and take the part of Ophelia in Charles Raymond's version of *Hamlet*, made for Barker early in 1912. She was said to possess 'a rare natural talent for dramatic work', and her theatrical background allowed her to play her screen roles 'with the art and perfection of a consummate actress'.⁵⁶ But she was also a strong



Figure 6.4 B&C publicity postcard for Dorothy Foster.
Author's collection

swimmer and expert rider—qualities, she explained, much ‘in demand in picture work’—and these allowed her to undertake the tasks expected of the activist heroines of Period One.⁵⁷ She was said not to know the meaning of ‘nerves’, and the *Evening News* once called her ‘the most daring of our picture actresses’.⁵⁸ Thus, on the Welsh tour she was expected to climb to perilous heights, jump from a boat and fight the villain in the sea, traverse the roof of a house and make a 75 foot descent by rope. In fact, her strenuous exertions on these productions provoked a serious illness that kept her from film work for several weeks that summer.⁵⁹ She was part of the 1913 Jamaica tour, but she too failed to survive McDowell’s reforms and her brief moment of film glory seems to have come to a full-stop. Consequently, a year later, one trade journal was asking what had become of both her and Gladstone Haley; the magazine had asked after their whereabouts but had failed to locate them.⁶⁰

The B&C stock company

Like its rival Hepworth, B&C adopted the stock company principle in Period One. As it had developed in the theatres of the nineteenth century, this practice was constituted by a permanent company in which

particular performers specialized in the standardized roles that would recur from play to play in melodrama. Elements of this arrangement endured in production at B&C during the time of Bloomfield and McDowell's joint control. Thus, Bill Haley was the company's low comedian or comic man. Percy Moran was the dashing lead hero, who the *Evening News* called 'the William Terriss of the picture play', thereby explicitly likening him to one of the most famous leading men of the late Victorian theatre.⁶¹ Dorothy Foster was the attractive heroine, whilst Ivy Martinek would, on occasion, assume a villainess role. An actor called George Foley was 'the distinguished heavy lead' for the company, playing a range of villains between 1912 and 1914, as well as appearing in such prestige productions as *The Battle of Waterloo* (as Blucher) and *The Life of Shakespeare*.⁶²

M. Gray Murray joined the company some time in 1911 and stayed with it through to 1916. He tended to play older father figures, and therefore occupied the stock company's old man role. His background, like Dorothy Foster's, was theatrical. Having been educated at London's University College, he had declined to enter his father's cloth manufacturing business and had joined the Vaudeville Theatre to train as an actor. He spent some time touring America and then, in partnership with his brother, had entered management, leasing a series of London theatres. This activity had ceased when the brother died in 1908, and after a period travelling abroad, he returned to become a screen actor with B&C.⁶³

Wallett Waller was with the company from late 1911 to the end of 1912. He had been born in Hampstead in 1881 and had fought and been taken prisoner in the Boer War. Initially, he too entered the legitimate theatre, touring in musical comedy and appearing at London's Garrick and Coliseum Theatres. From this, he moved into film acting, and had appeared in some sixty pictures by the summer of 1912, including several leads for B&C such as the knight's son who makes good as a private soldier in *The Gentleman Ranker* (July 1912). *The Pictures* claimed his acting was 'marked with vigour and intensity'.⁶⁴ After directing for B&C, he subsequently moved on to direct for the Cunard Film Company when it opened at Wood Street, Walthamstow, in October 1914. He was there until his death in December 1915, working alongside Harold Weston—who was one of B&C's leading directors in Period Two.

Another performer of note was Charles Calvert, who was Three-Fingered Kate's hapless opponent, the detective Daniel 'Sheerluck' Finch. He came from a well-established theatrical family and had gained considerable stage experience, having acted since the age of nine and having taken responsibility as a stage manager at sixteen. He became a screen

actor with Clarendon in 1909 and then joined B&C, bringing into the company—like the performers already mentioned—the knowledge of theatrical performance modes that was to become so significant in Period Two's productions. He moved on to direction with Cricks and Martin late in 1912, but returned to direct *The London Mystery* for B&C in 1914. He continued in direction throughout the 1920s.⁶⁵

Ernest Trimmingham was part of the stock company in 1910–1914 and has the distinction of being the first black actor playing in British films at a time when most black roles were taken on by white performers in blackface.⁶⁶ He was born in Bermuda in 1881 and was in his thirties when he worked for B&C. In 1909, he had written a play, *The Lily of Bermuda*, that received poor reviews when it was staged in Manchester, and so he had turned to acting. At B&C, he can be seen in drag in the comic short *Playing Truant* (July 1910); in 1912–1913, he played Beetles, a regular member of the highwayman's gang in the Dick Turpin films; in October 1912, he was in the drama *Her Bachelor Guardian*; and he also appeared in *The Tattooed Will* (March 1914).⁶⁷ In 1919, he reunited with Percy Moran in *Jack, Sam and Pete*, a Western based on an Edwardian children's story directed by Moran for his own production company; and his last film appearance was as a genie in *Where the Rainbow Ends* in 1921, after which he returned to the stage, acting there for the next twenty years until he died in 1942.⁶⁸

Harry Lorraine, like Ivy Martinek and Moran, came from the world of popular entertainment, where he had established himself in 'the proud position of the world's youngest handcuff king'.⁶⁹ Here, he was borrowing a title from a more famous escapologist, the American Harry Houdini, who had first starred on the London halls in 1900. Lorraine, who had been born Henry Herd in Brighton in 1878, was a specialist in visually sensational stunts, a performance feature that he carried over into his films.⁷⁰ In 1915, *The Kinematograph Year Book* listed some of his exploits, several of which had been undertaken for B&C:

In Paris he dived handcuffed from an aeroplane into the water, the dive being 190 feet. He was thrown from Hastings Pier locked in a coffin, from which he easily escaped. He has dived, handcuffed, from every bridge spanning the Thames ... Outside Shoreham he jumped onto the roof of a train travelling at a great pace, and contrived to jump off just as the train entered a tunnel ... Another 'interesting little accomplishment' was a dive from a wharf into Kingstown Harbour, Jamaica, into a pool of sharks. He was dragged over Westminster Bridge in the thick of the traffic, one foot tied to the

back of a taxi-cab. He was suspended head downwards from a crane at a height of 150 feet. In this act he was also imprisoned in a straight jacket.⁷¹

The fearless Lorraine was recruited by Oceano Martinek, who undertook to tutor him for both heavy roles and juvenile leads.⁷² One of his first appearances was as Little John in *Robin Hood Outlawed* (October 1912), and he was later part of the company in Jamaica, during which trip he moved up to leading parts. He succeeded Moran as Lieutenant Daring, and carried his association with the name away with him when he resigned from the company in November 1913 to establish himself as managing director of the provocatively titled Daring Film Company.⁷³ His plan was to produce a series of pictures of which the first was *Detective Daring and the Thames Coiners* (March 1914), scripted by Harold Brett and directed by Sidney Northcote, both, like him, former B&C employees. In the second half of 1914, he was at Motograph under the direction of James Youngdeer, who had also just left B&C, boldly appearing as Lieutenant Daring in *The World at War* (November 1914), and in 1915, he featured in a series of Sexton Blake detective films for I.B. Davidson, under the direction of Charles Raymond, yet another B&C ex-staffer.⁷⁴

B&C'S ACTORS AND PICTURE PERSONALITIES IN PERIOD TWO

After McDowell took charge in May 1913, the well-organized stock company of Period One gave way to a more fluid situation during which leading players were regularly replaced and established visitors from London's West End were encouraged to make film appearances. Because the new policies moved the company towards longer quality dramas, the performance backgrounds of the new recruits began to tap a different set of cultural resources. Rather than the worlds of lower-class commercial entertainment, Period Two's leads were increasingly taken from the legitimate theatre, with its privileging of acting over action. The newcomers' training was in theatrical presentation and in performances with an element of psychological conviction rather than in spectacular display. Under the influence of the new directing and writing talent McDowell also introduced, dramas began to dominate over comic films, longer films were privileged over shorts, novels and plays provided source material and, latterly, even challenging subject matter was attempted. Nevertheless, a tension between a still robust cinema of sensation and a strengthening cinema of quality extended throughout the period.

Only one true picture personality emerged in these years and that was Elizabeth Risdon, although the child actress Dorothy Batley also established a significant presence. An interesting development, however, was the creation of a series of tentative director–actress pairings. This was strongly marked in the run of successes achieved by Maurice Elvey and Risdon, but Charles Weston directed the films in which Marie Pickering appeared, Ethyle Batley directed most of her daughter’s films and her husband, Ernest, was teamed as director with Ethel Bracewell. James Youngdeer made his three crime shockers with Lillian Wiggins and, in 1915, Harold Weston and Fay Temple cooperated on five, often provocative, dramas.

Dorothy Batley

The Batleys came to the company in mid-1913 as a family package, with both Ernest and Ethyle taking on acting and directorial responsibilities. Dorothy, their daughter, was already an established child performer when, in November, the *Picturegoer* featured her in a series of articles headlined ‘The Girl on the Film’, run by the magazine to promote female leads; its author designated her ‘a “star” actress’.⁷⁵ Her father and mother had followed careers in the theatre before coming to films, and Dorothy had made her first stage appearance at the age of six. She had appeared as Little Willie in a production of *East Lynne* and had followed her parents into films in 1910. She was eleven when she joined B&C, where she began by playing opposite her father in the detective drama *To Save Her Dad* (released in July 1913 and reissued as *Bess the Detective’s Daughter* in March 1914) and where she appeared in at least seventeen productions.⁷⁶ She regularly acted with Ernest and frequently dressed as a boy, either as a girl in disguise or for a boy’s part. In an interview, her mother stressed her daughter’s competence as an actress, observing how she needed little rehearsal, picked up a part quickly and would grasp ‘the essential idea of a character in an amazingly short time’; she succeeded, her mother maintained, ‘in transforming her [own] naturalness into her acting. I have seen genuine tears well into her eyes when she has been acting in an emotional or pathetic scene. Acting is really second nature with her’; and Dorothy herself observed how,

when I look at myself in the pictures, I see that I have done things in the play that it would have been better not to do. So when I see myself acting on the screen I criticise myself and make up my mind that the next time I play a similar part I will alter so and so.⁷⁷

In such comments, a different mode of evaluating performance can be seen as emerging—one that reached full fruition with Elizabeth Risdon's films but one that was already attending to the subtleties of naturalistic performance.

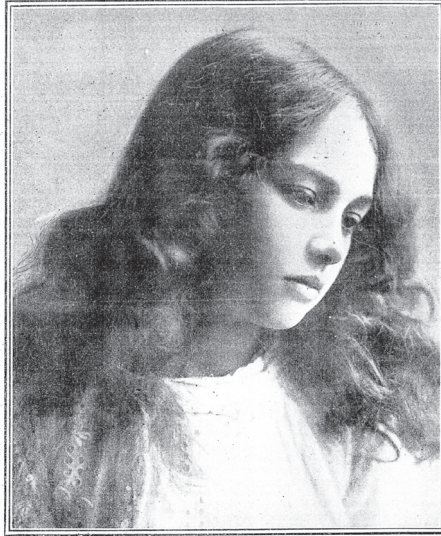


Figure 6.5 Dorothy Batley, B&C's leading child performer.
The Pictures, 29 November 1913

Even so, mishaps during filming were used to promote Dorothy, just as they had been used to draw attention to her predecessors. Thus, one Sunday in August 1913, before a large crowd watching at Broadstairs, Charles Weston and the company were filming scenes for *The Broken Chisel* (October 1913). Ernest Batley was portraying a convict rescuing a child—played by Dorothy—who was clinging to rocks, cut off by the sea. Benson, the cameraman, stood in a boat with his camera placed before him on the sand. A large wave hit the boat, pitched him overboard, snapped his tripod and precipitated the camera into the water. Then it broke over father and daughter, dashed them violently against the rocks and sucked them out to sea. Fortunately, a small boat was handy and the pair were rescued—albeit in exhausted condition—owing to the ‘coolness and the promptings of the managing director’, McDowell.⁷⁸ Benson suffered painful bruising to his back and arms, Batley severe cuts and bruises, and Dorothy shock. The incident received considerable publicity for the *Moving Picture Offered List* reported that ‘over fifty of the leading London and provincial papers published accounts of the

accidents', and so the film became one of B&C's most successful of the year.⁷⁹ This was followed by incidents on the unreleased *At the Hour of Twelve*. The *Film Censor* reported how '[d]evotion to realism ... resulted in many hair-raising incidents at Finchley... during which all the actors received minor injuries and one collapsed twice from exhaustion'.⁸⁰ The film's hero was required to walk along a telephone wire to save a child from a burning building, but his arm was severely cut by broken glass and burned by a gust of flame, whilst Dorothy's leg was injured when she was dropped from a window.⁸¹

Marie Pickering

Marie Pickering, at nineteen, was older than Dorothy but, like her, combined both stage and screen experience. She was part of the new intake in the summer of 1913 and made seven films—including two exclusives—with Charles Weston in the latter part of the year, regularly performing with Ernest Batley. She was 'a small, slight girl with a wealth of fair hair' and, in the view of *The Cinema*, had the 'necessary qualifications for a successful cinema actress: Plenty of nerve/Willingness to face any ordeal/Dramatic talent/Ability to face hardship/A real love of the work'.⁸² Such characteristics, of course, might also have described Ivy Martinek, and Weston's films continued to offer characteristic B&C action and spectacle. So, Pickering had to endure the severe rigours of the location filming for *A Tragedy in the Alps* (September 1913) and was called on to make the balloon rope ascent in the film that threw her into prominence, *Through the Clouds* (October 1913). Nevertheless, she had learned her craft in the theatre, having appeared in pantomime at Drury Lane, in *The Arcadians* and in the companies of the actor-managers Seymour Hicks and Sir John Hare. Before joining B&C, she had begun in films with Barker's company.

Ethel Bracewell

Ethel Bracewell followed Marie Pickering and made half a dozen films with the Batleys in the first part of 1914, before the ascendancy of Elizabeth Risdon—including the important exclusives *The Midnight Wedding* (May 1914) and *Revolution* (September 1914). She too was 'The Girl on the Film' for the *Picturegoer*, 'generously endowed with grace and good looks ... with a glorious, shimmering river of rich golden-brown hair, rippling in glistening cascades over her shoulders'.⁸³ She was born in Australia and began in the theatre there at the age of three. She

had worked in South Africa with Walter Melville's repertory theatre and then came to England, where she appeared in comedy and melodrama, dramatic plays and Shakespeare, including the roles of Juliet and Desdemona. Thus, she was already a successful leading actress when Ernest Batley visited her at the Lyceum and made the offer that led her to cancel stage contracts for work with B&C. In an interview, she confessed to enjoying the variety of film work, and how it allowed her to avoid the monotony of long theatre runs and the dreariness of much rehearsal time. On the other hand, she rather disliked playing street scenes before gaping crowds and the remarks of small boys. She too expressed self-aware commentary around screen acting when she remarked that her new work was

harder than acting before the footlights, and more difficult, but ... much more refreshing. I never act a part twice ... We just go over the scene once or twice, seldom more, the camera commences to buzz, and the thing is finished ... [However,] if one has been guilty of an unfortunate action, or facial expression ... you have no idea of the *awfulness* of seeing that action or expression recur on the picture-screen ... One watches and watches, dreading the repetition of the error ... then it happens, for there is no rectifying a mistake made before the camera.⁸⁴

Here, she was representative of the new kind of thoughtful screen actor being encouraged by B&C. In sharp contrast to Martinek, on an occasion when she was required to rescue Batley from the Thames at Hampton Wick, Bracewell concealed her inability to swim and plunged into the water knowing that, as he was a strong swimmer, he would be able to help her out. In other of her comments, she went on to articulate ambitious principles that accorded closely with McDowell's policy rethink. In 1914, as an established stage actress working in film, she argued in favour of an educational and culturally elevating role for cinema:

I believe that the cinema and the stage are working for the good of each other. I think, too, that the cinema will awaken interest in the drama, that it will tend to cultivate a love of watching good plays in those people who have hitherto been diffident. For instance, I am sure that the production of Shakespeare on the screen will engender a new interest in Shakespeare ... Although I act in film melodramas, I am sure that, in time, the public will want something better, more intellectual; that they will become satiated with mere sensationalism.⁸⁵

This was asserted at the moment B&C had *The Life of Shakespeare* in production.⁸⁶

Elizabeth Risdon

Elizabeth Risdon was the company's truly big picture personality in Period Two, but she was universally received as an *actress* of talent, not the performer of sensational stunts. She was born Elizabeth Evans in Wandsworth, London, on 26 April 1887 and had begun acting in the theatre at a very young age. She spent some time at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, newly founded in 1904 by the actor-manager Beerbohm Tree and established on a site in Gower Street the same year. Rather later, she returned to teach there. She gained some experience of playing comedy on the halls but never did musical comedy; she took parts in provincial tours and concentrated on as wide a range of dramatic roles as possible. Eventually, she performed in such West End theatres as the Haymarket and the Comedy, where she appeared in works by Pinero and the renowned contemporary author, Hall Caine; she gained a 'veritable triumph' as Glory Quayle in *The Christian*, a play based on the latter's best-selling novel.⁸⁷ But she was also associated with the progressive New



Figure 6.6 B&C publicity postcard for Elizabeth Risdon.
Author's collection

Drama movement that had been launched in 1904, appearing in repertory for one of its moving figures, Harley Granville Barker, as well as at one of its key institutions, the Glasgow Repertory Theatre, founded in 1909. She also featured as Fanny and Margaret in Bernard Shaw's good-humoured 1911 satire of the new plays, *Fanny's First Play*. In 1912, Granville Barker hired Maurice Elvey to take this play to New York, where Risdon assumed the title role to considerable acclaim. Further, just before moving to films, she was at the Royalty in London, under the management of Vedrenne, another name associated with the New Drama. Thus, in a few years, *The Pictures* claimed, Elizabeth Risdon had established 'an excellent reputation for serious dramatic work, both in England and America', and, along with her 'natural attractiveness', this 'charming petite brunette' was believed to possess 'an *artistic temperament* fully developed'.⁸⁸

In 1914, Risdon explained her transition to films:

I had always been interested in moving-picture work but until the end of last year I never imagined that cinema-acting would claim my serious attention. But at that time Mr. Elvey ... persuaded me to test my capabilities as a picture-actress ... he asked me if I would like to play ... before the camera just by way of experiment to see if cinema acting appealed to me.⁸⁹

Elvey had recently joined the Motograph Company as director and wanted her to play the lead in his version of *Maria Marten, or Murder in the Red Barn* (December 1913). Despite having to migrate from drama to melodrama, she was an instant success and was promptly awarded a contract as the company's leading lady. But she and Elvey remained with Motograph for only the next four months, because at the start of May 1914, he moved over to direct for B&C at Walthamstow and engaged her to accompany him. They stayed for the next thirteen months, during which time she worked almost exclusively with him, playing the lead in sixteen exclusives and various shorter films, beginning with a film version of yet another of the nineteenth century's famous melodramas *Black-Eyed Susan*, released in August 1914 as *In the Days of Trafalgar*. She was twenty-seven and instantly became B&C's star attraction. Ashley Exclusives, in advertising *Her Luck in London* (January 1915), presented her as 'England's Premier Picture Artiste'.⁹⁰ She began to devote most of her time to film work but still continued with some theatre activity, for example returning to Vedrenne at the Royalty early in 1915.

Like Ethel Bracewell, Elizabeth Risdon could contrast the different demands of stage and screen acting, but was unsure whether she preferred

the latter. Acting for films was harder than theatre work because of the earlier and longer hours, the less pleasant conditions and the need to work outdoors in all weathers and conditions—such as in the cold, wet clothes she had to endure whilst filming the shipwreck on *The Loss of the Birkenhead*. On the other hand, film work was varied and interesting, and she enjoyed much of the open-air work in preference to that of the studio. Further, like Bracewell, seeing her screen image meant she learned a lot about her acting she had not known before. The contrast in performance styles between Risdon and Ivy Martinek and the change of direction in B&C's film-making was brought out clearly when she was asked about any 'thrilling adventures' she had encountered in her film work.⁹¹ Her somewhat disdainful reply was:

Why is it that people think every picture-player is continually risking his or her life? I suppose it is because of the realism in many picture-plays. Well, I cannot truthfully say that I have ever been thrown over a precipice, run over by an express train, [or] trodden on by an infuriated elephant ... because nothing quite like that has happened to me ... Am I unique? I suppose I must be, for most cinema actresses, especially American, seem to have suffered more hardships than would kill the average woman ... But let us now talk about *acting*, shall we? I'd hate to be thought merely an acrobat by your readers.⁹²

At best, she could recall climbing over the roof of the Crystal Palace and struggling in a rough sea at Whitstable. She was, she explained, not sporting and her hobbies were needlework, chess and war gaming. Unsurprisingly, therefore, she admitted to not being a believer in that staple of B&C's populist programming the 'sensation' picture; she observed, 'The public are tired of them. If you do the exciting things very well they think them a fake. And if you only do them indifferently—well, the public are not impressed.'⁹³

Risdon's major contribution as a serious actress, it was generally agreed, was the truthfulness and versatility of her performances. *The Cinema* observed,

She has a singular gift of—we had almost said—'mimicry', but it is something higher than that; rather let us say a gift of getting right into the soul of an heroic part and delineating the personality of the character with an inimitably sure and graceful touch. It is a rare gift for an Englishwoman, but Miss Risdon undoubtedly has it.⁹⁴

The *Film Censor* stressed the psychological dimension of her performances, declaring her 'a great emotional player'.⁹⁵ In *The Idol of Paris* (February

1915) she was Flare-Flare, a vivacious nightclub entertainer; in *The Loss of the Birkenhead* she stoically suffered shipwreck and loss; in *Her Nameless (?) Child* (May 1915) she played both a mother and her daughter; but she won her greatest praise for *Florence Nightingale* (March 1915) wherein she aged from the reformer's teens through to her final years. The *KLW* enthusiastically claimed:

The sincerity and truth of the conception; the well-thought-out plan upon which the representation has been built up; and the consistency and restraint with which it has been developed, all contrive to make an artistic appeal which is irresistible. Miss Risdon lets a noble career tell its own story with a naturalness that comes as a pleasant breeze after the sultry sensationalism and over-wrought sentimentality of many screen pictures. In a word it is kinema acting at its highest and best; and with it Miss Risdon has, at a bound, taken her place securely in the very front rank of kinematograph actresses.⁹⁶

She had prepared for the role by immersing herself in a study of Nightingale's diaries, and observed that the part had given her great opportunities for 'natural acting'; she allowed that impersonating the reformer at age ninety was not difficult because it was a matter of make-up, but admitted representing her in middle-age was harder as 'There are no particular physical characteristics to help one at that time of life. One has to rely on expression.'⁹⁷

Risdon was a popular performer and received regular bundles of fan mail. She was also able to afford a comfortable apartment with a view of Hyde Park. However, in May 1915, *The Cinema* announced that 'Mr Elvey and Miss Risdon have come to an amicable agreement with Mr McDowell, whereby they will sever their year-long, distinguished connection with the B and C Co., and start producing on their own account.'⁹⁸ They formed Diploma Films, intending to release exclusive subjects dealing—like *Florence Nightingale*—with the lives of famous women. Interiors were to be filmed at the Twickenham studio of B&C rival, the London Film Company. But the venture proved short lived, and in 1915–1916, Risdon moved over to make films at London with George Loane Tucker. The first was a revival of her role as Glory Quayle in *The Christian* (December 1915). Tucker was one of two American directors working at the studio, and he and Risdon married in September 1915. In 1917, she returned with him to the USA, where she began to play leading parts on Broadway.⁹⁹

Fred Groves

In Period Two, B&C had no male personality of the stature of Percy Moran, but two men regularly played opposite Elizabeth Risdon, Fred Groves and A.V. Bramble—each born in 1880 and so in their mid-thirties in the mid-teens.¹⁰⁰ Groves was fourth in succession in a family of established actors, his father being a well-known character comedian.¹⁰¹ He had begun his career in around 1900 with the Sarah Thorne stock company in which he had played a variety of parts, including a series of men who were deaf, blind and dumb. Then followed seasons at the Lyric and work under various managements, including such esteemed actor-managers as Sir George Alexander and—for three years—Martin Harvey. Next came seven years with the famous couple Julia Neilson and Fred Terry. Later, like Elizabeth Risdon, he was under Vedrenne's management at the Royalty. In 1912, he moved on to revue at the Empire, playing twelve different characters each evening, whilst at the same time performing in films during the day. He worked as a leading man at Motograph with Elvey and Risdon in the autumn of 1913, and when they moved to B&C, Groves accompanied them, the three working together on *In the Days of Trafalgar* in which Groves took the part of the sailor hero. He made at least nineteen films for B&C, regularly appearing with Risdon and Bramble. Given the variety of roles in his theatre career, the *Picturegoer* appropriately characterized him as 'an "all-round" actor', and Elvey took advantage of this versatility by casting him in a range of contrasting roles.¹⁰² He played the hero of the title in *Beautiful Jim* (November 1914) and another hero figure in *From Shop Girl to Duchess* (April 1915), but he was the villain in both *Her Luck in London* (January 1915) and *The Idol of Paris* (February 1915). In *London's Yellow Peril* (February 1915), he played Gilbert the Knut, a fashionable man about town, and was so popular in the part that the company decided to feature the character in a series of comic shorts.¹⁰³ As it turned out, only two spin-off Gilbert shorts were released.

Journalistic commentary still sometimes invoked the dangers associated with film performances, and Groves was reported as having undergone the discomfort of hanging from a frozen iron girder at the Crystal Palace, as collecting bruises and a sprained wrist from tumbling down a steep cliff and as being pitched over the animal's head when driving a runaway horse and cart. In May 1915, he transferred to Diploma when Elvey moved on, continuing to perform opposite Risdon under the former's direction. In 1916, he was once more in the studio by day and the theatre in the evenings—this time for London Films and at the Haymarket.¹⁰⁴

A.V. Bramble

Like Groves, A.V. Bramble had passed his early career in the theatre, beginning there in 1904 and spending some ten years on stage. He became an actor in films with B&C in 1914, appearing initially with Risdon and Groves in *In the Days of Trafalgar*. He acted in at least thirty-two films for the company, more titles than any other of its named performers. *The Cinema* nominated him 'one of our soundest screen actors' and the *Evening News* described him as 'a master of the art of "make-up"'.¹⁰⁵ The latter talent was taken advantage of in the way he and Groves would alternate roles—in contrast to the performer typing of the earlier period. Thus, in *Her Nameless (?) Child*, Groves played an elderly blacksmith and Bramble the young earl married to Risdon, whilst in *Home* (October 1915), Groves was the young fisherman Risdon was destined to marry and Bramble an old sea dog, his father. For *London's Yellow Peril* he wore blackface. Thus, given the skills of these Period Two actors, the enticements offered audiences had shifted from routines of vigorous action to virtuoso acting performances.

When the studio was subject to the changes resulting from the joint exodus of Elvey, Risdon and Groves, reports reassuringly noted Bramble would retain his position as a leading artist and then, in July, registered his promotion to directing on *Hearts That Are Human* (September 1915).¹⁰⁶ *The Cinema* observed how, on that film, his experience as an actor and producer in the theatre was apparent in his film direction, including his 'attention to detail in scenery, acting, furniture and lighting'.¹⁰⁷ He directed four more films in 1916–1917, each scripted by Eliot Stannard and two co-directed with him. In June 1916, just as production at B&C was about to collapse, he defended his work against accusations claiming that films showing crime harmed the young and should be banned. He asserted:

A play ... relies for its dramatic effect on contrast. Virtue versus Vice, Good versus Evil. Hence the extreme difficulty of giving strong and realistic film stories without depicting crime. The omission of crime from the subject-matter of our plots would leave us only Passion as the motive of our dramas—we should find ourselves perforce reduced to producing light drawing-room comedies, and scenics.¹⁰⁸

Such self-reflexiveness concerning the craft of film-making was also characteristic of the intellectual turn introduced by Bramble's peers—Elvey, Stannard and Harold Weston. But, with production at B&C at a standstill, Bramble and Stannard moved over to co-direct at Ideal in

January 1917 and then, through 1917–1918, cooperated as director and scriptwriter for various production companies.¹⁰⁹

Visitors from the theatre

Thus, in Period Two, B&C created a company recruited from actors whose performance styles had been first developed in the legitimate theatre. At the same time, from late 1914 to early 1916, it was pleased to draw attention to films in which it had persuaded eminent West End theatre people to make a special appearance. These occasional ‘visitors’ were used to further raise the status of the company and its films. Thus, McDowell was pleased to inform the press that the cast of Elvey’s *The Suicide Club* (August 1914) included the well-known players Montagu Love, who was currently performing at the New Theatre, and Frederick Culley, who had been in a recent revival at Wyndham’s Theatre.¹¹⁰ At the very end of 1914, it was announced that the company was working on a three-reel comedy expressly written around the personality of Charles Hawtrey, a highly successful light comedy performer. This was Hawtrey’s second screen appearance, and the film was directed by Elvey with Risdon as the female lead. Hawtrey constituted a big catch, and so a key selling point for the film was that it represented the ‘first time that a star of the legitimate stage has acted in combination with a star of the picture world in the production of a film play’.¹¹¹ Davison’s advertising for *A Honeymoon For Three* (February 1915) claimed it was ‘The Greatest Combination of Theatrical and Film Stars ever presented in a photoplay/Including/Charles Hawtrey/The celebrated actor now appearing in *A Message From Mars* at the Apollo Theatre/Supported by/Elizabeth Risdon/Britain’s Favourite Film Actress, in an Original, Romantic Comedy’.¹¹² Significantly, it was thought proper to bill theatre’s Hawtrey above cinema’s Risdon. In commenting on the film, the *Evening News* observed Elvey had made ‘the *experiment*, which turned out successfully, of getting together a cast which included stage and film players’ and that ranged through Miss Ruth MacKay and Miss Edith Evans of the Royalty Theatre, Mr Fred Groves of the Empire, Miss Mona Harrison of the Apollo, Mr Ernest Cox of the Vaudeville and Mr E. Compton Coutts of the New Theatre.¹¹³ This coup helped set a pattern for a year during which, as *The Kinematograph Year Book* suggested, probably more actors and actresses from the legitimate theatre appeared in pictures than in all previous years together.¹¹⁴ Amongst the other famous theatrical names visiting B&C were the forty-two-year-old Lilian Braithwaite in her first screen appearance, *The World’s Desire* (May 1915), and in *The Climax* (April 1916), Leon M. Lion to

play opposite Groves in *Grip* (July 1915) and Milton Rosmer for Harold Weston's *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*. The *KLW* called the latter the 'most polished and intellectual of actors', suggested he had yielded to 'the "Picture" Lure' and identified his 'accession to the ranks of kinema actors [as] a remarkable surrender of the "legitimate" to the youngest of our entertainments'.¹¹⁵

Another performer to work at B&C was Arthur Finn, at the time of his recruitment allegedly 'the highest paid picture artist in the United Kingdom'.¹¹⁶ He was an American who had appeared in films for Lubin and Mutual. He came to England in late summer 1913 and joined B&C in October, working there under the direction of his former colleague and fellow-American Charles Weston. He made only four films for the company, usually with Marie Pickering, but won approval for his Master Crook, the protagonist of the company's last film series. In December, he and Weston left to set up on their own account, although Finn did return to play in *Wild Oats* (November 1915).¹¹⁷

Finally, Jeff Barlow should be mentioned for the contrast he provided with the mainstream performers of Period Two. He was taken on specifically to play the lead in *The Adventures of Charles Peace, King of the Criminals* (July 1914), a film that, along with James Youngdeer's accounts of London criminal gangs, represented the more sensationalist emphasis in the 1914 productions. He was a performer of whom it was claimed that, without resort to make-up, his 'features [were] so remarkably loose that he [could] easily and comfortably make at least a hundred different faces in not much more than as many seconds'.¹¹⁸ He claimed to have conceived the idea of filming the infamous criminal's life: 'It was my indiarubber features that caused me to think of Charles Peace as a popular subject for a film drama. He had just such another face, and many times escaped the clutches of the law by changing it.'¹¹⁹ Barlow, therefore, represented a return to the physical performance mode characteristic of Period One, and typically he drew on experience in more popular fields of entertainment. In his thirty years of performing, he had appeared in musical comedy and with the D'Oyly Carte company, in pantomime and with the music hall star Albert Chevalier, a performer of comic Cockney songs. But Barlow and Charles Peace were essentially an exceptional sensationalist throwback at a moment when the dramas directed by Maurice Elvey and Harold Weston were being promoted as the company's premier productions.

Behind the Screen: Policy-makers, Directors and Writers

Actors were foregrounded in B&C's publicity, but determining their appearances on screen were the decisions of the company's senior management and the ideas of such talent-grade personnel as its directors and scenario writers. The cultural resources these people introduced served directly to determine the types of film produced and their distinctive qualities.

Bloomfield assumed the crucial role of top decision-maker during the first twenty months of the business. Then, for the next three years, he ran the enterprise in association with McDowell, before the latter took sole responsibility for a further three years. The formation of these two men in the earliest days of British cinema made a powerful contribution to how B&C developed during its years of growth and peak production.

B&C'S MANAGING DIRECTORS

Albert Henry Bloomfield

Albert Henry Bloomfield at times called himself an engineer, but his prime professional identity was that of cameraman. He was born at Walworth, London, in 1884, the eldest of five children, and his father was a hackney cab driver. He had entered the industry in its pioneering days by joining the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company some time in 1898 or 1899, presumably shortly after leaving school.¹ The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company had been founded in the USA but had come to Britain early in 1897 to set up a production unit for making topical and actuality films.² In March, it was given a place

on the bill at London's Palace Theatre, Cambridge Circus, where its films were showcased for the next five years. The British branch gained legal independence from the parent company in December 1897 and was growing rapidly at the moment Bloomfield was recruited. It was the only company at the time providing its staff with a formal training and would have taught him how to operate a film camera.³ With them, he acquired the practical knowledge of camera work and topical filming that later gave B&C its initial direction in production.

By 1904, British Biograph was passing its peak and beginning to scale down production, so, in either 1905 or 1906, Bloomfield moved to the Walturdaw company, where he took charge of its new dark rooms. This business had begun as Britain's first film rental company in 1896 but had reorganized itself as Walturdaw in 1904 in order to enter production the following year.⁴ It had set up an open-air studio at Wembley Park, and over his two or three years with the company, Bloomfield would have gained much of the organizational experience that facilitated his setting up B&C's plant and studio.

In the summer of 1908, at the age of twenty-four, he made the bold move of starting up on his own at Twickenham to make film locals and the sort of topicals he had worked on at Biograph. His initial success allowed him to transfer to Denmark Street the following February, and that autumn, possibly adopting the example of Walturdaw, he began production of story films. The summer of 1911 saw further growth, with the transfer to Endell Street and the addition of the East Finchley studio. Despite his managerial responsibilities, he sometimes operated as a cameraman, filming football matches on a Saturday afternoon or the occasional local—as when he recorded a ceremony of Druids at Finsbury Park, London, in November 1910.⁵ The year of the successful travelling stock companies was 1912, but after his return from the Jamaican expedition in spring 1913, he relinquished his directorship, after having spent the last five years building B&C up into an expansive and profitable concern.

Thereafter, Bloomfield returned full time to his initial vocation as cameraman. Broadwest Films Ltd was registered as a private company in October 1914 and he appears to have joined them from the beginning, to work on fiction subjects. By 1916, he was one of Walter West's top three cameramen there, working near B&C at Cunard's old Walthamstow studio, taken over by Broadwest that January. He seems to have stayed with the firm until it ceased production in 1921.⁶ He invented a camera tripod, whose rigidity and ingenious system of adjustment by pulleys rather than screws made it superior to alternative models, and he was present at the founding of the KineCameraman's Society in December

1918. Later, he seems to have gone freelance, working, for example, on the newsreels of the Topical Film Company in 1922.⁷

John Benjamin McDowell

John Benjamin McDowell—known familiarly in the trade as ‘Mac’—was born in London in 1878. His father, who had been born in Canada, was then a general labourer, but by 1891 had become a foreman at Woolwich Royal Arsenal. In 1893, John, aged fifteen, was apprenticed at the Arsenal to train as a mechanical engineer, and there he was engaged in the manufacture of war materials and ‘the proving of guns and ammunition’.⁸ At the time, the family lived at Maxey Road, Plumstead in south-east London, and McDowell’s first involvement in the novelty of cinema was as a Mutoscope operator at Plumstead in 1898.⁹ The Mutoscope was an individual viewing machine that showed moving scenes through an arrangement of flip-card photographs. They were located in shops, leisure sites and railway stations, and were one of several business ventures attempted by the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company. In July 1898, in a further modest entrepreneurial move, McDowell became the



Figure 7.1 John Benjamin McDowell, Managing Director of B&C, in uniform as a war cinematographer.
Collection of Sally Freytag

holder of five shares in the regionally based Manchester and Salford Mutoscope Company Ltd. However, he soon moved over to the Biograph side of the business, receiving there—like his fellow operatives, Bloomfield and Emile Lauste—training as a cameraman. Some years later, the industry pioneer, A.C. Bromhead, observed how '[a]ny man who began with the Biograph Company got a very sound grounding in his trade'.¹⁰ In particular, at Biograph McDowell helped 'to set up records in speedy photography' that were still unbeaten when he joined B&C in 1910.¹¹ For example, one year he and Lauste filmed the Grand National at Aintree, developed the print on a train back to London and had the topical screened at eleven o'clock the same night in the Empire Theatre, Leicester Square. Alongside his work as cameraman, he also gained experience on the exhibition side of Biograph's operation by working as a projectionist. In April 1900, he was at the Palace Theatre presenting the company's films from the Boer War, and, in March 1905, he was showing films at the Empire, Leicester Square, where Biograph had transferred its programmes.¹²

At some time in 1906, McDowell moved to become chief cameraman with the big Warwick Trading Company.¹³ That year, Will Barker, another industry pioneer, had merged his Autoscope Company (which he had founded in 1900) with Warwick (itself originally set up in 1898) to become managing director of the reorganized business. He was an enthusiast for the news film and Warwick had always specialized in topical and actuality production. It sent travelling operators around the world, and the *KLW* observed how McDowell had 'covered the greater part of Europe and America in search of subjects'.¹⁴ Nevertheless, in September 1907, he transferred to the photographic department at Walturdaw, where Bloomfield was already supervising the darkrooms.¹⁵ But he had left them by April 1908 and was offering himself as 'open to engagement as a kine photographer'.¹⁶ Soon after, he returned to Warwick where, with Barker, he filmed territorial soldiers camping out on Salisbury Plain in mid-August 1909.¹⁷ By the end of the month, though, Barker had branched out again on his own, and so, late in October, with his mentor gone, McDowell was whispering to a *KLW* reporter that he was about to sever his connection with the company.¹⁸ By February 1910, he had joined Bloomfield as partner in the expanding B&C business, at which moment his reputation in the industry was riding high. The *KLW* held him 'responsible for a considerable proportion of the topical successes of the last three years' and claimed he had contributed many 'scoops' to the run of 'most remarkable "exclusives" obtained by the indefatigable Will G. Barker and his assistants' at Warwick.¹⁹ He was

also reputed to stick out for the rate for the job from the various firms that employed him.²⁰

Clearly, McDowell was a cinematographer of some skill and ingenuity, and Barker later recalled one characteristic example of his resourcefulness. He was his 'most trusted operator' at Warwick. Once, when they were attempting to film the killing of a course hare by a greyhound, they had mistakenly brought out an old camera damaged the previous week. Nevertheless, McDowell 'had a screwdriver, a pair of pliers, and a bit of string, which, together with one of [Barker's] bootlaces, got the camera fixed up somehow'.²¹ He then used wire from a soda water cork taken from a nearby refreshment room to substitute for the missing bobbin onto which the film was threaded. The finished film, according to Barker, was a success, but only ran for three nights before it was withdrawn at the request of the Home Secretary after complaints in the House of Commons!

McDowell, therefore, came to B&C at the age of thirty-two with almost twelve years of industry experience behind him. He had worked primarily in the topical field and joined B&C specifically to enhance its topical output, although he also proved instrumental in starting up the company's general-interest actuality subjects. Like Bloomfield, he would sometimes function as a cameraman, but he became increasingly preoccupied with managing the company and with the commercial side of the business. Steadily, it seems, Bloomfield's role was eclipsed by that of his dynamic partner until, with the stepping down of the former, McDowell took charge as B&C's 'genial managing director'.²² With the central-producer system in place in Period Two, he was in full executive control of company operations, determining policy and allocating resources. In the mid-teens, it seems, the company was very much his personal creation and, in parallel with contemporaries such as Hepworth and Barker, he helped set the precedent for the head of a British production company to assume a creative role—a role in which he was succeeded by such eminent producers as Michael Balcon, Alexander Korda and David Puttnam.²³

The Great War, however, took him away from these business responsibilities. He clearly felt some obligation towards the war effort for he had become a member of the Auxiliary Services in November 1915 and had joined the Voluntary Training Corps in January 1916, but it was B&C's membership of the Trade Topical Committee of the Kinematograph Manufacturers Association that led to his actually going to France.²⁴ This body had allocated exclusive film rights to major newsworthy events before the war, and midway through 1915 had managed to negotiate terms with the War Office, which had initially refused permission to film

on the Western Front, regarding the topical record of the war.²⁵ Consequent on this agreement, a farewell dinner was held in November to see off the two men selected to be the first official war cinematographers. McDowell was present, and the *KLW* expressed its pleasure at seeing older industry men still allied with topical work.²⁶ One of the original cameramen was invalided home with influenza in June 1916 and, as the War Office was eager to replace him without delay, McDowell promptly volunteered. According to one account, 'within a few hours after leaving the meeting on June 23rd 1916, he was on his way to France'.²⁷ In reality, he had almost forty-eight hours to make his preparations and four days in France before the big summer push began on 1 July. He spent ten days filming, exposing some 4,000 feet of negative, before returning to England where his footage and that of his colleague Geoffrey Malins was viewed on 12 July, and the decision was made to combine the material into a feature-length film, *The Battle of the Somme*. It was given a special presentation by the Topical Committee on 10 August.²⁸ Subsequently, McDowell returned to France and remained there—brief returns to London for leave or editing apart—until the war's end. He became the longest serving of the official cameramen, to the clear neglect of his responsibilities at B&C. By 1917, there were seven cameramen on the Western Front, and in April 1918, he was placed in charge of them, overseeing all production, developing and printing as well as continuing to film.²⁹ He served as a lieutenant and was awarded the Order of the British Empire in June 1918, along with Malins, and then the Military Medal—both for his work as an 'intrepid war cinematographer'.³⁰

In June 1918, he was displaced as B&C's Managing Director by Edward Godal, and from that moment his responsibility for the company ceased. Thereafter, he went it alone, continuing to work as a cameraman. After the war, he began operations as McDowell's Commercial Films Limited from an address at 213 Shaftesbury Avenue, which seems to have been the family home.³¹ By October 1919, he was advertising himself as undertaking 'All Kinds of Kinema Camerawork', especially 'when you require a special or local film', and in 1920 his offer was: 'Cinema Films for All Purposes/Private and Specialised Films Taken/Records of Family Events/Weddings etc.'.³² This was, perhaps, a rather sad back-tracking to the sort of film locals that Bloomfield had launched B&C with back in 1908. But McDowell was continuing with film-making, including topical work, the field in which he had established his reputation. In 1919, for example, he was responsible for a short item on returning soldiers, *The March of the Guards*, and in 1920 he filmed both the first Boat Race since 1914, *The Victory Boat Race*, and, at feature length, *The Allied Pilgrimage*

to Lourdes.³³ Like Bloomfield, he worked for the Topical Film Company and was credited as one of their 'star' cameramen early in 1922.³⁴ In 1924, his own company revived Lieutenant Daring in *Lieutenant Daring RN and the Water Rats* (February 1924), which reunited him with Percy Moran and James Youngdeer. Between 1926 and 1936, he worked with the cinema department of the Agfa Company, after which, for a while, he dealt with the American negative stock being handled by a Mr Stubbs of Welwyn Garden City. In 1949, when McDowell was seventy-two, a contributor to the *Cine Technician* speculated that, despite his retiring from films—and in a return to his beginnings—he was 'making a second fortune in engineering'.³⁵

As managing directors, Bloomfield and McDowell made the broad strategic decisions that determined the overall development of B&C as a business—for example, by investing in a sophisticated processing plant and a costly second studio—and the specific policy decisions that gave direction to the company's day-to-day activities—for example, making the shift into fiction films and actuality subjects and turning towards exclusives and a cinema of quality. However, the actual content and quality of the films produced depended more particularly on the work of the firm's writers and directors, so what follows details some of their backgrounds and biographies.

THE FILM DIRECTORS

From the beginning of its fiction output, B&C deployed the director system of production, wherein a film's director assumed control over the creative team participating in its making. At the same moment, the trade press began reporting on the director as the figure crucially responsible for the films in his charge. Thus, the germ of later criticism's 'author theory' was present from very early on, premised on the emergent organizational routines of the cinema institution's production companies. Here, however, as in so many areas of early cinema practice, film-making was following relatively recent theatrical precedent. For, as part of the emergence of the West End theatre in the late Victorian period, a new figure had appeared on the scene, the 'artistic director', whose presence marked 'a definite stage in the evolution of the modern [theatre] producer or director'.³⁶ This figure, often the playwright, had begun to take responsibility for the staging and balance in the performances of whole theatre companies, thereby giving the production of a play an overall artistic coherence. The film director was taking on a similar role in Britain's fledgling film studios.

Table 7.1: B&C Directors and Fiction Films, 1909–1917

Director	Years films released in ¹	Total duration (in hours and minutes) ²	Total number of films	Average length (minutes)
PERIOD ONE				
Martinek	1909–1913	14:20	71	12
Raymond	1910–1913	8:59	31	17
Aylott	1911–1912	4:10	17	15
Northcote	1912	2:38	10	18
PERIOD TWO				
Fitzhamon	1913–1914	1:29	8	11
Chas. Weston	1913–1914	9:50	16	37
Ernest Batley	1913–1915	9:45	18	32
Ethyle Batley	1913–1915	5:17	18	18
Youngdeer	1914	1:48	3	36
Elvey	1914–1915	19:55	22	43
H. Weston	1915–1916	6:17	6	63
Bramble	1915–1917	6:03	6	61

(1) Some films were released after a director had left the company. Further, Martinek had one late film released in 1916; Aylott had two films released in 1916; and Northcote had one film released in 1914.

(2) Durations have been calculated by converting a director's total footage released into hours and minutes on the basis of 1 foot per second.

Between 1909 and 1917, the majority (78 per cent) of B&C's fiction films were made by twelve directors.³⁷ They joined and left in a clear succession and, like the actors, their involvements corresponded to the two periods that fell either side of May 1913. Table 7.1 lists their names, the years during which B&C was releasing their pictures, the number of films made by each, their total duration and their average lengths.

Clearly, there were major and minor figures. Oceano Martinek was the company's premier director in Period One, with over fourteen hours of film to his credit, and Maurice Elvey was top director in Period Two, responsible for twenty hours of film. Intermediate figures were Charles Weston, Ernest Batley and Charles Raymond, each credited with nine to ten hours. Then came Harold Weston, A.V. Bramble, Ethyle Batley and Dave Aylott, whose contributions ranged from over four to over six hours. Lastly, there were Sidney Northcote, James Youngdeer and Lewin Fitzhamon, each of whom put out two and a half hours of film or less.³⁸ In Period One, average film lengths were short, but in Period Two, they

grew longer. The average duration of Martinek's films was twelve minutes, whereas that of the latecomer, Harold Weston, was sixty-three; an intermediate figure such as Charles Weston averaged thirty-seven minutes.

However, as with the actors, what most differentiated B&C's directors was the cultural resources they brought with them. Their backgrounds were relevant in that they determined the predispositions, knowledge and ideas that helped form their production practices. Once again, the contrast between contributions from popular commercial culture in the earlier period and from more bourgeois cultural assumptions in the latter becomes apparent, especially when, towards the end of Period Two, Maurice Elvey and Harold Weston were aspiring to treat film as an art form as well as a mode of entertainment.

DIRECTORS IN PERIOD ONE: 1909–1913

Oceano Martinek

Martinek and Raymond, along with Aylott and Northcote, were the Period One directors, with Martinek joining in the summer of 1909, aged thirty-three, to direct his wife in *Her Lover's Honour*, which, he asserted, 'opened the eyes of the makers'.³⁹ He seems to have had connections with the picture business since 1898, and *The Pictures* observed that he was 'one of the earliest pioneers of the motion picture in this or any other country. He [could] recall the times when the cinematograph was in its very youngest infancy, when films of thirty to forty feet in length used to be taken round by travelling circuses.'⁴⁰

Oceano Henry Oscar Martinek was born in May 1876 on a steamship travelling to Sweden.⁴¹ His father was a circus performer, born in the Ottoman Empire—giving Oceano Turkish antecedents—though his mother was English. His elder brother Leonard was born in Italy and his younger sister Emilie, known as Aimee, in Germany. All three followed family tradition and became circus performers, with Leonard and Oceano playing both together and as part of larger ensembles. Their double act was as The Martinek Brothers, clown-grotesques wearing exaggerated make-up—a feature Oceano carried over into his film work. Some time in his early career he was, for a while, a bullfighter, luring the bull with a cloak and plunging banderilla darts into its shoulders. He was injured twice, on one occasion receiving 2 inches of horn into his body.⁴² Also, in around 1900, he appears to have had his own company, travelling in North Africa and showing films as part of the entertainment offered. The Arabs, he recalled, 'refused to wax enthusiastic ... [and] ascribed the weird objects on the screen to the action of some particularly malevolent demons'.⁴³ But

circus was central to his career, taking him through Europe and, like his wife, to touring with Forepaugh and Sell's Circus, travelling for nine months with them through Canada, the USA and Mexico, and witnessing a cyclone level the big tent. He married Ivy at Ostend in March 1904 on the eve of their departure for America as part of the twelve-person Florenz Troupe of Acrobatic Dancers, signed up by the Barnum and Bailey Circus in the wake of its recent European tour.⁴⁴ They returned to France early in 1907 and went to work in films for the Pathé Frères company. In 1909, they came to England and B&C, and in 1911 were living in two rooms in Lichfield Street, West London, where they were recorded as naturalized British citizens. Their daughter was born in Ostend a year before their marriage, and appears as the child posting a letter in her parents' 1912 film, *Three-Fingered Kate and the Wedding Presents*.

Oceano was a much-travelled, cosmopolitan figure who spoke seven languages and appears to have been a man of some sophistication, claiming to be both a sculptor and a painter in oils and watercolours. Even so, like his wife and other family members, his background was in various fields of spectacular entertainment, and it was this culture he could bring to his work for B&C.

He directed at least seventy-one films for the company in an output that expanded steadily before falling off with his 1913 releases, and he directed virtually all the fiction films in its first two years of production. He made both comics and dramas, but was largely confined to short, one-reel subjects and the more routine productions.⁴⁵ He also acted and wrote many of his own plots. Nevertheless, he left during McDowell's reforms, and in August 1913, he and Ivy were making the Big Ben Films for Pathé at Alexandra Palace. He continued to direct for them into 1916 before briefly returning to B&C for one more film in September 1915.⁴⁶

Charles Raymond

B&C's second fiction director was Charles Raymond.⁴⁷ He was born in India in 1858 and had gained considerable experience in some of the West End's less straight-laced entertainment venues before he entered cinema in the 1900s. Although he was a playwright who had taken roles in both tragedy and comedy, he was not a conventional actor from the legitimate theatre. He was, however, a talented mime and an excellent impersonator, which skills clearly contributed to the success of his screen performances. For several years, he was a leading dancer in the ballets performed at the Alhambra music hall in Leicester Square and he was an established producer of pantomimes. He was also an innovator in the

more 'racy' areas of popular amusements, as when he introduced London to the 'revue' format at the Tivoli, a leading music hall in the Strand. This was a musical entertainment—developed in late nineteenth-century Paris—in which a team of performers presented songs, dances and satirical sketches with a topical edge. He also installed the provocative 'tableaux vivants' at the Palace Theatre of Varieties, Cambridge Circus, in the 1890s as a challenge to its prestigious rival, the Empire in Leicester Square. These 'living pictures' copied nineteenth-century paintings of nudes, the female performers in their skin-coloured, close-fitting 'body stockings' appearing outrageously naked to the audience.⁴⁸ *The Pictures* reported that they 'created more talk than anything which had previously occupied the boards'.⁴⁹

Thus, Raymond brought to his film work skills and insights gained in the domain of popular show business. He seems to have begun working in films in around 1902 with Will Barker's Autoscope Company and to have moved on to direction at the Warwick Trading Company when the two businesses combined in 1906—the time it also took on McDowell. There, his name was associated with the origination of the Cinephone system—a method of synchronizing gramophone and film developed at the end of 1909. Raymond was briefly at B&C in 1910 and then appears to have rejoined Barker, for whom he directed a version of *Hamlet* (March 1912) that also featured Dorothy Foster. With this film, he claimed to have established a record for, after drafting the adaptation, he played the title role and directed the film, without previous rehearsal, all in one day. He returned to B&C for a more protracted stay in May 1912 but was another casualty of McDowell's reforms, and so, in 1915, was to be found making Sexton Blake detective films with ex-B&C actor Harry Lorraine at I.B. Davidson.⁵⁰

Raymond made at least thirty-two films for B&C and was entrusted with many of Period One's major projects. In 1910, he directed *Every Wrong Shall be Righted* (October 1910), which was the company's second film of some significance and the one claiming the novelty of employing West End theatre actors. The female lead was, allegedly, 'a young lady specially selected by [Raymond] for her aptitude for living picture work, in which she [had] undergone a training extending over two years'.⁵¹ In 1912, he directed *The Great Anarchist Mystery* (September 1912), important as the company's first move into the two-reel film. He directed all five of the popular, action-packed Dick Turpin films and was responsible for the highly charged Don Q series (released through 1913), as well as their spectacular companion, *The Mountaineer's Romance* (December 1912). He was also director of the films produced on the expedition to Jamaica.

Much of the time, he worked with Percy Moran, thereby making a major contribution to B&C's growing fame as a producer of action spectacles.

Sidney Northcote and Dave Aylott

Sidney Northcote was a more shadowy figure. Possibly born in Liverpool in 1884, he made around ten films for the company in 1911–1912, although he seems only to have stayed for some six months.⁵² Even so, he was responsible for several of the more prestigious Period One films. In particular, he directed the Dorothy Foster 'romance' vehicles, filmed at scenically impressive locations in Cornwall and North Wales. He also directed what may have been the first British Western, *Through Death Valley* (April 1912), in which gold prospectors were rescued from Indians by the US cavalry. Later, in 1914, he was working with other ex-B&C personnel for Harry Lorraine's Daring Films.

Dave Aylott directed fifteen films at B&C in 1911–1912. Born in London's East End in 1885, he had seen his first film in a converted shop in 1897. This site had also functioned as a fit-up theatre showing shortened plays, as a marionette theatre and as a venue for performing seals. He began working on the halls in 1899, and appeared as an actor with Hoxton's Old Variety Theatre stock company, putting on 'strong meaty drama' twice nightly.⁵³ He entered the cinema by developing plot ideas and directing chase comedies for Walturdaw at their open-air studio at Wembley Park, and was with the company from April 1906 to 1908, at the same time as Bloomfield was responsible for its dark rooms and McDowell was there filming topicals. After eight months in charge of Williamson's studio at Brighton, he moved to Cricks and Martin and another open-air studio. There, his output was a brisk two films a week, including the 'Muggins, VC' films and the comic 'Scroggins' pictures that ran in parallel to Haley's 'Snorky' persona at B&C. Also at Cricks and Martin, Aylott worked with performers from the troupe of the eminent music hall entrepreneur Fred Karno. With them, he created a team of 'Comic Coppers'. When he joined B&C, he was therefore already an experienced film-maker. Next, he turned back to acting and directing with Cricks and Martin, until the partnership dissolved and he joined the latter to make trick comedies at Merton Park. He returned briefly to B&C to direct a couple of exclusives for release early in 1916, and then went into the army.⁵⁴ His first B&C film was in the familiar chase genre he had pioneered at Walturdaw, *Run to Earth by Boy Scouts* (August 1911), and he made mainly short comics whilst with them. However, his company claim to fame was direction of the first four Lieutenant Daring films.⁵⁵

DIRECTORS IN PERIOD TWO: 1913–1917

Direction in Period Two divided between an early and a later phase. The former was associated with Charles Weston, James Youngdeer and Lewin Fitzhamon, whose backgrounds, like those of their Period One predecessors, were in popular culture. The later phase was associated with directors from more legitimate theatrical worlds—first the couple Ernest and Ethyle Batley, and then Maurice Elvey and Harold Weston, men of marked artistic ambition.

Lewin Fitzhamon

Lewin Fitzhamon made eight films for B&C of a highly specialized nature, mainly in the first part of 1914. By this time he was a veteran figure. He was born in 1869, and his early career involved time as a steeplechase rider (c.1889), touring the halls with a company that performed sketches, writing for a sporting paper and employment at several theatres as stage manager. One of his music hall sketches was filmed in 1900, and he joined the Hepworth Company in 1904, where he remained under contract for the next eight years, writing, directing, acting in and producing over 600 short films.⁵⁶ In 1912, he formed his own production company, Fitz Films, based, like B&C's big studio, in Walthamstow. There, in the years up to 1914, he specialized in working with children and animals, and it was for these skills that he was hired by B&C.⁵⁷ All the films he made for the company featured children and often animals, and in particular he worked with the Royston children on their Hurricane Kids series.

Charles Weston

Charles Weston and James Youngdeer were recruited from the booming North American film industry, and unlike their intellectually inclined successors with their orientation towards quality film, these two contributed most forcefully to the spectacular and sensationalist tendency in B&C's Period Two productions.

Charles Weston was born in 1886, and so was twenty-seven years old when he arrived at B&C. He was small, dapper and 'sparely built, with a big wide head, a command of language and a governing, masterful temperament'.⁵⁸ According to *The Cinema*, he was a 'typical hustler', and publicity presented him as the world's youngest film director.⁵⁹ His early career, probably somewhat embroidered in the telling, aligned him with the populist culture of Period One. His father was a Londoner and his

mother a Frenchwoman, but he alleged he had been born on a train travelling from New York. Following his mother's death, he ran away to join a circus, with which he remained for five years. After this, he ended back in a New York saloon clearing spittoons, where he was approached by a stranger who had overheard him singing and inquired if he could act. As a result, he drifted into the theatre, touring for some time in *Peter Pan*, in which he played a variety of parts and for which an entirely new supporting company was engaged in every new town at which it played. Next, he moved to London, where he became a roller-skating instructor at Olympia. That was followed by a tour to Australia with another theatre company. On his return, he washed up in Egypt with no money, but passed himself off as a tour guide to visiting Americans, whom he also escorted to Jerusalem and Jericho. Using money from this venture, he travelled to Paris, where once again he taught roller skating. There, an injury led a doctor to recommend rest at Irthlingborough in Northamptonshire, England—the location he later chose for *Waterloo*. After three months there, he married the daughter of the household he was lodging with, and together they returned to acting in Paris. From this, he made enough money to cross to America with his own company, but expenses on entering the country left him broke. However, because his wife needed an operation in New York, he wrote a film script that was taken up by a production company. Later, he moved into direction, and was in Cuba as assistant director with the Imp Company in 1910. He worked for Bison, Reliance and Majestic, in whose films his wife, Alice Inward, also appeared, and with Excelsior and Punch, but, as *The Cinema* explained, his 'special forte [was] the production of battle pictures'—hence *Waterloo*—despite a gunpowder explosion at Bison having scarred his body, injured his eardrums and damaged his eyesight so that he lost vision for three weeks.⁶⁰

Weston came to England in May 1913 for another rest, but was soon employed by B&C, for whom he made four films in the three weeks before embarking on the task of setting up *The Battle of Waterloo* in June. He was with the company for around seven months, during which time he directed seventeen films, including five longer exclusives—the latter, of course, McDowell's new venture. He avoided comedy and was drawn to crime films and action spectacles. The former included the detective drama *To Save Her Dad* (July 1913), *The Broken Chisel* (October 1913), with its jail escape and dangerous sea rescue, and the first outing of *The Master Crook* (December 1913), featuring fellow American Arthur Finn. The spectacles included the epic *The Battle of Waterloo* (September 1913), the snow-blinding adventures on Mont Blanc of *A Tragedy in the Alps* (also

September), the balloon and aeroplane exploits of *Through the Clouds* (another September release) and a ship explosion and hydroplane rescue on *In Fate's Grip* (December 1913)—all costly major productions and key contributors to the company's considerable success in the latter part of 1913. For most of these films, Weston also worked on the scenarios, and his custom in directing actors was first to perform the various parts himself so they might follow his instructions more closely. However, in mid-December, he and Finn severed their connection with B&C to start up their own production company.⁶¹ This was the Weston-Finn Publishing Company, which began releasing films in January 1914, usually directed and scripted by Weston and featuring Finn—for whom they created the character of Detective Finn.⁶²

James Youngdeer

James Youngdeer, a Native American, came to England and directed three sensational crime dramas for B&C in the summer of 1914. These featured actress Lillian Wiggins, the sinister Black Cross Gang, kidnapping, counterfeiting, explosions and Thames-side hide-outs. Like his compatriot, Youngdeer brought to B&C his knowledge of the flourishing cinema of North America. He had been born in Nebraska as a member of the Winnebago tribe in the 1890s and had been another travelling performer, appearing in a Wild West show with the Barnum and Bailey Circus. He entered the film business to appear in a series of Indian films, a minor genre distinct from the Western, where the characters he played were figures of nobility, authority and moral responsibility—not the conventional racist stereotype of the screen Indian.⁶³ He acted for Kalem, Biograph and Vitagraph and then starred in, wrote for and, from around 1908, directed films for Lubin. He also, like Weston, worked at Bison Pictures. He joined Pathé American as a director and actor when it opened in New Jersey in spring 1910 to make authentic-looking Western and Indian pictures, and he established and took charge of its West Coast studio at Edendale in 1911. In 1913, however, scandal struck, and Youngdeer was accused of involvement in white slavery and charged with statutory rape. In consequence, he jumped bail and fled to Europe, where he seems to have remained for the duration of the First World War, part of the time making documentaries in France. He arrived in England from Paris in spring 1914, and seems to have promptly fallen in with McDowell, perhaps through the agency of fellow-American Charles Weston. At B&C he worked on his three gangland shockers, and then moved to Motograph to direct a picture with former B&C actor, Harry Lorraine. He was in England again in 1924 to co-direct Percy Moran

in *Lieut. Daring and the Water Rats*—a title that echoed his earlier B&C film, *The Water Rats of London* (July 1914)—for a company briefly set up by McDowell.⁶⁴

Ernest and Ethyle Batley

The films of Ernest and Ethyle Batley introduced the second phase of directorial work in Period Two, when the contribution of practices and ideas from the legitimate theatre began to shape company films in a more substantial fashion. They began to strengthen the quality film tendency that was to be consolidated and extended by Elvey and Harold Weston.

Ernest was born in London in 1873 and Ethyle was born Alice Ethel Murray in Wigan in 1876—which would have made them forty and thirty-seven years old when they joined B&C in 1913.⁶⁵ Each seems to have grown up in a prosperous middle-class environment, but at some time in the 1890s, Ernest turned to the theatre and, in the latter part of the decade, Alice Murray left Wigan for the same vocation, taking the stage name of Ethyle Gordon Murray.⁶⁶ Rather than appearing in London's prestigious West End theatres, they were part of the tradition of touring companies, travelling between provincial theatres and giving week-long performances of a standard West End repertoire. At the moment of the 1901 Census, they were recorded as an actor and actress boarding in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, presumably theatrical lodgings whilst on tour. They



Figure 7.2 Ernest Batley as Napoleon in *The Battle of Waterloo*.
Illustrated Film Monthly, October 1913

were married the following June, and daughter Dorothy, their only child, was born seven months later in January 1902.

Ernest seems to have begun directing films in 1910 and maintained a steady output until 1916.⁶⁷ He worked as an actor, writer and director, and in June 1913 *The Cinema* somewhat extravagantly claimed he had 'probably written and [directed] more photo-plays than any man living'.⁶⁸ For her part, Ethyle was a unique figure because, as her obituaries duly noted, she was 'the only lady [director] in the country, and she won the affection and respect of all who knew her by her kindness and her outstanding capabilities as an artist, and also as a businesswoman'.⁶⁹ She too wrote and acted, and she directed her first film in autumn 1912 for John Bull films. Much of the time, husband and wife collaborated closely, and each would act in the other's films. *The Cinema* wrote of them in their time at B&C:

Mr Batley is certainly one of the most hard-working and able men in the company's employment, and with the assistance of his clever wife he is responsible for some of the finest work which it has turned out. It is a real education to watch Mr and Mrs Batley at their work. Their attention to detail and the extraordinary care they devote to every side of their profession are worthy of the very highest praise.⁷⁰

Before joining B&C, Ernest was with the Hepworth and Clarendon companies, and had directed several H.B. English films. He had declined offers to work abroad and joined B&C in June 1913 to play Napoleon. He stayed on for the next nineteen months to act and direct, so, when the second studio was opened in autumn 1913, Ernest was put in charge at East Finchley whilst Charles Weston took responsibility at Walthamstow. By the following June, Batley had transferred to Walthamstow and James Youngdeer was setting off explosions at Finchley, with Ernest becoming the company's lead director between Weston's departure and the arrival of Elvey.

Although they were a team, the Batleys' output revealed a significant company-sanctioned gender differentiation. Each directed eighteen films whilst they were with B&C, but Ernest produced almost ten hours of material, with an average duration of thirty-two minutes, whilst Ethyle produced only around five hours, with an average duration of eighteen minutes. She was limited to short subjects, whereas he was entrusted with six exclusives. Further, given her position as Head of the Juvenile Department, Ethyle worked much of the time with children, and ten of her films featured her daughter. Typical titles were *The Child Mother* (her

first release in November 1913), *Three Little Orphans* (February 1914) and *The Girl Boy Scout* (October 1914). Ernest directed more varied fare, including the last two Lieutenant Daring films, the two follow-ups to Charles Weston's *Master Crook*, *Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot* (November 1913) and *The Adventures of Charles Pease* (July 1914). These continued the sensationalist tradition of Period One, but some of Ernest's other films helped open up the quality film line of development. Four of his exclusives were adaptations of famous plays, including Walter Howard's romantic melodrama *The Midnight Wedding* (May 1914) and *When London Sleeps* (October 1914), from a Charles Darrell melodrama. Of Batley's revival of the Howard play, *The Cinema* approvingly wrote that he had 'handled the subject with memories of the scenes which attracted the people to the Lyceum. He ha[d] attempted, not unwisely, no innovation of his own origination, but followed the stage version religiously.'⁷¹ Perhaps his theatrical background encouraged this veneration for the original but it contrasted with Elvey's opening up of the more elderly *Black-Eyed Susan* when he adapted it at around the same time. *The Midnight Wedding* and *The Life of Shakespeare* were the films *The Cinema* believed were beginning to move the company away from its more routine sensationalist fare and Ernest's female lead for *The Midnight Wedding* was Ethel Bracewell, the actress dedicated to refining her craft. The First World War broke out during the Batleys' tenure at B&C and so, in the autumn of 1914, they put out several war-themed subjects, including anti-German comic shorts and Ernest's *An Englishman's Home* (October 1914), adapted from an invasion-scare play by Guy du Maurier to which he had owned the screen rights since January.⁷² During 1914, Ernest was, to an extent, competing with a more enterprising newcomer, Maurice Elvey, and it seems that latterly, with Elvey's star in the ascendant, Ernest was relegated to comic shorts.

Late in October, Ethyle left B&C, after sixteen months with the company, to join the Burlingham Standard Company.⁷³ Burlingham had been B&C's cameraman-director of travel and mountaineering films, but had left in June to set up on his own. He recruited Ethyle to help him diversify into fiction films, and in January 1915, they were joined by Ernest, another refugee from B&C.⁷⁴ He had been there for nineteen months.⁷⁵

Maurice Elvey

Maurice Elvey was the most important and creative director to work for B&C, the company giving him his first big opportunity to develop as a

film-maker. He was one of the three ‘intellectuals’—alongside Harold Weston and Eliot Stannard—to join the company in 1914–1915 who helped shift production definitively towards the quality film. The cultural formation of these three was not the worlds of circus, music hall and popular entertainment but the legitimate theatre, journalism and fiction writing, more intellectual domains that they were able to draw on in both their practice and theorizing.

Elvey once recalled how he was ‘a very high-brow young man’ when he entered the film industry, and by the time he joined B&C at the age of twenty-six, his experience in the theatre had already been considerable.⁷⁶ He was born William Seward Folkard at Darlington in November 1887 and in his early years he was very poor, receiving only a limited education. He ran away from home at the age of eleven and took a series of casual jobs before finding his way into the theatre, where he began as an extra and assistant stage manager first in London and then at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham. He moved on to provincial touring, and, between 1908 and 1911, to small parts in the plays put on at London’s New Theatre by the company run by Fred Terry and Julia Neilson. At the same time, he embarked on a project of self-education and refashioning by reading widely, joining the Fabian Society, where he got to know H.G.



Figure 7.3 Advertisement for Maurice Elvey’s *The Bells of Rheims*.
Moving Picture Offered List, 17 April 1915

Wells and George Bernard Shaw, contributing to socialist periodicals and becoming, as he later suggested, 'very revolutionary in my ideas'.⁷⁷ In July 1911, aged twenty-four, he formed the Adelphi Play Society, a part-time subscription company putting on Sunday night performances of plays denied a West End showing because they were regarded as either insufficiently commercial or too controversial. As a consequence, he staged critically appreciated plays by such progressive writers as Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov. In 1912, having watched Elvey rehearsing an Adelphi Play Society item, Harley Granville Barker, who had staged Shaw's plays in his New Drama seasons at the Court Theatre between 1904 and 1907, hired him to be his representative in New York and to take *Fanny's First Play* by Shaw to Broadway, with Elizabeth Risdon in the title role. There, in a converted shop, Elvey claimed to have seen his first feature film—a German movie based on Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*—and this so impressed him that he resolved to make films on his return to England.

In America, he also met Larry Trimble, the director and husband of Florence Turner, who gave him a letter of introduction to Joe Bamburger, the American owner of the small British Motograph production company. Bamburger took him on to work alongside the more experienced ex-B&C director Charles Raymond, and he made seven films there to be released between November 1913 and March 1914. Four of them featured Risdon, who had joined Motograph with him, and Fred Groves, who had helped Elvey when they were both with Terry and Nielson.

Having gained initial film-making experience, Elvey approached the bigger and more successful B&C with a proposal for filming the much-revived naval melodrama *Black-Eyed Susan*. He joined the company as its senior director on 13 April 1914, and the popularity of this film with reviewers and the public led to an intensive thirteen-month stay, during which he directed twenty-two films. Together, they ran for twenty hours, with an average duration of forty-three minutes. Elizabeth Risdon was the lead in eighteen of them. Sixteen were longer exclusives—double the number made by any other B&C director—and twelve were adaptations. The latter made a significant contribution to the company's quality film output and its bid for greater respectability. Elvey filmed three novels, including two by John Strange Winter, and adaptations of six plays—mainly melodramas, including three by Charles Darrell. *Florence Nightingale* (March 1915) was taken from a biography, *The Loss of the Birkenhead* (August 1914) drew on a poem and *The Suicide Club* (August 1914) reworked stories by Robert Louis Stevenson. There was a certain irony about the play adaptations in so far as the self-made intellectual from a New Drama background won cinema success by directing the sort of

melodramatic material advanced critical commentary was coming to disdain—though company policy here would have been laid down by McDowell. However, Elvey and his collaborators were resourceful in their adaptations, as when, in *Black-Eyed Susan*, he contrived for the heroine to rescue her sailor lover and introduced the historical figure of Nelson—hence the name change to *In the Days of Trafalgar*. For the Darrell melodrama *Her Luck in London* (January 1915), the action was cleverly ‘brought up to date by the introduction of a hilarious night-club and miniature “revue”’.⁷⁸

Elvey was recognized as tireless and hard-working, enthusiastic and imaginative, and his sure judgement regarding ‘what the public wants’ was seen as ‘proverbial’, with *The Cinema* opining that ‘perhaps no other British [director could] cast such a wide net over popular fancies. His work inevitably “ropes in” the masses and at the same time does not neglect the tastes of the more critical members of the community.’⁷⁹ By the time he left B&C, he was widely recognized as being ‘one of our most distinguished [directors]’ and as a ‘master-craftsman’ whose titles had become ‘picture-household words all over the country’.⁸⁰ *The Cinema* declared Elvey’s methods were ‘marked by the simple directness and dynamic force of character which are typical of the man himself ... There is nothing “namby-pamby” or decadent about Mr Elvey’s work, and his clean, vigorous, and manly style has been enormously to the liking of British cinemagoers.’⁸¹ Thus, the magazine offered him as a proficient narrative film-maker with a distinctive style and to this judgement the *KLW* added the observation that his ‘artistic temperament and... . keen eye to beauty’ were also reflected in his films.⁸²

In contrast to his collaborator Eliot Stannard, Elvey wrote little about film art, but at the end of the war, he did reveal an intellectual familiarity with the cultural modernism of the early teens—albeit a disdainful one. He asserted:

In artistic circles a relentless freakishness prevailed, which condemned all the nobler and simpler expressions of art, revelling in any new and grotesque form which would startle a lukewarm public into paying some attention. Futurism, Cubism, Realism, music symbolic or syncopated, verse blank or rhymed, but full of hideous colloquialisms, drama full of sex problems—in short, Art had been stripped as naked as the *statues vivants* or the classical ballet-dancers.⁸³

By contrast, Elvey saw his own film work as at the intersection of art and commerce, claiming that ‘although we are essentially a commercial

business, our money is made through an *artistic medium*'—a rather more sophisticated stance than that adopted at B&C in Period One.⁸⁴ For him, in contrast to modernist waywardness, British films displayed 'individualism', dealt in 'human emotions' and provided the public with what it dearly loved, 'real sentiment and English atmosphere'.⁸⁵ In his opinion, 'the British film is human, whereas many of the American films of the moment are machine made'—even though D.W. Griffith was a figure to respect.⁸⁶ Further, as effective film-making depended on a division of labour between three key creators, he accepted that the scenario writer was 'as essential to the manufacture of a good film as the photographer'—although both should be subordinate to the director.⁸⁷ The latter, he felt, could not possibly undertake both to write scripts and to direct 'if he [was] to keep up an output big enough to justify his work being, and remaining, a commercial proposition'.⁸⁸ So, a competent scenarist such as Stannard or Kenelm Foss—a later Elvey collaborator—was needed to help guarantee the economic viability of his own phenomenal productivity.

In May 1915, Elvey left B&C to set up Diploma Films, under the umbrella of the recently formed London Film Company. On leaving, he—perhaps disingenuously—declared, 'there has been no friction, and you may say that Mr J.B. McDowell and myself mutually and amicably severed our connection with each other'.⁸⁹ But when in 1918 he looked back to his early days, he did admit to a tension between himself and his former employers. He recalled how his plans to film a life of his hero, Nelson, had been thwarted when he was at B&C, and he charged the industry with having exploited the 'lurid melodrama, and yet more lurid sex drama' in preference to the serious historical subjects he would have preferred to make.⁹⁰ At Diploma, he proposed to continue directing exclusive screen versions of famous novels and plays—but presumably free of McDowell's intervention as production head—and patriotically to employ only English artists and studio workers, including several he had engaged whilst resident at B&C.⁹¹ His career continued through the silent period and into the sound years, making him Britain's most prolific film director.

Harold Weston

In the two and a half years he spent in the British film industry, Elvey's successor at B&C Harold Weston, the company's second intellectual director, evidenced a certain capacity for provocation and generating controversy. He was quickly recognized in 1915 as 'one of our leading British producers' and was characterized as a film-maker 'of originality

and power' and of 'more than ordinary attainments'.⁹² The *KLW* declared: 'The original scenarios, the choice of cast ... and the actual staging and directing of the [photo-]play are matters with which Mr Weston is intimately familiar. He enters heart and soul into his work, bringing into his new sphere a wide and mature experience and a sheaf of new ideas.'⁹³ For *The Cinema*, his work 'invariably shows real power, genuine enthusiasm, and a nice discrimination in picture values'.⁹⁴ He had begun his professional career in 1904, acting and producing in theatres in Melbourne, Australia.⁹⁵ Later, he came to England where he wrote stories for popular monthly magazines, drama criticism for a weekly journal, and plays and sketches for the theatre. His first play, *The Mystery of the Black Dwarf*, was produced at Sadlers Wells in 1910 and ran concurrently as a series of stories in *Shurey's Magazine*. Several of his published tales were turned into plays and he acted in his own productions, as well as playing leading parts in touring companies, where he assumed the roles first performed by such elegant West End stars as Charles Hawtrey.

Weston claimed D.W. Griffith's *The Battle of the Sexes*, which opened in America in April 1914, had alerted him to the dramatic possibilities of film, and he began directing for the newly formed Cunard Film Company at Wood Street, Walthamstow, in the autumn of that year,

SHADOWS

A Drama dealing with the Greatest Problem of modern times.
WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY HAROLD WESTON.

B&C

A Story of Life as it is, told in a way that grips.

Featuring **FAY TEMPLE** and **A. V. BRAMBLE.**

B&C

Vivid, Intense, Dramatic, it will arrest attention.

Strong, Purposeful Drama, without Lurid Sensationalism.

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Figure 7.4 Advertisement for Harold Weston's *Shadows*.
The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 6 May 1915

alongside the former B&C actor-director Walford Waller. His first film, *The Call of the Drum* (November 1914), encouraged volunteering for France and appeared at the same time as a short story version in the Christmas edition of the mass-circulation *Pearson's Weekly*.⁹⁶ That December, he demonstrated his originality with an article proclaiming the importance of the camera-man to film production in the *KLW* and through a heated correspondence with several leading industry names in *The Cinema*, regarding the significance of 'atmosphere' in the staging of films.⁹⁷ He made two more films for Cunard on war-related themes before moving over to B&C at Hoe Street in February 1915. There, he assumed Elvey's position as senior director and made six films, each with an average duration of over an hour.

Characteristically, given Weston's background in story writing and playwriting, he both scripted and directed several of his own films and so was a prime example of the 'author-producer' around whose role another controversy raged in the pages of *The Cinema* in June and July 1915.⁹⁸ Four of his B&C films were original scripts but the other two were adaptations, and all but one of his post-B&C films were taken from novels. At the beginning of December 1915, the company announced he was to be put in charge of a special venture called Pall Mall Photoplays, for which he alone would write and direct.⁹⁹ In the event, only *The Climax* (April 1916) was made, and at the start of 1916, he seems to have been freelancing at a couple of other companies. In September, he published his book on the photo-play, in which he consolidated the ideas about film aesthetics he had been developing over the past two years at B&C, and in October, he was working for the Broadwest Film Company, having joined them earlier in the summer.¹⁰⁰ His last picture was released by the newly formed renter Hagan and Double in April 1917.

In contrast to Elvey's adaptations, Weston was drawn to directing his own original screenplays and, in a reversal of the former's career trajectory, Weston moved from participation in lighter theatrical fare to screen work that drew directly on the concerns of the New Drama—in particular with *Shadows* (August 1915) and *The Climax*. Hence, his approach to film seems to have been eminently serious, with a profile in *The Bioscope* declaring that 'he is a firm believer in the power of the screen as a *moral and educational force*, and, being a keen observer of men and things, does not hesitate to employ the moving picture as a *medium for translating his ideas*'.¹⁰¹ The *KLW* reported: 'He has faith in the screen for purposes beyond the passing amusement of an hour; he has ideas, and a *message* that the screen can tell.'¹⁰² Weston himself asserted: 'Clearly the moving-picture is the greatest moral and educational force the world has ever

possessed.¹⁰³ Thus, the entertainment orientation of the Period One films was being displaced by a more committed approach under Weston's guidance. Given this stance, it is understandable B&C's writer-director would push against the boundaries of what was thought 'appropriate' subject matter. However, he identified a widespread problem that had to do with the way British film-makers confused 'the art of producing' with 'the art of money-getting'.¹⁰⁴ British directors, he wrote, 'have aimed at highly artistic productions; [but] the managers of our film companies have thought solely of their profits'; for him, as for Elvey, these two outlooks needed to be reconciled.¹⁰⁵ In the event, his own output was often traversed both by a pull to sensation characteristic of B&C and one towards the sophistication of his more personal concerns.

His subject-matter was bold for the time. *Shadows*, for example, followed Bernard Shaw's lead in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, his New Drama play of 1894, by taking on the taboo subject of prostitution and tracking a young woman's descent into the shadow world. That film and its companion, *Wild Oats* (November 1915) also investigated the familiar 'double standard' of sexual morality. In turn, *The Climax* explored class, generational and political antagonisms rather in the manner of John Galsworthy and, therefore, constituted a quite different mode of film-making to the action-packed series spectacles that typified Period One. By the same token, Weston was intellectually committed to film as an *art* form—as the title of his book *The Art of Photo-Play Writing* asserted.¹⁰⁶

His most provocative films, however, did fall foul of the vigilance of the newly constituted British Board of Film Censors and of interference from local authority Watch Committees empowered by the 1909 Cinematograph Act. Half of his films received the Board's more restrictive A certificate, awarded to films best suited to adult audiences, and on *Shadows* the Board—'very obligingly' he ironically observed—excised from the film's opening moments the 'Street of Shame' scene symbolically representing the world of prostitutes and their clients.¹⁰⁷ *Strategy*, filmed in July 1915, was withdrawn from the open market just before its September release 'owing to the action of certain local authorities who [took] exception to the unconventional ending'.¹⁰⁸ The authorities objected to the criminals' success in outwitting the detectives—although a few years earlier B&C's serial transgressor Three-Fingered Kate had regularly carried off her ill-gotten gains unscathed. The film was reconstructed 'to meet official approval' and uncontroversially reissued in January 1916 as *Society Crooks*.¹⁰⁹

One fascinating and perhaps surprising conclusion to be drawn from this is that the groups of film associated with particular directors tended

to evidence their own individuality, as a not too rigorous application of later 'author theory' might have anticipated. The studio's organizational arrangements under the director-unit system and the frequent involvement of directors in scripting their own films may have encouraged this differentiation, at least in terms of subject matter and directorial perspective if not formally and stylistically. Thus, Fitzhamon and Ethyle Batley specialized in films with children, Charles Weston in spectacle and sensation, Harold Weston in provocative dramas and Maurice Elvey in creative adaptations of plays and novels. In the earlier period, of course, Sidney Northcote had specialized in the company's scenic romances and Charles Raymond in many of the lively action films.

THE SCENARIO WRITERS

Another talent grade to gain a measure of status in the teens was the writers, and two important figures emerged in these years, their tenures coinciding with B&C's two historical periods.¹¹⁰ Harold Brett and Eliot Stannard were the company's full-time scenario editors and, like so many other features of early cinema, their role had earlier analogues in nineteenth-century theatre. As permanent members of the company, they were like the 'house dramatists' in the melodrama establishments who, for a fee, would turn out several new plays a year to keep their particular theatre and its company in regular business.

Harold Brett

Harold Brett was the key writer in Period One, joining the company in the latter part of 1911, aged twenty-eight, and leaving at around the time of McDowell's 1913 reforms. He began as assistant to O'Neill Farrell in the Publicity and Advertising Department but complemented that role with scriptwriting responsibilities before becoming the company's first scenario editor.¹¹¹

Bertie Harold Brett was born in Mile End Old Town, London, in 1883, the son of a carpenter and joiner. He began writing stories at the age of nine and subsequently became a contributor to popular magazines. In 1901, he seems to have been serving as a soldier and then to have travelled widely in England and abroad, holding down a variety of jobs, one of which was as a reporter on a suburban weekly newspaper. In 1913, the *Evening News* maintained no English film script writer had a bigger list of successes, and that he could be credited with at least forty scripts for B&C since September 1911.¹¹² *The Cinema* credited him with 'an imaginative nature' and rated

him as 'an author of some repute in the cinematograph world'.¹¹³ Brett was one of several claimants to being the 'inaugurator' of the Lieutenant Daring series, and he wrote several of the scripts.¹¹⁴ He also created the scenarios directed by Sidney Northcote in Cornwall and Wales, as well as those for the Dick Turpin and Don Q series. In fact, because of his editorial role, he probably had a hand in most of the company's fiction films. In this capacity, he was recipient of all the scenarios and picture ideas submitted to the company, either as a result of competitions organized by the Publicity Department or on the personal initiative of would-be photo-play authors. From these, he was expected to select those items suitable for filming and to put them to use as workable scenarios. He had no very high opinion of the material he received, finding most of it either indecipherable, unoriginal—because it was taken directly from another film or copied from a magazine—or impossible to perform 'from the camera point of view'.¹¹⁵ So it may be assumed that many of the scripts originated with him. Unlike Stannard in Period Two, he was rarely required to rework previously successful novels or plays, and so Hesketh Pritchard's Don Q stories were his only venture into adaptation. Further, because he believed that 'experience teaches', the *Film Censor* maintained he had adopted a 'unique manner of gaining correct information before producing a picture': he would first visit a location he wished to depict to check out its filmic potential.¹¹⁶

After B&C, Brett joined Harry Lorraine's Daring Film Company from which he resigned in order to set up Cygnet Films, with a partner, in June 1914. The intention was to make a series of detective dramas, but Brett was called up in mid-August. He was a sergeant in the Devonshire Regiment in Egypt in September 1915 and went on to see action in France, the Dardenelles and Syria.¹¹⁷

Eliot Stannard

B&C's third intellectual, Eliot Cardella Stannard, was born in 1888, and was twenty-six years old when he joined the company in August 1914 to adapt his mother's novel *Beautiful Jim of the Blankshire Regiment* (published in 1888), for Maurice Elvey. In contrast to Harold Brett and many other B&C personnel, his early circumstances were affluent. In 1891, shortly after his birth, the family was living in Neven Square in fashionable Kensington where his father was an employer and civil engineer and his mother a successful writer. Stannard and his sisters were looked after by governesses and there was a staff of a cook and three maids in the household. In 1911, he was still living in the family home, now at Hurlingham Gardens, Fulham, and his father was managing

director of the Toilet Preparations Company, with Eliot an assistant manager in the business.¹¹⁸ His cultural background was not theatrical but literary and he brought to B&C both skills as a writer and a knowledge of literature. Since 1874, Henrietta Eliza Stannard—often under the name of John Strange Winter—had been the author of highly successful stories and novels of military life that drew on family traditions of military service; she was also a journalist concerned with women's issues and both owner and editor of a popular weekly magazine.¹¹⁹ Her son followed her example, and had a short career in fiction and journalism before he entered the film business. Stannard's background was seen from within the cinema institution as an advantage, for the *KLW*, late in 1916, hoped his film work was a possible augury 'of a still more extensive connection in the future between the screen and our well-known literary families'.¹²⁰ After joining B&C, he passed through 'various stages as actor, stage-manager, art-expert, film-cutter and [director]', thereby, it was suggested, acquiring 'a complete mastery of "screen-technic"'.¹²¹ This apprenticeship in production methods directly informed his ideas on screen practice and the film as art and led him, like Elvey, to encourage greater professionalization in the industry and a recognition of the creative contribution made by its range of craft skills, from negative cutting to set design.¹²² Stannard acted in several pictures, including *Beautiful Jim* (November 1914), where his playing of Captain Owen provided 'just that necessary amount of vim which [made] the character real'.¹²³ He was also allowed to try his hand at direction—first, a short solo effort from his own script, *The Courage of a Coward* (December 1914), and latterly co-direction with A.V. Bramble on two adaptations, *Jimmy* (March 1916) and the big studio production *Fatal Fingers* (May 1916). Regarding the novelty of this joint direction, the *Film Renter* suggested it was, 'perhaps, the first example of film producing in this country by the well-known method employed by the French dramatists'.¹²⁴

Stannard's prime responsibility, however, was writing photo-plays, and in May 1915, like Brett before him, he was appointed scenario editor.¹²⁵ This quickly led to a magazine article, 'The Scenario Writer as Author', in the *KLW*—the first in a series of items by him designed to elucidate the craft of the scenarist, raise the writer's status in the industry and sponsor film as an art form.¹²⁶ This article contrasted the work of poets, dramatists and writers of prose fiction with that of the scenario writer, proclaimed the suitability of novels, plays and biographies for purposes of adaptation, and argued the contemporary scenario writer should be prepared to have his work judged for the *psychological* motivations it offered. In a subsequent article, his commentary ranged from Walter Scott, Dickens

and Thackeray, through Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Euripides, to Barrie, Pinero, Shaw and D.W. Griffith, a set of references invoking a cultural world quite at odds with those the company's Period One personnel might have claimed familiarity with.¹²⁷ His responsibilities as scenario editor were to consider the photo-plays submitted by hopeful lay scenarists, identify possible plays and novels for adaptation and—in contrast to Brett earlier—to wade through the bundles of books now being sent in by agents and publishers offering the sale of their film rights. As many as twelve at a time might be submitted, tied up like firewood, accompanied by an incompetent synopsis and 'apparently ... chosen without the smallest consideration of their suitability or of the type of work produced by the firm'.¹²⁸ Unsurprisingly, few were filmed, and Stannard's scripts were either based on previously successful books and plays or were original scenarios for which, in 1914, he received a guinea in payment.¹²⁹ Whilst at B&C, he scripted at least twenty-three films, of which twenty were exclusives. Fifteen were for Maurice Elvey, two for Harold Weston and four for Bramble, including the two they co-directed. A close collaborative relationship between writer and director was a key principle in Stannard's approach to film-making, and this gained its fullest application in his work with Elvey. Fourteen of Stannard's scripts were his particular speciality, adaptations. *Florence Nightingale* (March 1915), was from a work of biography, seven were from plays—usually melodramas, including those of Charles Darrell—and six were from novels, three of which were by his mother, who wrote as John Strange Winter. Her *Boots Baby: A Story of the Scarlet Lancers* had been serialized in the *Graphic* in 1885, had reached 2 million sales over the next ten years, had been dramatized at the Globe Theatre in 1889 and was filmed by B&C's rival, the London Film Company, in the summer of 1914. B&C, in turn, secured rights to others of her novels, and filmed not only *Beautiful Jim* but also *Grip* (published in 1896 and released as a film in July 1915) and *Jimmy* (March 1916). Recent commentary on John Strange Winter has referred to 'the lighthearted simplicity and tender pathos of her writing' and has suggested her stories 'undoubtedly served to reify the patriotic and militaristic cravings of the nation'.¹³⁰ Similarly, the wartime trade press, at the release of her Eliot-scripted films, observed how she was 'generally credited with being the most convincing exponent of barrack life and the general atmosphere of a soldier's calling' and how she was 'one of the most wholesome writers of the day ... [who] believed that it was unnecessary to descend to the sewerage of sex in source of plots'.¹³¹ Her stories, therefore, offered a set of middlebrow fictions, pre-tested for success, to a production company zealously bidding for cultural respectability.

After B&C's production had ground to a halt in the latter part of 1916, Stannard went freelance. He worked again with Bramble and continued to adapt plays and novels for Elvey at Ideal, Butchers and International Exclusives—including a couple from New Drama plays, John Galsworthy's *Justice* (written in 1910 and filmed in 1917) and Stanley Houghton's *Hindle Wakes* (written in 1912 and filmed in 1918). He was back with B&C in 1922–1924 for its final years and, at the end of the decade, was scenarist for Alfred Hitchcock's silent films. By the time he ceased writing in the early 1930s, he had scripted around 150 films. Back in 1919, given his established concern to professionalize scenario work, he had been elected to the Cinema Sub-Committee of the Incorporated Society of Authors and had helped draft a revised contract for film writers—thereby, perhaps, reprising his mother's involvements with the Writers Club, of which she was first president in 1892, and the Society of Women Journalists, of which she was president in 1901–1903. He declined to write for foreign producers and was praised in 1920 for devoting 'much of his energy to developing the artistic perfection of British pictures'.¹³² Part of this project took the form of the aesthetic ideas and principles he elaborated from 1915 onwards in talks, articles and a booklet in a series on cinema.¹³³

The last two chapters have demonstrated that, between 1909 and 1916, Bloomfield and McDowell employed a number of lively personalities to act, direct and write for B&C and who, in their various areas of competence, contributed substantially to the company's growth and prosperity and to the success and originality of its films.

Part IV

The B&C Film

Comics, Dramas and Series Films: The B&C Film in Period One

Although B&C operated over a range of generic fields, differential attention was directed to each as company policy changed over time. Thus, whilst the production of the locals that helped launch the business is impossible to follow, they probably became of decreasing significance as attention was focused on newer categories of production, especially after the major policy reorientation at the start of Period Two. Similarly, supply of that other early staple, the newsworthy topical film, faded after the initial success of B&C's film fictions and the settling in of the rival newsreel in 1911. For its part, the brief venture into the 'sound' film was limited to a two-picture experiment in 1915.

A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY OF B&C FILM PRODUCTION

The company's fiction, actuality and animated output between 1909 and 1917 is documented in Table 8.1.¹ Broadly, over these years B&C released around 100 hours of fiction, ten hours of actuality material and one hour of animation. Even so, the actualities were concentrated into the years 1910 to 1914, with a peak in 1913, and the dabble in animation was another brief wartime venture that resulted in only seven films. Each animated picture was short, running for an average of eight minutes. The actuality films were similarly brief, with an average duration of 7.8 minutes. Only two of the seventy-seven made came out at over a reel in length, Frederick Burlingham's *Ascent of the Matterhorn*, released at 1,500 feet (twenty-five minutes) in 1913, and his *Descent into the Crater of Vesuvius* in 1914, also at 1,500 feet.² Thus, actuality film represented 9 per cent of B&C's total output over the period and animation a tiny 0.8 per cent—leaving 90 per cent of the company's production in the fiction field.

Table 8.1: B&C's Fiction, Actuality and Animated Films 1909–1917, by total output and number of films issued

	Fiction		Actualities		Animation	
Year	Total output (in feet)	Number of films	Total output (in feet)	Number of films	Total output (in feet)	Number of films
1909	3,295	6	-	-	-	-
1910	11,697	22	2,190 ⁽¹⁾	5	-	-
1911	16,135	28	2,684	5	-	-
1912	42,619 ¹	45	8,512	19	-	-
1913	70,338	51	14,837	31	-	-
1914	102,490	66	7,963	17	522	1
1915	77,531	39	-	-	1,119	2
1916	26,813	7	-	-	1,632	4
1917	9,052	2	-	-	-	-
Totals	359,878	266	36,186	77	3,273	7

(1) Length of one film not included here.

Clearly, the latter was the business's main manufacture, the one designed to cater directly to the appetite for entertainment in the expanding cinema institution. So, as the company grew, its fictional output rose from nearly an hour of film in 1909 to 28.5 hours in 1914. Later, with McDowell committed to filming in France, fiction production dropped back to around 7.5 hours in 1916 and to only 2.5 hours in 1917. Table 8.2 presents this production in terms of four significant categories—as comic films and dramas, series films and exclusives. The latter were also dramas, but have been separated out because each was more important for the marketing of the company's productions than its more mainstream drama output. The table reveals several important changes of emphasis in policy-making over the period. Comics functioned as a staple of production from the beginning until they dropped out of manufacture in the last two years of company contraction. Even so, they outnumbered drama productions, the company's main concern, only in 1910 and 1911. Mainstream dramas continued throughout, though even here some dramatic films—such as the inaugural *Her Lover's Honour* (September 1909) and the two-reel *Great Anarchist Mystery* (September 1912)—were more important than others. The series pictures ran from 1909 to 1914, and were the key films for promoting B&C in Period One, a time that saw the release of twenty-five of the thirty-one series items. Only one exclusive film belongs in

Period One, for the concern with exclusives was very much that adopted by McDowell in Period Two. As he directed B&C upmarket from the second half of 1913, the main production effort was increasingly invested in these 'big' films.

Table 8.2: B&C's Comics, Dramas, Series Films and Exclusives 1909–1917, presented in terms of annual average lengths and (in brackets) the number of films issued annually in each category

Year	Comics	Dramas	Series	Exclusives	Totals
1909	468 feet (2)	543 feet (2)	638 feet (2)	-	6
1910	427 feet (14)	691 feet (6)	790 feet (2)	-	22
1911	447 feet (17) ¹	778 feet (9)	765 feet (2)	-	28
1912	616 feet (10)	1,044 feet (24)	1,093 feet (11)	-	45
1913a ²	625 feet (7)	1,109 feet (14)	1,195 feet (8)	1,737 feet (1)	30
1913b	575 feet (4)	1,623 feet (10)	2,755 feet (2)	3,020 feet (5)	21
1914	646 feet (22) ³	1,367 feet (26)	2,267 feet (4)	3,124 feet (14)	66
1915	573 feet (16)	1,595 feet (5)	-	3,524 feet (16) ⁴	37 ⁵
1916	-	3,758 feet (2) ⁶	-	3,859 feet (5)	7
1917	-	-	-	4,526 feet (2)	2
Totals	92	98	31	43	264

(1) Four of these films were B&C's comic series featuring Weary Willie and Tired Tim.

(2) In row 1913a are the films made that year by the Period One directors, and in row 1913b are the films directed by Period Two personnel.

(3) Four films here were the comic series featuring the Hurricane children.

(4) One of these was B&C's only feature-length film comedy, *A Honeymoon for Three*.

(5) In addition, there were the two 'sound' films issued this year, each at 2,000 feet, but not included in the table.

(6) One of these films was *Fatal Fingers*, at 6,423 feet B&C's longest feature, but one which seems not to have had an exclusive distribution.

Table 8.3 translates the average length in feet of the films in Table 8.2 into their average duration in minutes to further clarify the relative importance of each of the four categories. Throughout their years of production, the low cost comics remained short, at less than one reel in length, with little change between Periods One and Two. Average duration varied only between seven and 10.5 minutes over the seven years during which comics were being issued, an indicator of their relatively low status. In Period One, mainstream dramas initially came out rather longer and steadily increased in length, their average duration doubling from nine minutes in 1909 to eighteen minutes in the first part of 1913. Hence, even in these years, B&C dramas were proving the more substantial field of production. Period One's prestigious series films, in turn, began marginally longer than the mainstream dramas, and they too steadily increased in length, more or less doubling from an average duration of around ten minutes in 1909 to twenty minutes early in 1913. Period One's only exclusive, *Dick Turpin's Ride to York* (August 1913), with a duration of around half an hour, was longer again.

Table 8.3: Average Duration (in minutes) of B&C's Comics, Dramas, Series Films and Exclusives 1909–1917

Year	Comics	Dramas	Series	Exclusives
1909	7.8	9.0	10.6	-
1910	7.1	11.5	13.1	-
1911	7.5	12.9	12.7	-
1912	10.2	17.4	18.2	-
1913a ¹	10.4	18.4	19.9	28.9
1913b	9.5	27.0	45.9	50.3
1914	10.7	22.7	37.7	52.0
1915	9.5	26.5	-	58.7
1916	-	62.6 ²	-	64.3
1917	-	-	-	75.4

(1) In row 1913a are the films made that year by the Period One directors, and in row 1913b are the films directed by Period Two personnel.

(2) This figure is boosted by *Fatal Fingers*, B&C's longest feature but one that seems not to have had an exclusive distribution.

Period Two witnessed further quantitative increases in film lengths. Although the series films were phased out in 1914, those made in Period Two averaged forty-six minutes in 1913 and thirty-eight minutes in

1914—well up on earlier series lengths. As company interest and investment became concentrated on the exclusives, other dramas were given less attention. Even so, the average durations of the mainstream dramas from late 1913 to 1915 ranged between twenty-three and twenty-seven minutes and were, therefore, somewhat longer than in Period One. The new exclusives were designedly long, expensive features, beginning with an average duration of fifty minutes in 1913. This had risen to seventy-five minutes with the two films released in 1917.

This constitutes a quantitative account of company output, but what follows provides a more qualitative description of the fiction films. The Period One pictures are dealt with in this chapter whilst the different characteristics of the Period Two films are covered in Chapter 9. Unfortunately, very few B&C films have survived—and all but one belong to Period One.³ Consequently, any description has to be built up out of what can be gleaned from synopses and commentary in the trade and fan press, from film stills and from those films that have come down to us.

PHOTOGRAPHY, 'EFFECTS' AND COLOUR

The excellence of B&C's photography was a regular leitmotif in commentary on its films throughout both periods of its existence, though the practices making for that excellence differed somewhat in each.

In December 1910, the *KLW* observed B&C had 'always maintained good photographic quality and staging'.⁴ A few months later it asserted how '[r]ight from the start they have maintained a standard of photographic quality which has been surpassed by no other home manufacturer' and how '[t]o this they have added recently really striking staging'.⁵ Here, in what amounted to the beginnings of a film critical discourse in the trade press, a significant distinction was being drawn between 'photography' and 'staging'—a distinction to be developed later in this chapter.

Quite what made for 'quality' photography can be clarified by drawing on articles written by Thomas Bedding in August to October 1909, the very moment when B&C were releasing their first fiction films. Bedding took Pathé's recently released *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise* as an exemplar, explaining how the film was 'well, fully, evenly and naturally illuminated', how 'there were no obtrusively high lights or very dark shadows' and how the prints offered 'a rich warmish hue, in contradistinction to the soot and whitewash effects that are so common in moving pictures'.⁶ It is, perhaps, relevant to recall that B&C's first director was Oceano Martinek, a man who had spent the recent past working for Pathé in France. Further, it was Bedding's opinion that, in many picture

factories, 'it is the photographic end which receives the scantiest attention' because it was often left in the hands of 'ignorant empirics, who have failed to make good as professional photographers'.⁷ This reproach would hardly have applied to B&C, where both Bloomfield and McDowell brought their experience as actuality cameramen to bear on organizing the photographic side of the business.

Bedding was also convinced that '[m]ost of the best work produced at the present time is made in the open air for there you get equable lighting coupled with natural grouping'.⁸ Following on from this, he maintained: '[K]eeping in view the photographic quality of the picture, its proper and natural lighting, its modelling, freedom from shadows and truth of tone rendering, ... it may be taken as axiomatic ... that a daylight studio is the best for all round work in moving picture making.'⁹ Both of these recommendations characterized B&C's practice in Period One because the company engaged in extensive location filming and because the Finchley studio was an open-air platform illuminated by the sun. Artificial light, Bedding conceded, might be made to resemble daylight, but a difference was nevertheless perceptible in the projected pictures, 'which have a certain harshness and unreality of illumination, due to the fact that the light is thrown on the [film studio] stage from many sources, instead of as in natural light proceeding from a common source'.¹⁰ In this, he had the full agreement of Bloomfield, who in a 1916 interview maintained he 'believe[d] in no other' than daylight photography.¹¹ When asked whether the solution to a cameraman's problems with the dull and misty winter-time English climate might not be the 'all-dark studio lit solely by arc-lamps, and therefore independent of the sun, or its absence', his response was to shake his head dismissively and reply, '[a]rtificial light is always artificial light'.¹² In, perhaps, a memory of his time running B&C, he proposed film-makers should produce in England in the summer, where there was 'no more beautiful atmospheric quality than that of a really fine summer day', and then 'take themselves and their companies to more equable climates in the winter'—a move he had earlier undertaken when he led the expedition to Jamaica.¹³

Within their positive assessment of the company's photography, commentators would occasionally express approval of what was considered a noteworthy lighting 'effect'. For example, the second adventure of *Three-Fingered Kate*, included 'a *good moonlight effect*' for a garden chase and glimpses of a pursuit along a corridor that included 'some *good light effects*, which [were] more remarkable in that they were ... taken at the London premises of the firm'.¹⁴ *The Artist's Ruse* (January 1911) was claimed as another illustration of the firm's 'ingenuity in the use of novel lighting

effects—a branch of the art which Continental manufacturers [were] generally thought to monopolise'.¹⁵ This particular effect was a silhouette projected onto a blind, whereby it appeared as if a man's arm was stabbing a woman in the back. The first Dick Turpin film in 1912 was thought photographically excellent, with 'one particularly lovely scene, in which a little band of horsemen are seen to pass one by one along a grassy ridge beyond a silent, silver pool, in whose unruffled surface they are sharply mirrored'.¹⁶

These occasional effects would have been realized at the moment of filming, whereas the application of colour came later, when processing the prints for release. Comment on the first fiction films was careful to draw attention to their use of colour. The tinting in *Her Lover's Honour* was 'in no way behind the best Continental work'; *Shipmates* (September 1909) was 'remarkable for clever double toning effects'; and the second Kate film was 'toned and tinted throughout'.¹⁷ *Shipmates* also concluded on a shot of its female lead 'capably hand coloured'.¹⁸ Such a time-consuming activity as the latter is unlikely to have been repeated often, but colour tinting at Endell Street would have been standard practice. Bedding suggested: 'Portraits, fireside and forge studies may be stained red; moonlight effects blue, and sunlit landscapes and street scenes green or orange.'¹⁹ B&C's films adopted similar conventions.

'STAGING': SETS AND LOCATIONS, COSTUMES AND PERFORMANCES

The critical discourse developing around B&C's early films drew attention to their 'staging' as well as to their 'photography'. What the former term might mean was broached in the *KLW's* account of *Her Lover's Honour*. It suggested:

the *acting* ... is of such a forcible nature as to provide an effective contradiction to the general belief that English actors do not possess that peculiar talent required for moving picture acting. In perfection of staging ... the subject is also in no way behind the best Continental work—for ... special old *furniture* of the period is used in *appropriate surroundings*, while the *costumes* are equally accurate.²⁰

Drowsy Dick's Dream (December 1909), the *Weekly* maintained, was a further 'admirable example of the really excellent staging which the firm give their work, *costumes, furniture* and *scenery* being equally appropriate to the [historical] period illustrated'.²¹ In September 1911, it commented

on developments at B&C and elsewhere by praising the way 'the native manufacturer ... has realised the necessity of larger expenditure, the use of actors worthy of the name and the employment of decent settings'.²² Thus, 'staging' in films meant conscious attention to the provision of suitable settings and costumes, and to the encouragement of effective performances. In later critical writing, such concerns have been subsumed under the concept of *mise-en-scène*—a term that draws on late nineteenth century theatrical practice and that translates as 'putting in place' or 'into the scene' or directly as 'staging'.²³ The elements of *mise-en-scène* contribute to the *visual* look of a film for they determine what actually appears on screen. In later commentary, they have often been understood as a matter of 'production values' and B&C were reputed to be willing to spend out on their films, even in Period One. Significantly, Bedding identified a similar complex of visual features when he admired *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise* for the accuracy of its costumes, accessories, archaeological and other details, its perfect grouping, carefully rehearsed acting and 'what we commonly call *mise-en-scène*'.²⁴ Hence, effective staging of an event for the camera was fundamental and how B&C carried out this task can be examined by addressing each element of *mise-en-scène* in turn.

Studio sets

Sets were built and decorated under direct studio control and involved what later became known as aspects of 'production design'. In Period One, however, they were somewhat rudimentary, as the *Evening News* witnessed in the summer of 1912 when it watched the scene from the Robin Hood picture being filmed in a room with neither roof nor sides, 'only a background set at angles'.²⁵ For *Her Lover's Honour*, there were three interior sets, but they were simply variations on each other. The painted back wall closed off a shallow acting area, and in each the wall was punctuated by an arch at the left to give a modest sense of depth. But what made for one review's 'perfection of staging' was the deployment of period furniture—a selection of ornate, carved tables, chairs and cupboards.²⁶ In fact, sets for the more prestigious films seem to have impressed most through how they were dressed. For example, one comment referred to 'the sumptuous drawing room' in which Three-Fingered Kate lived with her sister, and in *Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents* (August 1912), the affluence resulting from her criminal career is conveyed by fancy vases standing on a cabinet, an ornately framed picture, the elaborately moulded fireplace and comfortable armchairs.²⁷

In some films, there was a tentative attempt to 'characterize' an environment through a room's décor. An example is *Playing Truant* (July 1910), a naughty boy comic, which opens with a cluttered bourgeois domestic interior, the family at breakfast around a table covered by a clean white cloth, a dresser with ornaments and a thickly curtained door to the rear. By contrast, an interior in *The Plum Pudding Stakes* (April 1911), a comic escapade of Weary Willie and Tired Tim, is a poor workman's home, its table uncovered, a brick wall blocking the view through a rear window and a recessed oven on which stand steaming pots.

Certain special features of their sets contributed to the more sensational effects in some of the series films. So, for Daring's first picture, an underground chamber was built in which, at the touch of a lever, a moveable slab opened to reveal a spike-studded cavity into which his kidnappers proposed to thrust the intrepid sailor. For *The Bioscope*, this 'scene in the torture chamber [was] the last word in sensationalism'.²⁸ However, it was Three-Fingered Kate's films that made best use of such gothic paraphernalia. Over her series, she resourcefully managed to conceal herself from pursuit in a sham safe, a grandfather clock and a large trunk; in quest of booty, she entered one room through a sliding wall panel and another through adjoining fireplaces; in a further exploit, a coiners' den was instantly transformed into a sitting room; and in *The Case of the Chemical Fumes* (September 1912), an elaborate apparatus was set up to feed knock-out gas into a ballroom full of wealthy guests.

Location settings

If studio sets were a matter of conscious design, however rudimentary, location settings were an occasion for careful choosing, and given B&C's predilection for outdoor filming in Period One, trade press commentary became very impressed by the company's selection of locations, both in terms of their appropriateness to a film's story and for their scenic attractiveness. Promotion for the Cornish films proclaimed the company had 'searched out the beauty spots of Old England in their quest for settings suited to their plots' and the *KLW* observed of *A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast* (February 1912):

The wild beauty of the Cornish coast ... lends itself admirably to the portrayal of the plot. The scenes too, have been selected with such care that while the picturesque nature of the land remains for long after, the rugged beauty of England's famous county does not

obtrude itself on the spectator in a manner that would be likely to detract from a clear understanding of the story.²⁹

A Lieutenant Daring escapade filmed at Rottingdean near Brighton was received as evidence for '[t]he marked improvement in the B and C productions of late', both because it was well acted and because it was performed 'under the most favourable circumstances as regards scenic arrangements, many of the scenes being beautiful and in thorough keeping with the plot of the story'.³⁰ B&C's film-makers were clearly attempting to balance the narrative demands of their plots with the scenic spectacle of their locations.



Figure 8.1 Lieutenant Daring in trouble in *Lieutenant Daring and the Ship's Mascot*. *The Pictures*, 27 April 1912

According to some commentary, there was a kind of mixing of genres at work here. Amongst the actuality films circulating in the 1910s were the sub-genres of the scenic—travel films showing the scenic beauties of particular locations—and industrials—films demonstrating the manufacturing process of certain standard commodities. B&C were major contributors to the former, making films at holiday places around Britain and at various tourist spots in Europe, but were irregular makers of industrials. *Lieutenant Daring Beats the Middleweight Champion* (August 1912), in which Percy Moran rescues Ivy Martinek from a capsized boat, was filmed at Staines on the river Thames, and one review commented:

With regard to the settings much could be written, for the outdoor scenes are such that were they included in a *travel* none would be dissatisfied, and they are handled here in such a manner that the observer is unconsciously taking stock of their beauty while still concentrating his attention in the plot.³¹

At the start of 1913, the *Evening News* described industrials as a form of 'educational advertising' designed to 'create and maintain public interest' in a commodity, but concluded that many failed through being too technical and that it would be better done by interweaving a story with the industrial picture.³² The following week, the paper praised *A Factory Girl's Honour* (February 1913) as one of the best types of a new form of picture for doing just that. Filmed at a gas mantle factory in Wandsworth, with its heroine joining the female workforce, it offered both a sensational story and insight into the manufacturing process.³³

Alternatively, a chosen location might provide 'local colour' for a particular scene, and here *Dick Turpin and the Gunpowder Plot* (August 1912) seems to have been taken as exemplary, with the *KLW* observing how it had been 'taken in the neighbourhood of the Spaniards, Hampstead, one of the principal haunts of Dick Turpin and all who have visited this famous spot can readily imagine the beauty of the scenery shown in the film'.³⁴ Similarly, Polperro in Cornwall provided *A Fisherman's Infatuation* (January 1913) with an 'ideal, old-world unspoiled fishing village ... a tiny place ... nothing but picturesque cottages and a snug little fishing fleet'.³⁵ Beyond this, judicious choice of a real environment could add something extra to a written source. In 1912, when the company adapted the tales about the Spanish bandit Don Q for the screen, *The Bioscope* maintained:

[T]he picture play, in this case, is far more complete in its appeal to the imagination than the original story. The wild and romantic scenery of the Peak district, with its cliffs and caverns and moorland reaches, forms a magnificent background for the action of the play; the bandit heroes are so picturesquely garbed and so effectively posed amongst their wild surroundings, that they create a more vivid impression of reality than could be conveyed by pages of descriptive writing.³⁶

Costume

Effective staging also encompassed the attention that was paid to how the actors were dressed, with the significance of costume being most

apparent in pictures with an historical setting. B&C made few of these beyond the Dick Turpin films set in the eighteenth century. *Robin Hood Outlawed* (October 1912) required medieval dress and *The Puritan Maid* (November 1911) costumes from the time of Charles I. Period authenticity seems to have been the expectation for such subjects, with the *KLW* praising the accuracy of the costumes in *Her Lover's Honour*, set in the reign of Louis XIII, and *The Bioscope* vouching for the 'correctness' of the costumes in the Dick Turpin films.³⁷

More frequently, dress was used to indicate social identities. This was at its most straightforward with respect to uniforms. For example, in 1911 and 1912, the company released a clutch of military films where soldiers' uniforms were unavoidable, and in one, *A Soldier's Honour* (September 1911), the significance of military dress was foregrounded when an officer was dismissed from the regiment, his buttons and epaulettes cut off, his medals removed and his sword broken.³⁸ Naval uniform was integral to the Lieutenant Daring series, where the hero was always immaculately turned out and the rank-and-file sailor 'blue jackets' were genuine Naval Reserve men.³⁹ By contrast, the signifying of national identities through dress was rather more stereotypical. 'Welshness' in the North Wales films was conveyed by women outfitted in the conventional chequered shawls and conical hats. Don Q's 'Spanishness' was suggested by his cloak, flared trousers and broad-brimmed hat, and the 'foreignness' of Daring's enemies in Corsica, Spain or South America depended on such items as headscarves, cummerbunds and a range of exotic headgear.

More extravagantly, comic films adopted a range of outlandish outfits for humorous effect. For example, Papa Huggins cut a 'weird figure' in *The Prehistoric Man* (January 1911) when he dressed for a pageant 'with a wild beard on his face, legs in tights, arms bare, and carrying a huge club'.⁴⁰ For the Weary Willie and Tired Tim series in 1911, Oceano Martinek and Joe Archer were made up with prosthetic noses and dressed like their thin and fat originals in Tom Browne's comic paper drawings. In addition, they were '[r]igged out in highly coloured shirts, slouch hats and leather trousers' as *The Wild Westers* (June 1911) and approached by a soldier dressed in 'a queer, composite uniform, in which a kilt [was] a prominent feature' when field marshals were required for the Gorgonzola Army.⁴¹ Elsewhere, another kilt irresistibly proved a source of hilarity in *Sandy's New Kilt* (April 1912), when, because it was several lengths too long, family members came down at night to cut strips off, thereby reducing it to a preposterous shortness.⁴² There were also various forms of comedy transvestism. Inevitably, men turned to drag: they disguised

themselves as old maids in *The Sanctimonious Spinsters' Society* (May 1913) in order to relieve the women in the Bachelor Girls' Society of a document vowing they would never marry, whilst in *His Maiden Aunt* (May 1913), Freddy dressed himself as a rich aunt to take revenge on an avaricious married couple.⁴³ Conversely, out-of-work Leonora made herself up as Mr Brown, with her typist friend playing the part of 'his' wife, in *Two Bachelor Girls* (June 1912).⁴⁴ In *The Tables Turned* (October 1910), a dwarf was disguised as a baby to outwit a couple of thieves and the butler in *The Butler's Revenge* (July 1910) regained the 'affectionate attentions from the fickle cook' after he had caused mayhem wearing the uniform of his policeman rival.⁴⁵

Mostly, however, costume was a matter of everyday dress. Even so, this passed from the stylish upmarket fashionableness of Kate to the impoverished clothes of a distressed family in the Poplar slums for the Christmas film *The Fairy Doll* (December 1912).⁴⁶ Most of the time, of course, performers would appear 'in character', with their clothes used to convey a message about social class or status, in particular through the contrasts between rich and poor—as in *Only Two Little Shoes* (December 1910) or *The Old Gardener* (June 1912), both of which involved unemployed men gaining rewards from their social superiors after undergoing a series of setbacks.⁴⁷ At times, costume was also used to suggest aspects of 'character', as when the employer's daughter willingly took on a factory girl's dress to expose malpractice in *A Factory Girl's Honour*.

Thus, costume was deployed to serve a number of functions in a film's *mise-en-scène*—signifying an historical period, suggesting identity, providing a source of humour or referencing different social statuses.

Performance

It was, of course, the company's actors who animated the costumes and inhabited the sets, and their performances constituted another component of *mise-en-scène*. But performance style seems to have been inflected by the type of film in which it figured.

Performances in the comic films were essentially unobtrusive and depended on almost continuous movement, chases and vigorous—even violent—incident. So, for example, the mischievous boy passing along the roads in *Playing Truant* first pushes a policeman onto a coster's barrow, then steals a bill poster's pail, which he proceeds to upend over a man's head; next, he tips a workman into a trough of mortar before leaning into a house to pull the tablecloth and crockery from a table; after this, he ties a smoke bomb to the coat of an artist painting in a field and then thrusts

a fisherman into a pond. His victims give pursuit until, in the end, the miscreant is waylaid by boy scouts and himself tossed into the water. In *A Cheap Removal* (August 1910), rogues run off with a barrow piled high with a family's furniture; the family and police furiously pursue them before the film ends on 'a mass of writhing people, broken furniture, destroyed bedding and flying feathers'.⁴⁸ As a later comment maintained, 'a good film of [this] type' was a matter of 'knockabout chase comedy, in which people and, of course, policemen, tumble over one another, and over various objects until the wonder is that they have an unbroken bone in their bodies'.⁴⁹



Figure 8.2 Percy Moran and Ernest Trimmingham in *The Adventures of Dick Turpin* No.3: *Two Hundred Guineas Reward*. *The Pictures*, 14 September 1912

Similarly, performance in the series films involved sequences of lively action, rather than subtlety of gesture and expression. Regarding the first Dick Turpin film, *The Bioscope* admitted:

Naturally, the picture allows no great scope for acting, but such as there is room for is entirely capable. If one finds no great performance histrionically, however, there are a dozen magnificent exhibitions of horsemanship ... [and] the notorious Dick is constantly in contact with the minions of the law and order, and his skirmishes with those worthies offer opportunities for some really exciting moments.⁵⁰

For the *Film Censor* its lead, Percy Moran, was ‘an actor of very great versatility’—but went on to allow this meant he could ‘do anything from falling from the top of a lighthouse to riding a steed bareback through forest fires’.⁵¹ In fact, Moran’s films were designed to exploit his physical prowess as swimmer, boxer or rider. In the Turpin films, he was constantly on horseback, besides being caught up in last-minute escapes, disguises, duels and combats, in flight from the Bow Street Runners and in the holding up of stage coaches. As *Daring*, his adventures were similarly physical. The lieutenant had a certain susceptibility to attractive women that unfortunately often resulted in his being captured, bound and dumped either into a cellar, down a deep well or over a cliff. From these impediments he would dextrously release himself, at the same time demonstrating his skilfulness with a range of weapons and exercising control over several modes of modern transport. For the climax of *Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Minefield* (November 1912), he pursues spies by motorcycle, horseback and motor car; then flies a monoplane to the coast before hiring a motor boat from which he boards the Channel steamer in mid-ocean.⁵²

Ivy Martinek tendered similarly active performances as Three-Fingered Kate, assuming numerous disguises to avoid capture, driving cars, firing a revolver, chloroforming a victim and crawling through a drain. In turn, the Don Q series had its own quota of captures, shootings and movement in mountainous terrain, but at its heart was a figure whose image was already established in the mind of those who had read the stories or scanned their illustrations. Consequently, Charles Raymond was in the position of having to create a known ‘character’ rather than be himself, as seems to have been the case with Moran. For *The Pictures* he was ‘the loving duplicate of Stanley Wood’s world famous drawings, and his conception of the quaint character is strictly in accordance with Mr Hesketh Pritchard’s creation’.⁵³ Raymond himself rather ruefully recalled how his ‘too candid friends’ had delighted in telling him how like Don Q he actually looked, and he did allow that with ‘a very little make-up, a cloak and a hat ... I [was] “Don Q’s” double’.⁵⁴ Advertising for the film claimed: ‘Charles Raymond does not act Don Q—He is Don Q. You think a miracle has brought the Romancer’s dream-hero to life, and Don Q’s thrills are not common thrills. He’s original.’⁵⁵

This sort of more ‘actorly’ performance might have been expected in the film dramas, but with many of them ‘action’ was again a necessary component. As *The Bioscope* observed of *A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast*: ‘The fighting scenes among the rocks are thrilling, and the action of the chief ‘villain’ in presenting a revolver to the head of the girl, who is rescued

by a timely shot from Tom [the hero], is melodramatic, and calculated to bring “down the house” wherever the film is shown.⁵⁶ Ivy Martinek was required to fight sword duels in *Her Lover's Honour*, *The Puritan Maid* and *Her Bachelor Guardian* (November 1912)—in the latter with another woman. In *Lily of Letchworth Lock* (January 1913), even Dorothy Foster had to make ‘a magnificent bare-back ride along the towing path’ before diving into the canal to rescue her lover.⁵⁷

In several of the less spectacular dramas, a more subdued melodramatic mode of performance would have been required, and a move in this direction seems to have been made with *Every Wrong Shall Be Righted* in autumn 1910. Having viewed the film, the *KLW* wrote of how the company would have ‘a big future’ if they were to ‘take their strong company of actors well in hand so that they may realise better the requirements of the kinematograph camera and develop those necessary pantomimic exaggerations without unduly labouring the situations’.⁵⁸

Performances in the dramas seem to have shuttled between three different modes or registers. Characters engaged in the basic actions necessary to advance a plot line—moving between spaces, encountering one another, riding, fighting and shooting. In addition, mime might be deployed to convey narrative information, as when Jack explains his absence at sea in *A Plucky Lad* (August 1910) through a series of gestures indicating ocean waves, an explosion, a sinking boat and himself swimming. At the same time, broad, emphatic gestures of the arms would be used to suggest powerful emotional states. But there could also be subtler performances with more restrained, ‘natural’ acting and emotions conveyed through facial expression, even though camera placements eschewed close-ups. Thus, in *Her Father's Photograph* (March 1911), a drama in which a long-lost daughter is restored to her mother, the latter's anxiety is suggested at one point by her slow pacing of a room, and the reconciliation is effected when the woman's stepson gently brings parent and child face to face, allowing them hesitantly to come together and tenderly embrace. In the same film, it is the actors' features rather than their sweeping arm movements that are allowed to convey their feelings, for example shock and happiness on the daughter's face or the disconsolation and anger of the stepson who loves her.

Much of the time, the kinds of film B&C chose to make in Period One demanded performances that set the body in motion, whether it was the slapstick routines of the comics or the strenuous exploits of the protagonists in the series films. Even the dramas regularly foregrounded scenes of action. At the same time, in some of the latter, more sober performances were being attempted.

CAMERA PLACEMENT, SHOTS AND EDITING

Although the tentative critical commentary of the early 1910s took note of a film's photographic quality and its staging, there was as yet no regular commentary on what later critical writing would think of as 'film form'. Nevertheless, in these years, B&C, other British manufactures and producers internationally were, at a very practical level, having to deal with the problems of how to put a film together—where to place the camera, how to compose a shot and how to link one shot to another. In Britain and elsewhere, film-makers were beginning to explore the formal possibilities of the new medium.⁵⁹ Hence, at B&C, between *Her Lover's Honour* of September 1909, in which an agent of Cardinal Richelieu is outwitted in his attempt to intercept important messages, and *With Human Instinct* of June 1913, wherein the family dog helps rescue a kidnapped child, there were clear developments in the complexity of the films made by Martinek, the company's most prolific director in Period One.

However, attention to the existing films suggests a distinction should be drawn between the stricter and more routine protocols involved in filming on a studio set and the greater freedom possible when shooting in outdoor locations. There were differences in the formal strategies and possibilities associated with each situation.

In the studio

As motion pictures were recorded by a film camera, camera placement was inescapably integral to the enterprise. In the studio, most shots were taken from a camera set at about chest height.⁶⁰ There was no camera movement as the camera remained static, animation coming from movement within a shot or the transitions from one shot to another. Similarly, the camera regularly viewed the scenes it was recording frontally, photographing them straight on, declining an angled viewpoint.⁶¹ Furthermore, the physical relation between the camera and its subject matter remained quite distant, so there were no close-up shots of faces.

Hence, scenes in *Her Lover's Honour* were filmed in long shot, the actors at a distance with plenty of space in the foreground and above their heads. Somewhat later, however, whilst continuing to recognize full bodily integrity, the camera sometimes began to edge in closer to frame performers from just below their feet and with their heads near the top of the image. Thereafter, occasional images might advance closer still, framing people from the ankles, knees or even the thighs up—as in *The Gentleman Ranker* and *Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents*, both summer

1912—until a shot in *With Human Instinct* (June 1913) framed its kidnapers seated at a table from the waist up. But such tightening seems not to have been the norm; the camera usually upheld its distanced stance. However, over time, there was a move to a more careful centring of main characters; that is, their strategic placement at the centre of the framed image and thereby at the centre of viewer attention.

The basic principle adopted in the studio was that of one shot per scene, which meant there was nothing of what later would be recognized as ‘scene dissection’ or ‘analytical editing’; that is, the breaking down of a particular scene into a number of shots—wide views, close-ups and angled images. Most scenes, especially early on, were quite long, self-contained ‘tableaux’. For example, in *Her Lover’s Honour* a scene in the cardinal’s palace first shows him praying, then sitting meditatively, next receiving the villain to plot with him and finally sending the latter out through a secret panel. The average shot length for the film was 34 feet (or a little over half a minute) meaning the time an image remained on screen was considerable. Nevertheless, there was some slight shortening of average shot duration over time, with that for *Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents* in summer 1912 contracting to 21 feet, and the pace of *With Human Instinct* in 1913 sometimes appearing quite brisk as the action cut between several different settings.

Given the shallow space of the early sets, actors’ movements within the single-shot tableaux tended to be lateral, to left and right across the plane of the image. Then, in the autumn of 1910, Martinek and Raymond seem to have made a crucial decision regarding how performances for a particular scene could be blocked out when they began to deploy ‘staging in depth’. Of the latter’s *Every Wrong Shall Be Righted*, the *KLW* noted that ‘the drawing room setting ... calls for particular notice, the stage is particularly *deep*, and gives the proper effect of a large room, very different from some of the flat looking apartments we are treated to’.⁶² Released in the same month, Martinek’s *Trust Those You Love* (October 1910) gave further ‘convincing proof’ of B&C’s ‘remarkable qualities as producers’ by offering ‘the same depth of staging, clear photography and competent acting’ as in *Every Wrong*.⁶³ In a still from the film, a man, positioned well back in a spacious family interior, looks forward as a despairing woman moves towards the camera, their children, seated in mid-shot, watch her closely, whilst another figure enters through an arch in the back wall. Compared with the shallow side to side movements in *Her Lover’s Honour*, this placement around and movement through a deeper acting area represented a new direction in the company’s modes of performance.

After this breakthrough, the blocking out and choreography of scene movement could, on occasion, become quite complex—as was the case with *Her Father's Photograph* in March 1911. One scene is set in a maids' bedroom that is to be searched for a missing necklace. Family members enter a door at the rear right and move forward to form a group in the left foreground. One of the maids remains hovering in the right background to hide the pearls in a jacket hanging over a bed-end to the set's rear. A policeman enters and starts checking the maids' trunks whilst the father of the family picks up the jacket, moves forward to mid-shot and hands it to the officer, who then discovers the jewellery. Eva, the other maid, who had entered the room first, moves toward the father to implore her innocence. Meanwhile, the deceitful maid has crossed to stand close to the camera screen left, looking left, her back to her companion, whilst the son of the family has crossed to the right foreground, to look disconsolately off right. The large stage available at East Finchley from summer 1911 facilitated the building of even larger sets, which, in turn, further encouraged such back and forth movement in the deeper performance spaces available. Even so, there were no exits forward either side of the camera on interior sets. A strict line seems to have been maintained over which actors could not pass.

These practices can be illuminated by the contrast drawn by Ben Brewster in a discussion of this period in international cinema.⁶⁴ He maintains that the staging of long tableaux could be given variety either by increasing the cutting rate at which such scenes were replaced on screen or by creating more complicated settings and more complicated action within them. More speculatively, he suggests faster cutting between scenes and deep staging with its fixed viewpoint could be seen as alternatives, the American cinema broadly adopting the former, whilst the tendency to emphasize depth was more European. With Martinek and Raymond's move B&C had clearly adopted deep staging but, as will be seen, they did not neglect cutting between spaces.

In fact, variety and visual interest might be derived from the range of settings or spaces in which the film's action was staged. For example, *Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents* had five interior sets. Usually, however, when the camera returned to a particular set for a later scene, it would assume the same set-up as before, shooting from the same camera position. But occasionally greater image variety would be achieved when, on a return, the set was filmed from a rather different camera placement. So, separate scenes in the room Kate robs were taken from three camera positions. Fixity of camera placement could be eased up but, even so, it was a matter of moving further back or closer in along the axis of a shot rather than adopting an angled viewpoint.

Films were a combination not only of images but also introductory titles, explanatory intertitles and written or printed inserts. Editing was the joining of these discrete items together, so film-makers at B&C had to make decisions about how best to combine them. Intertitles providing narrative information were regularly placed *between* shots, thereby separating different scenes one from another, but where they were used to articulate a character's speech, they might break *into* the shot of a particular scene, thereby dividing its continuity in two.

Inserts were the texts of messages passed between characters within the film's story—the written matter of a letter or, maybe, a photograph. They were inserted as a close shot *into* the shot of a scene, again breaking its continuity into two parts. Consequently, part way through a scene in which Kate uses a tea kettle to steam open a letter and read it, the wording of the letter is presented on screen. This technique seems to have suggested a rare close shot in *Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Minefields* late in 1912. In a scene in his sitting room, filmed from the usual distant set-up, an artist, there to paint his portrait, takes papers from a bureau during Daring's absence and studies them. A standard insert of the plans for a minefield follows. Later in the scene, the artist's female assistant sits with her back to the camera as he begins to paint on her bare shoulders. There follows a close shot of a copy of the plan painted on her back. Something similar crops up in *With Human Instinct* in 1913 when, in the course of a fight in a barn, the camera is moved in for a close shot to reveal that the backside of one combatant had knocked a candle off a table, thereby starting a fire. In both films, the idea of the close-up image seems to have been motivated by the previously established use of the insert. But these closer images were, once again, moves forward down the axis of the main shot, thereby avoiding an angled image for sustained frontality.

Her Lover's Honour, running for 596 feet, or around ten minutes, was made up of sixteen images and eleven titles, intertitles or inserts, the latter representing 41 per cent of the total combination. *Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents* was 877 feet long, or fifteen minutes duration, linking thirty-eight images with thirteen intertitles and inserts, the latter constituting some 32 per cent of the total. Thus, the ratio of images to titles began to reduce, although the time any intertitle or insert would appear on screen was always short compared with the duration of the images. With a reduction in the frequency of intertitles, often image would be followed by image in a direct cut, thereby raising the problem of how events in one shot should be related to those in the next. If succeeding images were self-contained tableaux scenes in different settings, the transition was usually clear, as when *Her Lover's Honour* transferred from an

inn scene to one in an open field. But in other combinations, Martinek, following wider developments, began to deploy methods specific to film to move between shots. In *Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents*, there is no scene dissection, but liveliness is generated through the dexterity with which he cuts between the proximate spaces of several different sets in the manner Brewster associates with American films. The narrative moves between Kate's sitting room, the corresponding room next door and a reception room elsewhere in the neighbouring house. The robbery begins in Kate's room, where the bricks have been removed from the back of a fireplace located screen right; Kate crawls through, moving right. The following shot is next door's sitting room where the fireplace is set at screen left; Kate enters through it still moving right, thereby maintaining screen direction from the preceding shot and linking the two spaces together; she piles gifts into a case before turning back to pass them to an accomplice looking out through the fireplace. The following shot returns to Kate's room as the assistant, now at Kate's fireplace screen right, himself turns back to pass the case over to sister Mary. This careful attention to the topography of spaces, screen direction and character movement continues through the rest of the sequence, thereby demonstrating Martinek's surer grasp of specifically filmic modes of articulation.⁶⁵ A fight scene in *Lieutenant Daring Quells a Rebellion* (September 1912) follows a similar logic when a man tumbles over a railing on the top floor of a lighthouse to drop down onto the basement floor below in the following shot, a matter of continuity in time, movement and screen direction over the cut between two successive images.

In *The Plum Pudding Stakes*, Willie and Tim steal a pudding in a neat, five shot sequence. Having seen a pot steaming on a stove through the house window, they make their move when the housewife goes out. There follows a set representing the roof and its chimney, a dead cat lying in front of the latter. In a medium long shot, the pair climb up from behind and settle either side of the chimney; Willie, to the right, lowers a hook at the end of a ball of string into the chimney. Next image is a rare close shot of the boiling pot; the hook enters from above, lifts off the lid, hooks the cloth-wrapped pudding and raises it out of shot. On the roof, the tramps lift the pudding from the chimney, unwrap it, replace it with the dead cat and return it down the chimney. Shot four repeats shot two as, in close up, the wrapped cat is popped into the pot and the lid replaced. The following image returns to the roof as Willie and Tim take their leave. Once again, formal methods of shot combination have effectively linked two separate spaces.

Out on location

The openness of location filming seems to have facilitated a somewhat greater—albeit occasional—formal inventiveness. Outdoors, camera placement could accommodate a range of distances from close, though still maintaining bodily integrity, to very long shots. Hence, *A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast* includes a number of impressive long shots of characters moving in the distance along cliff paths and over rocky terrain. The camera might also adopt an angled rather than frontal viewpoint, as in Daring's *Plans of the Minefield*, where the port building at Folkestone is filmed at an angle with the escaping spies and other passengers passing the camera in a diagonal movement, thereby lending depth to the image. On several occasions in Cornwall, the camera looks down onto rugged rocks from a very high angle and once, in a particularly long shot from high up, tiny boats approach over the open sea. Such camera work was not without its problems, and Raymond recalled how, whilst filming in the Peak District,

[i]t was almost impossible to place the camera so that the resulting pictures would give the idea of the height and steepness of the paths we were using. You see the men scrambling up rocky slopes, but you do not see the danger they are in ... Only in the case of birds eye views can you realise the depth down the valleys.⁶⁶

The outdoor camera might also *move*. For example, in *Plans of the Minefield*, the spies descend the gangway of the Folkestone ferry and turn left at the bottom to stand against the ship's rail whilst the camera, standing on the dockside, pans slowly left and down to follow them. *The Mountaineer's Romance* (December 1912) has a number of tilting and panning movements, some spectacular. In one, a climbing party gather in the shot's foreground before turning to walk away up a path mounting the slope behind them; as they move into the distance, the camera tilts up to follow them and capture the grandeur of the cliff face. Another begins with a very long shot looking down onto a valley floor before making a leisurely pan left to rest on the top of a nearby hill as the climbing party arrive.

Staging in depth was a studio innovation in the autumn of 1910, but blocking out scenes to give a sense of depth had long been possible within the greater freedom of location filming. Thus, from the outset, a scene in an open field in *Her Lover's Honour* gave ample scope for movement. A sword fight between hero and villain has been halted; the former

stands mid-shot reading a letter whilst the latter sheathes his sword at screen right; the villain then moves to the centre, proffering to shake hands, but the hero refuses and retreats up the slope of the field, back to the camera; meanwhile, the villain has come forward to pick up the dropped letter, before moving off left shaking his fist. The choreography of these movements is simple but nevertheless extends into the depth of the location space. The Cornish and Peak District 'location films' inevitably encouraged such staging, with characters distributed over the landscapes both near the camera and into the distance, moving back and forth through the open areas and up and down the hillsides. Further, on location, performers might make exits and entrances by passing right or left of the camera, a practice unheard of on a studio set. Consequently, figures would transgress the studio's distanced viewpoint to loom large and appear close to the camera.

Location filming also made its own contribution to editing practice. For example, in *Her Lover's Honour*, the hero carries a message to a midnight meeting with a courier. There follow three shots in different exterior locations dealing with this encounter.⁶⁷ To link them, Martinek adopted a stratagem that had first been developed in the comic chase films of earlier in the decade. In each succeeding shot, the main figure enters the space from behind the camera and moves into its depth, his forward momentum passing from one shot to the next, thereby linking them together. The company's own comics applied this technique, as in *Playing Truant*, where the errant schoolboy wreaks havoc on the public as he progresses from space to space, shot to shot, in and out of frame. The climax to the drama of *A Cornish Coast* adopts a similar approach in its final intertitle-less eight shots, in which the hero and a party of sailors pursue and shoot it out with the villains over a series of rocky locations, the whole multi-shot sequence comprising a coherent self-contained episode.

Another type of multi-shot combination was employed from time to time. Cross-cutting was a matter of shuttling or cutting between different spaces and two lines of action that would eventually come together. So, in *A Gentleman Ranker* (July 1912), when a company of soldiers is ambushed and one man is sent to secure help, the film cuts between images of the group, always filmed from the same set-up, backs to the camera and firing to the rear, and shots of the soldier hastening for help, filmed from a variety of set-ups, riding forward through woody landscapes and passing out beside the camera.

In contrast to studio work, on a couple of occasions location filming permitted attempts at scene dissection or the filming of a particular scene

from more than one camera position and the later cutting of those shots together. On *The Plum Pudding Stakes* in 1911, this took a rudimentary form when, in a first shot, Willie and Tim approach a Punch and Judy tent in the street and, in the second, are shown to its rear attaching a rope to a car that will drag it off the puppeteer inside. *Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Minefield* over a year later offers something more complex in five images: first, an aeroplane is wheeled out of a hangar in long shot; a distanced frontal shot of the plane and its pilot follows as Daring enters, persuades the man to change places and sits, centre image, in the pilot's seat; next, the camera moves directly in to a closer shot of Daring as he turns to look back right; this is succeeded by an angle shot from behind and to the plane's left as a mechanic turns the propeller (which is behind the pilot); then there is a similar angle shot from further back that shifts into a left pan as the plane moves into the distance to take off.

Equally sophisticated shot transitions are evident in *The Antique Vase* (April 1913), where attention is given to a character's line of regard and a novel sense of off-screen space is evoked. A female artist and an actor plan to dupe a shopkeeper. In the first of four exterior shots, they enter from screen right and pause, looking left, in front of a wall; the actor points and exits screen left, the artist remaining to watch. In the next shot—framing the shop front with the owner standing in the doorway—the actor enters, is rebuffed and exits. The third shot repeats the first, with the young woman gazing off left, clearly witnessing the foregoing scene; she then moves off left. The fourth shot repeats the second: the shopkeeper is looking off screen in the direction from which the woman enters; he then welcomes her into the shop. Each shot transition here is a direct cut, but the continuity is smooth and the sense of contiguous spaces coherent. However, the Daring scene dissection and this attention to line of regard appear one offs, as such polished editing was not yet regular practice.

A different kind of editing tactic was deployed in *A King's Peril*, released in September 1911 following George V's coronation in June. The film featured anarchists in a cheering crowd proposing to throw a bomb, and included 'a glimpse of the actual coronation procession'.⁶⁸ The latter shot would have been taken from one of the company's topicals filmed in June and incorporated into the fictional images. By the same token, the combination of fiction film and industrial in *A Factory Girl's Honour* would have resulted from a similar incorporation of shots from B&C's industrial on *The Manufacture of Incandescent Gas Mantles* released later in the same year (September 1913).

The emblematic shot

There was a further formal figure that B&C made regular use of in Period One, the image Noel Burch named 'the emblematic shot'.⁶⁹ Widely discussed by film theorists with reference to Edison's 1903 *The Great Train Robbery*, this was the provision by the producer of an image not integrated into the film narrative and taken from a closer camera position than the conventional scene-recording long shot. In the Edison film, it was a medium shot of an outlaw firing his revolver at the camera and it rather perplexed exhibitors, who might place it either at the beginning or end of the film, as either a prologue or an epilogue. B&C carried this procedure over into cinema's second decade and throughout Period One. However, the decision where to place the image was no longer left to the exhibitor, as B&C's emblematic shots were integrated into the organization of the film by the producer. In the main, they were placed at its end, thereby providing a clear form of closure once the narrative had concluded. In 1909, *Her Lover's Honour* ended with a shot of hero and heroine embracing after their adventure, framed from the chest up, and the next film, *Shipmates*, ended with 'a head and shoulders view' of its female protagonist.⁷⁰ In 1912, a Daring adventure concluded with the lieutenant, arms folded, looking into the camera against a background of real naval warships. In 1913, *The Antique Vase* closed on a close up of the tricked shopkeeper, filmed from the waist up, ruefully shaking his head over the deception, whilst the exclusive release of *Dick Turpin's Ride to York* ended with an image of Black Bess dying, Dick at her side in 'a touching scene which add[ed] much to the effectiveness and completeness of the story'.⁷¹

There were a few occasions when the emblematic shot was used as a prologue. *The Puritan Maid* opened 'with a beautiful picture of Ruth, the Puritan Maid, at a lattice window ... standing by her spinning wheel and distaff', a scene that, according to the *KLW*, formed a fitting prelude to the picture.⁷² At the opening of *The Mountaineer's Romance*, the four protagonists are introduced in a series of head and shoulder close shots and identified in the accompanying intertitles by their character names rather than those of the performers. In two other films, the prologues were rather more artful. Both pictures were taken from stories written by established authors, whose persons B&C proceeded to co-opt for promotional purposes. The script for *The Great Anarchist Mystery* was written by Silas K. Hocking, and as the film opened, the audience was 'shown the writer of the play at work on it, and then in succession the chief actors'.⁷³ *The Chronicles of Don Q* had been a set of stories by the travel writer

Hesketh Pritchard, and the first film in the series presented its lead actor, Charles Raymond, in an opening scene with the author—though, because the former was in costume, *The Bioscope* felt it ‘must, to some extent, tend to destroy the illusion necessary to the complete enjoyment of a dramatic performance’.⁷⁴

MATTERS OF NARRATIVE

Two problems

In the early 1910s, with the great increase in the number of films telling new and unfamiliar stories, a possible problem was identified regarding the ready intelligibility of such novel film texts. At issue was whether audience members would readily understand them. As Charles Musser has demonstrated regarding the American cinema, the longer term solution lay with the developments in editing and film form that B&C film-makers were exploring.⁷⁵ But at the start of the decade, it was the agencies selling a production company’s films that came up with an intermediate solution. This lay in providing a supplementary text to the films themselves. B&C’s first agent was Cosmopolitan, which used the trade periodical the *Film House Record* to promote its films. The *Record* printed synopses of all the pictures that agents at the Film House were handling, and suggested cinema owners should take up handbills of them to distribute amongst audiences, thereby increasing ‘the enjoyment of the visitor, who can follow the film more easily and appreciate its points better, if he has already read a summary of the incidents’.⁷⁶ Next, through 1912 and into 1913, B&C films were handled by the MPSA, who hit on the idea of promoting its films through a house magazine directed to the picture-going public. Called *The Pictures*, it styled itself ‘An Illustrated Weekly Magazine of Fiction for Lovers of Moving Pictures’ and employed writers to tell the story of its forthcoming films. It proposed:

Our stories ... will make the picture actors real and living personages, invest them with human interest, and lay bare their characters, motives, passions, and mutual relations. When, therefore, the reader of one of our stories sees it realised by the cinematograph, he will be able to follow every scene with vastly increased facility; he will readily seize details that might otherwise have escaped him ... and he will enter into the drama enacted before his eyes with a thoroughness of sympathy and appreciation which he could not feel were he witnessing it without having read the story.⁷⁷

This treatment was only extended to B&C's major films—the series films and more significant dramas—but, unlike the bare plot outlines of the *Film House Record*, stories in *The Pictures* provided, in effect, a 'novelization' of the films covered. The writers adopted the conventional stance of the omniscient narrator, explaining characters' thoughts, quoting their utterances and commenting on their behaviour. Both publications justified themselves in terms of making the films more 'readable' to audiences, but *The Pictures* seems to have been offering an 'interiority' to the characters in its printed accounts that was not yet apparent in the films themselves.

Another problematic issue in the move to longer films was the matter of 'padding' or including unnecessary and irrelevant material to lengthen the duration of a picture. B&C were largely exonerated from this charge. For example, the comic short *A Deal in Broken China* (May 1910) was deemed 'without an inch of padding'; the drama *Trust Those You Love* was a 'particularly effective story' as it was also 'presented without an inch of padding'; and amongst the series films, *Dick Turpin and the Gunpowder Plot* was similarly 'devoid of padding'.⁷⁸ The company seem to have been recognized for the proficiency of its narrative film-making.

Advice to scriptwriters

Beyond this, some insight into how the company thought about story development in Period One can be gained from the advice they released to aspiring scenario writers amongst the general public who were submitting scripts on the off chance they might be taken up and filmed. A scenario competition run by *The Pictures* in spring 1912 suggested as suitable B&C subjects 'Dramas—Naval, Military, Historical and Domestic ... Comedies, or ... Comics—without the inevitable chase or knockabout business'.⁷⁹ Later that year, *The Bioscope's* regular column providing information about the kinds of plot manufacturers would consider observed that B&C required 'Domestic dramas with a touch of sensationalism, without anything gruesome'.⁸⁰ Writing early in 1913, script editor Harold Brett declared: 'What is required now is a good moral English drama depicting English people in English homes amid English scenery. Society dramas with a touch of excitement in them, hair breadth escapes, but without murders or suicides, are mostly favoured.'⁸¹ J. O'Neill Farrell, as publicity manager, offered further guidelines. He advised: '[D]on't write up your play from old books or poems ... Either invent your plot yourself or else work it up from real life or the newspapers ... [And] don't write a story that would cost hundreds of pounds to film.'⁸² He warned: 'Don't introduce bar-room scenes, drunkenness, needless drinking, brutal

murders, robberies, or anything else unpleasant or questionable into your play.⁸³ More specifically, he cautioned against introducing letter reading or flooding a picture with intertitles, because '[a]nything that breaks in on the actual pictures is apt to irritate'.⁸⁴ And finally, he set out a specification that lay at the heart of B&C's film-making practice: 'Don't forget that there must be "action" all through. It's no good making your characters carry on long conversations, the audience can't hear what they are saying. The people in the play must be *doing things* the whole time.'⁸⁵ Thus, the company was encouraging a range of film dramas whose narratives incorporated a measure of excitement and sensationalism, without being gruesome or unpleasant, and where the emphasis fell on action and movement. By and large, this was what B&C itself was providing, but it is nevertheless possible to differentiate between the narrative strategies of the three types of fiction they were releasing at this time.

Film comics

The comics were short with simple inexpensive sets and were regularly filmed in the streets and parks local to the studio. They were also part of an intermedial field in so far as they derived elements of their narrative approach from the drawn strips in the comic papers that had been appearing since the 1890s.⁸⁶ On the one hand, a series of sequentially ordered graphic frames and, on the other, a succession of well-chosen film shots provided comparable techniques for the organization of brief comic storylines. These narratives had their own distinct construction that was intermittent and recurrent rather than the logically developing sequence of cause and effect of conventional narrative. The *Film House Record* offered a perceptive insight into their technique when, of *A Cheap Removal*, it declared the film to be 'a really funny comic containing a *continuous series* of amusing and laughable *incidents* of a very characteristic nature'.⁸⁷ B&C's comics deployed an *additive* structure, where outrageous event was added to similar provocative event in a picaresque succession of mishaps and violence—in defiance of *The Pictures'* advice to avoid knockabout. These event series, often without intertitles, regularly developed into a chase sequence that not only effectively bound together the succession of images but also provided the opportunity to aggregate the earlier injured and insulted victims into a vengeful crowd. For example, in *When Women Join the Force* (December 1910), the policewomen in their new uniforms begin by swaggering out of the station but then run away from a burglar forcing a window, arrest only a small boy for stealing

apples and leave undisturbed dog thieves and 'other shady customers'. In the end, so many applications are made for their help that they 'take to their heels in panic', running away from the crowd to a male officer, before shedding their uniforms and hiding.⁸⁸

Series films

The top-line series films were longer, as well as being more expensive in terms of costumes, far away locations and novel sets. They too operated an intermedial exchange by drawing on the practices of the penny blood and penny dreadful periodicals of nineteenth-century lowbrow publishing.⁸⁹ In these, a larger-than-life character would regularly reappear in a string of different stories. Like such predecessors, B&C's series films were episodic, built up from a loosely combined sequence of events involving the central character. Three-Fingered Kate executed a run of 'exploits'; Lieutenant Daring and Dick Turpin each went through a number of 'adventures'; and the Don Q stories were the 'chronicles' of his encounters. Within a series, each episode remained implicitly open-ended, despite its momentary



Figure 8.3 Charles Raymond as Don Q with the author Hesketh Pritchard.
The Bioscope, 5 October 1911

closure, suggesting that the lead character would return and that the series could be added to indefinitely. Most notably, Daring's adventures managed to endure for thirteen episodes and for almost three years.⁹⁰

If the overarching narrative of the run of series films was episodic, so often were the narratives of individual episodes. For example, the high point of *Lieutenant Daring Defeats the Middleweight Champion* was the three round match Percy Moran fought with the professional boxer, but, before that, there were the set pieces of the rescue of a girl from the Thames, the waylaying of Daring and his release from captivity in a lonely hut and a car chase to the fight venue. But it was the Dick Turpin films that proved most comprehensively episodic. *The Bioscope* admitted that the first had 'no particular plot, beyond showing how Turpin first took to his illicit trade', and *The Pictures* characterized it as a 'thrilling British romance, crowded with incident. The highwayman robs a horse dealer, takes to the road, waylays a coach, and is pursued by Bow Street Runners. Exciting and picturesque.'⁹¹ Adventure four, *A Deadly Foe, A Pack of Hounds and Some Merry Monks* (January 1913), combined a fight, an escapade in a monastery, another encounter with the Runners and a hunt with fox hounds.

The dramas

The most numerous category of film was the dramas, which appear to have had clearer storylines than the comics and tighter narrative integration than the series films. Consequently, there was a more coherent cause and effect structure to many of them. In *Her Father's Photograph*, for example, a mother, forced to abandon her infant child at the film's opening, is reunited with her as an adolescent at its end because the daughter has preserved the photograph of her father that the mother had concealed in her baby's clothing. The sequence of causation in *The Mountaineer's Romance* begins with Nan's suspicion that her sweetheart is having an affair with a visitor to the Peaks; this leads to a fight between him and her brother that leaves the former struggling in a river; but when Nan discovers her lover's innocence, brother and sister seek him out for rescue.

The dramas also had their own intermedial field of reference, the nineteenth-century theatrical melodrama. Peter Brooks has described how 'the melodramatic imagination' emerged in France at the time of the Revolution and Michael Booth has detailed its manifestations in England, observing, 'English melodrama developed its distinctly separate form in the 1790s, continued in several varieties through the nineteenth century, and died lingeringly after the First World War.'⁹² Thus, melodrama was

a distinctly nineteenth-century tradition, but whereas in the early part of the century it was a new form, by the latter part, the writing of such plays had fallen into what might be called 'the melodramatic habit'. Perhaps inevitably, screenwriters such as Harold Brett and directors such as Martinek and Raymond would have readily assumed this habit when creating B&C's film dramas.

Furthermore, if the storylines were determined by their makers' adoption of the melodramatic habit with respect to narrative organization and character typing, then the resulting films were likely to prove more readily understandable to audiences already familiar with the melodramatic form from its previous manifestations on the stage. Transferring the melodramatic habit to the cinema served, therefore, to address the problem of the readability of stories in the new medium from within the film texts themselves. In addition, the standardized melodrama roles regularly enacted by individual performers in the B&C stock company would have further reinforced audience recognition.

Nineteenth-century stage melodramas resolved themselves into a number of sub-genres, most of which resurfaced in the Period One film dramas. The nautical melodrama, for example, underpinned the Lieutenant Daring series with patriotism and defence of female vulnerability—though Daring's officer rank gave him a higher status than his able-seaman ancestors. In 1911–1912, the company released five films that descended from earlier military melodramas. In *A Comrade's Treachery* (May 1911), for example, set on the Indian frontier, hero and villain, in standard melodrama convention, are rivals for the colonel's daughter; facing a native attack, the villain shoots the hero in the back and returns to base representing himself as the sole survivor of the encounter; but the wounded hero nevertheless leads his soldiers to victory before returning to headquarters to refute the false story and claim the girl.⁹³ In the second half of the nineteenth century, there were a number of exciting factory melodramas of which the film *A Factory Girl's Honour* was a late example. *The Top-Line Indicator* suggested: 'Its incidents are knitted together so cleverly that they grip all the time. There are many sensational incidents in this film, and the great fire scene, showing hundreds of terrified girls rushing from a burning factory, is a startler.'⁹⁴ A minor genre was the animal melodrama, and B&C produced a couple of these in 1913 with the company bulldog. In *Sagacity Versus Crime* (April), it carried an urgent message, and in *With Human Instinct* (June), it rescued a baby from a burning building.

But perhaps the two major theatre genres were the domestic melodrama, running throughout the century but strengthening in its second

half, and, from the 1860s, the sensation melodrama. The former was the more sentimental mode, whereas the latter was more action-oriented, drawn to physical sensation and the visual spectacle of fires and explosions, fights and battles. B&C operated in both modes, but over the period was drawn increasingly towards the spectacle and sensation that was to flourish at the start of Period Two. *Only Two Little Shoes*, released for Christmas 1910, represented the pathetic mode. An unemployed man is arrested and imprisoned for housebreaking, the shoe of his dead child his only keepsake; his wife, treasuring the other shoe, is reduced to selling matches in the street before a position is secured for her in a private home; the discharged husband, once more jobless, breaks into this house, but is reunited with his wife after discovering the shoe that matches his own. Both *The Fisher Girl of Cornwall* and *Blind Faith*, of March 1912, represent standard domestic melodrama, with its oppositions of town and country, rich and poor. In the one, a fisher girl, having helped rescue a visitor from drowning, is fascinated by him and elopes with him to London; there, after discovering his villainy, she resorts to selling flowers in the street, where she is found by her Cornish lover, who has come to town in search of her.⁹⁵ The second film effectively duplicates this plot. Katie is persuaded by the 'suave tongue and immaculate manners' of the wealthy Philip to leave her village and her blacksmith lover; in London, now married, Philip loses his money gambling at his club, takes to drink and attacks his wife; she leaves home, only to be found starving on the Embankment by the blacksmith, who carries her back to the village; in the meantime, Philip has been killed in a motor accident.⁹⁶

August 1910's *A Plucky Lad*, with its rescue of a girl from a burning building, represented an early move into the more sensational melodrama mode and the incidence of sensation scenes increased in 1911 with, for example, the battles in *A Comrade's Treachery*, fights and the apprehension of a bolting horse in *A Noble Revenge* (June) and, in *The King's Peril*, the thwarting of the anarchists' assassination attempt through two fights and the physical destruction of their hideout. By 1913, and particularly in the films made in Jamaica, sensation melodrama had become a staple product. In *The Old College Badge* (June), a sugar factory is blown up and the plantation workers encouraged to rebel. In *The Favourite for the Jamaica Cup* (May), there is a kidnap, hand-to-hand fights, a horse ride to prevent a train crash and the villain's spectacular fall from a high bridge into a river. And in *The Planter's Daughter* (September), there is more fighting, a runaway horse, another chase and a rescue of the hero tied to a railway line.⁹⁷

Thus, in Period One, B&C released a distinctive corpus of films that contemporary opinion felt was distinguished both by its photographic quality and the high standard of its staging. At the same time, the company's film-makers were coming to terms with the formal demands of camera placement, shot combination and narrative organization. All these matters continued to command attention in Period Two, but there were qualitative changes in each as production moved into the indoor studio and company policy took on a new emphasis in its embrace of the film 'exclusive'.

Spectacle, Sensation and Narrative: The B&C Film in Period Two

In the autumn of 1913, B&C opened their big, indoor studio at Walthamstow, where film-making became increasingly concentrated. Earlier in the year, McDowell had decided on the 'exclusives' policy, directed to privileging the release of longer, more expensive feature films. As rental charges on these were not fixed and were often quite high, the company's enhanced income could be ploughed back into higher production values, thereby potentially raising the quality of the next tranche of production.

As Tables 8.2 and 8.3 revealed, B&C continued to make comic films and dramas, but the main effort was now given over to the exclusives. Consequently, most of the discussion here will concentrate on these more prestigious films.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND LIGHTING EFFECTS

The approving commentary on the company's photography continued into Period Two. For example, a 1913 Lieutenant Daring episode was judged photographically 'superb, every detail coming out clear and sharp'.¹ Similarly, never before had 'sharper or more clearly defined photography' been seen than on *The Battle of Waterloo* (September 1913).² On the winter-filmed *The Life of Shakespeare* (February 1914), even though 'the photography suffer[ed] in some respect from the vagaries of our climate, many of the pictures [turned out] very beautiful, and typical examples of English pastoral scenery'.³ In autumn 1915, in a return to the Period One 'location film', B&C made *At the Torrent's Mercy*, for which *The Cinema* praised McDowell on account of his 'excellent camera-work'.⁴ It observed: 'What gives value and distinction to this simple story is the

extremely beautiful photography, and the gloriously picturesque glimpses of mountain and glen, tree-clad heights, sweeping park-land, craggy precipices, lonely passes, and brawling little valley streams, amidst which many desperate thrills take place.⁵

However, these were examples of outdoor, daylight photography, whereas Period Two witnessed a withdrawal from location shooting as film-making moved inside the Hoe Street building. This was a dark studio that needed to be illuminated, but McDowell, unlike Bloomfield, was not hostile to artificial lighting. As early as October 1907, when he was still a topical cameraman for Walturdaw, he had filmed a banquet given for visiting Paris counsellors *inside* a London hotel. To this end, he had installed mercury vapour lamps providing 36,000 candle power, which allowed him to light a panoramic shot of the room. One comment on the resulting film declared ‘the clearness of the picture [to be] remarkable’.⁶ Given this interest, it might have been expected that he would design the complex, mobile lighting arrangements for the new premises.



Figure 9.1 Dramatic studio lighting in Maurice Elvey's *Florence Nightingale*.
The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 1 April 1915

By 1914, certain standard principles for lighting a studio set had been developed. As H.M. Lomas explained in his textbook *Picture Play Photography*, ‘The lighting of a scene should be so arranged that it is easy to distinguish the individual members in a group of performers, and to

follow their respective movements. The whole group should likewise stand out in clear relief against the background'.⁷ Consequently, he recommended a graduated lighting approach that was stronger on one side of the set than the other, with additional top lighting and strong illumination at the front. Such an arrangement would give 'solidity and relief to the figures, and [would make] them and their actions easy to see and follow'.⁸ B&C staff would have followed these routine procedures.

However, critical interest was directed towards *special* lighting effects. Thus, one reviewer responded to the 'soft fire-light scenes' in the interiors of *The Life of Shakespeare*, whilst another observed how, on *Hearts That Are Human* (July 1915), the photography had 'that warm, mellow tinge which the B and C Co. knows so well how to obtain'.⁹ But it was the films directed by Maurice Elvey in 1914–1915 that were most often celebrated for their novel lighting. Hence, in the summer of 1915, the *Film-Renter* remarked on how on *Grip* (July 1914) 'the trade mark of the B&C and the name of Maurice Elvey as producer render any doubts as to the quality of the photography ... superfluous', thereby suggesting the studio brand-name and this particular director had become guarantors of lighting quality.¹⁰

Elvey took this responsibility for granted, maintaining: 'It is, of course, up to the producer to know what scenes he wants taken and what lighting effects, both exterior and interior, he desires them to be taken in.'¹¹ And it was on *Beautiful Jim* in November 1914 that he made his initial impact. *The Cinema* observed:

[T]he photography and settings touch the very highest level of skill and artistry. The interiors are very rich and choicely furnished, and elaborate thought has been devoted to the lighting arrangements. Many of the effects obtained are surpassingly beautiful ... The light has a warmth and richness and mellowness which greatly enhance the charm of the film. One very skilful effect deserves special mention. The murder of Captain Owen is accomplished in the dark. A second or two of obscurity follows, and then the room is illuminated with cold *green* moonlight as the murderer flings back the window curtains. This effect is almost immediately succeeded by a rush of warm, *yellow* light from the corridor as the criminal goes out by the door.¹²

In a still of this scene there is strong chiaroscuro, with the light from the window at screen left first touching the side of the standing killer, then falling across the chest of Owen's body as it lies on the floor and finally picking out the edges of several items of furniture. *The Cinema* was

similarly impressed by *It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary* in December, suggesting that the war scenes were

rendered all the more impressively by being exclusively enacted in light representing night. This 'discovery' has apparently found the 'missing something' which has hitherto been noticeable in war dramas. If Mr M. Elvey, the producer, is responsible for this, he has indeed found the way in which to make film war scenes impressive and convincing.¹³

The *KLW* recalled how the initial trade audience had applauded 'a red-tinted group of soldiers seated around a camp fire and giving voice to the infectious air that has inspired our troops'.¹⁴ A still of this scene has men sitting in a group in the foreground, with others standing behind them; their faces are lit from a source to the bottom right and there is a further glow at the right back.¹⁵ It is also noteworthy how in both *Beautiful Jim* and *Tipperary*, Elvey was apparently enhancing his lighting effects by the use of colour—at least for the prints seen at the trade shows. Finally, scenes in the blacksmith's shop in *Her Nameless (?) Child* (May 1915) were 'considerably intensified by the excellent lighting effect, ... one of Mr. Elvey's specialities'.¹⁶ For a hammer fight between the blacksmith and villain, *The Cinema* observed, closing the doors and shutting off outside light 'considerably enhance[d] the effect of the glow from the fire in the forge'.¹⁷

Harold Weston, Elvey's successor, had his own ideas about the importance of photography and lighting in films. From the outset—unlike, it would appear, Elvey—he recognized the contribution expressly made by the cameraman. In his opinion, a director needed to be 'a person of some artistic achievement', whereas 'the camera need[ed] a scientist to control it'; hence, a successful film depended on their collaboration.¹⁸ Poor camera work, he maintained, could 'distort [the director's] efforts, making the tensest tragedy into blurred farce, [could] darken the faces of the actors until the expressions of their anger, joy or remorse [could] not be detected, to say nothing of the more transient emotions which they [might] endeavour to portray'.¹⁹ Further, he felt that through films audiences were being taught, in part, 'aesthetic values by the skilful arranging of light and shade'.²⁰ To this end, he proposed film-makers examine paintings in order to learn 'how to obtain some of the most beautiful lighting effects'.²¹ In general, he argued, studio lights should be arranged so the illumination was 'natural'; that is, light should strike a scene as it would naturally from the rays of the sun or the usual illumination of a room.²² Thus, in his film

Shadows (August 1915), he decreed that for the day scenes in Sir William Rodney's old-fashioned house, 'the light [would] come from the windows up stage to the left' and during the evening scenes 'from the firelight or the electric bracket above the centre of the room'; for the modern flat of his son's mistress, light for the evening scenes would come 'partly from electric globes on the walls and partly from the adjoining room'.²³ At particular moments, such as when a narrative climax was approaching, 'an effect either of lighting or picturisation [that is, staging]' might be arranged to 'carry on the interest in some degree'.²⁴ One such effect was deployed in *Shadows*, a film that, according to *The Bioscope*, contained 'much in the way of artistic photography'.²⁵ It occurred in Sir William's room one evening and was described thus in the script: 'It is empty, lights are down, the only illumination comes from the fire, which leaves the background in shadow. Vivian [Sir William's son] enters, and a flood of light enters the door as he opens it.'²⁶ Beyond this, Weston deployed studio lighting to create what he called 'atmosphere'. For the opening of *Shadows* he filmed a kind of prologue to the main story, which investigated the world of prostitution. His script described the scene:

The Street of the Shadows. A mean street, lighted only by the rays from a glaring lamp in a public house, and the semi-transparent light from a broken luminant in a street lamp. An atmosphere of gloom and discontent pervades the road ... No person is visible, but the shadows of the women of the night are cast upon the wall ... As the shadows pass and re-pass, a man's figure is cast upon the wall every now and again, until at last the street is empty, desolate and alone.²⁷

Unfortunately, the British Board of Film Censors disapproved of this evocative scene and it was deleted from the released film!

ASPECTS OF *MISE-EN-SCÈNE*

In March 1917, a review of *When Paris Sleeps*, B&C's penultimate Period Two film, suggested the evaluative criteria tentatively advanced in response to the company's first dramas in 1909 had become consolidated into standard critical commentary. It touched on all the elements contributing to a successful film by observing:

[T]he *setting* of the story has been ... carefully considered ... and some [scenes] are really excellent examples of *stagecraft*. As regards

acting, and *dressing*, too, the film is unusually well found, and whilst the *photography* throughout is of consistently good quality, some of the *lighting effects* reflect the utmost credit upon the cameraman responsible.²⁸

Thus, alongside photography and lighting, it listed the now conventional ingredients of *mise-en-scène*, but, as will become apparent, these had undergone qualitative changes with the costly exclusives.

Sets at Walthamstow

The move into the Walthamstow studio meant even greater control could be exercised over the production process. Consequently, outdoor environments began to be reproduced inside the studio. As early as December 1913, *The Bioscope* remarked on how, for *The Two Father Christmases*, 'the snow scenes are wonderfully well done and there are some remarkable studio settings ... particularly striking being the exterior of Gamages emporium, which is reproduced with notable skill'.²⁹ Later still, on *A Honeymoon for Three* (February 1915), there was an attempt to recreate the natural world when 'one of the most effective forest and lake scenes is actually constructed in the studio itself'.³⁰ And on *Fatal Fingers* (May 1916), the whole studio was filled with the recreation of a street in an Italian town.³¹

The studio floor space was extensive, so the carpenters had room to build increasingly large and substantial sets, and a growing income allowed the designers to dress them more lavishly, especially for those films set in upper-class environments. The first film to exploit these resources was *The Life of Shakespeare* at the end of 1913, with its recreation of scenes around Elizabethan London that led one commentator to conclude 'the atmosphere of the times is vividly reproduced'.³² In the summer of 1914, two crime films drew attention to their sets. On *The Master Crook Turns Detective* (July), the interior of a bank strong room and the layout of a gambling saloon were both 'exceedingly well planned', contributing to 'that realism the B and C Company are so successful in obtaining'.³³ And *The Bioscope* felt *Queen of the London Counterfeiters* (August) was 'notable for the unusual excellence of its studio scenes ... The interiors are splendidly built, and of an elaborate nature, particularly effective being the sectional view of two separate apartments, and the spacious ball-room scenes'.³⁴ The 'sectional view' was the film's true novelty, for the set presented a well-furnished drawing room in which the 'queen' worked a lever to open a trapdoor through which the detective pursuing her was

precipitated down into the basement where the counterfeiterers were at work—both rooms being visible in the one shot.

Maurice Elvey and 'big sets'

As with the case of lighting effects, it seems to have been Elvey's work that was primarily associated with the move to more elaborate sets. He made his position clear in an interview early in 1918, in which he stated:

In the past the essential difference between the English and the American film has been in the elaboration on the one hand, and the paucity of detail on the other, in the sets used as backgrounds for the story portrayed. How often have we seen the suburban drawing-room doing duty for a Mayfair reception! Personally, I am a strong believer in the value and importance of *big sets* wherever possible and necessary.³⁵

He was then working for a company that had rented the B&C studio, which, he allowed, offered him 'plenty of scope and opportunity for carrying out my ideas in this direction'.³⁶ McDowell had allowed him similar latitude there in 1914.

Elvey's first B&C film was the naval melodrama *In the Days of Trafalgar* (August 1914), on which there was a 'noticeable absence of "canvas and plaster"'.³⁷ Instead, *The Cinema* observed 'a very exact reproduction has been obtained in costume, customs and manners of sea life in the days of the "Wooden Walls of Old England"', and *The Bioscope* found 'an accuracy of detail and a vivid realisation of atmosphere in which too many historical pictures are sadly lacking'.³⁸ On *Beautiful Jim*, the 'settings touch[ed] the very highest level of skill and artistry ... the interiors [being] very rich and choicely furnished'.³⁹ Thus, for its gentlemen's clubroom, the rear wall was panelled along its lower half; an ornate fireplace, topped by candles and a clock, was set into the wall; and, in mid-shot, a fancy candelabrum, a punch bowl and wine glasses were laid out on a heavy table. This placement of storylines in such wealthy environments or 'Society' continued with *Her Luck in London* (January 1915) and *The Idol of Paris* (February 1915). Sets for the latter were 'most lavish', and one facilitated 'the representation of a large orchestra for which nearly a hundred performers were engaged'.⁴⁰ The interiors of the former included the Hilarity Lounge, a West End gambling den and the Fly By Night Club, which, according to *The Cinema*, were 'very well produced indeed'.⁴¹ On the historical biopic *Florence Nightingale*, there were 'none of those

staring anachronisms common in subjects of this kind', perhaps because where possible Elvey had 'copied the scenes from existing photographs and pictures'.⁴²

With *London's Yellow Peril* (March 1915), he descended into the criminal underworld to present 'the eerie, sordid drabness which surrounds London's Chinatown'.⁴³ *The Bioscope* wrote of how 'the settings verge[d] ... upon the more sordid aspects of a slum district', of how the opium den offered 'what we should assume to be a fairly accurate representation of a seamy, but fascinating, phase of life, and of how the ransomed heroine was imprisoned 'in a squalid den quite worthy the pen of a Greenwood or a Sims'—both recorders of the lifestyles of London's lumpenproletariat.⁴⁴ Following the conventions of melodrama these low-life situations were contrasted with a smart Bond Street hat shop, a musical soirée and a luxurious study. Similar contrasts displaying the set designer's ingenuity were evident in the last Period Two film, *Auld Lang Syne* (October 1917), made well after Elvey had moved away. On the one hand, there was Lady Welton's Mayfair palace and, on the other, the Hoxton Drapery Stores. A feature of the film was 'the skill with which it reproduces the atmosphere of working class life'.⁴⁵ By this time, the proficiency of B&C's studio staff had become routinized, as was apparent in a trade press comment on an earlier film, *Hearts That Are Human*:

[T]he knowledge of studio craftsmanship and general producing technique evidenced in the film is of a high order ... All the scenes are placed in and around lower middle-class life, and a few of them are set in a genuine British kitchen, one of the most typical 'home products' we have ever seen on the films. The scenes giving glimpses of the full stage-setting, as seen from the shadowed background of the dress circle, are splendid examples of constructive studio craft.⁴⁶

The film's final reel proved 'remarkable from a scenic point of view' because it recreated a complete theatre, including the stage door, dressing rooms and the 'spectacular triumph' of a big set encompassing private boxes, stalls, dress circle and the stage itself.⁴⁷

Harold Weston and 'atmosphere'

However, it was Harold Weston who attempted to theorize the practice of sets and set design with his concept of 'atmosphere'. In contrast to Elvey's admiration for big sets and American elaboration of settings, Weston felt 'the artistry of American producers' had been 'stifled' latterly

by thousand dollar sets and heroines 'garbed by Worth'.⁴⁸ Instead, he proposed an 'impressionistic' approach. This was first outlined in an exchange of letters in *The Cinema* in the winter of 1914–1915, just before he joined B&C. He had been reproached for a lack of conscious attention to 'detail', which, for the critical opinion of the time, had to do with matters of setting, set dressing and costume. So, a neglect of detail might be the director omitting to change a character's clothes in a shift of scene from summer to winter or forgetting to alter a clock.⁴⁹ Weston's initial response remained somewhat cryptic. He claimed lack of detail was not one of his faults, as 'every movement in the ... photoplay has been worked out in detail, together with the "business", by puppets on [a] miniature stage'; that his film's success lay less in its melodrama than 'upon *atmosphere* and this same detail'; and that if a director told his story 'in a lucid manner by means of action', and if he 'retains the atmosphere, the detail is quite by the way'.⁵⁰ In a second letter he expanded this point, arguing:

[I]t depends ... upon the type of production as to whether *extraneous* detail shall be introduced. In a certain class of photoplay, that which I may call, for want of a better name, the 'impressionistic' type (a parallel in painting to the work of Gauguin and Cezanne), it is very essential that the broad outlines should be drawn, that one should *suggest*, more than definitely state, that one should *show the spirit* rather than the body; in cases like these a mass of detail would be superfluous, and only that which is entirely and absolutely necessary to retain the illusion should be employed.⁵¹

The term remained somewhat elusive here too, but its application was clarified in his script for *Shadows* where the sets for the house of the overbearing Sir William and the flat of the woman who charms his son are each described. For the former, Weston proposed:

[A]n early Victorian atmosphere should reign ... , the furniture being for the most part treasured relics of Lady Rodney, coming to her down the ages from her forbears. Here and there should be touches of expensively decorated furniture, neither in good taste nor bad, merely uninteresting. Flowers should decorate the tables. The oak settee in the window should be heavy, as should the rest of the furniture used.⁵²

By contrast, he suggested, 'The furniture in Creda's flat should be light, bright pictures should be on the walls and flowers in plenty. Dainty

cushions be on the settee and the lightest of carpets used. Light chintz curtains should decorate the windows.⁵³ Thus, a set and its dressing should offer more than its denotative aspect—that is, a representation of an indoor space. Their design should evoke a connotative dimension whereby the set conveyed something about the people who lived in it, their status, character, even moods. This atmosphere would work subtly on audience emotions. As the second letter explained, provided production details were not ‘obtrusive’ or ‘outrageously false and untrue’, audiences would accept ‘anything that appeals to [their] emotions’; atmosphere was ‘as necessary to pictures as blood ... to the human body’; it was ‘that strange intangible abstraction which we ... call atmosphere’ that appealed to audiences; and without such a ‘strong emotional vehicle photoplays would not retain their hold on the public’.⁵⁴

Atmospheric set design and the impressionistic type of film represented a new direction for B&C, but it was one Eliot Stannard had taken to heart when he recast his experiences with the company into guidance for scriptwriters. He advised them to be ‘alive to the “atmospheric” value of costume, furniture, architecture and scenery’, and suggested a script should describe ‘the types of houses [the characters] live in, how they are furnished and every detail of “atmospheric” importance’.⁵⁵ The realization of this, he noted, was the responsibility of the scenic artist, the property man and the costumier.

In March 1916, Stannard had the opportunity to put these ideas into practice on *Jimmy*, a film he scripted and co-directed and which was written up in the trade press in a manner suggesting the reworking of a studio press release. The *Film-Renter*, for example, reported:

The producers have attempted, above everything, to preserve the ‘atmosphere’ of the novel ... In order to intensify this ‘atmosphere’ the rooms in which the action of the story takes place have been specially designed to *express the moods and habits* of their occupants. For example, while Denbigh’s library is typical of the man, his drawing room bears the unmistakable feminine influence of his two daughters ... Denbigh’s business stability is represented by a strong room, especially constructed by Messrs. Milner and Co., Ltd.; his love of comfort by a kitchen constructed by the Eagle Range Co., Ltd.; whereas his wealth is indicated by his daughters’ clothes, the whole of which were created by the Maison Merci of Paris and London. From the old-fashioned quill pen of the banker to the Dresden tea cup used by his daughter, every detail of this production will bear the closest scrutiny.⁵⁶

Clearly, by the end of Period Two, sets were moving beyond the basic functionalism of Period One. Matters of design and *mise-en-scène* were now being thoughtfully attended to, and the builders and decorators, under the influence of Weston and Stannard, were orienting their work to the enrichment of a set's signifying 'atmosphere'.

Costume

Costume continued as an integral component of *mise-en-scène*, still conveying information about such things as social identity and status. Where historical films were concerned, period authenticity remained of prime importance. On *The Battle of Waterloo*, 'uniforms, guns, batteries, and the accoutrements [were] exactly as were in use at the period', and on *Florence Nightingale*, the story moved 'step by step across the years ... through all the costumes and customs of the intervening periods [1820–1910], reproduced with a faithfulness on which Mr. Maurice Elvey has lavished devoted insight and care'.⁵⁷

But with the drift into upper-class social worlds and the studio's greater expenditure, there was a move towards specially designed, stylish and up-to-date clothes for the women leads. For example, in *Her Luck in London*, the dancing troupe in the Fly by Night Club wore short-skirted dresses in bold checks, each with a pair of large bat-like wings on their shoulders, whilst Risdon took centre place in the show, clothed in elegant evening dress.⁵⁸ On *Jimmy*, every player wore new clothes, and on both that film and Weston's *The Climax* (April 1916)—despite his sneer at the Americans' use of the House of Worth—the women's dresses were designed by Maison Merci of Paris. W.G. Faulkner—informed, as he claimed, by a lady reader—described them in the *Evening News*. In *The Climax*, a ball gown of ivory white chiffon, fringed with mother of pearl drops and with emerald green chiffon over the hips, symbolized a butterfly. In *Jimmy*, the banker's daughters were elegantly attired in an apricot satin tea-gown, with head and train edged in mink, a pale blue and mauve fur-trimmed negligée and a full-skirted, seal skin coat trimmed with skunk.⁵⁹ With such costumes, production values had moved decisively to solicit that elusive and fashion-aware middle-class audience McDowell had been pursuing since 1913.

Acting and performance

In Period Two, performance modes witnessed a dramatic shift from 'action' to 'acting', although the more sensational films still required strenuous

performances. As *The Bioscope* remarked with Marie Pickering's ballooning exploits in *Through the Clouds* (October 1913) in mind:

[T]he fact must be undisputed that few individuals are called upon to participate in such deeds of daring, entailing enormous physical endurance, as fall to the lot of the present day camera artiste. If any proof were needed that the *dilettante* actor can never reach his Mecca by means of the cinema, the production under notice should dispel all question of doubt.⁶⁰

She had a similar bracing stunt, clinging to the wing of a hydroplane, on *In Fate's Grip* (December 1913). Similarly, Lillian Wiggins had demanding parts to play in James Youngdeer's crime pictures of 1914. But such female action roles were becoming rarer as the newer directors, with their theatrical backgrounds, began to encourage more decorous performance styles.

What this entailed and how the approach to screen acting was changing can be clarified by an article on *The Art of Screen Acting* written by Charles Calvert in December 1915. He was then a director at Cricks and Martin, but had previously performed and directed at B&C. He allowed that the 'art of cinema acting [was] more or less in its infancy', but nevertheless claimed he had come 'to the conclusion that here was a new Art', one, strange to say, that was 'a glorification of stage acting' because, to him, 'there seemed to be more life and strength on the screen than on the stage'.⁶¹ The 'first essential of the modern school of [stage] acting', he maintained, was voice production, whereas 'the first essential thing required for the screen [was] expression both as regards gesture and features'. Portraying emotions by expression demanded a performer 'capable of feeling and a certain amount of imagination' because, he argued, 'on the screen you see the very depths of the soul, and are not carried away by the author's words, but by the emotions shown by facial expression alone, which is considerably stronger in effect than words can ever be'. For Calvert, screen performance had shifted from bodies in physical movement to faces and their expression of emotion. More particularly, he observed, in screen acting 'we employ looks and glances' so that a 'certain stress or emphasis must ... be placed on certain expressions, and a definite pause is required before the expression is changed'; the student of cinema acting, he added, should 'become cognisant of the values of emphasis, pauses, and variety of expression'. Up-to-date screen performance styles were, it seems, to become slower and more a matter of 'being' than 'doing', and B&C appears to have moved in that direction, especially in the films directed by the Batleys, Elvey and Harold Weston.

This change in performance mode appears to have been most evident in the adaptations from novels and melodramas and the more serious dramas. For example, Harry Ward, who was recruited from the theatre to play the writer, gave 'a fine exemplary for cinema students' with his 'smooth, harmonious acting' in *The Life of Shakespeare*; Gray Murray's performance in *Beautiful Jim* 'was marked by remarkable restraint'; and, with *Fatal Fingers*, 'owing to ... the ... fine grouping, realistic characterisation and the finished and convincing acting of every individual ... the photo-play [gave] the impression of belonging to the realm of realistic drama'.⁶² In *Grip*, Fred Groves, as an Englishman nursing a treacherous rival through their term of imprisonment, had a role offering 'an almost unique opportunity as an actor, ranging ... over an almost unique gamut of human passions'; Leon M. Lion, his French antagonist, stood 'in strong contrast ... being in appearance and physique his diametrical opposite', the narrative differentiating 'the excitable, nervous restlessness of the little, jewelled, powdered, and scented sprig of the French nobility and the terribly calm strength of the big Englishman'.⁶³

But it was Elizabeth Risdon's appearances that became the touchstone for evaluating the 'new' acting, and her performances were variously regarded as 'intense and powerful', as 'wonderfully natural', as 'straightforward, sincere and natural', as an 'admirable combination of naturalness and subtlety' and as evidencing commendable 'restraint'.⁶⁴ For the *KLW*, 'versatility' was 'the keynote of Miss Risdon's success' in films, for she possessed 'in a remarkable degree the power of interpreting with convincing realism almost any phase of human nature, from a flower girl to a countess'.⁶⁵ For the *Weekly*, her 'perilous climb' up the social ladder from farmer's daughter to nightclub entertainer in *Her Luck in London* gave her 'the scope she need[ed]'—as did her appearance as both a mother and her daughter in *Her Nameless (?) Child*.⁶⁶ But her playing in *Florence Nightingale* won the most acclaim, with the *Weekly* claiming that her 'portraits of the "great little lady", at the various stages in her life ... prove[d] her an actress of consummate power', *The Cinema* maintaining 'her progressive make up through the advancing years ... [to be] a wonderful example of consistent and well-sustained characterisation' and *The Bioscope* suggesting her playing of Florence at eighty-six was 'instinct with the pathos and dignity of venerable old age'.⁶⁷

Given his progressive ideas on film-making, Harold Weston in particular seems to have expected the kind of acting proposed by Calvert, with its emphasis on facial expressiveness. In the script for *Shadows* were numerous cues for actorly portrayals of emotion. So, Creda enters a city café and 'wearily' glances round, she 'sits disconsolately' on a bed and

elsewhere listens 'with the light of terror in her eyes'; Sally, her mentor, looks at Creda's soiled clothes 'a little contemptuously'; Vivian, her lover, at one moment smiles 'in a superior manner' and, at another, 'a little patronisingly'; the face of Millicent, Vivian's fiancée, first 'shows her disappointment' and later 'express[es] her sorrow'.⁶⁸ These were subtle expressions to convey but, even though Weston did not indicate they were to be filmed in close-up, the *KLW* found Fay Temple to be 'delightful as Creda in all her varying moods, the portrayal enlisting and holding everyone's sympathy to the end'.⁶⁹

Both Risdon and Temple were young actresses making a name for themselves in films, whereas Lilian Braithwaite was already an established theatre performer when she made her first appearance before the camera for B&C in 1915. But her presence served to further reinforce the performance tendency that was becoming established in the studio. For *The World's Desire* (May 1915), her playing was 'smooth and natural', and on *The Climax*, she gave 'some splendid examples of expression and gesture'.⁷⁰ More generally, it was claimed for her:

[T]here is a quiet ease and freedom of movement in all she does that does not by any means always characterise the work of artistes long-seasoned to the work ... [W]e are bound to admit that the sense of restraint which is one of the most marked qualities of Miss Braithwaite's acting is very effective on the screen ... Her acting ... is characterised by quiet dignity and strength.⁷¹

Review commentary concentrated almost exclusively on individual performances and overlooked ensemble playing, although a couple of gambling scenes in 1914 were seen as providing opportunities for effective grouping. The alternating passions of eagerness and despair amongst gamblers around the roulette wheel in *The Master Crook Turns Detective* presented 'an extremely animated scene', and '[n]othing more exciting' had been seen for a long time than the degrees of emotion and anxiety shown by the players as the cards were dealt in *The Suicide Club*.⁷² But, as with the individual performances, the interest here was in interpersonal exchanges and the expression of emotion—a quite different mode of performance from that demanded by the Period One films.

SHOTS, COMPOSITION AND EDITING

Unfortunately only one Period Two film survives in British archives, Ethyle Batley's *There's Good in the Worst of Us* (January 1915); but Harold

Weston's book, published in 1916, drew on his experience of working at B&C to list the repertoire of techniques currently available to film-makers and his 1915 script for *Shadows* indicates how he put them to practical use. Coupled with comments and stills in the trade press, these sources allow a number of conclusions to be drawn about developments in the studio's formal methods during 1913–1917.

Company practice seems still to have remained essentially a matter of one-shot-one-scene, with little scene dissection or variation of shots within a particular scene. The outdoor epic, *The Battle of Waterloo*, at around 4,500 feet, was filmed in 112 scenes 'each of which [had] to take place amidst different surroundings'.⁷³ *The Life of Shakespeare*, at around 5,000 feet, ran to 150 scenes made up of location shots and studio-built exterior and interior sets. *There's Good in the Worst of Us* at 908 feet had twenty-eight scenes and *Shadows* at 3,840 feet was filmed in sixty-nine scenes. Nevertheless, film-making became increasingly complex.

In *There's Good...*, camera placement echoed that of earlier years, holding back to film all scenes in long shot, but in other films the camera did move closer to the performers, particularly for interiors. In *Jimmy*, for example, proximity varied between framings from the ankle up, the hip up or from the waist up.⁷⁴ Other films adopted these closer placements but still left considerable space above the performers' heads, maybe as much as a quarter of the image, though by the time of *Fatal Fingers* in May 1916, framing had sufficiently tightened to bring heads near the frame's top.⁷⁵

Further, in 1916, Weston was recommending use of the 'close-up' shot, which, he claimed, was the little-known 'American manner of telling a story'.⁷⁶ These were a matter of moving in to see the expression on a face—something he was keenly concerned to reveal. There was no need, he suggested, to limit the number of times this could happen, as almost an entire scene might be made up of close-ups. His own practice, however, seems to have been more parsimonious. In *Shadows*, a scene in a poor café is filmed in long shot, with Creda sitting at a table; Sally enters, sits opposite and looks across at her; then there is a cut to the film's first facial close-up (of Creda), followed by a reverse close-up (of Sally). The next (paired) close-ups come in a nightclub. Vivian has entered with his friends and has sat near Creda; he looks her way in long shot before there is a close-up of 'Creda glancing at Vivian' followed by one of 'Vivian looking at Creda'; a cut then returns to the long view of the club.⁷⁷ Here, then, views are exchanged and eye-lines matched one to the other. Weston also pointed out that close-ups might be used to force a particular piece of business, such as a photograph, on the audience's attention. So, at one

point in the café scene, Creda looks down and the film cuts to a shot of her hand holding a purse and a few coins. Significantly, such close-ups break into the standard one-shot-one-scene principle by cutting into an ongoing scene, rather in the manner of the earlier ‘inserts’ of written or printed matter.

There is also some evidence that studio camera placements were beginning to break with the rigid frontality of earlier positioning as angled shots began to appear in interiors. Camera set-ups could be directed towards the corner of a room where two walls join, with furniture placed diagonally to the camera, thereby giving a sense of recession to the image—and, perhaps, a more dynamic feel. Similarly, directors were making more explicit changes of camera set-up when returning to a particular set for a new scene. For example, one set in *The Midnight Wedding* was a church interior, with steps up from the nave into the chancel and stained glass windows at the back. The ‘midnight wedding’ was filmed there frontally, the camera looking from the nave into the chancel, but a later scene adopted an oblique viewpoint, looking right into the angle between the chancel and a side wall of the nave, where another window was revealed.⁷⁸

The one-shot-one-scene approach and angled camera placements served to encourage continued composition in depth. While Eliot Stannard was clearly conscious of the importance of careful composition in film work, he could only offer a generalizing proposition: ‘The duty of the producer is to study painting and drama ... [H]is work is expressed through the medium of *pictures* which require composition and grouping. The choice of a camera shot and the grouping of his figures may make or mar a dramatic situation.’⁷⁹ Weston proved similarly vague, suggesting the scriptwriter needed ‘a pictorial sense’ and that, once he was fully cognisant with ‘dramatic values’, he needed to ‘turn his attention to the art of picturisation’—that is, he should study the work of great painters.⁸⁰ For these two, painterly composition was to provide guidance for shot composition, but how they might operationalize this remained unstated. For Charles Weston, the meeting of Wellington and Blucher before the Belle Alliance Inn in *The Battle of Waterloo* was consciously modelled on a Daniel Maclise painting in the Houses of Parliament, and Maurice Elvey was known to base some of his images on well-known academic paintings, but Stannard and Harold Weston were probably not proposing direct copying.⁸¹ In practice, work in the studio composed shots in depth either by aligning characters along a diagonal receding into the image or by setting up a series of planes of action receding back from the camera. An example of the former occurred in a nightclub scene from *The Suicide*

Club, crowded with twenty-two people. Risdon in a stylish evening gown and a man in dress suit are seated at a marble-topped table in the left foreground; tables with other revellers are set up along the diagonal leading back right, whilst to the rear a dancer is kicking up her leg.⁸² An example of movement between planes of action was Weston's blocking out of the nightclub scene in *Shadows*.⁸³ The foreground is filled with tables at which sit expensively dressed men and women; waiters move between them and dancing is under way in an alcove to the rear; Creda and Sally enter and sit at an empty foreground table; Vivian and his male friends come noisily in to sit nearby; the men are joined by young women who lead them back to watch the dancing in the far room; this frees Vivian and Creda to meet glances in the foreground. *A Soldier and a Man* (March 1916) made use of both practices. In one interior, thirteen officers are seated to dine either side of a long table that recedes, at a diagonal, from the foreground to the shot's rear. In another scene, the same room and well-laid table are viewed from a distance and through an arch. Eight men are deployed across the space of the shot, some far back in the dining area and another group closer to the camera in the anteroom.⁸⁴

In the one-shot-one-scene presentation the camera still remained static, animation coming from in-shot character movement. But Weston did suggest occasional use of 'the run-in', where the camera would move slowly towards an object—today this would be called a forward tracking shot. He noted it was used by Elvey on *The Suicide Club*, but recommended it should not be used too frequently because it would draw 'attention too much to the technique of the photo-play'.⁸⁵

Films were still a combination of images and printed intertitles—known at the time as 'sub-titles'—with, like Weston's close-ups, dialogue intertitles breaking into the continuity of the scene-shot. Several of the Period Two films offered novelty in their use of intertitles. *It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary* (December 1914), for instance, was organized around the well-known marching song, and its refrain was thrown onto the screen so the audience might join in.⁸⁶ According to *The Cinema*, 'a rather novel innovation' on *The Life of Shakespeare* was 'the use of Shakespearean quotations in the sub-titles, which added additional charm to the general atmosphere of the picture'.⁸⁷ And in the romantic comedy *A Honeymoon for Three*, 'very ingenious sub-titles in verse add[ed] considerably to the gay, spontaneous humour of the piece', with one commentary extravagantly declaring:

After 'A Honeymoon for Three' let us hear no more about the campaign against sub-titles. In this production ... [they] are a veritable

inspiration, and provoked as much laughter as the acting itself ... As a rule the sub-titles of a film plot are just the barest possible lines between one phase of the story and another. In 'A Honeymoon for Three' the process is ... given a new definition. The characters just walk on, skip about, and carry on the deliciously absurd imbroglio to illustrate the comic text the author has provided.⁸⁸

Transitions between shots were by direct cuts but, when the shot represented a self-contained scene, there was no call for a continuity between that shot and the next. Even so, apparent borrowings from the widely admired D.W. Griffith can be detected on occasion. At the end of *There's Good...*, the husband has been returned to a prison cell where he is sitting despondently; he then stands up and holds out his arms in a supplicating gesture as the image slowly fades to black; the next shot fades up from black to reveal the wife to whose welfare he has sacrificed his liberty sitting in their home alone. A similar editing tactic, emotionally associating two people in different spaces at the same moment of time, occurred in Elvey's *In the Days of Trafalgar*. *The Cinema* described it thus: 'William is seen gazing out across the vast spaces of the sea, thinking of his beloved Sue. And she, a forlorn and lonely picture in the firelight, lifts her face and shows the longing in her beautiful eyes for a message from the seas.'⁸⁹

Griffith's name was specifically mentioned by Weston when he recommended use of 'the flash-back'—a practice, he claimed, that had originated with the novel but was particularly associated with the American director. Today, it would be called 'parallel editing', and he defined it as 'the keeping of two apparently distinct stories running at the same time, and not allowing them to converge until the time is ripe for their being dovetailed'.⁹⁰ The force of their contrast, he argued, would keep the audience's mind alert, and they should converge at the "moment of dramatic climax."⁹¹ Both Ethyle Batley and Weston adopted this convention. In *There's Good...*, scenes of the wife at home parallel scenes of the husband moving through outdoor locations, only to be followed by scenes of him at the house and her in the outside world. They never actually meet in person, and their 'convergence' comes only in the rapprochement conveyed over the final two shots described earlier. In *Shadows*, the narrative begins with a sequence of scenes in parallel. These alternate between a room in Sir William's house, which introduces him, his wife, Vivian and Vivian's fiancée (scenes 3, 5, 7), and the cheap City café, which introduces Creda and Sally (scenes 2, 4, 6). Throughout, Vivian is seen initially at his father's house and then at a room in his club; Creda is seen at the café and then in Sally's rooms;⁹² the couple finally come together in the nightclub

interior. Here, Weston maintained a rigorous temporal continuity. Thus, towards the end of one of the café scenes, Sally has leaned forward to address Creda, and when the narrative returns she is still speaking. In the script, Weston underlined this continuity by noting the earlier part of the café scene was at 7:40 and the later at 7:50! Thus, as was beginning to happen in Period One, liveliness was being developed in Period Two films by an editing strategy that moved the story between a variety of spaces, settings and locations.

A novel development on *Shadows* was Weston's use of 'the fade through', a device, he explained, whereby the film author would regress the story to explain previous events.⁹³ In modern terminology these are 'flashbacks' and he made clever use of them to explain the circumstances that had forced the young women into prostitution. In the café, Creda responds to Sally's inquiry about her presence there and an intertitle 'Creda's story' breaks into the speech she begins; the scene is then 'faded through' by a darkening screen to one earlier in time in a 'Modiste's Room in an Elegant Milliner's', where she is working as a mannequin; unfortunately, she is discharged for her reaction to a rude customer, and the scene fades into a cheap lodging-house where the landlady is demanding her rent; a fade into an office interview follows, but the job has gone; in a return to the lodgings the landlady is shown ejecting Creda; after this, a final 'fade through' returns to the café and the present. A similar sequence explains Sally's predicament via 'fade throughs' back to the past and forward to the present. In her first flashback scene, she is a factory machinist who faints over her work, and in the second she is leaving hospital, a convalescent. At the end of scene 24, which closes Part One of the film, the scene fades to black. The 'fade in', where one scene darkens and the next fades up, was offered by Weston as a means for modifying any 'slight jerk' between scenes, though here he seems to have been using it as a more emphatic form of closure.⁹⁴

Several of the Period Two films continued to finish with the sort of emblematic shot typical of Period One or with a scene specially staged to signify narrative closure. *The Life of Shakespeare* drew to a close with Shakespeare shown dreaming, glimpses of some of the best known scenes from his plays 'superimposed on the picture', before the final moment of 'the fading-in and fading-out of the bust ... in the Parish Church of Stratford-on-Avon'.⁹⁵ At the close of Ethyle Batley's *The Drawn Blind* (June 1914), a coster's wedding made 'a bright and picturesque ending', and after a drama of explosions, revolution and the apparent death of a king, her husband Ernest's *Revolution* (July 1914) ended on 'a pretty view' of a farm and a happy couple—the king and his partner.⁹⁶

Formally, it appears, the films of Period Two moved beyond those of Period One, keeping pace with many of the wider developments in film technique, both nationally and internationally.

APPROACHING NARRATIVE

But making longer films continued to raise the problem of sustaining an extended narrative, especially as B&C's film-makers were caught up in the contradiction between a continued preoccupation with a 'cinema of attractions' and an aspiration towards a 'cinema of narrative integration.' Films in the latter category were most concerned with driving through a story, whereas those in the former were more likely to hold up narrative development to dwell on moments of visual spectacle or vivid, often violent, action. The distinction was initially made by Tom Gunning in his periodization of early American cinema, where the first short films with their exhibitionist concern to show audiences self-contained scenes that were novel, exciting and visually stimulating, were gradually displaced, after 1907–1908, by longer films focused on telling continuous stories.⁹⁷ Even so, a dialectic between the appeal of spectacle and the demands of narrative has characterized film-making ever since, and clearly troubled B&C between 1913 and 1917. There, the cinema of attractions approach was characterized by a concern with either scenes of spectacle or moments of sensation, whilst the company's cinema of narrative integration was made up either of melodramas or more thought-provoking dramas. These differences produced four categories of film, although the differences were more matters of emphasis than clearly demarcated genres, and elements from one category could appear in another. Nevertheless, in Period Two there was an overall shift from spectacle and sensation towards melodrama and then on to serious drama.

Scenes of Spectacle

'Spectacle' had to do with the quality of a film's visuals, the scenic splendours of its locations or its visual extravagance. *The Battle of Waterloo* (September 1913) was the most striking example of this category. It was received as 'a magnificent spectacle', advertised as a 'continuous panorama of especially exciting events from our history' and reviewed as 'a succession of engagements, which for clash and excitement would not be approached in a sham fight'.⁹⁸ *The Bioscope* pointed to 'the opportunity it offer[ed] for spectacular display' and observed how the whole picture was 'a series of battle scenes, all of them magnificently carried out, with any number of men and horses'.⁹⁹ At the same time, it was admitted the film had 'no

plot' and was 'without a story', with *The Bioscope* arguing the production aimed at 'not so much giving us a "war drama" as at offering a vivid series of battle pictures more or less illustrative of what the great fight must have been like'.¹⁰⁰ The writer further suggested that, had the story been more 'carefully and logically developed, it would [have made] a real-life film play far more thrilling and deeply interesting than any fictional work'.¹⁰¹

A year later, *The Loss of the Birkenhead* (August 1914) was another historical reconstruction based on a real life event, this time the sinking of a troop ship bound for South Africa in 1852. The *KLW* celebrated it as 'this great wreck film' and claimed it to be

devoid of the slightest suspicion of being other than a faithful animated photograph of a real wreck on the open sea. The whole wide expanse of the watery waste is splendidly suggested, with its unfriendliness, its treachery and its doom. The gradual submerging of the vessel, and the putting off of the survivors in small boats are managed with a skill that cannot be over praised.¹⁰²

This time, however, in contrast to the plotlessness of Charles Weston's *The Battle of Waterloo*, Elvey created a fictional story around a love triangle in a Kentish village to build up to the spectacular event of the sinking.



Figure 9.2 Spectacle in *The Battle of Waterloo*.
The Pictures, June 1913

Two other films fell into this category on account of the scenic magnificence of their locations: Weston's *A Tragedy in the Alps* (September 1913), filmed on a glacier on Mont Blanc, and the late *At the Torrent's Mercy* (January 1916), made in the Peak District. Both offered a link back to the 'location films' of Period One. The latter was 'a simple story ... clearly and lucidly told' about a gamekeeper's daughter, her lover and his poacher rival but was 'enacted amidst beautiful scenery ... [wherein] the grandeur of the ... mountains and rocks, the rushing torrents and smiling valleys was quite exhilarating'.¹⁰³

Perhaps a fifth spectacle film was Elvey and Standard's *It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary* (December 1914), with its impressive night-time effects and its visual contrasts. As one review noted, '[the] story starts in a little humble cottage in Ireland, and thence it traverses the shell-swept field of battle, until once again back in the quietude of the old country home'.¹⁰⁴

Of the forty-three major releases in Period Two, these five films most obviously represented the company's spectacular tendency.¹⁰⁵ Each was based on an original screenplay, but in each, much of the narrative element seems to have been subordinated to visual display.

Moments of Sensation

In November 1913, the *Picturegoer* could write, with some justification, that B&C films were 'largely of the sensational type'.¹⁰⁶ If spectacle depended on a film's visual richness, sensation had to do with graphic action and startling events. The main attraction of these films was their 'moments of sensation', either in the form of a series of exciting incidents or the thrill of a big 'sensation scene'. The latter was derived from those theatrical melodramas, beginning in the 1860s but given special prominence at Drury Lane from the 1880s, that culminated in a climactic scene—such as a train crash, a rescue from a burning building or even a fight in a balloon—emphasizing both realism and elaborately staged spectacle. At B&C, such films were mainly released through 1913 and 1914, and the two directors from the USA, Charles Weston and James Youngdeer, made significant contributions to the tendency. In all, perhaps eleven of the forty-three major films can be associated with this category.

Through the Clouds (October 1913), directed from an original script by Weston, was a noteworthy contribution, with a jewel robbery, a detective trapped, bound and gagged in a cellar, his escape and recapture, his rescue by his daughter and an aviator, and the near drowning of the thieves in their cellar after a sewer pipe bursts. *The Cinema*, in a direct comparison

with the field of popular fiction, allowed it 'contain[ed] more thrills than [could] be found in a three volume novel or a shilling shocker of the most exciting character', whilst the *KLW* admitted 'one [could] hardly complain that there [was] not sufficient thrill ... for there was sensation enough to spare'.¹⁰⁷ The big sensation scene was, of course, the balloon rescue, with the aeroplane circling, the pilot firing his pistol, a man hanging from the basket and the heroine climbing up the rope.

In the Days of Trafalgar (August 1914) was Elvey's adaptation of the old melodrama *Black-Eyed Susan*, first performed in 1829. It illustrated the tension between narrative development and the allure of visual attractions because, as the *Evening News* observed, he 'touched up the old story with considerable advantage to it from a film point of view'.¹⁰⁸ Basically, the storyline of the play was opened up to provide more sensational action. '[T]he bigger scenes incorporated by the producers', as listed by *The Cinema*, included 'the representation of the historic fight at Trafalgar and the death of Nelson' and 'some very vivid fighting scenes'.¹⁰⁹ The latter had the hero clambering up the ship's rigging to engage in 'a desperate hand-to-hand encounter' in a crow's nest with the French sharpshooter responsible for killing Nelson.¹¹⁰ Further, Susan was turned into an action heroine prepared to take on the open sea and swim to her lover's rescue. Regarding the 'magnificent realisation' of Trafalgar and Nelson's death, *Pictures and Pleasures* declared that the 'stage could not show it: its triumph rests here on the screen', and *The Cinema* drew attention to cinema's greater visual potential because 'in the film *realism* is so much more necessary and essential'.¹¹¹

James Youngdeer's *Queen of the London Counterfeiters* was released in the same month, and *The Bioscope* took up *The Cinema*'s suggestion, proposing:

The moving picture melodrama is a form of entertainment unique to the cinematograph. Not even on the wonderfully-equipped stage of the famous home of sensations in Drury Lane would it be possible to present a play with the kaleidoscopic variety of scene, the solid realism of setting and the volume of diverse incident, which mark one of the latest and most successful 'thrill-films'.¹¹²

The magazine's claim was that the realism of the settings and the variety of scene possible in film allowed the cinema to go further than the stage drama. The picture itself moved between a racecourse, London streets, the counterfeiters' den, the Thames, a trawler at sea and a ballroom in a Brighton hotel, whilst the detective hero assumed three disguises, was chloroformed, captured twice and tied in a sack before being thrown in the river, as well

as being required to effect escapes and swim to the trawler. The sensation scene was that wherein the 'queen' dropped him through the floor of her drawing room. This was Youngdeer's one exclusive, but his two other gang films, *The Water Rats of London* and *The Black Cross Gang* (July and October 1914), were similarly sensation-packed, with battles and police pursuits, explosions and burning buildings, rescues and struggles in the river. *Water Rats...* was advertised as 'One breathless series of sensations and thrills' and for its display of 'Crime. Passion. Thrills. Throbbing Human Emotion'.¹¹³

When London Sleeps (October 1914), directed by Ernest Batley, was another adaptation from the theatre, this time the first in the company's series of Charles Darrell melodramas. Its big sensation scene was when the heroine, a circus tightrope walker, escapes from a burning building in her nightgown by walking along telegraph wires above the house tops, all the while carrying a child on her back. The *KLW* was emphatic in its enthusiasm, declaring:

If these sorts of incidents appealed when represented amidst the glamour and artificiality of the stage ... it almost goes without saying that they will appeal with far greater force when seen upon the screen. The film version of the play, indeed, is in many respects far more convincing than the play, for there is an air of *reality* about it that is lacking when the story is told upon the stage.¹¹⁴

The Bioscope similarly felt that the film improved on the original in both the escape and the behind-the-scenes circus passages.¹¹⁵ Screen sensation, for film trade commentators, could be both more realistic and more exciting than theatre sensation.

The Mystery of a Hansom Cab, the 'famous sensational story' by novelist Fergus Hume, was adapted by Stannard, directed by Harold Weston and released in December 1915.¹¹⁶ The story began with a murder in a hansom cab and climaxed with the unmasking of the villain at the Old Bailey. According to the *KLW*, Stannard's reworking of the narrative had retained 'all the essential details' so the story incidents could 'move rapidly' and in 'easy sequence'; but, it added, following a line similar to those developed above, '[i]n some respects the film is an improvement upon the novel, for it enables us to see certain things that are only hinted at by the author'.¹¹⁷

Other exclusive sensation releases based on studio scripts were *Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot* (November 1913), *The Adventures of Charles Peace, King of Criminals* (July 1914) and two war films, *The Bells of Rheims* (December 1914), which ended with the shelling of the cathedral, and *The Blind Man of Verdun* (May 1916), featuring aerial bombings and the

motor car escape of a French officer accused of spying. Elvey and Stannard's *London's Yellow Peril* (March 1914) presented 'an exposure of the dangers of the drug habit in London', and showed the kidnapping of a young heiress by opium smugglers, a ransom note accompanied by a severed ear, the hero's torture of the duplicitous villain and a police raid on the East End opium den.¹¹⁸ A significant number of the company's more important open-market pictures were also sensation films, including such titles as *The Broken Chisel* (October 1913), with its prison escape, *In Fate's Grip* (December 1913), with a hydroplane rescue, and *The Tattooed Will* (March 1914), with scenes of suffering on a raft adrift at sea.

Melodrama and the melodramatic habit

In Period Two, the melodramatic habit that had characterized the scripting of many Period One films was reinforced by the adaptation of particular West End stage melodramas for the screen. Of the sixteen films that largely fall into the melodrama category, nine were taken direct from plays and a further four were adapted from novels or short stories. These films represented a decisive shift towards a cinema of narrative integration and were significant for their adaptation of more bourgeois cultural resources. They were a key component in the quality film project and an important contribution to B&C's strategy to move its audience upmarket. Adapting mainstream melodramas, in turn, meant taking over their complexly plotted storylines, their emotional conflicts and their conventional morality. The adaptations began in the spring of 1914 and endured through to the last couple of films in 1917.

Central to the tendency were Stannard, who was responsible for the scripts, and Elvey, who undertook much of the direction. The latter was described in *The Cinema* as 'a master hand at telling a film story in a *straight-forward way* and emphasising all that there is in it of *narrative value*'.¹¹⁹ Hence, his films were good evidence for the company's move towards linear storytelling. Consequently, when he adapted three stories from Robert Louis Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* as *The Suicide Club* (August 1914), one reviewer concluded it was 'a positive inspiration to have recognised the wealth of film drama heaped up in [the tales]', whilst another observed how the film 'in every important detail closely follows the plot of the original with such omissions and additions as the adaptor has thought expedient for dramatic conciseness or picturesque amplification'.¹²⁰

The company's first stage melodrama adaptation, however, was undertaken by Ernest Batley and released in May 1914. It was *The Midnight Wedding*, which was taken from a play by Walter Howard; he, along with

the brothers Walter and Frederick Melville and Charles Darrell, represented a cohort of late nineteenth-century melodramatists whose work regularly inhabited fashionable upper-class worlds and adopted a somewhat 'racy' subject matter. *The KLV* recalled the Lyceum production of *The Midnight Wedding* as 'probably the most popular of all the Howard melodramas', but went on to argue its plot 'might have been written expressly for the kinematograph camera. It is strong, easily followed, and abounds in dramatic incident.'¹²¹ With its secret marriage between peasant and aristocrat, its misalliances, generational conflicts and secret plottings, the film presaged a move away from the physical sensations of the films from late 1913.



Figure 9.3 A B&C melodrama: poster for *Her Nameless (?) Child*.
The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 24 June 1915

The late nineteenth-century theatre had also developed the 'society drama' set in wealthy aristocratic environments, and elements of these plays infiltrated the company's films. Thus, writing of *Home*, an Elvey-Stannard adaptation in which complications arise from a lord's daughter having been raised by a Cornish fisherman, one reviewer claimed: 'The B&C are past-masters in the production of pictures which rely for their appeal on scenes alternating between ancestral mansions and humble homes. It is the democracy set over against the aristocracy, with both making a sympathetic appeal.'¹²² These contrasts were central to the couple's Charles Darrell adaptations, which offered dramas of social ascent and descent. In *Her Luck in London* (January 1915), an underworld villain causes a farmer to turn his daughter from home; at the villain's nightclub

she meets an upper-class young man whom she marries; on hearing of her past, the husband drives her away and she is forced to take in needlework; later, having been persuaded to attend the nightclub, she is reconciled with her husband during a police raid. In *From Shopgirl to Duchess* (April 1915), a lord's daughter, ignorant of her true identity, has been working in a drapery store; various developments lead to her marriage to a duke, who leaves her on their wedding day when her past is revealed; after a train accident that harms the duke's eyes, his wife is tricked into removing his bandages, thereby rendering him blind; next, his fortune is lost in a colliery disaster, but the wife remains faithful. The film was presented as 'dealing especially with the evils of the living-in system', and showed something of the exploitation and indignities that shopgirls living on business premises might suffer, but *The Cinema* decided that, 'while openly facing this great social problem, they [B&C] have resolutely set themselves to avoid any pandering to the morbid or merely sensational'.¹²³ The melodrama origins of both films were enthusiastically embraced by the trade reviews. Regarding *Her Luck in London*, the *KLW* maintained:

It is a pleasure in these days of problem plays, philosophic farces and spectacular poetry to renew acquaintance sometimes with the good old undiluted melodrama ... All its characters are dear, intimate friends ... all are here, the old familiar faces and we are glad to think that the subtle sophistry of the modern film has not yet banished them from our sight.¹²⁴

Similarly, *The Cinema* observed of *From Shopgirl to Duchess*:

Tested by every canon of transpontine tradition, it rings beautifully true. It brings with it all the glamour of the 'Surrey side' ... These remarks are in no sense derogatory to the film ... Personally, we have a strong liking for melodrama ... and much prefer its simple passions and motives to the tangled tortuosities and intellect dear to the modern school of drama.¹²⁵

Ironically, Harold Weston and Stannard were shortly to introduce the subtleties and intellect of modern drama to B&C in an attempt to move away from the conventional characterizations and received morality of the melodramatic habit.

Two years later, when *When Paris Sleeps* (March 1917), the last Stannard adaptation of a Darrell play, was released, critical opinion about the merits of filmed melodrama was more divided. As in *Her Luck in London*, the

heroine leaves her father's farm for the nightlife of the capital; saved from suicide by art students, she becomes the 'Night Queen of Paris'; but, on returning home, her father dies when the villain (again) reveals the truth about her recent past; she, however, lures him to her Paris mansion where he kills himself after she has tricked him into an admission of his crimes in the presence of the police. The *KLW* gave it qualified support:

Melodrama of the good old-fashioned sort, which we all revelled in in the days when the Adelphi was the home of the George R. Sims ... plays, still makes a very wide appeal, and if well done, proves undeniably popular with patrons of the picture playhouse ... granted that melodrama even at its best is always a more or less crude form of the dramatic art, it is almost always clean and wholesome, and instinct with human feeling ... [*When Paris Sleeps*] more nearly approaches the standard of good melodrama than drama.¹²⁶

By contrast, *The Cinema* was damning, declaring:

This photo play is full of "stuff", which ... is threadbare from over-much use. It is, frankly, transpontine melodrama, the good old Surrey-side sort of days of yore, with a sensation every few minutes. It reeks of lurid crime pitched in rustic and aristocratic tones. It is the kind for the East-End and working class districts, where people like their fare served up piping hot and do not search too critically for improbabilities ... In viewing this film, we began to wonder if the stage-world had really progressed at all.¹²⁷

This disdain for melodramatic subject matter revealed a certain class condescension in the developing critical taste culture, but for both reviewers traditional melodrama in films had become old-fashioned and backward looking by 1917. The other emphasis in B&C's cinema of narrative integration, by contrast, provided a more progressive alternative.

Serious Drama

The move to inject greater seriousness into company films came in 1915, mainly through the intellectual turn introduced by Stannard and Harold Weston. It took the quest for a quality cinema and a cinema of narrative integration one stage further by developing a preoccupation with character psychology, social problems and more meaningful subject matter. Perhaps eleven of the major films fell into this category.

The company's two biopics representing the lives of Shakespeare (February 1914) and Florence Nightingale (March 1915) were early serious subjects, each based on major biographies. For both, narrative structure was provided by the pattern of a life's story, Shakespeare's from youth to his mature years in London and Nightingale from childhood to old age. Advertising for *The Life of Shakespeare* suggested a narrative progress: 'Romance of his life from Village to Court/His youthful frolics, love's thrills, married trials, progress in London, royal favours, success and fame'.¹²⁸ But *The Bioscope* found the storyline still somewhat episodic, observing:

[I]t is essential that every detail of a play should contribute to the advancement of the story, which cannot be said for the episodes relating to Sir Hugh Clopton ... or of the abortive Papist plot with which Shakespeare is so little concerned ... [H]ad the adaptor confined himself strictly to what is known of Shakespeare's life, he might ... have had no story to tell. As it is, he has told quite an interesting series of short stories—in which Shakespeare plays very little part.¹²⁹

Florence Nightingale, on the other hand, had greater coherence, and was received by the *Film Censor* as the 'story of a noble woman's self-sacrifice and her glorious triumph over over-whelming difficulties' and as a film that 'for sheer pathos and dramatic force has never been excelled'.¹³⁰ Although the film was set during a war, interest was directed to character and emotion rather than the spectacle of warfare, for, as one commentator noted, 'much is done by suggestion, and at no time in the telling of the story is anything approaching "the horrible" shown on the screen, though there [was] no mistaking the purport of the more realistic scenes'.¹³¹ B&C's shift from spectacle to story was well understood by the *Evening News* when it contrasted the 'well acted' and 'obviously sincere' *Florence Nightingale* with another contemporary release, the historical epic *Jane Shore*, a 'long spectacular production where the acting is subordinate in interest to the elaborateness of the scenes presented'.¹³²

Florence Nightingale was scripted by Stannard, who concurrently outlined his thoughts on the scenarist's responsibilities. He allowed the cardinal law for writers was that, as 'kinematography tells stories by means of gestures', plots should be 'replete with action', but he felt the law had been 'almost universally misread' to mean 'replete with melodrama'.¹³³ This had resulted in the 'ultra-sensational type of film' and an orgy of death, violence, explosions, wrecks and fire—in fact, though he does not admit

it, the very substance of much of B&C's recent output.¹³⁴ However, he believed the industry was on the 'eve of a revolution' and that the public was beginning to demand 'films that were more compatible with their intelligence'.¹³⁵ In particular, he set himself up as an advocate for 'the introduction of the *psychological* into ... film plots' because, he argued, 'audiences are no longer interested in what a man does but with his *motive* for doing it'.¹³⁶ Shortly after, when again inviting scripts from the public, B&C itself registered this change of emphasis by indicating it would 'consider anything good—especially drama with a *psychological* basis'.¹³⁷ Rather later, Stannard admitted his argument was also part of the search for new middle-class audiences, when he maintained the conversion of 'cultured book readers into picture-goers' would happen only when 'the psychology of the films we wish them to see is equal to the psychology of the books they read'.¹³⁸

Three of the novels he adapted into films were by John Strange Winter, two directed by Elvey, *Beautiful Jim* (November 1914) and *Grip* (July 1915), and one jointly directed by Stannard and Bramble, *Jimmy* (March 1916). The films were exercises in constructing longer narratives, and their sources were successful examples of the sort of middlebrow fiction read by the public towards which B&C's policies were now looking. A review of *Jimmy*, in an echo of Stannard, observed of the source writer: 'Those whose tastes incline towards the ultra sensational will find little to satisfy them in the work of John Strange Winter. In dealing with the weaknesses of human nature, she displays a tenderness and leniency which makes all her characters exceedingly attractive.'¹³⁹ Similarly, a comment on *Beautiful Jim* declared Winter's stories to be 'simple and direct, full of that healthy sentiment which appeals to every class of audience'.¹⁴⁰ In the latter film, Jim, a lieutenant in love with his colonel's daughter, has to endure the suspicion of having committed the criminal acts of his scapegrace brother. One review praised it for its discretion, narrative coherence and depiction of character, explaining:

[A]lthough it has none of those great battle scenes so popular in the picture theatre at the present time [autumn 1914], it possesses a story which by its inherent strength will make an appeal to all who love a good dramatic story well told and, above all, well acted. Those of us who remember Mrs Stannard's novel and its clever characterisation will enjoy seeing its visualised version upon the screen, for here we have the book and its atmosphere reproduced in as nearly perfect a form as it is possible to reproduce it.¹⁴¹

Stannard's project was to adapt prestigious novels, plays and biographical materials, but towards the end of Period Two, B&C produced several dramas based on original scripts that, in turn, were influenced by the New Drama, plays in which social problems, character psychology and class, gender and intergenerational relations were explored. B&C tentatively eased itself in this direction.

The World's Desire of May 1915 came out at the same time as the melodramatic *From Shopgirl to Duchess*, but was scripted and directed by a newcomer to the company, Sidney Morgan. It addressed the taboo subject of a rich woman's desire for a child, her own baby's stillbirth, the substitution—unbeknownst to the mother—of a poor woman's child for the dead infant and the husband's resentment over what he is led to believe was his wife's deception of him. *The Cinema's* review suggested that there was 'undoubtedly no greater dramatic attraction than the "problem play"' and that B&C's 'initial attempt in this direction [was] immensely absorbing'.¹⁴² The film, it maintained, represented 'an all-important domestic problem', and was one of those dramas 'which probe and attempt to illustrate the probable disappointments of marital companionship'.¹⁴³

But it was Harold Weston who showed the strongest affinity with the New Drama. Like Stannard, he adopted a stance that, in effect, rejected B&C's earlier sensationalist dramas when he contrasted the work of 'a hack writer' with that of 'a self-respecting artist'.¹⁴⁴ For the former, it was enough 'to think out a number of "blood and thunder situations" and to write them in such a manner that a cheap picture palace audience shall be thrilled by them'.¹⁴⁵ But Weston aspired to be an artist, was self-conscious about his craft and was committed to the integrated narrative, arguing that 'the plot should present itself as a whole, not as a series of incidents insecurely linked together by connecting scenes. Unity is power'.¹⁴⁶ His *Shadows*, dealing with prostitution, was universally understood as a 'problem play'. In the words of the *KLW*, it was concerned with 'the pathetic position of countless unprotected girls driven by the iron heel of circumstance to join the great army of the shadows'—although, in another comment, the magazine did question 'whether any good object is gained by its perpetuation on the screen'.¹⁴⁷ In promoting the picture, Davison's agency claimed it was '[n]ot a lurid visualisation of the seamy side of life, pictured for its own sake, but an arresting drama, intended to show that in the battle of life those who step beyond the pale of convention must ultimately sacrifice all they treasure most'.¹⁴⁸

Wild Oats (November 1915), billed as a 'Morality Play in Motion Pictures', also concentrated on sexual relations to challenge the 'double

standard' of morality that allowed licence to males but prescribed continence for females.¹⁴⁹ The *KLW* conceded it 'was inevitable that such a subject would, sooner or later, form the basis of a film drama', but allowed that 'the theme is treated with considerable discretion'.¹⁵⁰ In the picture, a painter becomes infatuated with a revue girl to the neglect of his girlfriend, but the 'culminating point in the drama is a big scene between the young man and his fiancée, in which the latter refuses to accept the maxim that men are free to sow their wild oats without question'.¹⁵¹ Significantly, the climax consisted not of action but an emotional confrontation over a matter of morality.

The Climax (April 1916), rather in the manner of a Galsworthy play, blended together the cinematically neglected topic of politics, in the corrupt strategies proposed during a Conservative–Labour parliamentary by-election, intergenerational conflict and the social stigma of illegitimacy. G.A.A. reviewed it for *The Cinema* with a particularly perceptive critique directed at Weston personally, but this might be taken as a more general reflection on B&C's mixed output in these years. Weston, he maintained, seemed to have

fallen between two stools. On the one hand, he appears to have tried to produce a film which will 'please the mob,' and, on the other, one which will satisfy his own more sophisticated inclinations. Possibly the problem was not insuperable, but we do not think that it has been worked out with success in [*The Climax*], as we found the two forms of appeal continually at war. There are scenes that fully conform to dramatic traditions in vogue 'across the bridges.' There are others, subtle, poetic, suggestively elusive, that reveal the power of a mind naturally attuned to art working in a congenial medium. But it seemed to us that the touches of poetic realism, true both to life and art, were destroyed by those scenes which were starkly melodramatic, and the latter ... had the appearance of masquerading as real life.¹⁵²

This was a shrewd analysis of the playing off of melodramatic sensationalism against an ambitious striving for a more artistic film drama, and its wider application points to the two poles between which B&C's film-making was balancing during this period, that of sensational and spectacular attractions, and that of the well-constructed drama with a serious purpose. The contradiction remained unresolved when McDowell was drawn away to France.

Part V

Distribution, Promotion and Publicity

From the Open Market to the Exclusives System

Having produced its films, B&C was faced with the task of getting them into cinemas and encouraging audiences to view them, which, in turn, brought the company into contact with the organs of film distribution and the practices of publicity and advertising. But in the first half of the 1910s, distribution and promotion were developing fields, which can best be understood within the wider context of the modest 'consumerism' emerging in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.

THE CINEMA AND CONSUMERISM

In the latter years of the nineteenth century, some three-quarters of the population was engaged in manual work, but a combination of better wages, falling prices and reduced working hours generated an appreciable rise in living standards and a limited increase in disposable income and leisure time. This resulted in a slow growth in both domestic consumption and the less tangible satisfactions provided by the service industries of popular entertainment, including cinema.

A variety of new, factory-produced, brand-named commodities had entered the market, ranging from foodstuffs, through clothes and footwear, to more durable items such as furniture and bicycles. The production of such items became subject matter for the filmed 'industrials' produced by B&C and others—actuality films that showed the process of a product's manufacture and its destination in the family home, examples being *Bootmaking at Northampton* (June 1911) and *The Manufacture of Incandescent Gas Mantles* (September 1913). Retailing consumer goods became the responsibility of chain stores with their own brand names, such as Lipton's for groceries or Hepworth the

clothier. Cinemas, in turn, began to adopt the chain store strategy in the second decade of cinema's history. With this range of goods flowing onto the market, the period also witnessed increasing sophistication in 'selling'—the promotion and advertising of brand name commodities. The new consuming public was increasingly inundated with informative leaflets, solicited by visually appealing newspaper and magazine advertisements, and surrounded by posters and hoardings that turned the streets into sites of colourful spectacle. Such practices were eagerly taken up by B&C and its distribution agencies in order to promote the company's own commodity—films.¹

As one social historian points out, 'Increased disposable income could mean the buttressing of family life, but it could also lead to the growth of interests and habits of consumption outside the home.'² The latter were increasingly catered for by the services provided by the commercial entertainments industry, which at the beginning of the twentieth century had developed its nineteenth-century antecedents to embrace opulent public houses, spectator sports (especially football, the subject of many B&C 'locals'), seaside resorts for day excursionists (a subject for such B&C 'scenics' as *Fashionable Folkestone* in October 1912, *Breezy Blackpool* in February 1913 and *Whitstable-On-Sea* in March 1913), working-class music halls and theatres, fairs and circuses, and the popular press. To these, from around 1908, were added the picture theatres, which, as a service industry, offered their customers the enjoyable experience of watching films. This commercial popular culture was a highly competitive arena, so that those addressing potential purchasers had to deploy appropriate strategies to draw attention to their particular entertainment. The early cinema industry, however, was able to adopt and adapt the pre-existing methods of promotion and advertising already developed by the consumer goods retailers and other entertainment media.

The industry also needed to establish ways of distributing films to cinemas where the public might view them, and B&C's operations between 1908 and 1916 spanned the move from one method of film distribution—the open-market system—to another—the exclusives system. As the company and its agencies negotiated this transition, they developed increasingly sophisticated ways of promoting and publicizing company films. The latter were also one of the major forms that competition took *within* the burgeoning industry, so B&C, as an ambitious firm, was pitting its films against both those of other British producers and, initially, those of France and Italy, then, increasingly, those of the USA.

B&C IN THE OPEN-MARKET SYSTEM

In the very earliest days of the open-market system a completed film was bought outright by the showman proposing to exhibit it, just like any other commodity, and by 1906, shortly before Bloomfield set up B&C, the price throughout the industry had been standardized at 4d (an equivalent of £1.84 at 2019 values) per foot of film. Thus prices would vary only in terms of quantity—that is, the overall length of a film—rather than quality. Buyers were required to pay for a quantity of film material rather than for the qualitative experience a film, its story, production values and performers might offer. The move to the exclusives system was a recognition of the increasing significance of the latter for audiences. However, the open-market system was the distribution environment for B&C's Period One.

Somewhat before this, in 1898, the firm of Walturdaw had hit upon the original idea of purchasing sets of films from their producers and offering them to showmen, not for outright purchase but to be rented for a period of time and then returned. Subsequently, as the number of producers and exhibitors expanded, specialization within the cinema institution increased the number of such 'renters' who would hire out films—thereby relieving showmen of the full costs of film purchase and allowing them to change their programmes more frequently. Specialization also threw up the 'agents', the businesses that took on the role of 'distributing'—in the form of retailing—the films manufactured by production companies to either renters or purchasing exhibitors. These were independently owned, and employing them meant a producer such as B&C was assigning most of the responsibility for marketing its films to another organization.³ As intermediary enterprises, film agencies seem to have been following the model of the agencies first set up to expand commodity business advertising in the 1880s.

Thus, when B&C began producing, there were four significant components in the distribution chain: production companies manufacturing films, agencies promoting and advertising them, renters distributing them and exhibitors showing films to the public. Between 1909 and 1913, the agents selling B&C films were first the Cosmopolitan Film Company and then the MPSA. These two handled the company's dramas, comics and actualities, whilst the distribution of topical films followed a different pattern whereby—for prompt delivery—exhibitors ordered them direct from B&C's Endell Street headquarters. The tasks facing the company and its agents were twofold: getting films into cinemas and encouraging audiences to come and view them. Thus, there was one promotional address to the trade, the renters and showmen exhibitors likely to book a film, and another to the public, the potential cinemagoers.

The Cosmopolitan Film Company, Limited

B&C's films were handled by Cosmopolitan for the twenty-eight months from September 1909, when the company added fiction films to its output, to the end of December 1911. It also acted as agent for several European production companies, and in November 1909, the *KLW* characterized it as a 'youthful but very much alive firm' that had come into the front rank in a very short space of time.⁴ Its showrooms were on the ground floor of the Film House in Soho's Gerrard Street, after the latter was opened on 1 June 1909, having been equipped by several film manufacturers—such as Walter Tyler and Cricks and Martin—to act as a kind of clearing house, displaying films to potential rental-house buyers and to the managers and proprietors of the halls that would be showing them.⁵ Consequently, in any one week, the Film House might present up to twenty new films, all of which were either of Continental or British origin but not American—a situation reflecting the current British screen dominance of European films. Early in September, B&C's breakthrough film, *Her Lover's Honour*, was its first to be exhibited there.

In February 1910, the Film House began to issue a weekly eight-page listings magazine, free to showmen unable to attend Gerrard Street. The *Film House Record* supplied synopses and a still image in advance of each week's releases, and claimed the combined output of the companies represented was 'so varied in nature that a showman might select his complete list of films from their productions'.⁶ Early cinema programmes featured a variety of short films, and the *Record* argued for a "Balance" in Programmes', maintaining that a great weakness in many picture houses was often the 'too great proportion of long dramatic pictures, which, excellent in themselves become monotonous unless relieved by films of lighter character and varied by travel and industrial films'.⁷ But the manufacturers it represented were well able to offer variety, and B&C contributed here not only with its comics and dramas but also by moving into the field of actuality production.

Industry personnel were also contacted through the emergent film trade press, to which Cosmopolitan would circulate the titles, plot synopses and release dates of B&C's new films. Here, much of the strategy seems to have been to promote B&C as a distinctive production company and, in this, its trademark became a crucial feature for company identification. B&C's first trade press advertisement was a half-page in the *KLW* on 9 September 1909—placed by Cosmopolitan as their 'Sole Agents'.⁸ It read: "B and C Films/Signify Acting, Staging & Quality/Equal to the World's Best", only then introducing *Her Lover's Honour* as

'A GREAT HEADLINER', thereby adopting the term by which music halls would indicate their leading variety 'turns'.⁹ A later advertisement rather nonchalantly claimed there was 'NO TIME/to write Letters/Too Busy Booking Orders for/B&C/Most popular of ENGLISH productions', and one for *The Bioscope*, presenting the actuality *Under the Union Jack* (April 1911), proclaimed it 'A Patriotic educational film. Just right for Coronation visitors ... Quality A1. The quality of a B&C film is unequalled.'¹⁰

The *Film House Record* and the cinema press were used to address the trade on behalf of B&C—that is, the renters and showmen. However, agencies were also beginning to make a publicity address to audiences on behalf of their clients' films, though the first attempts by the Film House in that direction proved rather limited. In February 1910, under the heading 'Advertise your Subjects', the *Record* strongly recommended to exhibitors 'the liberal use of "synopsis" leaflets', and offered showmen special arrangements whereby reprints of its own film descriptions—including those for B&C—might be obtained at a special low rate.¹¹ The descriptions and illustrations 'with the addition of the name of the hall and one other line (such as "This Week's Star Picture") would be supplied at the rate of 4s (an equivalent of £20 today) per 1,000.¹² In March, the *Record* asserted that showmen using such descriptions as throwaways would find them 'a particularly effective as well as cheap form of advertising'—publicity leaflets having become an established part of the ephemera of everyday urban life since advertisers had taken them up in the late nineteenth century.¹³

The next publicity move was to adopt that staple of commercial advertising, the poster, for exhibitors to display invitingly outside their cinemas to attract the attention and patronage of passers-by. In March 1910, Cricks and Martin were the first at the Film House to offer an illustrated poster to accompany their films.¹⁴ *Cosmopolitan* followed shortly after with the offer of a poster, on application, for their first release in the prestigious Film d'Art series, and B&C's first poster was for *Trust Those You Love* in October 1910.¹⁵ It was a five-colour Double Crown sheet—that is, 30 by 40 inches—and was available to exhibitors at six shillings (an equivalent of £30) per dozen. It was followed in December by a colour poster for *Only Two Little Shoes*.¹⁶ A later article in *The Cinema* claimed it was for this film that McDowell gave Waterlow's the printer their first order for a cinema poster, which suggests B&C and *Cosmopolitan* were collaborating on the production of advertising matter.¹⁷ Thereafter, several drama releases were accompanied by a poster, but not it seems the comic subjects.¹⁸

The Motion Picture Sales Agency

B&C transferred its business to the MPSA on 1 January 1912, and that organization undertook the handling of its films for the next twenty months—until the end of August 1913. The *KLW* congratulated B&C for having ‘effected a smart business move’ in joining the MPSA because its premises were visited weekly by the leading trade buyers, so a producer getting his pictures projected there was certain of worthwhile patronage.¹⁹ It had been handling the American production companies of Biograph and Lubin since it had been set up in 1909 and, by adding B&C’s brand, had now secured ‘a thoroughly representative British house ... whose pictures [had] in the past secured for them a reputation second to none in this country’.²⁰ Thus, B&C moved from *Cosmopolitan*, an agency oriented to European producers, to the MPSA, an agency favouring the cinema of the USA, just when the latter was beginning to emerge as a more formidable competitor—with the MPSA as one mechanism whereby it was penetrating the British market. The agency’s address was 86 Wardour Street, Soho, and it claimed sixteen branches in Europe, Africa and Asia.²¹ A key member of staff was Thomas Henry Davison, who had been with the business since around 1904.²² Essentially, he worked as a travelling salesman, because the film agencies had adopted a major marketing strategy of the nineteenth century, that of sending men out on the road to visit possible sales outlets and persuade customers around the country to take their product. Davison later calculated he had travelled over 30,000 miles on behalf of the MPSA and had interviewed over 4,000 exhibitors.²³ In part, this was because the MPSA was operating in the open-market system, but through 1912–1913, it was selling B&C films at the moment when there was a pronounced increase in that company’s output—an increase that the skilled handling of the agency undoubtedly helped to promote.

The MPSA seems to have been enterprisingly aggressive in marketing the films of the companies for which it acted, but it also made a stronger pitch to reach audiences than had *Cosmopolitan*. This was because competition was becoming more intense, because films were increasingly lending themselves to individualized exploitation and because the MPSA had learned from American techniques of selling. So, the company consciously set out to address the *public* for films through posters, a fan-oriented publication called *The Pictures* and through postcards.

Cosmopolitan had intermittently put out posters for B&C, but with the MPSA, they became standard issue from the outset. *A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast* was the first B&C film the agency promoted, and *The Bioscope* declared it ‘warrant[ed] the amount of printing ... the M.P. Sales

Agency [had] prepared for it'.²⁴ These materials were produced by the agency for use by cinema managers at the point of exhibition, for, as the firm explained to 'M. Exhibitor':

The public must be *attracted* into picture theatres these warm days ... Good posters advertising good films will attract them. Our posters will get people into your hall, and our films will make them come again. We issue pictorial billing matter for every film we handle—obtainable from your Renting House or from us.²⁵

Consequently, by the second half of 1912, the MPSA was supplying a wide range of promotional matter, including coloured posters in a variety of sizes, banners to go across the entrance to a picture theatre, paper streamers, throwaways and synopses, photographs and postcards of performers, and even poster frames.²⁶ The agency insisted: 'For the benefit of the moving picture industry we say, Show plenty of good posters ... *They attract the public.*'²⁷ But, the amount of material it produced would vary with the importance attributed to a particular film. Thus, B&C's first two-reeler, *The Great Anarchist Mystery* (September 1912), was accompanied by a generous range of resources, including three sizes of poster, a souvenir programme and information about the competition used to boost the film.²⁸ *Three-Fingered Kate: The Wedding Presents* (August 1912) had the smallest size poster, banners, synopses and postcards, whilst a short actuality such as *Fashionable Folkestone* (October 1912) merited only a 'Photo Synopsis List'.²⁹

Posters became a significant part of the visual culture that flourished in urban Britain in the late nineteenth century, and their embrace by B&C and the MPSA inserted those businesses into patterns of advertising that, since the mid-1880s, had been deployed by sponsors of the mass consumption of household commodities, seaside resorts and commercial entertainments. In fact, it was the providers of *popular* amusements who were the first to take up pictorial advertising. Stafford, the Nottingham printers, was an important supplier of such material to the entertainments industry, and a member of the firm was to advance debenture loans to B&C and serve with them as a director in 1913–1914. An advertisement drafted in 1901 outlined the deliriously vulgar world of popular culture championed by poster art, when Stafford offered 'a large and varied stock of Pictorials suitable for ... Dramas, Comedies and Farcical Comedies, Burlesques and Comic Operas, Comic Scenes and Dancers, Ladies Heads and Figures, Pierrots and Pierrettes, Circuses, Acrobats, Menageries, Music Halls, *Cinematographs*, War, Magicians, Ventriloquists, Dioramas, Ghosts, Minstrelsy etc.'³⁰ B&C posters were a further extension of the visual

display integral to such commercial culture, and yet another encouragement of everyday leisure consumerism.

By the end of the nineteenth century, developments in lithography had made the colour poster viable and improvements in printing technology had made large posters feasible. B&C's advertisements, like those of its competitors, depended on these processes. Further, poster design was divided between the 'jammed full' style of circus and melodrama posters, crowded with performers and incident, and the simpler style of such artists as Dudley Hardy and Tom Browne—who also drew the comic strip *Weary Willie and Tired Tim*. These latter used minimal lettering, clear design and broad areas of colour, and the series of posters issued for B&C by the MPSA in late 1912 broadly assumed this approach.³¹ They provided striking single images: a struggling Dick Turpin being bound by a monk and two other men; Don Q brooding on a rock above a figure defying a bandit with a rifle. The lettering was minimal, just the name of the protagonist and, in smaller lettering, the title of the film: *Dick Turpin No.4: A Deadly Foe, A Pack of Hounds and Some Merry Monks* or *Don Q/ The Dark Brothers of the Civil Guard*. The only other item was an oval containing the B&C trademark. Significantly, these posters featured a



Figure 10.1 A Motion Picture Sales Agency poster for *Dick Turpin No.4: A Deadly Foe, A Pack of Hounds and Some Merry Monks*.
The Top-Line Indicator, 18 December 1912, British Library

screen character rather than the picture personality playing him. Nevertheless, cinema advertising was beginning to individuate films and to suggest their visual attractions to the public.

The MPSA also sought to enthuse the public through the original tactic of issuing *The Pictures*. An item in the *Evening Times* suggested the agency had been 'enterprising enough to produce a new weekly', and that this interesting departure would prove popular with people 'who would often like some souvenir of a particularly good picture'.³² An accompanying advertisement indicated the magazine would be 'On sale at all Picture Theatres in London and the Provinces'—although it also became available through newsagents.³³ Its offices were at 88 Wardour Street, next door to those of the MPSA, and the first edition appeared on 21 October 1911. In its initial editorial, it declared that 'every number will contain a collection of stories, profusely illustrated, each story corresponding to a set of films about to be shown in the picture theatres', that the magazine would be in the hands of the public 'well in advance of the appearance of the pictures, of whose coming it will therefore serve as a herald' and that its unique function was 'to serve as a guide to all that is best and most worthy of being seen in the picture theatres' so readers would be able to make an intelligent choice of film.³⁴ A later copy put matters more succinctly. Readers were advised the periodical would 'serve ... as a guide to the best things in cinematography; facilitate ... [their] comprehension and enjoyment of the films; and furnish ... [them] with first class fiction'.³⁵ However, it was only films issued through the MPSA that it was concerned with. From the start of 1912, illustrated stories of B&C's major releases began to appear, narrating the adventures of the series heroes, telling the stories of the company's other dramas and describing several of its actuality films. MPSA advertisements for its first B&C release thoughtfully assured readers of the *KLW* and *The Bioscope*: 'The story of the ... subject will duly appear in "THE PICTURES", on sale everywhere.'³⁶

The periodical subsequently added items of cinema news and feature articles about production activities, thereby drawing B&C to the attention of readers as a film-making enterprise. There were reports on the tours to film in North Wales, Derbyshire, Cornwall and Jamaica, on the company's actors and on its recent history.³⁷ Further, in 1912, unlike the posters, *The Pictures* began to focus audience attention on the picture personalities animating the screen narratives and appearing in the magazine's film-still illustrations. Beginning in April, the names of the 'Principal Cast' were listed in the information advertising current releases on the inside covers; from May, the names of cast members were appended to the printed stories; and towards the end of the year, some films were promoted through

their lead players. Thus, the narrative of *The Bargee's Revenge* (November 1912) was introduced in October as, 'A thrilling story of canal life, with Percy Moran and Dorothy Foster'.³⁸ From the outset, a full-page portrait photograph of a leading performer was a regular feature on the second page. These were usually female and American, but Dorothy Foster, 'the charming and popular leading lady player', appeared in May and Ivy Martinek, 'a versatile member of the ... company', in August.³⁹ Percy Moran's appearances were more problematic, for he was identified as Lieutenant Daring—in uniform in February and in a 'Plain-clothes Photograph of Britain's most Popular Photoplay Hero' in October.⁴⁰ *The Pictures* also ran articles on the players, and so Dorothy Foster was interviewed in May and Percy Moran, 'known to fame as "LIEUT. DARING"', recounted his experiences as a boy boxer in November.⁴¹

Thus, *The Pictures* provided the MPSA and B&C with an important instrument for promoting the company's films, its activities and, increasingly, its leading players to the consuming public. As a penny 'miscellany' magazine, it took its place alongside the numerous mass-circulation periodicals that had been proliferating since the 1890s and enlivening people's leisure-time pursuits. It ran every Saturday for sixty editions up to the end of 1912, when the proprietorship was then transferred to the Queenhithe Printing and Publishing Company, which, whilst 'remaining on the most cordial terms with the late proprietors', felt it would best serve its ever-growing circle of readers and exercise an independent influence if it could supply 'the stories of the leading films, no matter who the producers of such films [might] be'.⁴²

The postcard was another ingredient in Edwardian popular visual culture, having established itself as a regular mode of communication in the first decade of the century, so postcards and photographs were incorporated by the MPSA into its repertoire of film-promotional techniques.⁴³ They were another means of contacting the public and, in particular, of interesting them in the lead performers. They were made available to cinemas and through the pages of *The Pictures*, which settled on 'portraits' of popular artistes at 1d each (an equivalent of about 41p today), declaring them 'worth a frame and space on your bedroom wall'.⁴⁴ Thus, images of picture personalities were offered for home consumption and as interior decoration. Foster, Martinek and Daring appeared on the B&C cards. Part of the magazine's rationale for this strategy was revealed in an advertisement that asked, 'Can you recognise them?' and proceeded to explain: 'These popular artistes play important roles in many photoplays, yet few people can name them when they appear on screen ... If you possessed a set of our postcards you could. Your enjoyment of motion-pictures

will be doubled when you know the identities of the chief artistes.⁴⁵ This statement of July 1912 confirms that year as the one during which picture personalities were provided with a clear identity for cinemagoers. The post-MPSA *Pictures* continued issuing B&C postcards, adding images of O'Neill Farrell and the company's comic actor Bill Haley.⁴⁶

The MPSA, therefore, was addressing the cinemagoing public on B&C's behalf through posters, postcards and *The Pictures*, but it also needed to address the film trade. The renting houses needed to be cajoled into buying the films and the exhibitors to be assured a film was worth renting. To these ends, from 30 October 1912, it put out the *Top-Line Indicator* with 'Latest News about the Best Films. Published for the convenience of Buyers and Exhibitors'.⁴⁷ A preliminary editorial explained how, in future, 'what we have to tell you about our films and film advertisers will be chronicled in this paper, which will be posted to you once a week'.⁴⁸ The *Indicator* carried some limited editorial matter under the heading 'Programme Fill-Ups', including, for example, biographical snippets about Moran, Frederick Burlingham and Charles Weston—respectively actor, cameraman and director—but its main purpose was to persuade exhibitors to take the MPSA-distributed films, in part by advising how they might play with the public.⁴⁹ Thus, the promotion for *A Factory Girl's Honour* (February 1913) assured showmen: 'We can heartily recommend this stirring British drama. It is one of those nice happy-ending plays that leave every audience satisfied. Its incidents are knitted together so cleverly that they grip all the time.'⁵⁰ For *Just a Girl* (July 1913), the puff screamed:

Book it, it's a British Winner! Don't miss this two-reel British feature, which is right out of the ordinary. If you want to see what British actors can do, BOOK THIS FILM ... If you believe that Britain is bucking up, this film will delight you. If you think that British production is behind the times, this splendid picture will open your eyes.⁵¹

Here, advertising had begun to move beyond the provision of story information into attempts at persuasion, a trajectory advertising in general had taken as it moved into the early twentieth century.

The MPSA also took out advertising space in the *KLW* and *The Bioscope*. Thus, for the first *Don Q* film, its advertisement urged:

There is still time to book ... Amidst Derbyshire's rugged and picturesque hills, the B&C Company dramatized HESKETH PRICHARD'S world-famous brigand stories ... The story has been read by a million people ... that speaks for the plot. The acting and

staging are considerably in advance of most British productions. Book the film and turn money away. Book it NOW. There's no time to waste.⁵²

Here the appeal was to the prestige of an established author and to success in another medium as ways of guaranteeing the film's exhibition value. The trade journals continued to carry synopses and release dates of B&C films, but also began to offer their own editorial commentary. The *KLW* similarly took up the importance of the author in its observations on *The Great Anarchist Mystery*, arguing that it should be remembered 'the plot of the story has emanated from the pen of Silas K. Hocking, an author of world renown'; further, it defensively suggested that, 'coming as it does from the Rev Silas Hocking, [the story] should form a useful agent in disputing and disproving the endless tirades made by certain members of the Church against the picture palace'.⁵³ This attention to authors contrasted with *The Pictures'* attention to actors, but actors' names and escapades began to crop up in trade journals too. In particular, the *Film Censor*, which began publication in July 1912, ran a series of illustrated items between August 1912 and March 1913 on both B&C's actors (Moran, Martinek, Foster and Harry Lorraine) and its directors (Oceano Martinek, Charles Raymond and Harold Brett)—yet another move towards nominating company personnel for publicity purposes.⁵⁴

B&C AND THE EXCLUSIVES SYSTEM

Between 1913 and 1916, film distribution and marketing changed as a consequence of the shift to longer, exclusive films. As was observed in *The Kinematograph Year Books*, 'the open market ruled supreme' before 1913, so that whatever the intrinsic merits of a particular film or the sums spent on its production, it would sell at the standard rate.⁵⁵ Then in 1913, with manufacturers making efforts to produce films beyond the ordinary, the exclusive emerged and renters, in turn, saw new scope for their own enterprise and began offering high sums for these films. Consequently, by 1915, the open market had 'suffered severely', especially in London and the south of England, and traders were suggesting it was practically dead.⁵⁶ Discussing the future of the film trade in April 1915, the *KLW* observed how, under present market conditions, short films had become 'more difficult to handle than the exclusive and feature film', and that it had become clear the open-market method, weakened by the three year boom in exclusives, was 'gradually taking second place', especially as the exclusive was an attraction that could be billed more easily in cinemas and benefit from 'a properly

directed advertising campaign'.⁵⁷ At the time, though, the open market's fixed charge was seen by many as a hedge against unscrupulous buyers driving down film quality by paying manufacturers only the lowest prices, thereby forcing them to cut costs. On the other hand, it was argued manufacturers should be free to assume those costs of production that would raise the quality of their films and that they should be able to charge accordingly for their product in the marketplace.⁵⁸ As managing director of B&C in Period Two, McDowell enthusiastically espoused the latter position.

Under the emergent exclusives system, differentiation developed amongst the renters who divided between small enterprises, usually still buying films outright on the open market, and major renters, buying the exclusive rights to distribute a particular film to leading cinemas. Here a new kind of film commodity was coming into existence. The price no longer depended on length, or 'quantity', but on its more indeterminate 'quality'—its production values and likely audience appeal. Prices paid by major renters began to vary in light of a film's anticipated returns, and that price, negotiated through the production company's agent, was paid for exclusivity. Whereas, previously, several renters might each have bought multiple copies of a B&C film, a renter securing exclusive rights knew the production company would release its film to no one else. More specifically a renter bought three things from the manufacturer. First was the right to distribute a film through a certain geographic area. For example, the Atlas Feature Film Co. Ltd and Ruffell's Imperial Bioscope Syndicate Ltd jointly bought the rights to distribute *The Battle of Waterloo* throughout the British Isles, the Channel Isles and the Isle of Man, whilst later, H. Winck acquired its distribution rights to the USA.⁵⁹ Distribution for 1916's *The Blind Man of Verdun* was more regional, with the Preston Film Service securing the rights to Lancashire and Cheshire and A1 Features and Exclusives of London gaining the rights to London, the Home Counties, the South West and Eastern Counties.⁶⁰ Second, the manufacturer ceded rights in a film to the renter for a determinate period of time and, third, the production company undertook to provide the renter with a specific number of film prints. In 1913, for example, £6,700 was paid for fifteen copies and three year exhibition rights for Cines's *Quo Vadis*, while £4,000 secured eleven prints and exclusivity for Barker's *East Lynne*.⁶¹ For its part, the renter would vary rental charges to exhibitors depending on a film's attractiveness. In return, exhibitors keen to book a popular film were provided with their own exclusivity. In this case, the renter's release policy would guarantee that no two cinemas operating in the same area would be showing a particular film at the same time—though the cinemas would have had to compete to secure the first run. The George Prince

Film Service, therefore, informed exhibitors, 'You Must Book the Great B&C Masterpiece Detective Drama/*To Save Her Dad*/If you are to keep abreast of the times! It can *only* be arranged through us', and Atlas-Ruffell's urged exhibitors to 'secure *your* territory at once' for *The Battle of Waterloo*.⁶²

The Kinematograph Year Book felt the initiative towards exclusive films was taken by the manufacturers, and McDowell's risky decision to produce *The Battle of Waterloo* was clearly an important contribution to that development. Yet exclusives were also a response to changes in exhibition practice—and a promoter of such changes. Rachael Low once characterized as 'old fashioned' the view that the chief merit of early cinema programmes was variety, and proposed as a 'more fruitful view' the suggestion that longer feature films had the drawing power of 'legitimate plays'.⁶³ Such comment was characteristic of her occasionally tendentious approach to British cinema history, but she did identify the direction in which forceful interests in the cinema institution were moving. However, the transition also reflected a conflict between popular culture's enthusiasm for variety and middle-class culture's demand for more homogeneous cultural objects, such as the 'well-made play' and the films of the 'cinema of quality'. In Period One, B&C had espoused the variety principle and addressed the predispositions of its popular audiences, but with the turn towards exclusives, McDowell began to head towards more culturally respectable territory and a 'better' class of clientele, at the same time contracting the company's generic range. Even so, its divided cultural allegiances continued to structure the later production programme because it was still pursuing a policy of making shorter films for the open market even in 1915, and, at a Joint Trade Conference of renters and manufacturers called by the Council of the Exhibitors Association, McDowell himself complained that the illicit export of open-market films was constituting a present danger to the trade.⁶⁴

It was the task of a new agent, Davison's Film Sales Agency, to negotiate B&C's entry into the exclusives system whilst keeping its foot in the open market. But before that there was the rather special case of the release of *The Battle of Waterloo*.

Distributing The Battle of Waterloo

In 1913, exclusives were a novelty in Britain and several were sold in a novel way—by auction. This seems to have been an intermediate arrangement in the transition between distribution systems, for once exclusives became the norm, a more standardized procedure was established, and for B&C this became Davison's responsibility.

As *The Battle of Waterloo* was its first major exclusive and a real gamble for the company, McDowell assumed responsibility for its disposal. In May, William Barker's melodrama *East Lynne* had sold at auction for a record sum, and McDowell, who had learned some of his own showmanship from working with Barker, decided to follow his mentor's example and sell B&C's film at Britain's second ever film auction. The feature was shot in early June and on the 18th—coinciding with Waterloo Day—an enticing double-page advertisement in red and blue appeared in *The Cinema*:

At Last/The B&C Company have produced at an enormous expense/
The Greatest Battle Ever Fought/A Film Britain Will Be Proud Of/
The Battle of Waterloo/Adapted from History and Produced By Charles
Weston/A British Battle on a British Film by a British Firm.⁶⁵

It was auctioned the following Tuesday at the company's Endell Street offices in the presence of over thirty 'magnates of the cinematograph world'.⁶⁶ The auctioneers were Harris and Gillow, cinematograph property and estate agents of London, who listed the film's enormous expense, drawing power and conditions of purchase. Bidding began at £2,000 and proceeded in £500 advances until it was knocked down at the new record British price of £5,000 to Atlas and Ruffell's. Two days later, the latter placed double-page advertisements in the trade papers, announcing they had secured the film at enormous cost and inviting bookings.⁶⁷ The next week, another double-page spread announced that a 'Private Review to Exhibitors' of 'The Film that Britain will be proud of' was to be given early the following week at the London Palladium and that exhibitors should 'Write Immediately for Tickets'.⁶⁸ A special musical arrangement was prepared for this trade show by the Palladium's orchestra leader, Mr Jimmy Sale.⁶⁹ Exhibitors were also pressed to 'secure your territory now', although such encouragement may have been rather superfluous, for it was being reported even in early July: '[T]here is no question about the success of the bookings. They are simply prodigious, and an ever-increasing demand both by telephone, telegram, and letter is proof positive that *The Battle of Waterloo* is likely to be the greatest 'exclusive' production known in the history of the trade.'⁷⁰

Promotion was heavy, with Ruffell's Exclusives organizing a dynamic publicity campaign on several fronts. Items directed to exhibitors—both advertisements and editorial matter—were a regular feature of the trade press throughout the three months of summer, and in mid-August, the three leading trade journals each carried a special colour supplement illustrating 'The Charge of the Life Guards'.⁷¹ In mid-July, the renters

were asserting how, with the picture, 'Every exhibitor will find a THREE-FOLD satisfaction/1. in fulfilling a great national duty/2. in pleasing his audience/3. in increasing his profits. The British Public are asking for this stupendous attraction.'⁷² They also inflated the film's cast to 2,000 soldiers and 1,000 horses, and regularly emphasized the large sum paid out on it. By mid-August, Ruffell's were hyping the 'event' aspects of the film and its unprecedented reception in the national press. In the *KLW*, it was presented as 'The Greatest Battle in the History of the World/*The Battle of Waterloo*/A most remarkable production in Five Reels of the most awe-inspiring sensationalism and heroism/A film that has received, and will continue to receive, unprecedented publicity from the press'.⁷³ Simultaneous advertising in *The Bioscope* observed there were 'Only a Few Open Dates' left for bookings and listed 'What the Press think' by quoting commentary from trade journals and eight local and national newspapers.⁷⁴ Even at the end of September, the renter was still proclaiming: 'Pronounced by Press, Public and Exhibitors to be the Greatest Battle Picture ever produced. Records broken at all theatres exhibiting it ... The Greatest Battle in the world's history, produced on a most lavish scale. A sensational and elaborate production with thousands of men and horses.'⁷⁵ Given this campaign, bookings proved to be extraordinary, so that by the end of the first week in August, the film had been taken up for showing in some 300 towns between its release date on 8 September and Christmas, and there were further bookings up to Easter 1914.⁷⁶ These cost exhibitors up to £200 for a week's hire, with the *Picturegoer* claiming that 130 copies of the film had been printed from its negative by the end of October.⁷⁷

Regarding the cinemagoing public, *The Bioscope* reported how Ruffell's had 'organised an exceedingly smart publicity campaign ... Not content with a big scheme of Press advertising, all the devices known to the "publicity man" have been utilised to good effect ... [and] many excellent "dodges" ... [have] helped ... materially to attract public attention'.⁷⁸ The company issued throwaways and posters of various sizes to generate public interest, and the first issue of 50,000 sheets was so quickly exhausted that a reprint of double the quantity had to be ordered in early September.⁷⁹ A poster of the Duke of Wellington seated on his horse was declared 'quite out of the ordinary' by *The Bioscope* as it had been 'executed in fine style, the printing in particular being exceptionally good', and the artist was commended on 'his faithful reproduction of the features of the "Iron Duke"'.⁸⁰ Ruffell's also issued a special souvenir booklet to accompany the film. This was a portfolio of fourteen sepia photographs of scenes from the picture, large enough to detach and frame, and printed on heavy, gloss paper with royal purple covers embossed in gold. It was introduced

by the poem *After Waterloo* by George Sheldon.⁸¹ At the moment of release, a group of horsemen, in appropriate costumes, rode through London's West End in an attempt to further 'boom' the picture.⁸² Advertising to the public was also placed in the national press when, in the latter part of July, half-page spreads promoting 'England's Greatest Battle. A Stirring Reproduction' appeared in the *Weekly Despatch*, the *Daily Mirror* and the *Evening News*. They advised their readers to 'Ask your PICTURE THEATRE MANAGER when he is showing The Great British Picture THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO', the text being accompanied by Sheldon's poem and illustrated by photographs depicting Wellington, a scene of battle and Napoleon's coach exploding.⁸³ Public interest was clearly aroused, for in mid-July, *The Cinema* reported how, alongside extraordinary bookings, 'more wonderful still [were] the shoals of letters from the public' to Ruffell's asking when the film was coming their way.⁸⁴ Consequently, the renter was able confidently to assure exhibitors that the 'British public are asking for this stupendous attraction ... not a Nine Days Wonder but a Continuous Draw'.⁸⁵

The unique appeal of *The Battle of Waterloo* was evident from the fact it opened simultaneously in three of London's major West End cinemas, within a mile radius of one another, and that it ran for a full week in each—rather than the standard three days.⁸⁶ It was also booked as a special 'Top of the Bill' turn at three leading music hall combines, including Moss empires.⁸⁷ At each of the Hippodrome cinemas in Peckham and Cardiff, over 5,000 people attended the film.⁸⁸ The responses returned to Ruffell's by exhibitors proved highly enthusiastic. Pyke's in Charing Cross Road reported 'Waterloo Breaking All Records'; at Peckham, where it was showing four times daily, the response was 'House full. Huge success. Everyone delighted'; for Cardiff it was 'Greatest Picture Ever Produced. Went Terrific. Records Broken'; and from Ealing came: 'Enormous Reception. Houses Packed'.⁸⁹ A series of promotional 'stunts' were also devised to boom the film at individual cinemas. Ernest Batley, the film's Napoleon, appeared in person when it was shown at Walpole Picture House in Ealing.⁹⁰ At the Gem Picture Palace, Lavender Hill, where it was successfully shown for nine hours daily, pipers, drummers and trumpeters in Scottish uniforms—lent by a local alderman—would march down the hall playing when the French attacked a Highland regiment.⁹¹ At the New Picture Palace, Melton, each performance was introduced by J.W. Brighten, one of the actors, and closed by a Duke of Wellington in full uniform reciting Sheldon's poem.⁹² In Leicester, the manager of the Silver Street cinema had men in uniform and sandwich-board men parade through the town to publicize the film.⁹³

Davison's Film Sales Agency

On 1 September 1913, Tom Davison entered distribution on his own account as Davison's Film Sales Agency, initially at 18 Charing Cross Road and then, from December, at 151–53 Wardour Street—the industry's new centre of gravity. He had broken with the MPSA, taking with him as his first account 'one of the best-known brands in British films', namely B&C, and the option on several attractive exclusives in the company's autumn schedule.⁹⁴ Securing B&C turned out to be very successful, as the firm entered its most productive and creative period over the next two years. Initially, Davison's customers were the exhibitors and renters of the open market, but he soon had to cope with the rise of the exclusives. His first year proved a 'quite extraordinary success' that complemented the 'remarkable growth' of B&C.⁹⁵ He added several European producers to the agency and then, given the failure of some of these companies because of the outbreak of war, added American firms after a visit to the USA in autumn 1914, which saw the opening of a New York office.⁹⁶

From the beginning, he 'set himself to foster the growing popularity of British films', so during the war, he adopted the identity of 'Davison, the *British Agent*' and assumed a militantly patriotic stance in which the films of B&C featured heavily.⁹⁷ A month after hostilities opened, his full-page advertisement in the *Film Censor* proclaimed, 'The Public are Asking for British Films/Here are the first you can book', and presented an open-market package that included three by B&C.⁹⁸ A year later, in November 1915, addressing the exclusives market in *The Bioscope*, the agency emphatically declared:

The STRONG Exclusive Merchant and Renter is wanted who has a sound vein of patriotism in him to uphold and Help the British Manufacturer. We have all Heard about "BRITAIN FOR THE BRITISH", that is all we have done, only Heard about it. It is about time We had Deeds-Action...Insist and Demand British Films—For British Audiences.⁹⁹

At its peak, the core of the agency's business seems to have been its British companies as when, in 1915, it urged exhibitors to 'Show the Brands that Pull in the Crowds.'¹⁰⁰ These were Martin, with comics that 'never fail to "keep them laughing"', Lion's Head (a brand logo of Cricks & Martin), with 'films of proved merit', Samuelson's 'film masterpieces',

C&E 'for topical and educational subjects' and B&C, 'the sign of perfection in film production'.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, in May 1917, Davison took up the post of sales manager with the Trans-Atlantic Film Company, having had to wind up his own business 'through lack of agencies', after having directed it for three and a half years.¹⁰² Failure was probably attributable to the contraction of production in the later stages of the war, to the increasing redundancy of the open-market system and to the fact the agency's major client, B&C, had dropped out of production midway through 1916.


FEATURE.
The BROKEN CHISEL
 Length 2,886 ft. Released October 20th.
 The film that nearly caused the drowning tragedy at Broadstairs.
 Millions read about it. Thousands saw it taken.
PACKED WITH INCIDENT.
 Hero escapes from prison. Seizes captive Balloon. Slides down rope into the sea. Changes clothes with his sweetheart. Rows away from Broadstairs, pursued by the police, and sacrifices his liberty to rescue the child of the man who could have saved him from gaol.

The WONDERS of RHODESIA
 A FINE IMPERIAL TRAVEL PICTURE, SHOWING THE MAGNIFICENT VICTORIA FALLS.
 Sole Agents:
DAVISON'S FILM SALES AGENCY
 (T. H. DAVISON, late M.P. SALES AGENCY.)
 18, CHARING CROSS ROAD, LONDON, W.C.2. Phone: 1272 Central.
THE FILMS THE PUBLIC WANT.

Figure 10.2 Davison's Film Sales Agency advertisement for *The Broken Chisel*.
Moving Picture Offered List, 6 September 1913

However, in its three years as agent for B&C, Davison's assumed two responsibilities. First was finding smaller renters to buy stocks of open-market films outright at the standard price and promoting them amongst exhibitors. These were the company's actualities (until they ceased production in August 1914), comics (until they were dropped in July 1915) and short dramas (until January 1916). Davison's second responsibility was to secure major renters to purchase—at variable prices—the exclusive rights to B&C's longer films. This increasingly became the prime task. In 1913, exclusive footage constituted 20 per cent of B&C's output (or six films); in 1914, the year of peak production, exclusive footage doubled to 39 per cent (fourteen films); and in 1915, it climbed to 72 per cent (sixteen films). In the first half of 1916, five of the seven films released were exclusives.

At first, Davison was optimistic about sustaining an open-market programme. He travelled to major provincial towns—as he had for the MPSA—doing good business everywhere in December 1913 with the first of B&C's series featuring *The Master Crook*.¹⁰³ He held the firm belief there was a strong public demand for 'the domestic drama, the simple, homely story, making a direct and straightforward appeal to the hearts of a popular audience', such as *The Child Mother* (November 1913) and *The Two Father Christmases* (December 1913).¹⁰⁴ Similarly, he contended showmen were 'eagerly on the look-out for really good comic pictures', such as the first Hurricane Kids short, released in January 1914.¹⁰⁵ He adopted the tactic of 'releasing specially good films on public holidays', and managed to keep a regular weekly programme of open-market films going for some time.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, in July 1915, he celebrated his one hundredth open-market programme at the same moment as McDowell was deciding to keep B&C's foot in the door of that particular market.¹⁰⁷ Even so, the open market effectively died on the agency a short time later.

Distributing exclusive films

In the distribution of exclusive films, two 'intermediaries' existed between B&C as producer and the cinemas exhibiting its films—Davison's agency and the major renters acquiring rights to the films. However, a determinate series of stages through which exclusive pictures might be sold and promoted soon became routinized, one consequence of which was a lengthening of the time between completion of a film's production and its appearance in cinemas—possibly to as much as three months. In the course of this process, much of the responsibility for film publicity shifted from the agency to the renter. Further, as a result of the greater competition resulting from the growth of American imports and rising British production, attempts to persuade through advertising became imperative. Whilst late nineteenth-century advertising had striven merely to associate a commodity and a brand name, most famously Pears' Soap, strategy in the early twentieth century began to advance justifications for buying a particular product. When Davison's addressed the renters or the exhibitors, certain selling points were advanced in favour of B&C's films, drawing on such notions as the celebrity of the author whose work had been adapted, success in another medium, the featured performers and even the prestige of the director or scenarist. By mid-1915, it was widely accepted that Davison's had evidenced remarkable success in selling exclusives after it had made a series of notable sales for B&C in 1914 with *The Midnight Wedding* (May), *The Loss of the Birkenhead* (August),

The Suicide Club (also August), *Revolution* (September) and *The London Mystery* (October).¹⁰⁸

The process of distribution began with reports in the trade press announcing a particular film was entering, undergoing or completing production. This was information circulated by the production company's publicity department or its agent, alerting renters to the imminent appearance of the film and letting future exhibitors know of its existence. Thus, the editorial pages of *The Cinema* variously reported B&C signing a contract securing the film rights for William Le Queux's novel *Fatal Fingers*; its acquisition of the rights to John Strange Winter's novel, *Grip*, to be adapted by her son, Eliot Stannard, and directed by Maurice Elvey; Elvey's filming of a version of Frank Lindo's famous play, *Home Sweet Home*, with Elizabeth Risdon; and the completion of a big exclusive, *Wild Oats*, written by Stannard, directed by Harold Weston and featuring the return of popular screen star Arthur Finn.¹⁰⁹ Here, source author, star, director and script-writer were being offered as guarantees of a film's viability.

The next stage was for the agency to sell the exclusive rights to a renter on behalf of the producer. This began with Davison's placing advertisements in the trade press announcing a film's readiness and inviting renters to apply for it.¹¹⁰ Thus, the agency's first such promotion assumed a hard-sell approach and declared: 'A B&C Masterpiece/Everyone who reads the papers has heard about the Drowning Tragedy that so nearly happened when this film was taken.../The Broken Chisell/Genuine Heart Appeal.../Strong New Situations.../A Powerful Love Story.../A Film packed with Thrills, Incident and Pathos.'¹¹¹

In similar style, it offered 'The World's Greatest Act of Heroism/B&C/are filming/The Loss of the Birkenhead' ... For full Particulars, Exclusive Rights, &c &c, apply to Sole Selling Agents/ Davison's FSA.'¹¹² Attempts to persuade were also forthrightly made, as in:

Coming. The Greatest Money Making Drama of Recent Years *When London Sleeps*. This drama has visited everywhere in England—it has been translated into 8 different languages ... The great sensation of a woman and child crossing the telegraph wires in their nightgowns from the burning building. The whole of the original scene will be in the B&C Film of this wonderful play.¹¹³

Here, the selling lines were success in another medium and the strong appeal of 'sensation'.

The introduction of a film onto the market was associated with a trade show in Davison's private projection room for potential renters and future

exhibitors, 'to find a customer among the former and advertise the film among the latter'.¹¹⁴ Renters would be represented by an 'expert viewer' who would exercise his 'knowledge of the "pulling" power of a picture' in deciding whether to offer for it.¹¹⁵ The screening was accompanied by discussion, after which an immediate offer might be accepted, on terms later to be formally ratified. Thus, the *KLW* congratulated B&C's *The Loss of the Birkenhead* on 'the *éclat* with which it was greeted at the trade show'.¹¹⁶ In turn, the film's 'show copy' might be shortened, edited or retitled at a renter's request. Thereafter, an announcement about the sale would be placed in the trade press to let exhibitors know from whom to book it. Thus, Davison's placed an item announcing that 'The All-British Masterpiece *Beautiful Jim* by the Famous British Military Authoress John Strange Winter Produced by the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company, At Their English Studios Has Been Sold With Exclusive Rights to the United Kingdom and the same will be controlled by Renters, Ltd.'¹¹⁷

Thereafter, the initiative passed to the renter, who would advertise the film to exhibitors, inviting them to book it for their cinemas. Thus, Renters' Limited commended showmen to

Book the most charming English story ever filmed. *Beautiful Jim* by John Strange Winter. The author of 'Bootles Baby'. This film is unique, its quality is splendid, and it is so thoroughly English in every way that it appeals to everyone. THE BOOKINGS ARE ENORMOUS ... BOOK IT AND BE IN THE FASHION.¹¹⁸

For special films, a renter might offer a private trade show—perhaps in a West End cinema—so possible exhibitors or a cinema's own 'viewer' would be able to see it before deciding on a booking. Similarly, renters might put on shows around the country in either a branch office or a specially engaged local cinema.¹¹⁹ Thus, the Ideal Renting Company offered trade shows in their offices at Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff for B&C's *When London Sleeps*, 'a film picture of that famous melodrama which has broken all records in theatres up and down the country. It is by general consent, the most successful and best-known English melodrama ever staged—A DRAMA OF THE LIFE OF TODAY—brimful of human touches and thrilling situations.'¹²⁰ At the same time, the renter's travellers would visit provincial exhibitors to boom a film, and later advertisements might urge them not to leave booking too late, as when the Kinema Exclusive Company warned of *The Bells of Rheims* 'only a few early dates left/unanimous approval of the Whole of the Trade/of this Topical Dramatic Film'.¹²¹

Furthermore, alongside renter promotions to exhibitors, the film trade press was enhancing its own intermediary role by accompanying its summaries of forthcoming films with commentary on them. *The Cinema*, in reply to a reproach about such reviewing made by Maurice Elvey, assumed his critique of the practice referred to a film's 'artistic merits', but argued these were 'not necessarily commercial ones' and that 'a trade journal [was] compelled ... to look at the selling qualities of a film first'.¹²² It argued that 'film reviews in trade journals ... are written from a standpoint totally different to that of dramatic criticisms which appear in the daily Press', for the periodical's reviews did not ask, 'Does this film conform to our accepted ideas of art?' but rather, 'What is there in this film that will attract the public?'¹²³ Thus, at around the time B&C's Elvey, Stannard and Weston were thinking in terms of film as 'art', the trade press was offering exhibitors a guide to a film's commercial potential. Therefore, *The Cinema*'s review of the Elvey-Stannard war film, *It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary*, proposed:

It must be admitted ... that the film will, in view of recent happenings, appeal, but had it been of a mediocre calibre its popular life would have been comparatively short. As it is, however, its prospect

The Greatest of all Patriotic Films.

"It's a long, long way to Tipperary"
THE STORY OF IRELAND'S LOYALTY
 AS TOLD BY THE FAMOUS SONG
 THE GREAT PATRIOTIC FILM OF THE DAY

APEX FILMS, LTD.

A STORY OF IRELAND'S LOYALTY.
 THE EXCLUSIVE AND ONLY FILM VERSION OF THE FAMOUS SONG.

IT'S A LONG, LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY

In 3 Parts. **THE BIGGEST WINNER OF THE DAY.** Produced by B. & C.
Districts Booking Fast. Special Publicity Matter Issued.

THE PENALTY OF BEAUTY.
3000 Feet.
 Milano's Most Beautiful Production. Madame Hesperia in the Leading Role.

DON'T FAIL TO BOOK THIS!

Call, Write or Wire—**APEX FILMS, LTD.,**
Phone—Bijou 595.
 Wire—Zimvelin. Watford, London. W.

45, LITTLE NEWPORT STREET, LONDON, W.

REPRESENTATIVES—SCOTLAND—Messrs. E. D. Farnham, Ltd., 8, Dundas Street, Glasgow. 10 BRACKLEY, DERBYSHIRE, LINCOLN, SHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE—The Wellington Film Service, Ltd., 41, Abce Street, Leeds. 1 NORTH DEREELAND, LEICESTER, CHESHIRE, and WYDERSHIRE—Messrs. J. B. Peacock, Ltd., 10, Wapine Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. LANCAHIRE, CHESHIRE, STAFFORDSHIRE and IRELAND—The Signal Film Service, 4, Little Bridge Street, St. Denis Street, Manchester.

Figure 10.3 Advertisement for Maurice Elvey's *It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary*. *The Cinema*, 3 December 1914

of becoming one of the most successful financial productions of the year is exceedingly bright.¹²⁴

Similarly, the *KLW* maintained of *The Midnight Wedding*:

This Lyceum production is probably the most popular of all the Howard melodramas, and has toured both in England and America with considerable success. A big public already exists, therefore, for the film version. As a matter of fact, the subject does not need this assistance, though it will probably benefit by it.¹²⁵

Having viewed its acquired film, the renter needed to select scenes for poster display and to prepare a synopsis, for, with exclusives, the renter was responsible for supplying exhibitors with posters and not the agency.¹²⁶ So it was Moss Empires who prepared the advertising for *The Midnight Wedding*: this consisted of posters, streamers, showcards, photographs and, for the trade, an attractive booklet.¹²⁷ Exclusives posters, designed to attract the cinemagoing public, included not only the brand name of the production company but also that of the renter. Further, some daily newspapers—circulated with information by the publicity departments of renters and agencies—also began to speak to the film-going public with occasional advertisements—as for *The Battle of Waterloo*—and through regular film columns, the latter providing information and publicity about current films and constituting a guide to consumer choice.

The final link in the promotional chain was the exhibitors, and in 1914, the *KLW*'s Low Warren produced *The Showman's Advertising Book* that drew on current good practice to give them guidance in boosting an exclusive. Once booked, a forthcoming film should be announced by lantern slides during a performance, advertised on poster hoardings outside the theatre and publicized through the supply of editorial matter to local newspapers. Throwaway handbills and outdoor advertising would complete the publicity campaign, with the latter involving sandwich-board men walking the streets and lorry-borne tableaux—adopted from the example of travelling circuses—touring the locality to display a scene from the film, its title and the name of the cinema showing it—as in Warren's illustration of costumed figures representing a moment from a Lieutenant Daring picture.¹²⁸

B&C films, Ideal and Renters

Two ambitious renters regularly taking B&C exclusives were Renters' Limited and The Ideal Film Renting Company, and their relations with

the producer served to reinforce aspects of McDowell's exclusives policy. Renters' explained how, in starting their business, they had 'determined that they would ... issue only films of English manufacture and of classic or literary reputation. [But] they were told that classic films, or films based on classic or famous novels, would be a "tough proposition", that they would be above the heads of picture theatre patrons.'¹²⁹ Nevertheless, their releases based on Dickens, Walter Scott and Charles Read were very well received. Thus, the young rental company represented the recent aspirational trend in the industry, oriented to adaptations of recognized literary sources and a more middle-class audience—part of the same process of bourgeoisification evident in B&C's cinema of quality tendency. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there was a rapport between some of the latter's films and the Renters' programme. Consequently, Renters' purchased *The Suicide Club*, based on tales by Robert Louis Stevenson (August 1914), two of the films from novels by John Strange Winter, *Beautiful Jim* (November 1914) and *Grip* (July 1915), and a play adaptation, *Another Man's Wife* (1915). *The Cinema* enthused that Renters' had 'taken stories of classic or literary reputation and issued them for the benefit of the democratic picture palace', and observed it was 'good to find that the genius contained in great English novels can be released for the delight of the vast audiences drawn to films'.¹³⁰ Thus, in the mid-teens, certain films and film-workers—including several at B&C—were seen as engaged in an educational project intended to raise popular cultural horizons. Further, *The Cinema* observed the existence of a precedent in publishing itself when it suggested that it had been 'a bold publisher ... who first attempted to democratise the "classics", but now cheap editions of the classics meet us at every turn, and the courage of the pioneer has been justified'; Renters, it concluded, had been doing 'something of the kind for film patrons, and doing it with conspicuous success', so that 'the average patron ... has not only swallowed these "classic" dishes without a single pang of mental indigestion, but—in that dumb, intelligent way of his—he is asking for more!'¹³¹

Ideal was similarly aspirational and, after beginning in 1912, had risen in three years to a leading position in distribution.¹³² Its declared policy was that the Ideal Picture Play was one that 'tells a good, sound, dramatic story, is perfectly acted and beautifully produced, and, above all, makes an appeal to *every class* of present and prospective theatre goer'.¹³³ To this end, it purchased eight B&C productions in 1914–1915, especially those for which Elvey and Stannard were responsible and often featuring Risdon. In its pitch for fresh audiences, like Renters, it favoured the company's adaptations—though, perhaps, those with a rather more melodramatic orientation. These were given big promotions in the pages of the *KLW*.

An advertisement for the Charles Darrell adaptation, *The Idol of Paris*, forcefully asserted:

Grand 'Ideal' Exclusive/*The Idol of Paris*.../Another Big Subject by the author of/ *When London Sleeps*/A Thrilling Tale of the career of FLARE FLARE, the Darling of the Paris stage/A Stirring Melodrama. Magnificently Acted. Superbly Staged/*When London Sleeps*/is in the very front rank of the season's successes/*The Idol of Paris*/is a brilliant successor to this famous film—a great drama tingling with action and rich in charm and colouring.¹³⁴

The promotion of *Florence Nightingale* was more sober:

Stirring and Beautiful Story of the Noble English Woman ... the idol of every British soldier's camp, and to whom one of the noblest statues in London has just been unveiled. The correctness of the film narrative is guaranteed by the fact that it is based on the life of Florence Nightingale, which was written by Sir Edward Cook. The PATHOS AND ROUSING DRAMA of a remarkable life is brought out with remarkable vividness by ELIZABETH RISDON.¹³⁵

For this film, Ideal issued exhibitors with a souvenir booklet about Nightingale's life via a special supplement in the *KLW*, which contained a colour portrait, sixteen stills from the film, its story and suggestions for a musical accompaniment.¹³⁶

To address the public, Ideal issued a standard range of posters, each with a film title, the trademarks of Ideal and B&C and the words, "Ideal" Exclusive'. In contrast to the simplicity of the MPSA's poster designs, these featured rather crowded drawings—for example, of a haunted-looking man overtaken by a cab near the Houses of Parliament for *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*—and added a star name, so they were presented as 'featuring' Miss Elizabeth Risdon or Miss Lilian Braithwaite, with the latter's portrait in the corner of *The World's Desire* poster. Further inducements were included, as when *Her Nameless (?) Child* was billed as 'Adapted from the famous play by Madge Duckworth' and *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* as 'A Picture version of England's first and greatest Detective drama'. Ideal also added intriguing phrases to certain posters—'How she found the hospital' for Nightingale's arrival in the Crimea and 'Your sacrifice will save her' for a mother holding a baby in *The World's Desire*.¹³⁷

The films appear to have proved a success, and Table 10.1 lists the notable number of theatres each was booked into and the extended period of time it took for each to circulate (as well as the source material used).¹³⁸

Table 10.1: Ideal's Exclusive Releases of B&C Films, 1914–1915

Title	Source	Number of theatre bookings	Period of circulation (in months)
<i>When London Sleeps</i>	Charles Darrell play	615 ¹	7.5
<i>Florence Nightingale</i>	recent biography	562 ²	10
<i>Mystery of a Hansom Cab</i>	Fergus Hume novel	503	7.5
<i>Her Nameless (?) Child</i>	Madge Duckworth play	457	8
<i>From Shopgirl to Duchess</i>	Charles Darrell play	446	9
<i>The World's Desire</i>	original script	444	8.5
<i>The Idol of Paris</i>	Charles Darrell play	377	5
<i>Midshipman Easy</i>	Frederick Marryatt novel	187	8.5

(1) On reissue in June 1916, it was booked into seventy-seven theatres in two weeks.

(2) On reissue in June 1916, it was booked into fifty theatres in two weeks.

Thus, the take-up of B&C films by Renters and Ideal served to confirm McDowell's bid for cultural respectability and his policy favouring a cinema of quality. Their sophisticated handling of the company's films also underlined how far distribution practices had developed between 1909 and 1915.

DISTRIBUTING OVERSEAS

B&C films got some overseas distribution, but information here is in short supply. Nevertheless, a rudimentary picture can be sketched from brief trade press references that indicate something of the geographical spread of the company's pictures.

In autumn 1910, B&C was looking east via the Film Agency (Russia), Limited, set up to carry on business with that country. It was registered on 28 October with a capital of £1,000 in £1 shares, and the directors were G.H. Cricks of the Film House, Gerrard Street, and J.B. McDowell of the B&C Film Company in Denmark Street; the registered office was 18 Charing Cross Road.¹³⁹ Also involved were Cecil Hepworth and Percy

Stow. However, trading ceased in the summer of 1912.¹⁴⁰ In 1911, this time looking west, B&C's *The Soldier's Sweetheart* played successfully in Montreal, Canada, where 'the audience [rose] in true Colonial fashion at the exploits of daring performed by the defenders of the mother country' and the element of romance helped give that 'heart touch' that 'naturally effects [*sic*] the Britisher away from home'.¹⁴¹ Having transferred to the MPSA at the beginning of 1912, B&C's films benefited from the services of its sixteen branch offices in Europe, Asia and Africa.¹⁴² Actualities of London Zoo were dispatched to Hungary, with names and explanations in Hungarian, and Lieutenant Daring films were shown in leading Paris cinemas.¹⁴³ Unfortunately, however, the German authorities banned the Dick Turpin films, and the MPSA was complaining early in 1913 that some 75 per cent of its British and American films were being banned in that country.¹⁴⁴

In Period Two, with Davison as agent, there were several developments. In July 1913, McDowell visited Berlin to place 'the exclusive B&C rights for Germany, Russia and Austria'.¹⁴⁵ H. Winck, who had started the bidding for *The Battle of Waterloo*, gained the rights to distribute it in the USA, whilst Ruffle's Exclusives sent ten prints to France, as well as prints to Spain, Siam, Japan, China, Java and Columbia.¹⁴⁶ By January 1914, according to *The Cinema*, '[w]ith such a fortification as the Davison Film Sales Agency, Mr McDowell ha[d] firmly established his name world-wide', and sales of B&C films were growing rapidly in France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Russia as well as in the Colonies.¹⁴⁷ *The Loss of the Birkenhead*, for example, was distributed in Australia by the Cooperative Film Exchange Ltd.¹⁴⁸ In May 1914, a Monsieur Monat, referred to as B&C's representative on the continent, explained to *The Cinema* how pictures on crimes and assassinations were unpopular with the French, but that English films with 'plenty of action and beautiful photography portraying lovely spectacles and scenery' went down well.¹⁴⁹ Also in May, Mr L. Taylor of Warners' Features secured the American and Canadian rights to *In the Days of Trafalgar* and twenty copies of the film for a 'substantial cheque'.¹⁵⁰ The Irish rights to *It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary*, B&C's film about Irish volunteering for the British army, were held by a Mr Aldred of the Signal Film Service. He reported the film did well there and that 'Irishmen of all parties are enthusiastic over it, and the part it is playing in cementing together people of divergent views is another example of the influence of the photo-play on everyday life'.¹⁵¹ In July 1915, M. Monat was again chatting to the trade press, this time about B&C's wartime European sales.¹⁵² He claimed eight copies of suitable subjects could be disposed of to Russia and that

business there was recovering from the previous autumn's war-provoked setbacks. Two copies each of a film would satisfy the French and Spanish markets, but the best market was South America where the demand for good films was increasing. In December, it was reported the Scandinavian Film Agency was doing big business in, again, Russia with the films of B&C and other producers.¹⁵³ In 1916, Gaumont purchased *The Climax* for distribution in France and J.R. Darling of the Fox Corporation of America was quoted as believing B&C's *Jimmy* to be the best British film he had seen.¹⁵⁴ Later in the year, Davison travelled in the USA with three B&C films, including *Jimmy* and *Fatal Fingers*, and in December, the foreign and colonial rights for *Florence Nightingale* were sold to Canada and Austria.¹⁵⁵ In March 1917, an advertisement for the Ideal Film Renting Company listed the various countries to which it had exported B&C films. *Her Nameless (?) Child* had gone to Austria and Switzerland; *Mystery of a Hansom Cab* to France, Switzerland, the USA and Canada; *Florence Nightingale* to France, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Italy, India, Burma, Ceylon, the USA, Canada and Australia; and *When London Sleeps* to Russia, Scandinavia, Holland, India, Burma, Ceylon, Africa, the USA, Canada and Australia.¹⁵⁶

B&C's production effectively ceased in mid-1916 and Davison's Film Sales Agency closed in May 1917, but in June 1917, Lionel Phillips, identified as a film exporter of energy and enterprise, was appointed sole exporting agent for all B&C's features, adding their 'very commendable series of films' to his growing list of British producers that included Broadwest, Clarendon and International Exclusives.¹⁵⁷ Phillips and his associates had long experience of foreign sales but were basically handling B&C's back catalogue. Thus, films they were offering to South Africa that July included the company's *Wild Oats* of November 1915. Nevertheless, whatever films could still be sold abroad would have been another means of keeping the company going during its fallow years when McDowell was in France.

So, on this slender evidence, films from B&C appear to have circulated quite widely outside Britain, albeit mainly into Europe.

Promoting B&C and Its Films

Alongside the distributional processes developed between 1910 and 1916, B&C also engaged in various other promotional strategies to publicize the studio, its personnel and films. Here, the Publicity and Advertising Department played a leading role, often adopting stunts and procedures previously developed by other commercial organizations servicing the consumerist economy. It was set up in the summer of 1911—at the time of the move into Endell Street—and was placed under the charge of John O’Neill Farrell, the company’s ‘genial advance representative’, who nursed it through the growth years of 1911–1913.¹

Like others in Period One, he was a somewhat restless character with a variegated career behind him, but in his two years as publicity manager, his schemes helped considerably towards raising the company’s profile. He had been born in Montreal, Canada, and had been associated with the film trade from as early as 1900, having toured a film of the Corbett–Fitzsimmons boxing match round Canada and taken jobs as a film actor. He had also worked as travelling manager for a large Canadian theatrical circuit and, until his voice gave out, performed as a vocalist in both Canada and the USA. In March 1911, he encountered B&C’s chief camera operator, William Bool, when he was visiting Newfoundland, and returned with him to England in June. There, aged thirty, he was given charge of the new Publicity Department, and at once launched into a range of lively publicity initiatives. Further, his enthusiasm for travel made him the company’s ‘champion “spot seeker”’ for locations.² He was part of the tour to Wales and went out to Jamaica in 1913. On his return, he proposed moving on, but was still present in June, handling the promotional work for *The Battle of Waterloo*. Some time later, he did leave to resume his travels, first spending six months showing B&C’s Jamaican films as entertainment on a liner cruising in the Caribbean—in

association, as the original tour had been, with Elder and Fyffe's. Shows were on deck in the tropical nights, with the best seats for passengers in evening dress, a band accompanying the films and a ball or concert following. He passed some time in studios in the USA and then, after the outbreak of war, returned to performing, appearing in cinemas and vaudeville in Canada and the USA with a patriotic act, the 'Singing Soldier', wearing a uniform covered in allied flags. He was back to his old position with B&C in August 1915, spending three months in Publicity before moving over to Davison's Film Sales Agency in November, as a travelling sales manager.



Figure 11.1 B&C promotes itself.
The Kinematograph Year Book 1914, Author's collection

Early on, O'Neill Farrell was assisted by Harold Brett—before he took charge of B&C's scripts—but in December 1913, E. Davy Pain was publicity manager, working in this role until his promotion to secretary and business manager of the company in 1914, a little before his enlistment in September that year.³

SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

The Publicity and Advertising Department collaborated closely with the distribution agencies on advertising and press releases as well as deploying its own initiatives to promote the company to both the trade and the public.

Studio Visits

One scheme launched by O'Neill Farrell was to invite members of the press to visit the studio and witness work on a film. This provided publicity for both the company and the particular film, and seems to have been directed mainly at the industry. Its first use was in June 1912 when the press and members of the film trade were invited to East Finchley to witness the filming of the boxing scenes for *Lieutenant Daring Defeats the Middleweight Champion* (August 1912).⁴ *The Bioscope* reported that, although Dick Turpin no longer operated there, the Great North Road still had 'its romantic associations, and not least among them [was] the fact that Newstead House, the studio of the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company, [was] to be found on its edge'.⁵ In August, W.G. Faulkner reported in *The Evening News* on a visit during which he watched the filming of scenes for *Robin Hood Outlawed*.⁶

In June the next year, filming *The Battle of Waterloo* in Northamptonshire was turned into an 'event' as O'Neill Farrell welcomed both the trade press and national and local newspapers to the shooting. Consequently, the film's production received not only detailed reporting in *The Cinema* but was also covered by, amongst others, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Evening News* and the *Northampton Daily Record* under such headlines as 'Waterloo Refought' and 'Napoleon Comes to Life'.⁷

In October 1913, the Walthamstow studio was officially opened, with the London press well represented. They watched filming of scenes from a big new drama for which, it was claimed, the acting was so realistic that 'even these disillusioned journalists were moved more than once to vigorous applause'.⁸ In December, another party of pressmen was there for the studio scenes of *The Life of Shakespeare*. This time, E. Davy Pain accompanied the journalists, collecting them at midday from Endell Street, taking them to the studio by car to watch an afternoon's filming and providing them with production information.⁹

The next visit came in July 1915 and was the idea of Davison the agent, who had concluded that little dinners and social gatherings had become a stale means of arousing interest and therefore decided on a trip round

the studios 'of those brands of films which he handle[d] and ha[d] been so successful in placing before the public'.¹⁰ A party of six reporters from the four London trade periodicals was collected by car one Friday at eleven o'clock for a tour that took in Cricks at Croydon, J.H. Martin at Mitcham and B&C at Walthamstow. There, according to *The Cinema*, they were 'welcomed by the genial Mr J.B. McDowell, the very popular managing director of this extremely go-ahead English concern', who briefly suspended work to show them, in the words of *The Bioscope*, 'a model studio ... worthy of the elaborate productions which are issued from it'.¹¹ There they watched Harold Weston filming *Society Crooks*. The next month, McDowell and O'Neill Farrell welcomed newsmen back to observe an Old Bailey scene for the Weston-directed *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*. Amongst those present were Fred Dangerfield, who did much to promote the studio in the pages of *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, and, once more, W.G. Faulkner, B&C's long-term friend from the *Evening News*.¹²

Openings and trade shows

Another promotional strategy, also primarily addressed to the trade, was special openings or, once the move into exclusives had been made, formal trade shows. B&C's first important opening was for *The Fairy Doll* on 28 November 1912, which had been produced as part of a Christmas appeal organized by the *Evening News*. The matinee was held at the Gaiety Theatre, which had been lent for the purpose, and was provided with a souvenir programme prepared by famous artists. It was attended by forty stage celebrities, including Harry Lauder, George Robey and Cecily Courtneidge.¹³ Next followed the special performance for exhibitors of *The Battle of Waterloo*, put on by Atlas-Ruffell's at the London Palladium on 8 July 1913.¹⁴ *The Life of Shakespeare* had its own private showing at a major West End cinema on 11 February 1914, attended by 'distinguished people'.¹⁵ These included George Bernard Shaw, Irene Vanburgh, the famous actress, Shakespeare biographer Sir Sidney Lee, and Sir Edward Elgar, who congratulated the conductor, Mr Penges, on the 'excellent setting he gave the picture'.¹⁶ According to *The Cinema*, 'many leading Shakespearean authorities were present and expressed great satisfaction and approval'.¹⁷ A year later, in January 1915, the Charles Hawtrey-Elizabeth Risdon romantic comedy *A Honeymoon for Three* was given a gala morning at the Shaftesbury Pavilion by its renter, the International Copyright Bureau. The film proved 'an uproarious scream from end to end', so Davison, as agent, looked properly pleased and 'several of the clever company engaged in the foyer afterwards receiving congratulations'.¹⁸ On 11 March, *Florence Nightingale*, another

major vehicle for Risdon, was given a special matinee by Ideal for members of the trade at, once again, the Shaftesbury Pavilion.¹⁹ Finally, another trade show there in January 1916 included B&C's controversial *Society Crooks*, and established a record for attendance with standing room only.²⁰ Other B&C exclusives received more modest trade showings.

One minor promotion to keep the company's name before the trade was the annual distribution—just like other commercial organizations—of Christmas gifts, such as a desk calendar, a booking diary and an ashtray presenting the company's title, along with John Bull and a 'sturdy colonial' grasping hands.²¹

Stunts

Attention was also gained by well-conducted publicity stunts. For example, in July 1913, the company released the actuality *The World's Smallest Car in the World's Largest City*, the filming of which constituted a publicity stunt in its own right. A miniature Cadillac was taken through some of the major thoroughfares in Central London that were contributing to the capital's traffic problems. But a boy of sixteen, without a licence, had been engaged to drive it, and was eventually stopped by a policeman at Marble Arch. The boy and B&C as his employer appeared in court at Marylebone where a fine of 2 guineas (an equivalent of £208 at 2019 values) was imposed, illustrating, according to *The Cinema*, the risks run by producers in their determination to provide unique films.²² Even so, B&C gained two moments of publicity, one in the streets and a second in court.

Other stunts were designed to promote particular films with the public, and followed the late nineteenth-century commercial precedent of having men, variously dressed up, parade through the streets to advertise a particular product. Such performances were used to promote film exclusives by B&C or its agents and renters. Thus, in September 1913, when *The Battle of Waterloo* was opening, *The Cinema* commented on how advertising could tax the ingenuity of both renters and cinema proprietors, but observed that Ruffell's Exclusives had cleverly engaged horsemen in old-time costumes to pass through London streets to draw attention to the film.²³ For the release of *The Master Crook* in December 1913, Davison sent cars with hundreds of balloons around London.²⁴ At every stop, the balloons, each bearing the name of the film, were released, with the public trying to catch them and passengers on buses making wild grabs for them. In August 1914, for *The Suicide Club*, an incident from the film was enacted in London's Coventry Street and Piccadilly, the actors

instructed in their parts by the film's director, Maurice Elvey.²⁵ At one o'clock one Wednesday, a man in evening dress, accompanied by two members of the National Reserve, appeared in Piccadilly carrying a tray of cream buns that he offered to people, presenting them with a card inscribed 'The Young Man with the Cream Tarts, Suicide Club, Box Court W'. He then declared the tarts poisoned and, at the arrival of a second tart distributor, dived into a taxi to avoid trouble. On one Monday the following month, performers were in Piccadilly again, this time for a stunt to promote the historical drama *The Loss of the Birkenhead*. Three old-time postmen of the 1840s appeared on horses, only to be mobbed by crowds receiving letters addressed to 'Everyman or Woman/Who admires/True British Pluck'.²⁶ The balloons, cards and letters were a novel variation on the leafleting characteristic of much standard advertising.

Visits to cinemas

One of O'Neill Farrell's more enterprising schemes was initiated at the end of 1911. This was the promotional tour of cinemas that was designed to introduce a popular performer to the public. In the *KLW*, Stroller asserted it to be 'one of the finest methods of booming a picture I have yet heard of', and *The Bioscope* agreed, concluding O'Neill Farrell was 'to be congratulated on this novel and effective way of still further popularising the B&C films'.²⁷ It was a strategy whereby the production company



Figure 11.2 Percy Moran promoting Lieutenant Daring outside B&C's headquarters in Endell Street.

The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 21 December 1911

would publicize its performers and films at the site of the public's encounter with them—the cinema—according to *The Bioscope*, therefore proving that 'audiences like to see the hero of popular films': an early manifestation of fan enthusiasm.²⁸ However, in its first use, it was 'Lieutenant Daring' who was presented rather than Percy Moran, for it was at that moment of vacillation in the Publicity Department about how best to exploit public interest in its performers.

The Daring tours were planned to accompany the release of the lieutenant's second adventure in December 1911. They lasted a fortnight and took in 160 London cinemas, from Chiswick to Ilford, Finchley to Mitcham.²⁹ A car decorated with bunting, the B&C trademark and Daring's name, and carrying a set of posters, took O'Neill Farrell, Daring, his orderly and, on one occasion, a representative from *The Bioscope* around the cinemas. At the end of a showing of the film, a voice announced, 'At your service, Lieut. Daring, RN', and the lights went up to an enthusiastic reception. At the Cambridge Circus Theatre, Daring was introduced by Montagu Pyke, the owner of one of London's most prominent cinema chains, who explained:

It speaks well for the British branch of the trade, when the public force upon the manufacturers, by their continued demands for 'Daring' films, the necessity of touring the hero himself, that their delight may be publicly expressed, and should be just the 'fillip' required to place British-made films on an equality with, if not advance of, the previously much boomed and advertised American productions.³⁰

The London tours ended in mid-January with a visit to the Poplar and Bromley Tabernacle, where a large crowd had gathered for its arrival. The 5.30 performance was attended by 800 children, and later in the evening, adults enthusiastically welcomed O'Neill Farrell, McDowell and Daring, who proclaimed his series to be 'British productions, by British performers on British soil'.³¹ The visits then ranged over an even wider area. In December 1911, Daring visited Portsmouth; early in 1912, he visited Brighton's Theatre de Luxe and gave a speech on 'The Life of a Cinematograph Actor'; in April, when the company was filming in North Wales, he visited Bangor; and in July, when filming took company personnel to France, there were visits to Boulogne's Kursal Cinema and to the principal theatres showing B&C films in Paris.³²

In subsequent years, other B&C performers visited cinemas—but this time as themselves rather than their screen characters. In September 1913, Ernest Batley was at the Walpole Picture House in Ealing to promote

The Battle of Waterloo.³³ And in April and May 1915, Elizabeth Risdon attended London showings of *Florence Nightingale*, where she made collections for the *Daily Telegraph's* wartime charity, King Albert's Fund for the Belgians. Her appearances took in the 2,000-seat Shakespeare Theatre at Clapham Junction, the King's Hall, Chelsea, where £10 was collected over three evenings, and the Palladium, Mile End, where £6 was taken in farthings and halfpence, which, *The Cinema* suggested, was 'not a bad sum for a somewhat poor district'.³⁴

Competitions

Another promotional strategy was to run a series of competitions designed to sponsor public awareness of the company and its films. Here, it was both taking a cue from recent developments in popular publishing and becoming directly involved in that particular field of cultural production. The pioneering mass-circulation periodicals were the weekly 'miscellanies' that combined stories, factual accounts, jokes and correspondence, and sold at a penny a copy. They had been developed in the 1880s by three ambitious media entrepreneurs. George Newnes's *Tit-Bits*, first published in 1881, had launched the project and provided the model for *Answers*, set up in 1888 by the twenty-three-year-old Alfred Harmsworth, and *Pearson's Weekly*, devised by the twenty-four-year-old Cyril Pearson in 1890. Their target audience, like that for B&C and popular cinema, was artisans and clerical workers, and a key strategy for building and sustaining their considerable readerships was regular competitions offering cash prizes. B&C took up this approach in 1912, at the moment its own production was undergoing expansion and when the MPSA became engaged in its energetic promotional initiative.

In March 1912, *The Pictures*—the MPSA's own miscellany weekly—opened a competition for its readers with the question 'Can you write scenarios?'³⁵ It offered prizes of 1, 2 or 3 guineas (equivalent to £104, £209 and £314) for the best original scenarios, and indicated the winning entries would in due course be filmed by B&C. Submissions were to be sent to the Publicity Department in Endell Street, where the company would assume the right to retain any interesting scenarios, 'for which payment on the usual scale will be made'.³⁶ The competition ran until early May and the results were declared in July. Two women and a man were the winners, but *The Pictures* regretted the 'scenarios submitted were not of a high standard; we certainly thought our readers could have evolved more original plots and better situations'.³⁷ The company therefore filmed only one story, *Autumn Roses* (released in October).

The next competition was associated with B&C's first two-reeler, *The Great Anarchist Mystery* (September 1912) and the *KLW* assured its showmen readers the usual 'considerable inconvenience and worry' to discover material on which to base advertising notices would not apply to this particular film.³⁸ The MPSA arranged the competition, which initial reports in the trade press misleadingly suggested would offer prizes amounting to the exaggerated sum of £5,000.³⁹ Showmen contacting the MPSA were supplied with slides to announce the competition in their cinemas and with novel billing matter—so this competition was organized at the point of exhibition. The task was to write an appropriate explanation for the anarchist villain's death in the locked room of an inn at the film's end. Harmsworth's *Evening News*, B&C's staunch ally, nominated the judging committee, and the true denouement of the story was withheld by its author, Silas Hocking, until the close of the contest.⁴⁰ The result was announced in March 1913, some five months after the film's release and towards the end of its period of circulation. The submitted essays were checked, and the MPSA awarded prizes of £25, £10, £5 and £2, with eight consolation prizes of £1 each—that is, prize money worth £50 in all—almost £5,000 in today's terms!⁴¹

A further competition was a return to scriptwriting, which was undertaken in conjunction with *Pearson's Weekly*. In August 1912, it became that magazine's turn to ask the question, 'Do you cinema?'⁴² This time the prizes were for the 'considerable sum' of £25, £15 and £5, and a 'novel tag' announcing the competition was added to the Lieutenant Daring films.⁴³ As *Pearson's* pointed out, large film companies were constantly on the look-out for new material, so the prizes would go to serious or comic plots best suited to working up into films. Submissions were to reach *Pearson's* by early October and the managing directors of B&C were to act as judges. The magazine carried an article by O'Neill Farrell providing scriptwriting advice to intending contestants.⁴⁴ In September, *The Pictures* drew its readers' attention to the competition, noting in passing that its own business knowledge had been acquired sub-editing for the *Pearson's* assistant editor.⁴⁵

B&C returned to the competition idea over two years later in November 1914, this time in association with *The Pictures'* successor fan weekly, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*. Its 'Ideas Wanted' competition offered a chased gold watch as first prize and twelve 'handsome books' as consolation prizes.⁴⁶ The task was to outline to B&C, in no more than one hundred words, an idea for a photo-play, because, as the producers pointed out, they were always on the look-out for original ideas and entry might lead to more than winning a prize. The deadline was 19 December, and the

judges were Maurice Elvey for B&C and the editor of *Pictures and the Picturegoer*. The results were announced by the magazine in January 1915, with the watch going to a seventeen-year-old woman.⁴⁷

One particular B&C film was involved in a second competition of 1914, but this time as the result of an initiative from the *Daily Sketch* newspaper. After overhearing a cinema discussion between a defender of cowboy films and someone hoping for 'something different', the *Sketch* became 'anxious to find a film that it could ask its readers' opinions about'.⁴⁸ It approached McDowell, and *The Midnight Wedding* was selected because it was already booked at 200 theatres, because millions were allegedly anxious to see it and because it was a 'big and important' film.⁴⁹ Prizes were set at £25, £5 and twenty at £1; *Daily Sketch* placards about the event were put into cinemas; entries were to be accompanied by six coupons from the *Sketch*; and the competition was run over a whole month to give the film time to circulate. The task was to tell the newspaper in three hundred words or less what the viewer thought about the film, in part as an opportunity to tell cinema managers what audiences wanted: 'You can criticise it, as the critics do in the newspapers ... what is wanted is your opinion.'⁵⁰ The *Sketch* claimed that thousands of entries were submitted from all classes and ages and from all parts of the country, and the winners were a woman from Liverpool and a man from Clapham. Despite a reference to the 'general excellence' of the responses and its promise to publish commentaries from the entrants, in the event, the newspaper printed only a few contradictory statements along the lines of: 'Will do much to encourage the revival of evergreen plays/Comedy is out of place in film drama/Great plays should be filmed because they are thus brought within the reach of the poorest/Great plays should not be filmed because the actor's best aid—the human voice—is lost.'⁵¹

The adoption of these prize-winning competitions aligned B&C and its promoters directly with the world of mass-circulation newspapers and magazines—an alignment that was developed in several other interesting dimensions.

INTERMEDIAL RELATIONS WITH CONTEMPORARY PRESS COMBINES

The twenty years beginning in the early 1890s had witnessed the growth of a popular press that constituted itself as a vital part of the urban commercial culture and leisure consumerism of late Victorian and Edwardian society. Central to this development were the new-style rival press magnates Newnes, Pearson and Harmsworth, whose networks of

ownership brought together national daily and Sunday newspapers, evening papers, women's magazines, comic papers and the weekly and monthly miscellanies. Together, the three had helped change the press from 'its traditional informative and interpretative role to that of commercial exploiter and entertainer of mass publics'—a project also taken up by cinema entrepreneurs.⁵² In fact, both Pearson and Newnes showed an early interest in cinema when they invested in the public flotation of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company in 1899, and gained representation on its board.⁵³

The Kinematograph Year Book suggested that 1913 was the year in which the national press began to report regularly on the cinema's achievements, whereas an advertisement in *The Pictures* for November 1911 had claimed several newspapers were even then regularly offering film news.⁵⁴ The reality during 1911–1913 seems to have fallen somewhere in between.⁵⁵ The flagship newspaper of Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press, the *Daily Mail*, seems to have largely ignored the cinema, as did its picture paper, the *Daily Mirror*, whereas *The Times*, as newspaper of record, would occasionally report on cinema matters as part of its routine journalism—including such productions of B&C as the *Waterloo*, *Vesuvius* and *Shakespeare* films. It was left to Harmsworth's *Evening News* to deal regularly with the film world. W.G. Faulkner began a weekly half-page in January 1912 that was sustained through the following years. It provided news and commentary about Britain, America and Europe, along with information about cinemas and forthcoming films. However, Faulkner and the *News* seem to have been particularly well disposed to B&C and frequently referred to the company, thereby providing it with valuable publicity. For their part, Pearson's papers took up cinema in a rather more desultory fashion, with the *Daily Express* briefly experimenting with a 'Cinema News' column in the autumn of 1911 and the *Evening Standard* offering a fitfully appearing Saturday item on 'Cinematography' from November that year. In neither case was much attention directed towards B&C. On this evidence, it seems production companies and their agents were initially able to make only limited use of the popular press for promotional purposes, and that B&C was particularly fortunate to have the favour of the *Evening News*.

Nevertheless, B&C was able to develop more specific intermedial involvements with this field of mass publishing, entertaining cordial relations with both the Harmsworth and Pearson combines and engaging with them in several mutual exchanges. This was another illustration of the company's deep integration in the domain of popular commercial culture during Period One.

Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press

Relations with Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press were intermittent over the years 1910 to 1913 but did involve several of the combine's publications. They began with the *Daily Mail* and the commission undertaken in 1910 for B&C to make *From Forest to Breakfast Table*, the film illustrating the production of the newspaper. W. Butcher and Sons, the agency contracted to handle its distribution, announced on its release: 'The Production of a great London Daily/Every Copy Booked for the First Week's Run/Showing at all the Best Halls During the Next Few Weeks/ See columns of the "Daily Mail" for Special Notices/The Publicity given to this Film will Simply pack any hall.'⁵⁶ McDowell's film, therefore, served to promote the *Mail*, whilst the newspaper provided publicity for the circulating film. The following year, in June 1911, B&C made a series of films of the coronation of George V, some of which received a novel form of distribution involving the patriotic *Mail*. The film-makers supplied six copies of each of its topicals to the Bush Cinema Company on the night of the coronation. The latter had arranged five tours, starting that night, to visit seventy-two centres—few of which had cinemas—for one night showings of the films at admission prices of 3s or less. The *Daily Mail* supplied the projection equipment and had the promotional *From Forest to Breakfast Table* included in the programmes.⁵⁷ Further, in September 1913, B&C were awarded the rights to film the end of a round-Britain Aerial Derby at Southampton Water as a topical. The competition was sponsored by the *Mail* as a form of self-promotion and to encourage the new phenomenon of aviation—an activity that also featured in several of B&C's concurrently released sensation dramas.⁵⁸

In the spring of 1911, another part of the Harmsworth empire made a direct input into B&C's fiction output. The comic strip adventures of two mischievous tramps, Weary Willie and Tired Tim, had been running in the press combine's *Illustrated Chips* comic paper since 1896. B&C transferred them to the screen in a four film comic series released between April and June.

However, it was with the loyal *Evening News* that B&C had its closest relationship. In the summer of 1912, the paper appointed the judging committee for *The Great Anarchist Mystery* competition, and its columnist W.D. Faulkner joined the farewell dinner before the Jamaican tour at the year's end. During the same year, B&C made two films in collaboration with the newspaper that were part of that paper's own publicity drive. In July, the *News* ran a series of articles on the dangers of modern street traffic in London. After reading them, McDowell, according to the paper,

‘with commendable public spirit, and with some degree of foresight, sent out ... operators to record those perils on the film so that they might be seen by all interested in London’s traffic problem’.⁵⁹ The film was ready in November, and showed the difficulties at such locations as Mansion House, Ludgate Circus, Trafalgar Square and the Elephant and Castle. The *News*, in campaigning mode, observed this was the cinema acting as a public service, and hoped the London Traffic Branch of the Board of Trade, police representatives and the London County Council would view it and that, as the film was of permanent and national interest, it would be kept in the library of the traffic authority. For its part, B&C offered to show the film to any interested representative of government or to the LCC at their Endell Street headquarters. It was released to the public in March 1913.⁶⁰ B&C’s own *The World’s Smallest Car in the World’s Largest City* reiterated the concern with traffic problems that July by returning to film in the same locations to give ‘an idea of the enormous amount of traffic that has to be contended with in some of the most congested centres of London’.⁶¹

In October 1912, the company began work on a film drama called *The Fairy Doll*, which was produced as a contribution to *The Evening News*’s second annual Santa Claus Fund appeal—another of the paper’s campaigning ventures. The Fund was used to buy 100,000 British-made dolls and 40,000 toys for poor girls and boys in London and the surrounding districts. Women readers were encouraged to volunteer to dress the dolls, and even Lieutenant Daring was said to have put himself forward to clothe twenty-five in sailor costumes.⁶² The film-makers approached the picture as a prestige production for, rather than use members of its own company, B&C recruited ‘first class artistes’ from the theatre.⁶³ The director was a well-known West End actor, Laurence Caird, and the other performers were taken from respectable theatrical backgrounds. The story was allegedly adapted from an event in the previous year’s campaign and represented the plight of a slum family living in Poplar, whose son happened to sell copies of the *Evening News*. In the film, the daughter plays with rolled rags passing as a doll, but dreams Santa Claus brings her a proper one and that a fairy transforms her surroundings into a cosy cottage. However, it is Lady Lyndhurst who leaves her a real doll and who, on receiving an illiterate letter from the child, arrives in time to stop the bailiffs ejecting the family and to secure a job for the father.⁶⁴ The film had its special matinee on 28 November and an Evening News Doll exhibition, displaying the dressed dolls, was held at Westminster’s Wesleyan Methodist Hall from 9 to 14 December.⁶⁵ In the latter part of November, the managers of London and suburban

cinemas were encouraged to show the B&C film at special matinees and hold collections to raise money for the Fund. Participating cinemas were duly listed in *The Pictures* and the *Evening News*, where readers were encouraged to attend performances. By the end of November, over £500 had been raised and the dolls were distributed to the children between 17 and 24 December.⁶⁶

Pearson's publications

B&C was closest to Pearson and his publications in 1912–1913, when it received coverage in *Pearson's Weekly*; like the *Evening News*, this magazine seems to have evidenced a certain partiality towards the company. Its attention to cinema topics was intermittent, but when it did broach them, B&C and its personnel seem to have been featured at the expense of other British producers. Thus, William Bool reported his adventures amongst the Arctic seal hunters in April 1912; in July 1914, Ethyle Batley described her work with B&C's child actors; the company was the only British firm named alongside American companies in an article on producers' trademarks; another item described how B&C filmed the Boat Race; and the company's work—such as the auction of *The Battle of Waterloo*—was referenced in other pieces on the world of films.⁶⁷ In August 1912, the magazine ran its film plot competition with B&C's managing directors as judges, and two of the company's lead performers of Period One were specifically featured in the weekly. At the height of his popularity, Percy Moran wrote an item about his life, and Ivy Martinek figured in a series of articles entitled 'Kings and Queens of Cinema', which otherwise considered American performers.⁶⁸

However, of most significance was the set of exchanges between B&C, the populist *Pearson's Weekly* and the upmarket *Pearson's Magazine* made in the summer and autumn of 1912. The Daring films had proved a great success throughout the year and Moran had been wildly received on his cinema tours, so in September, *Pearson's Weekly* announced: 'Frequenters of Picture Palaces all know Lieutenant Daring. He is probably the most popular of all cinematograph heroes. By special arrangement, we are able to narrate these new stories of his adventures.'⁶⁹ This was the first in a series of weekly short stories—usually illustrated—telling *The New Adventures of Lieut. Daring*. They ran through twenty-one episodes, concluding in September 1913. Characteristic titles were *Kidnapped: The Strange Disappearance of an Admiral's Daughter* and *A Fight to the Finish*. In the summer of 1913, one episode told of *How Lieut. Daring Defeated his Old Enemy, Haskheimer, the German Spy* and another of *How Lieut.*

Daring Saved the Life of the Prince of Wales. The final story—*Commander Daring: How Lieut. Daring, assisted by his Wife-to-Be, gained promotion*—was published shortly after Moran's last appearance as the naval hero in August. It gave the lieutenant promotion and married him off.⁷⁰ Early in August 1912, the month before the first Daring story in *Pearson's*, B&C's films were promoting the forthcoming magazine series at the same moment as they were drawing attention to the periodical's plot competition. As *The Bioscope* noted, 'A novel tag is being added to the B&C's "Daring" films, announcing the competition and inviting audiences to read the famous "Lieutenant's" life history in the pages of *Pearson's Weekly*, where it is shortly to appear.'⁷¹ In December 1912, *Pearson's* held its own promotional competition related to the Daring stories. In an echo of that summer's *The Great Anarchist Mystery* competition, *Pearson's* offered £10 for the solution to the mystery of their own story, *The Trafalgar Cup*. Readers were invited to provide an explanation for how the lieutenant communicated with a friend.⁷² There were thousands of entries, and the magazine suggested they had seldom run a more popular competition. The 400 correct ones were awarded with either a penknife or a pair of scissors rather than the 6d each would have received from a division of the £10 prize money.⁷³ Thus, Daring migrated from B&C's films to stories published in *Pearson's Weekly*.

The reverse journey was made at much the same time—also, presumably, 'by special arrangement'—by Don Q, the Spanish bandit. His stories, under the title *The Chronicle of Don Q*, had first run in the more prestigious monthly *Pearson's Magazine* between July and November 1903. They had been co-authored, with his mother, by Hesketh Pritchard, whom Pearson had dispatched to Patagonia in search of the giant sloth in 1900 and whose reports had gripped readers of the newly launched *Daily Express*. The initial Don Q stories had proved a notable success for the magazine, had been published in book form and had provoked successor series, so they were well-established narratives by the time B&C turned its attention to them. Nevertheless, in September and October 1912, the company was in the Peak District filming dramas featuring the Don for release the next year. Thus, B&C's Lieutenant Daring and Pearson's Don Q appeared in both written series and filmed series, with each circulating in two of the more popular cultural forms of the period—the miscellany publication and the short film drama (a constituent part of the cinema's own variety programme). In turn, the stories of their films were also running in *The Pictures* fan magazine where, in the case of Don Q, recognition of the original authorship and the complicated intermedial history of the tales was acknowledged in the claim that 'This story represents

our author's version of the original "Chronicle" by Hesketh Pritchard, as reproduced in photo-play form by the B and C company.⁷⁴

B&C's final association with Pearson was in spring 1914 and involved the making of yet another special film. In 1908, Cyril Pearson's sight had begun to fail, and by 1914 he had become completely blind. As a consequence, he campaigned on behalf of the blind and was appointed President of the National Institution for the Blind in 1913. B&C produced *The Drawn Blind* 'with the special object of assisting the fund promoted by ... Pearson for the benefit of the blind'.⁷⁵ As with *The Fairy Doll* for the *Evening News*, distinguished people were invited to lend their support by attending a special presentation of the film and special collections were made after cinema showings.⁷⁶ A Davison advertisement directly instructed exhibitors:

Everyone is Helping the Blind today. Do Your Share and help yourself as well by booking *The Drawn Blind*. The film that was specially taken to portray the sweetness and courage of a blind child—and to show her need for our help. After the show make a Collection for the cause.⁷⁷

The film was released in June, featuring Dorothy Batley as a child progressively going blind. Her flower-seller elder sister is prepared to sacrifice herself by going to Paris with a rich young man in return for money for an operation. But the child thwarts this plan by drawing the open blind that is to signal her sister's acquiescence. Fortunately, the flower-seller's coster boyfriend secures the money by answering an advertisement from a cinematograph company and diving spectacularly from Hungerford Bridge into the Thames whilst being filmed. The £75 so earned pays for the operation and a picturesque coster wedding.⁷⁸ The *KLW* felt the story had 'a good emotional punch' and would 'hit the sensitiveness' of many cinemagoers, so 'the loosening of purse strings' would be 'spontaneous and general'.⁷⁹ The thirteen cinemas of the Albany Ward Circuit certainly responded and raised over £148 for Pearson's fund.⁸⁰

B&C's modes of film distribution and its publicity methods clearly served to embed the company in the domain of commercial culture, align it with the new consumerism characterizing the period and encourage it to adopt those practices of advertising and promotion that were currently undergoing refinement in other fields of business and entertainment. These activities helped to sustain and expand company business until McDowell went off to France in the summer of 1916.

Conclusion: Godal, Aspiration and Bankruptcy—Period Three at B&C, 1918–1924

B&Cs re-emergence in Period Three coincided with the final years of British cinema's third decade. By this time, the cinema institution had become firmly bedded in, although its production side was going through one of its periodic crises, with the proportion of British-made films exhibited in the nation's cinemas estimated at only 10 per cent in 1923 and a pitiful 2 per cent in 1924.¹ However, unlike the situation in 1910, it was no longer European films that dominated British screens but those from the USA. Hence, it was the American market that Edward Godal, the new managing director at B&C, proposed to address in the immediate post-war years once production had been returned to the studio.

Godal, who was a captain at the war's end, replaced McDowell on the company's Register of Directors on 3 June 1918, entering himself as a 'cinematographer', whilst Frith, McDowell's co-director, was succeeded by Nigel d'Albion Beauvais Black-Hawkins, a 'merchant'.² McDowell had formally resigned six days before but was reappointed as a shareless additional director, thereby maintaining a somewhat tenuous association with the company he had once dominated. In turn, Godal and Black-Hawkins purchased all their predecessors' shares.³

Some two years later, in mid-March 1920, a special meeting of the company introduced modifications into its formal arrangements. The basic share capital was raised from £100 to £150 and each share, originally valued at £1, was converted into 20 shares each valued at 1s. It was also decided company directors should not number fewer than two or more than seven.⁴ Consequently, later in the year, Black-Hawkins was replaced by Frederick Lavy, a solicitor, and Arthur Beard, a cinematographer, was added to the list.⁵ Given his background, Black-Hawkins, a former major, was self-confessedly a learner in the film business, and during his time

in office, his main responsibility seems to have been to act as chairman at directors' meetings and at B&C's public dinners.⁶

By contrast, Godal, who was still only twenty-nine years old in 1918, already had several years' industry experience. He had been educated at the University of London and had worked as a schoolmaster for five years, but had also written stories for the film and stage and had founded the Victoria Cinema College in 1914, a pioneering venture preparing performers for film work.⁷ As he later explained, its training meant beginners would enter a studio 'with some elementary notions of what [was] required', and theatre professionals would realize they had 'a great deal to unlearn' before passing before the camera.⁸ The college was initially located in Bedford Street and then, from 1916, at 36 Rathbone Place, off Oxford Street. Godal was appointed its general manager in May 1915, and in 1916 became manager of an associated concern, The British Photoplay Film Company, where he produced four short comedies and two feature-length dramas; the last was released in December 1917, featuring the college's students and a late appearance of Ivy Martinek (under the name Montford).⁹ After 1918, the college operated in association with B&C, and its students gained real experience of studio work by becoming extras in company productions.¹⁰ One of its graduates, Christine Maitland, became a regular player for B&C, taking second female lead in most of the films of 1919–1920 and 'rapidly becoming famous as the British "vampire", a type of part until recently peculiar to American artistes and productions'.¹¹ From 1916, the college acted as an agency supplying production companies with performers—on one occasion apparently finding 100 artistes at twenty-four hours' notice—and as a source of training for other branches of the industry. Hence, during the war, it taught male and female cinema lantern operators how to project. Its scope was extended late in 1918 to provide training in other branches of the industry. An advert of 1920 claimed 'Six Years Continued Success', offered courses in 'Cinema Acting. Camera Work. Bioscope Operating, and all Branches of Cinematography' and presented the college as 'The only recognised Cinema Training Institute with Agency Department licensed by the LCC [London County Council]'.¹²

Period Three was a markedly different time from the exciting years of expansion and trade success under Bloomfield and McDowell in Periods One and Two, with Godal developing new directions in company policy, introducing new personnel and even making changes to the enterprise's physical amenities. Annual film production for 1919–1924 is laid out in Table 12.1, but the period can be broken down into three distinct phases—an early phase of optimism in 1918–1920, a dead, interim phase in 1921

and a final phase of pragmatism through 1922–1924, which ended in bankruptcy and closure.

Table 12.1: Annual Film Production, 1919–1924 (by date of trade show)

Year	Number of films	Total output (in feet)	Total duration (hours:minutes)
1919	4	22,200	6:10
1920	5	24,962	6:56
1921	1	5,818	1:37
1922	12 shorts	18,832	5:14
1923	2 features/18 shorts	47,766	13:16
1924	9 shorts	17,850	4:58

Duration has been calculated at 1 foot per second.

THE PHASE OF OPTIMISM: 1918–1920

In a series of speeches and interviews from early in Period Three, Godal developed a shrewd diagnosis of some of the problems currently facing the British production sector, and outlined the strategies his business was adopting to cope with them.

Godal on problems of production

He understood how, in the international film industry and in face of powerful competition from the USA, catering primarily for the British market limited the expenditure that could be made on films, thereby inhibiting their competitiveness. As he explained in February 1920, because America had some 20,000 cinemas to Britain's 3,600, '[o]ur revenue from the picture theatres if our markets only consist of Great Britain can only total about one-sixth of what it does in America if the producers only cater for the United States'.¹³ A good film there might gain a revenue equivalent to £500,000, whereas the most popular British film might bring in only £25,000. But, 'after having satisfied its own theatres, the U.S.A. ha[d] the rest of the world to exploit', whereas a British picture had 'a comparatively small revenue to derive from the rest of the world' if it did not include the USA and Canada.¹⁴ Outside these latter territories, the maximum income a British film might achieve would be £30,000, or an extra £5,000. In consequence, British producers were being compelled to base their expenditure on a maximum gross income of £30,000, which, after deducting

expenses of every kind, meant they could not afford to spend more than £3,000 to £5,000 on any one production, or 'at a great venture' up to £10,000, whereas the average US picture cost £20,000 to £30,000, and an exceptional picture £50,000.¹⁵ This situation had been further aggravated by the way costs of production had begun to rise above what could be expected in rentals.¹⁶ Moreover, because the American and Canadian markets were considered impossible to enter by home producers, British pictures were only expected to appeal to some 35 per cent of the world market.¹⁷ Thus, he concluded, 'Our catering for the home market with a haphazard possibility of some receipts from other territories has been the cause of the inertia so evident in our British manufacturers' policy.'¹⁸

The situation was further complicated by the introduction of the block-booking system that he associated with the latter years of the war. He maintained that uncertainty in England over the war's duration had led exhibitors to block-book US films up to a year ahead, 'for fear they [might] not have pictures to show their audiences', but by 1920, this arrangement was 'caus[ing] a British production to have its exhibition delayed for one year until the American bookings [had] expired'.¹⁹ And most significantly, this state of affairs was causing delays in the financial returns on British films 'for too long a period to make production pay'.²⁰ Furthermore, block-bookings allowed the USA to offer cheaper rentals than those that British films needed to charge.²¹

Godal also seems to have felt British attitudes to the American market were somewhat defeatist, observing how it was 'generally understood that America would not accept the British product because of some deep-set policy which they had evolved'.²² He refused to believe in this American hostility to British films, and when reproached for drawing on US resources in his own productions, charged his critics with 'lacking in broad-mindedness' and the sort of 'bold initiative' that had enabled British art and commerce to 'gather what [was] best from all corners of the world'.²³

Herbert Brenon, who directed B&C's first Period Three production, spoke alongside Godal at the film's trade reception to draw attention to another problematic area—sources of film finance. He declared British producers must both 'interest their bankers' whilst at the same time trying to 'understand their artists a little'.²⁴ The industry, he maintained, 'would move forward as soon as they had interested the bankers', but he allowed that 'they could not do that until they had got ... great artists in their films'.²⁵ At the time, Godal was consciously working at the latter aim.

Even as late as January 1923, by which time company policy had changed dramatically, Godal was still worrying away at the problems of production expenditure and international markets, but this time

implicating the exhibitor. He reasoned the latter should realize 'his duty to his patrons' by making a more careful selection of the films he would show—an indirect thrust at block-booking—and by adopting a preference for meritorious British films.²⁶ These would attract the larger audiences that would allow an exhibitor to pay higher rental prices for the British films he booked. In turn, this would mean producers could spend more on making their productions competitive in foreign, particularly American, markets. A potentially 'beneficent circle' might thereby be completed, because selling British films in America would in turn facilitate price reductions to British home exhibitors.²⁷

A final problem was less about external markets than internal structures. Right from the start, Godal maintained that pictures had been unsuccessful in the past because of 'too much overlapping of the various branches of the business'.²⁸ Instead, he proposed, each branch of production should stick to its own responsibilities: directors to making films, managers to business and actors to acting. In other words, the specialized division of labour under way in Periods One and Two should be more firmly entrenched. At B&C, he declared in July 1918, 'the business organisation will be something entirely apart, quite outside the province of the producer [that is, the film director], who will be left to devote his whole attention and energy to turning out the very best films'.²⁹ Consequently, throughout Period Three he functioned as business leader, as when he travelled to America to make distribution deals, and head of production, determining which pictures were to enter production and who was to work on them. He left it to the talent grades actually to make the films.

Godal's strategies for success

In answer to the problems he identified, Godal adopted a broad policy response and a series of facilitating strategies, each of which expressed his initial optimism. His ambitious new policy in July 1918 stated:

[B&C] shall cater not for English audiences alone, but for the *whole world*. To do this, with any measure of success, a theme with a universal appeal is an absolute *sine qua non*. This is the secret of the success of the American film, and there is no reason why the British-made film should not emulate it in this.³⁰

This was still his position at the start of 1921, essentially the end of Period Three's opening phase. Even then, he continued to be 'convinced that the salvation of the manufacturer [lay] in his getting every ounce

possible from the world's markets', especially the American.³¹ The challenge was devising the appropriate strategies.

The centrepiece of Godal's response was the claim that 'to obtain the revenue possible from the world ... we must remember the world point of view when we think of producing and cater for such in the consideration of our stories and the other essentials of production'.³² Pictures would only sell if they met 'the demands of the theatres in the various lands', and would only be profitable if the money was spent 'on more careful consideration of story, producer, and cast to meet individual territory needs'.³³ But it was really America he was thinking of, and he decided to test the alleged American prejudice against importing British films by giving them pictures 'which would be in many respects similar to their own', with recognizable familiar features, cut and edited as they were accustomed to see.³⁴ He maintained British producers should 'study American psychology' and remember that, as the films would be shown to a different type of audience, they 'should be thoroughly edited and titled for the American angle by someone who really understands what is needed'.³⁵ Research in that direction was undertaken by Brenon at the start of 1919. He had been put under contract with B&C the previous November, and had travelled to the USA with several scripts on which American opinion was to be sought. He was also to ascertain the types of story that would appeal there, and (possibly) to negotiate the sale of the American rights to the films he was about to direct.³⁶

Further, there was a particular financial incentive associated with sales to America. In contrast to the block-booking revenue delays in Britain, Godal claimed 'the release dates in America are immediate, giving a quick return for capital'.³⁷ Therefore, he reasoned, selling in the USA would mean:

we shall then be able to overcome one of the greatest difficulties presented to us at the moment. We shall be able to get an immediate cash return from the U.S.A. market which will help us to await the time of release of a British-made product in this country, and thereby get some compensation from them for the difficulties they have caused us.³⁸

This would mean 'the problem of tying up large sums of money in production [would be] made far less acute'.³⁹

Given his comments on American production expenditure and his intention to break into the US market, it followed that Godal would declare that 'We must spend more money on our films so that we may stand a chance of equal competition'.⁴⁰ Consequently, for his first film,

he declared, 'we spent more money on the picture than is usually spent in England, feeling it might be a good gamble'.⁴¹ But heavy expenditure would not be enough. To reach the proposed American standard, it was necessary British producers should learn 'from the American methods'.⁴²

To this end, B&C 'brought over an American staff who could cut, edit and photograph as they [did] in America'.⁴³ Consequently, in February 1919, Brenon claimed Godal had so transformed Walthamstow that it equalled '90 per cent. of the best American studios'.⁴⁴ For example, George Fitch, who had worked on Brenon's films in America, was appointed technical director responsible for designing and supervising the sets for *A Sinless Sinner* in 1919.⁴⁵ And Alfred J. Moses, who had passed the last five years at Thanhouser in the USA, was made head of the photographic staff, and was responsible for most of the principal photography in 1919–1920.⁴⁶ Where more than one camera was used for a scene, he took the 'first negative', and the second was taken by Roseman, who had been with the company since 1913 and was probably less than happy with this arrangement—especially as there were at least two other American cameramen present.⁴⁷ Further, in April 1920, after a visit to America, Godal returned with some of the latest studio lighting equipment, which was installed under the supervision of Moses.⁴⁸

But it was American or American-experienced directors—some of 'the very best producers obtainable'—that Godal believed would be most likely to fulfil his plans for orienting scripts and direction towards American tastes.⁴⁹ As matters turned out, five directors worked on the nine films made in 1919–1920. First came Herbert Brenon. He had been born in Dublin in 1880 and educated at King's College, London, but in his teens had moved to the USA. There he had appeared in vaudeville before working as a writer and director at the IMP studio in 1912. In 1915, he was working for William Fox and with such eminent female stars as Theda Bara, Nazimova and Annette Kellerman. Consequently, when Godal brought him back to England, he seemed the most appropriate man to help take on the American market with the sort of female-led star vehicles the company was proposing to produce. Brenon himself explained how he 'had come back to his home to help to move the Industry forward a little'.⁵⁰ He was engaged to direct a series of films that would be known as the B&C–Herbert Brenon Productions and would be 'produced on a scale of lavishness hitherto only associated with the super-productions of America'.⁵¹ His association with the company seems initially to have attracted the desired American interest, for Godal could claim in May 1919 that, 'When it was known that Mr. Brenon was going to produce British films with British artists and scenery, the American press began to be most considerate.'⁵²

But Brenon made only one film before moving on, and his departure seems to have been an early setback for Godal's plans as most of his successors were directors of lesser stature. James McKay had been chief assistant on Brenon's big American features and had come to Britain in the same capacity, so he was appointed Brenon's replacement in mid-1919. He was also to have stayed long term, but returned to the USA because of a family illness early in 1920 and so directed only two pictures.⁵³ His successor was George Edwardes-Hall, another of Brenon's associates, who came to England and B&C in July 1919. He had worked as a scenarist and director in the American industry, and directed three films for B&C before falling ill whilst making his fourth.⁵⁴ Completion of that film was undertaken by William J. Humphrey, another import with experience of the American industry, especially at Vitagraph.⁵⁵ The final incomer was George Ridgwell, who arrived in the summer of 1920 to direct the last two of the phase one films. Like Brenon, he was of British extraction, having been born in Woolwich in 1870, but had joined Vitagraph in the USA as a writer before moving over to direct short films in 1915.⁵⁶ On joining B&C, he wrote an article recommending directors to pay close attention to the scripting process, because time, money and labour might be saved by removing unnecessary scenes from a script before work began on the floor.⁵⁷ As the average number of scenes in a standard five-reel film was 140, an overlong scenario should be cut to that number. Such an efficient approach was likely to have recommended him to Godal.

Policy at B&C, therefore, was to tailor films to American tastes by employing American personnel. Nevertheless, a number of subordinate strategies were also adopted. In 1918, Godal declared he would keep up 'a continuous supply' of films so exhibitors would not fear that shortages might interfere with their business.⁵⁸ And a run of films did succeed one another on the floor at Walthamstow, but it was a matter of one film at a time rather than the multiple concurrent productions of the studio's earlier years. Godal also proposed 'to film principally books by well-known authors', because their popularity was evidence that such stories met the public taste.⁵⁹ He also looked to successful plays, and in April 1920 was credited with having read over 100 books and seen every play in London in search of material.⁶⁰ This was a continuation of Period Two policy, and seven of the first nine Period Three films were taken over from either novels or plays. Godal was also at pains to cooperate with the organizations distributing his company's films. So, for example, a particular 'collaboration' between B&C, as producer, and World Film Renters, a new distribution company, was proposed in 1919.⁶¹ As cinema exhibitors were the interpreters of public demand and because they

were associated with the renter, the latter should be able to interpret to the producer the type of film that would meet popular favour, thereby strengthening the industry.

A final (minor) strategy was a plea for greater industry cooperation. Basically, it would appear, Godal wanted others to adopt the policies he was following. He was reported as urging 'that producing companies should work together for the betterment of the British film Industry as a whole. They had to forget all their prejudice, and put out films equal to those of any country in the world.'⁶² Nigel Black-Hawkins took up this theme in January 1920, arguing that, whilst the industry was an excellent business proposition for exhibitors and renters, there was little profit in it for producers. But, as the cinema business now covered the entire world, home producers should combine for the good of British pictures. If they organized together in common cause, combination should be of value—but only if the society was restricted to 'serious producers who [were] out to do good work'.⁶³ Similar ideas were circulating elsewhere, but at the time, producers failed to establish any joint organization comparable to the Kinematograph Renters' Society or the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association.

Films and production, 1918–1920

Godal took over in June 1918, but was at first unable to occupy the B&C studio as International Exclusives held the lease there until October.⁶⁴ As Brenon did not arrive back from America before the following February, it was not until March 1919 that the first film got onto the floor at Walthamstow, restoring B&C to production after a lay-off of almost three years.⁶⁵ In the meantime, work had been under way on physical reorganization. Reporting on this, the *KLW* recalled that B&C was 'originally one of the *pioneer companies* in film manufacturing', and observed that its large studio was still one of the best equipped in the country.⁶⁶ The Endell Street processing plant was improved to almost double its working capacity, so the new management felt able to guarantee all work placed with them would be delivered on time. According to *The Cinema*, the 'efficient staff' there already had its hands full—an observation that confirms the supposition that processing work for outsiders had helped the company successfully negotiate its fallow period.⁶⁷ At Walthamstow itself, the old Court House next to the studio building had been acquired for extra space and had undergone conversion.⁶⁸

The pictures of these first two years were presented to the public as 'Superfilms' or 'Superproductions', notable for their expense and lavishness,

and their 'social portraiture' placed them decisively upmarket, inhabiting wealthy and aristocratic worlds. So, for example, the daughter of a suicidal sculptor was adopted by a lord in *Twelve-Ten*; *The Black Spider* presented the denizens of fashionable Monte Carlo; and *A Gamble in Lives* was centred on a ship-owning family.

The films were also conceived of as 'star' vehicles, featuring attractive female leads from theatrical backgrounds who had gained some experience in America. Marie Doro starred in the first two releases. British-born, she had starred in musical comedy in America before taking leading film roles there at Famous Players-Lasky in 1915. She signed a long-term contract with both B&C and Brenon, the latter explaining that she had been engaged 'because she was one of the greatest kinema artistes in America, and because she ha[d] divided her career between England and America, and ... [was] beloved by the public of both countries'.⁶⁹ In *Twelve-Ten*, her first British film, she had to spend a creepy midnight vigil in the bed-chamber of a dead man, and in *A Sinless Sinner* she played a woman with a dual personality. But, her proposed film series failed to develop.

Next was José Collins, the daughter of an English music hall star. A child performer in musical theatre, she had gone on to success in London and New York, had first appeared in pictures in 1916 and, whilst filming for B&C, was nightly starring in the highly successful musical *The Maid of the Mountains* at Daly's Theatre.⁷⁰ She was said to 'photograph well' and made two films for B&C.⁷¹ In *Nobody's Child*, she was singer in a Corsican café chantant who becomes a star of opera, and in *The Sword of Damocles* she played a woman who accidentally shoots the man who has bigamously married her. Yvonne Arnaud had also taken leading roles in musical comedy until damage to her vocal cords led her to concentrate on acting. She was French-born, and made her first film appearances for B&C as the lead in two films taken from stories by Balzac, *The Magic Skin* and *The Temptress*, where she played an adventuress.⁷² Malvina Longfellow played the ruthless ship-owner's daughter in *A Gamble in Lives*. Born in New York, she had been on stage since 1909, had married a British officer in 1916 and had begun a career in films in 1917. Irish-born Unity More had just left the dance stage before becoming the love interest for rival smugglers in the period drama *Queen's Evidence*. Finally, Lydia Kyasht starred in *The Black Spider*, a crime drama set in Monte Carlo. She was a Russian-born ballet dancer who had worked with Diaghilev and had been principal dancer at the Empire Theatre, where Unity More had appeared alongside her. Studio publicity presented her as the queen of ballerinas in London and 'one of the most famous dancers in the history of the stage'.⁷³

Thus, Godal's strategy was to release films foregrounding their female stars—women in their early thirties, by and large, with already established reputations on stage and screen. The aim, it would appear, was to promote a sense of glamour and stylishness. Consequently, how they were dressed was regarded as a matter of considerable import. Even the 'typical' B&C crowd of extras on *Nobody's Child* were reported to be 'irreproachably gowned, and looking as though they'd spent their lives doing nothing but wander round from reception to reception'.⁷⁴ But it was the stars who were most carefully turned out. The gowns worn by the leading ladies in *The Magic Skin* were expected to appeal to the female public, with Christine Maitland's 'ultra-fashionable frocks' having been specially designed for her and her character.⁷⁵ Similarly, she and Doro wore Parisian model gowns in *Twelve-Ten*.⁷⁶ When Kyasht was recruited for *The Black Spider*, she was said to have the reputation for being 'the best dressed woman on the stage' in America and on the Continent, and Maitland, as co-star, was claimed as 'own[ing] the same reputation in home film-land'.⁷⁷ Their gowns had been designed by Madame Merci, the same designer who had dressed B&C leads at the end of Period Two. The significance of stylish dress to these productions was revealed when Godal deplored the delay faced by the British release of *A Sinless Sinner* owing to block-booking. Great expenditure had been incurred in 'providing the most fashionable and up-to-date dresses', but in a year's time, he complained, they would look comparatively old-fashioned.⁷⁸

If costumes were intended to contribute an expensive look to the production values of these US-oriented films, so too were their big sets. For *Twelve-Ten*, sets were laid out on the studio floor to represent the old mansion in which the action was located, and they allowed consecutive scenes to be taken in their proper sequence. There was an Elizabethan bedroom, an oak-panelled room with a real wood wainscot and a library set lined with real books.⁷⁹ Later in the year, the American George Fitch prepared 'particularly lavish' sets for *A Sinless Sinner*, including a large ballroom and the interior of the China Town restaurant where the heroine goes astray, fitted out with real Chinese furniture.⁸⁰ On *Nobody's Child*, the work of 'art director' Willie Davis was praised for marking 'a distinct upward leap for British production and stage-craft'.⁸¹ His gorgeous queen's reception room stretched 'through lofty pillars to a vista of marble staircases and balconies' and was 'magnificently furnished ... [with] stately candelabra and statuary giving ... [a] sense of dignified splendour'.⁸² *The Temptress* attempted to outdo *A Sinless Sinner* with even grander sets. Its interior for a fashionable West End house was 50 feet long by 25 feet wide, with careful furnishing and a hall visible through an archway at the far end.⁸³ For *The Black Swan*, the whole studio was used to replicate the

lounge in a Nice hotel, complete with pillars, tessellated floor, staircase, and cane tables and chairs.⁸⁴ Some of this décor was likely to have been the work of T. Hartley West, the resident studio manager, who had an expert knowledge of furniture and periods of decoration.⁸⁵ In similar fashion, Godal had the interiors on *A Gamble in Lives* designed by one of London's best-known furnishing experts.⁸⁶

As with sets, so with location filming. In both, there was a shift upmarket to complement the wealthy worlds of the storylines. There was the 'unique spectacle' of a polo match at the fashionable Hurlingham Club in *A Sinless Sinner*, the country estate of Lord Lambourne was used for the squire's property in *The Temptress* and Chirk Castle near Chester provided exteriors for *Twelve-Ten*.⁸⁷ A team went to Paris in spring 1919 to film the prologue for *Twelve-Ten*, and returned with Black-Hawkins at the year's end for *The Magic Skin's* location work, including shots of the Arc de Triomphe.⁸⁸ For *The Black Spider*, a company went to the South of France and Monte Carlo. There, as Kyasht knew the Prince of Monaco, they gained unique access to film in the casino gardens.⁸⁹

The American market and the home market

Thus, Godal's strategy was to make expensive super-films designed to penetrate the American market, and on that front he had some initial success, claiming, in January 1922, that B&C 'were the pioneers in selling pictures there'.⁹⁰ In January 1919, Brenon, presumably on the strength of his reputation and that of Doro his star, had begun negotiating there around the American rights to the films he was about to make, and by early April had sold those to the still-incomplete *Twelve-Ten*.⁹¹ As a consequence, the film played over the following Christmas and New Year holidays at the Capitol, New York, the largest cinema-theatre in the world, the first British film to be shown there.⁹² Shortly afterwards, it was appearing in every theatre on Broadway in 'a great triumph' for B&C.⁹³ At that moment, Godal visited the USA to sell his other pictures. *Twelve-Ten* had been acquired by the Republic Pictures Corporation, for whom it was, apparently, a 'phenomenal success', and *A Sinless Sinner*, *Nobody's Child* and *Queen's Evidence* were then sold 'at record prices' and on 'even more advantageous terms'.⁹⁴ Godal subsequently claimed that several of these films had recovered more than their costs of production from the USA alone—rather as he had hoped.⁹⁵ In all, seven of the nine films made in 1919–1920 went to America, and at the start of 1921 he claimed the first four had gained 'good results' and the others were gleaned 'favourable reports'.⁹⁶ He put their success down to their tailoring, editing

and titling to American tastes, but seems to have been faced with diminishing returns from this market subsequent to the first four releases.

After a trade show in August 1919, the Lionel Phillips Company undertook to act as B&C's sole export agent for markets outside the USA, Canada and Britain.⁹⁷ It gained a measure of success, for in July 1920, *The Cinema* reported that, in pursuance of Godal's wide-ranging marketing aims, the greater part of the company's output had 'been disposed of in every country of the world'.⁹⁸

Regarding the home market, there was the problem Godal was acutely aware of, securing a distributor and gaining a release. In July 1918, he claimed to have 'concluded arrangements with some of the largest distribution agencies' to handle the company's films, but nothing concrete seems to have been settled until April 1919.⁹⁹ Then, in what was reported as one of the largest deals in the industry, World Film Renters were credited with having acquired the UK rights to the anticipated Herbert Brenon series.¹⁰⁰ This was a new British company with, it appears, big business backing and agents in eight British cities. It took up *Twelve-Ten*, which garnered good bookings in the provinces and, in one retrospective view, proved 'one of Britain's really big successes of the period'.¹⁰¹ World Film Renters also took on *A Sinless Sinner*, but that was the only other B&C film it handled, perhaps because the Brenon series it had contracted for was not forthcoming. Five other phase one films were acquired by the Butcher's agency in July 1920. *Nobody's Child*, which had been trade shown in October 1919, went 'exceptionally well', while the other Butcher-purchased films were *The Magic Skin* and *The Temptress*, both made in 1919, *The Black Spider* and *The Sword of Damocles*.¹⁰²

But the difficulty producers and distributors of British films faced remained the block-booking arrangements. At the moment World Film Renters associated themselves with B&C, there was a six- to nine-month delay between the end of production and a film's British release, but the release of *A Sinless Sinner*, which was trade shown in August 1919, did not happen until August 1920, a whole year later.¹⁰³ In December 1920, *The Cinema* observed that Christmas exhibition programmes across the country would include B&C super films, but these, it turned out, were all films made back in 1919, and Butcher's new year releases for 1921 included films made early in 1920.¹⁰⁴ *A Gamble in Lives*, trade shown in November 1920 and acquired by Pathé, took well over a year to get a release, appearing during 1922. Clearly, British distribution was far from unproblematic.

Interestingly, just as the films in America had been re-edited for that market, so too were some films scheduled for British release. World Film Renters re-edited *A Sinless Sinner*, and two of the Butcher's-handled films

were also altered.¹⁰⁵ *The Magic Skin* had originally been shown as *Desire*, but was reduced from a five-reel to a four-reel film to bring the story closer to the Balzac original.¹⁰⁶ *The Black Spider*, whose trade show in May 1920 was held, it was later claimed, under rather 'disadvantageous conditions', was 'completely revised' and re-edited by its new owners to tell its story 'much more clearly'; it was released in July some 700 feet shorter than the first version.¹⁰⁷

These re-editings, however, may have been indications of a deeper problem, for trade press reviews—addressed to exhibitors who might book the films—were less favourable to the later productions of 1919–1920, perhaps because the succession of journeyman directors after Brenon proved less competent. The *KLW* found *Twelve-Ten*, the first post-war production, a 'powerful and original drama, which [sought] to create an unusual atmosphere', and it struck *The Cinema* forcibly for its 'love of originality'.¹⁰⁸ The *Weekly* found *A Sinless Sinner* 'extremely clever and well produced' and the story of *Nobody's Child* a 'strong dramatic one', with José Collins's performance rising to 'a high pitch of tragic power'.¹⁰⁹ *Queen's Evidence* proved 'another of the strong dramatic "features" which [were] bringing the producing company rapidly to the fore'.¹¹⁰ The *KLW* could not decide if the original version of *The Magic Skin* was a melodrama or a problem play, but nevertheless felt it was 'one of the best we have seen', and *The Cinema* found it 'quite uncanny', with its strong cast and striking production.¹¹¹

But thereafter, review comment became more hostile. For the *Weekly*, the scenario of *The Black Spider* was unbalanced and its characters 'stagey'; certain of their relations were 'essentially unreal' and the hero's attempted suicide was perilously near funny—though after its re-editing it did look a better prospect for exhibitors.¹¹² One reviewer observed that the incidents in *The Sword of Damocles* failed to carry out their promise, that the director's 'mania for close-ups' marred the film and that, whilst the acting of the male lead was 'merely bad' in ordinary scenes, it was 'painfully grotesque' in the close-ups.¹¹³ On the other hand, *The Cinema* decided it was 'powerful romantic drama' and 'a notable British production'.¹¹⁴ The two periodicals also disagreed over *A Gamble in Lives*, the latter finding the acting 'decidedly good' and the storm scenes 'realistically thrilling', whilst the former saw the characterization as weak and the story a strictly conventional production with an old melodramatic plot.¹¹⁵ But both were agreed in rejecting the last film in this run, *The Temptress*, which had had its trade show delayed until November 1920, even though it had been on the floor at Walthamstow in October 1919. The *Weekly* decided there was no sense in describing it as a 'super' production and decreed its denouement 'feeble',

whilst *The Cinema* castigated it for offering 'a weak and unconvincing story, somewhat crudely produced and not too well acted'.¹¹⁶

So, whilst this initial phase of optimism began ambitiously and probably reached its moment of greatest success with Godal's visit to America in January 1920, there seems, nevertheless, to have been a falling off in the quality of the films produced and increasing difficulties in realizing the returns on them.

1921: AN INTERIM PHASE

Given the company's high production costs, declining returns from America and delayed income from the home market causing cash flow problems, B&C entered a time of crisis towards the end of 1920. Filming at Walthamstow had begun in March 1919, but the last of the super-productions was shot there in September 1920. The company had been in occupation for eighteen months, during which time they had produced nine films totalling some thirteen hours of drama. During the next eighteen months—until March 1922—B&C was absent from the studio and made only a single film, and that away from the UK.

In November 1920, the trade press carried this notification: 'STUDIO TO LET/The "B&C" Studios at Hoe Street, Walthamstow are now VACANT pending preparations for the next "B&C" PRODUCTION.'¹¹⁷ As enticement, the advertisement drew attention to the building's possession of Britain's largest floor space, its enormous stock of modern settings and its up-to-date array of lighting. In the meantime, staff at the studio were busy renovating the scenery stocks.¹¹⁸ This was a return to the strategy adopted late in Period Two when the company had earlier fallen on difficult times. So, other production companies came to occupy the Hoe Street premises. Granger-Bingham productions were there in October and November; Astra Films were present in January and February 1921; and Thompson Productions were there the following December.¹¹⁹

Complementing this rental income, B&C won a contract for special work with the Army Council in December 1921.¹²⁰ Experiments had been under way at various military centres in training army recruits by film. This had proved so successful that the Council wished to place it on a more permanent basis, to which end professional cameramen were employed to film different phases of military training at Aldershot, Chatham, Seaford and elsewhere, under the direction of Captain Rodd of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. But such activity was far removed from the commercial film-making Godal was committed to.

In June, company debts to the value of £4,000 were cleared when two debentures from March 1914 were satisfied in full, but in mid-September, shortly after the year's one feature film was trade shown, a new debenture was arranged with John Barrett Leonard, a gentleman, which provided the company with £1,000. It was repaid in mid-March 1924, just before the company's final moments.¹²¹

The difficulties of 1921 also provoked changes with respect to the company's management and shareholding. Two Extraordinary General Meetings of the Board in August altered the Articles of Association to have Godal named permanent director (rather than managing director), entitled to hold office as long as he possessed no fewer than 500 company shares and with power to appoint ordinary directors.¹²² As a consequence, the number of B&C shareholders was increased to seven. At the end of the year, 2,275 of the company's 3,000 shares had been taken up, though, as each share was valued at only 1s, some individuals' holdings were essentially nominal. Godal had 1,535 of the shares (51 per cent); Arthur Beard, a cinematographer, and Martin Crawley-Boevey, a retired major, each had 225 shares (7.5 per cent each); Nigel Black-Hawkins, formerly company chairman but now living in Morocco, held 200; another cinematographer, Harold Burningham, had fifty shares; and Frederick Lavy, the solicitor, and J.B. McDowell, referred to as a cinematographer, each had twenty—worth, that is, £1. The company's directors were Godal, Beard, Lavy and McDowell.¹²³ Even so, these changes seem to have had negligible impact on actual production during this somewhat dead phase.

At the end of 1920, Godal was anticipating making films outside Britain in the new year. As he explained, 'During 1921, we propose to produce to a great extent abroad, and we are now busily preparing a program [*sic*] whereby the most interesting and beautiful parts of the world will be put before the audiences, thereby adding to the usual entertainment value of the pictures an additional artistic and educational value.'¹²⁴ The proposal was over-ambitious as no film-makers left the country until May, and only one film resulted from its overseas experience. By this time, company personnel had changed yet again, with several of the Americans having retreated home. At the start of the year, Moses was still chief cameraman, but it was the ever-reliable Roseman who was to shoot the new film. George Ridgwell also began the year as top director, but Frank Hall Crane took responsibility that summer. He had had stage and film acting experience in the USA before taking up direction but this was his sole venture with B&C. The glamorous female stars of the earlier films were also dispensed with, as two of the new leads went to juveniles still in their teens.¹²⁵ Cosmo Gordon Lennox, an author and

playwright, prepared the scenario and was under contract for more stories, but his sudden death in August put an end to that project and represented yet another aggravation for the beleaguered producer.¹²⁶

A B&C company left for the continent early in May 1921 and returned in mid-July, after having filmed in Italy and the Austrian Tyrol.¹²⁷ Whilst away, a large travelling circus was engaged for a month, as *The Puppet Man* was a circus story.¹²⁸ Its proprietor was a well-known wrestler and in the cast was Harry Paulo, 'England's oldest living clown'.¹²⁹ No studio was used, and travelling motor generators and lighting installations accompanied the circus as it moved. The film was edited and titled back in England in August, and trade shown on the 24th.¹³⁰ Unfortunately, it was not well received. The *KLW* found the circus scenes 'cheap and tawdry ... small and cramped', with the actual turns presented being either too short or just uninteresting.¹³¹ The acting was 'mediocre and stereotypical', with the juveniles too immature for the demands of their parts, and the pivotal role of the puppet man, whose early injuries in a tent fire had unbalanced his mind, was too much like the conventional villain of melodrama.¹³²

As ever, home release was delayed—until August 1922. The autumn and winter of 1921–1922 therefore represented a particularly barren time in the fortunes of the company, with no production in prospect.

A PHASE OF PRAGMATISM: 1922–1924

The phase of optimism in 1919–1920 had been consciously oriented towards America, but in the end had met with only limited success, so, after the dead year of 1921, when company production had proved 'rather slack', a less ambitious phase of retrenchment set in, with production pragmatically reoriented towards a particular segment of the home market.¹³³ This involved another major policy rethink, but the twenty-four month production programme from March 1922 to March 1924 resulted in some twenty-three and a half hours of film—in contrast to the thirteen hours produced in the first eighteen months.¹³⁴ But most of the films were shorts rather than features—thirty-nine short films to only two feature-length pictures.

Proposing a short film policy

As in the case of his earlier pro-America policy, Godal offered an insightful industry analysis to justify his change of direction. In May 1923, over a year into the new policy, in an article headed *The Short Film Specialist*, he

announced that 'the apparently gilt-edge eight-reel super ha[d] proved commercially disappointing' and that the 'creation of the great spectacular super-film was an amazingly short-sighted mistake ... a monster that *must* kill the film industry that gave it birth'.¹³⁵ As his own recent super-productions had been five-reelers, there was clearly an element of self-criticism here. The problem with the big films, he claimed, was that for the exhibitor to get back the prices he had to pay for renting them, he was compelled to raise his seat prices, and this had the effect of frightening away patrons with only limited money for their amusements.¹³⁶ This situation had been compounded by the way exhibitors regarded the short films in their programmes as 'fill-ups', to which the public responded with fidgeting, impatience and 'sub-conscious resentment' at having to view films without artistic or entertainment value.¹³⁷ To win back lost patrons, he maintained, the answer was 'to exhibit a feature film of *reasonable* length, supported by short films, which ... equal it in technical perfection and artistry'.¹³⁸ He claimed that he 'foresaw this demand many months ago'—that is early in 1922—and went on to assert that 'an enormous public demand exists for the *feature* short film', that the public wanted 'a program full of variety, each item of which is an example of quality instead of quantity' and that through the short film the public could be led gently back into 'only demanding what can commercially be given them in return for the small price they have paid for their seats'.¹³⁹ Therefore, production at Walthamstow had been turned over to making one- or two-reeler films—but in series, such as 1922's twelve-film *Romance of History*.

In this, B&C seems to have won the backing of its distributors. Thus, Incorporated British Renters (IBR), a company formed in mid-1922 from six pre-existing regional rental houses, recognized B&C's enterprise in entering this 'entirely new field' and undertook to purchase and release the *Romance of History* films as its first offering.¹⁴⁰ IBR's new company secretary believed 'the day of the shorter film had arrived', and concurred with Godal that the public now wanted more shorter films and more British films alongside the big, sensational pictures.¹⁴¹ When the series was due to be released, IBR observed that room for short films might readily be found in cinema programmes, even though the features had been booked months ahead.¹⁴² The Regent Film Company, which released B&C's second series, appears to have collaborated closely with the producer when their E. Gordon Craig joined with Godal to formulate 'a scheme for supplying the large unsatisfied demand for short good features'.¹⁴³ Similarly, when working with Walturdaw, much of the initiative seems to have rested with the distributor. The *KLW* reported in April 1923 on how exhibitors had been voicing a demand for good shorts

'to balance their programmes' and how, in response, Walturdaw had 'contracted with the B and C Film Co. to make a series of short plays founded on famous classics by well-known writers'.¹⁴⁴ This was the company's third series, the twelve *Gems of Literature* films.

Godal, it appears, made a sensible strategic move in going over to shorts, for the *Daily Mail* felt there was undoubtedly a public for short films at a time when features were being padded out to last one and a half hours and 'over-elaboration [was] rampant', and *The Cinema* congratulated him 'for so courageously tackling this problem of the two-reeler'.¹⁴⁵

New lines of production

Work recommenced at Walthamstow 'after months of idleness', and five series were produced before bankruptcy closed the business in spring 1924. Godal produced them all, but direction was shared between several men. George Ridgwell took a three-month break from directing Sherlock Holmes adventures for Stoll to return and take responsibility for six of the *Romance of History* pictures. Three of the *Gems of Literature* series were made by Edwin J. Collins, a British actor and director for Cricks and Martin in the 1910s. But most of the films were directed by another British man, Edwin Greenwood, who was only twenty-six years old when he took on several items in *The Romance of History*. Prior to this, he had had some experience as a stage actor and director, and had worked as an art director at Ideal in 1919–1921.¹⁴⁶ In 1924, the veteran Thomas Bentley undertook direction of the *José Collins Dramas*. Born in 1880, he had toured music halls with impersonations of Dickens characters before taking up film direction in 1913 and specializing in adaptations of Dickens's stories.¹⁴⁷ The key figure in these years, however, was Eliot Stannard, who returned to B&C in 1922 to script all the company's late films. He shaped that output by implementing ideas he had first formulated in Period Two and basing his scenarios either on adaptations of novels, plays and poems—the *Gems of Literature* series—or on historical biography—as in *The Romance of History* and *Wonder Women of the World* films.

In the second half of 1923, he did script two features, both directed by Greenwood—*The Audacious Mr. Squire*, starring Jack Buchanan and adapted from a stage play, and *Heartstrings*, featuring a young Victor McLaglen and based on an Elizabeth Gaskell novel. These were the only features produced at this time, but they encouraged Godal into yet another new venture. As *The Cinema* reported in October, B&C, 'one of the oldest producing companies in the country', was 'developing a renting side to its business', so that, in addition to its production and printing works, it

was in the position to distribute its own pictures and those of others it deemed worthy of exploitation.¹⁴⁸ *The Audacious Mr. Squire* was a comedy drama, without intertitles and featuring Buchanan as a gentleman crook, while *Heartstrings* was about a sailor, apparently lost at sea, who commits suicide after returning to find his wife contentedly remarried. A review of the former suggested it erred in using the artificialities of the stage rather than the scope of the screen, but comment on the latter decided it had 'poignant power and grip'.¹⁴⁹ But it was the shorts that were now the mainstay of B&C production.

The first and most thoroughly developed series was *The Romance of History*. It was to be of films 'visualising epoch-making events in the world's history'.¹⁵⁰ The plan was for six one-reel films and six two-reelers, to be produced at the rate of one a fortnight. Each was to be made with all the care of a full feature film and each was to be built around a prominent 'star' performer.¹⁵¹ Malvina Longfellow returned to appear in three of them and recognized theatre names, such as Lonsdale Maitland, Dennis Neilson-Terry and Gerald Lawrence, also took part. The one-reel *Mary, Queen of Scots* was completed first in mid-March, just as the second film was being cast.¹⁵² This was completed as *The Great Terror* by the end of the month.¹⁵³ Its subject was the French Revolution, and it turned out to be the only film not based on British history. Thereafter, production seems to have flagged, only to be resumed in the latter part of June after IBR had undertaken the task of distribution.¹⁵⁴ Significantly, they purchased the series with only two films completed, but their involvement seems to have provided B&C with the resources to carry on. Therefore, from late June into August, the studio was busy on three films featuring Henry VIII and his wives—the trade press being invited to witness work on the first.¹⁵⁵ By mid-August, the initial six subjects were ready for a trade screening.¹⁵⁶ At the same moment, George Ridgwell assumed responsibility for the last six pictures. First, he directed *The Flight of the King*, 'a series of breathless escapades and sanguinary encounters between Ironsides and Royalists' that illustrated 'the flight from England of the hapless Charles II', and then, early in September, he was editing *The Story of Nell Gwynne*, number eight in the series.¹⁵⁷ He kept the studio operating into early October with two films set in the reign of Edward I, the one-reel *The Last Crusade* and *The Last King of Wales*, a two-reeler.¹⁵⁸ By early November, he had completed the final two films, each set in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, *The Story of Amy Robsart* and *Sea Dogs of 'Good Queen Bess'*.¹⁵⁹

The first six pictures were given their trade show by IBR at the New Gallery Kinema in Regent Street on 11 October—over eight months after the project had been initiated. Advertisements describing the series

appeared in the trade press in the first week of the month, when it was indicated that 'a number of representative public men' were to be present at the event because it was 'of particular importance, in view of the distinctive character of the pictures ... that the opinion of British men who count should be obtained'.¹⁶⁰ So, following the trade show, the renters entertained a luncheon party at the Café Royal at which there was 'some exceedingly plain speaking regarding the influence of imported films purporting to show British history' from Hilaire Belloc, the writer, the historian Sir George Aston and Clement Edwards, MP.¹⁶¹ IBR felt the films were 'big enough in their ideas to pay for special exploitation', which was why they provided a poster for each episode.¹⁶² Its publicity declared the one- and two-reelers to be 'FEATURES carrying lavishness of setting and publicity equal to any Five- or Six-reel productions', and offered them as 'Entirely Novel! Original! Tensely Dramatic! and Purely British'.¹⁶³

From the beginning, the *Romance...* project, with its bias towards Tudor and Stuart subjects, had claimed an aspiration towards historical 'truth'. In March, the decision to produce the series was set against recent press discussions debating the 'possibility of representing authentic historical events on the screen', with B&C maintaining that its films would be 'reconstructed from actual records of the period' and that every effort would be made 'to ensure accuracy and avoid irrelevance'.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, in June, the films were characterized as 'not founded on the highly coloured fiction of the imaginative novelist, but on the actual facts contained in official records and supplied by authoritative sources, and with the assistance of British Museum officials'; they would, it was believed, have 'a direct educational value'.¹⁶⁵ Later, in September, the *KLW* reported: 'The research work carried out has been most elaborate and painstaking and we are assured that the solecisms of some alleged historical pictures have been sedulously avoided'.¹⁶⁶ Such a claim appears to have pleased Hilaire Belloc, for he was reported as concluding that history might be 'taught to a point by fiction, but the teaching was better by such films as these just seen, which took authentic episodes'.¹⁶⁷

Responsibility for the research fell to the redoubtable Stannard, who, it was claimed, conducted 'exhaustive searches at the British Museum, and from private memoirs in the possession of noble families'.¹⁶⁸ He declared in a foreword promoting the films:

These films are authentic history and nothing but authentic history. Every situation and every detail is true. History is a record of lives of men and women, inspired by the same virtues and vices as heroes and heroines of fiction. Just as gripping, just as enthralling, just as

dramatic, with only this important difference—truth is stranger than fiction.¹⁶⁹

Actors were, in part, chosen for their physical resemblance to the historical characters they were to play, and care was devoted to ‘the selection of suitable settings and the provision of accurate and artistic costumes’.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, whilst most scenes were set in the studio, some were filmed at the actual spots where the historical events had originally taken place.¹⁷¹ B&C was so confident in the films that it offered a challenge ‘for anyone to prove that they present an error or an anachronism’.¹⁷²

However, whilst the company and its distributor promoted these claims to historical authenticity, reviewers drew attention to their preoccupation with romance. Already, in June, it had been conceded the series would display ‘the dominant force which today, as always, makes the world go round—Love!’¹⁷³ So the films gave audiences the uxorious entanglements of Henry VIII, the ‘Royal Blue Beard’ according to *The Cinema*, Charles II’s encounter with Nell Gwynne, ‘the little orange vendor who ensnared a royal heart’, and Mary Queen of Scots and the murder of her lover, Rizzio;¹⁷⁴ that is, according to *The Cinema*, films ‘portraying passages that contain some love interest’ and that deal with ‘the intimate lives of great figures of history’.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, the *KLW* understood them as films ‘dealing with the romantic side of history ... which do not pretend to delve deeply into the subject except so far as it affects the romance under consideration’.¹⁷⁶

The reception awarded *The Romance of History* encouraged ‘more of the same’, for the two follow-up series were both oriented to historical costume subjects. *Wonder Women of the World* took up the idea of ‘reincarnating in screen form the romantic incidents in the lives of the world’s most famous women’, with the intention of revealing ‘Woman’s all-powerful influence over the vicissitudes of men’.¹⁷⁷ This time, the plan—agreed on by Godal and the distributor—was primarily ‘to entertain—not to teach history’, so for each episode ‘romance’ was undoubtedly to be ‘the key-note’.¹⁷⁸ Each story would be woven round a ‘star’ character in history, and the lead in each would be the most suitable English female star, including, once again, Malvina Longfellow.¹⁷⁹ Stannard was again credited with much preparatory research—for example, to find the appropriate press for pamphlets printed during the French Revolution—but the emphasis fell on making history ‘entertaining by emphasising its human side’.¹⁸⁰ The six films centred on such women as Madame Recamier and Empress Josephine, Lady Jane Grey and Charles I’s wife, Henrietta Maria. They were advertised by the Regent Film Company as ‘A series of supers in 2 reels’ and as ‘Five-Reel Stories in Two-Reel Star Features’, thereby picking

up on Godal's plan to raise the profile of the short film and make their production values comparable to those expended on longer features.¹⁸¹ The *KLW* decided they were actually 'worthy of exhibition at any hall not merely as fill-ups, but as important attractions'.¹⁸² Its reviewer maintained there was 'a dignity and a sense of tragedy in each which [could] not fail to interest any audience', though another comment in the magazine, whilst allowing the films did not 'pervert historical occurrences out of recognition', nevertheless felt the title was not a particularly happy one as the male parts often proved the most dominant.¹⁸³

Further, given the 'enormous success' of *The Romance of History*, Godal was reported in December 1922 as proposing to spare neither effort nor money to surpass it with a *Gems of Literature* series. This the trade press somewhat coyly remarked would be 'an attractive "pot-pourri" of the better known works from the pens of Dickens and Shakespeare and of classics which ha[d] become universally famous', the whole forming 'a series of dainty delves into those treasures of the bookshelf which have made the greatest appeal to the public'.¹⁸⁴ The project would have appealed to Stannard's taste for adaptation, and the twelve two-reelers used the original authors' own words in many of the intertitles. Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and a film featuring *Falstaff, the Tavern Knight* were both items, and Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* appeared as *Scrooge*, starring Russell Thorndike, who starred in several further 'gems'. Other pictures were taken from plays and stories by Sheridan, Goldsmith, Balzac and Elizabeth Gaskell, and three poems were turned into films. When the first four were trade shown early in May 1923, they were declared to be 'perfect program balancers', although *The Cinema* was only prepared to concede the photography of these 'potted stories' to be 'satisfactory' and their settings 'adequate'.¹⁸⁵ However, Walturdaw, as distributor, issued an advertisement selecting comments from the London press that variously found them 'technically perfect ... produced with artistic skill ... film masterpieces in miniature ... [and a] welcome contribution to programmes'.¹⁸⁶

By January 1923, the three series were being credited as 'primarily responsible for reintroducing the costume play generally' into British production, with historical novels and several of B&C's own two-reel subjects being turned into longer feature films by other producers.¹⁸⁷ But the next series—made up of modern melodramas—was to be quite different, with commentary in *The Cinema* arguing there were considerably more possibilities in the new line than the historical series, because in the latter the huge events of history had had to be fitted into 2,000 feet of film, whereas the new films had 2,000 feet into which to fit a story best suited to that capacity.¹⁸⁸ José Collins was brought back for these

pictures, along with Arthur Wonter, her co-star from the Gaiety, where they were still playing to capacity audiences. Based on original scripts by Stannard, *The José Collins Dramas* were designed to 'show the romance, versatility and emotional power of these artists in the settings of various nations, and to deal with modern life'.¹⁸⁹ Further, it was Godal's object to demonstrate British-made films could reach or surpass 'in intensity, passion and fundamental drama those intimate studies of feminine psychology hitherto associated with America and the Continent'.¹⁹⁰ Thus, female performance was once more privileged, and his concern with international standards remained intact. The films were again said to have 'been prepared with the same care and thought that is usually directed upon the preparation of a five-reel feature', and they were advertised as 'wonderful SHORT FEATURES' or as each a "Super" Film', further evidence of Godal's aim to raise the status of the short film.¹⁹¹ Heavily trailed in January 1924 and still being filmed at the start of April, they were to be released at three week intervals from the end of the latter month. Collins was given 'opportunities for the widest range of emotional acting' in the different characters she played in the six pictures, appearing, for example, as a Sicilian beauty, a Russian adventuress and an American 'voluptueuse'.¹⁹² The first three of these 'tabloid melodramas' were trade shown at the end of February, with *The Cinema* understanding them as 'tend[ing] towards a new line in two-reel subjects' and suggesting they showed 'considerable promise'.¹⁹³

B&C's last, three-film, series was billed as *The Pett Ridge Comedies* and was trade shown towards the end of April 1924. It was taken from the work of W. Pett Ridge, a writer from the Cockney School of British Realism who had been writing humorous stories and novels of London life since the start of the 1890s. The *KLW* found them 'on the whole pleasant if not striking pictures' and felt the drawing power of the author's name should fill the better-class theatres, even though his comedy was of a type that was dying out.¹⁹⁴ *The Cinema* suggested they provided pretty good fun and got well away from 'the ubiquitous slap-stick'.¹⁹⁵ But this was faint praise for the company's last films!

The end of British and Colonial

The early 1920s had proved a difficult time for B&C as a business, but even so, the end came quite suddenly in April 1924, a month during which production was still under way. In March, a declaration of company share ownership indicated McDowell was no longer a shareholder, his shares having been transferred to Godal. So the key figure from B&C's

most creative years had finally severed any connection with the company.¹⁹⁶ On the 18th of that month, the 1921 debenture was paid off, but a new one for £1,000 was created with Gabriel Brenner, a merchant of Cazenove Road, Stoke Newington.¹⁹⁷

Just over a month later, on 29 April, Brenner, presumably because he wanted the debt repaid, moved against the company under the conditions of the debenture agreement, appointing the chartered accountant Isaac Levy of Levy Hyams and Co., Chancery Lane, as receiver, with powers to take possession of the business on that day.¹⁹⁸ Next, on 2 May, Henry Morgan of Capel House, New Bond Street, was appointed company liquidator, the figure appointed to take over control from the directors and to wind up the affairs of a bankrupt company by ascertaining its liabilities, determining its assets and paying off its creditors.¹⁹⁹ B&C's creditors and the receiver met with the liquidator on 19 May.²⁰⁰ The latter explained it had been too difficult to prepare an exact statement of the complex affairs of the business, and impossible to form a reliable estimate of what its assets were likely to produce. Nevertheless, his statement gives some sense of how things currently stood with the company, whose share value remained at a nominal £150, and how its finances were arranged. Various unsecured creditors—trading accounts, certain loans and advances—were owed £6,937, Barclay's Bank was due the £3,082 it had loaned out and a Bradford syndicate was creditor for £7,200—the latter having undertaken to provide money for certain films on a profit-sharing basis.²⁰¹ The sum of £1,511 was owed to several preferential creditors. B&C's assets were valued as follows: plant and machinery at £1,299, furniture and fittings at £697, stocks of positive and negative film and stage properties at £955, cash in the bank at £1, cash in hand at £4 and debts on the company's books at £715. The Endell Street lease had nine years to run, so the liquidator was of the opinion a considerable sum might be raised on that. On the other hand, he was unable to form any opinion of how much most of the films of 1919–1924 might realize—though Godal, characteristically, opined it should be a very considerable sum. It also appeared the company had interest to the value of £4,863 on films produced by other syndicates—perhaps these were a consequence of its recent move into distribution. On the 19th, the liquidator thought a sufficient amount to repay the debenture holder might soon be realized, thereby allowing the receiver to go out of possession. The matter, therefore, was left in his hands. But there it remained, and the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company ceased operations from that date.²⁰²

But, just as the company's growth in Period One had been part of an expansion in British film production, so its failure in Period Three was

part of something broader. B&C had been in difficulties throughout most of its late period revival, despite the initial optimism, but its problems were symptomatic of the wider malaise in a British production sector trying to cope with post-war American competition and block-booking arrangements. In the 1920s, before legislation to address the matter in 1927, America supplied up to 90 per cent of the British exhibition sector.²⁰³ It was unsurprising, therefore, that there was a depression in British production through 1924–1927, with the lowest point coming in the winter of 1924–1925. B&C's receiver was appointed in April 1924; another was appointed to the company's long-term rival, Hepworth, in June; and in November, every British studio was dark, all production having ceased.

This was the close of British cinema's third decade and the end of an era, as the last of the old producers of the early years then went out of business. Production only revived in the 1930s as a consequence both of the quota arrangements of the 1927 Cinematograph Act, requiring exhibitors to show a proportion of British-made films, and of the arrival of a new cohort of producers and production companies into the industry in the late 1920s, replacing B&C's pioneer generation. This represented a new, more positive phase in the history of British cinema but one that should not be allowed to obscure the work of earlier film-makers.

This book has been designed to retrieve and reinstate the contribution of one important production company and its personnel who had fallen out of the historical account. To gain a fuller understanding and appreciation of how British cinema developed in its second and third decades—particularly in the second—it has been worth exploring the activities of Bloomfield and McDowell as company directors, of the actors Ivy Martinek, Percy Moran and Elizabeth Risdon, of Oceano Martinek, Maurice Elvey and Harold Weston as directors, and of Eliot Stannard the scriptwriter. Similarly, studying the films they made and the cultural resources they drew on clarifies something of the origins of later traditions and developments in the national cinema. B&C became a major player in the British cinema industry between 1908 and 1916 and remained a minor player from 1919 to 1924. The foregoing has been a rediscovery and reappraisal of what the company did, who did it and how it was done.

Notes

Chapter 1. Introduction: Rediscovering British and Colonial

- 1 Fred Dangerfield, 'Birthplaces of British Films: No.1, The House of Hepworth, No.2, The London Film Company, No.3, The British & Colonial Film Company', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 23 May 1914, pp. 320–22, 6 June 1914, pp. 66–68, 27 June 1914, pp. 426–28 and 4 July 1914, pp. 444–45, 438; and 'Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films', *The Pictures*, 1 November 1913, pp. 99–104, 124.
- 2 Cecil Hepworth, *Came the Dawn: Memories of a Film Pioneer* (London: Phoenix House Limited, 1951). For a recent full account of Hepworth's early years, see Simon Brown, *Cecil Hepworth and the Rise of the British Film Industry* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2016).
- 3 Each of these one-volume histories references London Films and enthuses over Hepworth, but George Perry and Roy Armes ignore British and Colonial, Charles Oakley offers only a couple of passing references and Ernest Betts gives the company one short paragraph consisting of three major errors! In fact, early British cinema as a whole is poorly—and often incorrectly—covered in these general histories. See C.A. Oakley, *Where We Came In: Seventy Years of the British Film Industry* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964); Ernest Betts, *The Film Business: A History of British Cinema, 1896–1972* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973); George Perry, *The Great British Picture Show* (London: Paladin, 1975); and Roy Armes, *A Critical History of British Cinema* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978).
- 4 Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1906–14* [1948] and *The History of the British Film 1914–18* [1950] (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1973).
- 5 These journals are to be found in the Newspaper Library of the British Library.
- 6 For a good example of the sort of detailed work that can be done on a particular company, see Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film*

Enterprise: The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897–1915 (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999).

- 7 Some of the research generated by the British Silent Film Festivals is to be found in the six books that published papers presented at the weekend events. See Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *Pimple, Pranks and Pratfalls: British Film Comedy Before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000); Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *The Showman, the Spectacle and the Two-Minute Silence: Performing British Cinema before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2001); Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *Crossing the Pond: Anglo-American Film Relations Before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2002); Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *Scene-Stealing: Sources for British Cinema Before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2003); Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon (eds), *Picture Perfect: Landscape, Place and Travel in British Cinema before 1930* (Exeter: The Exeter Press, 2007); and Michael Hammond and Michael Williams (eds), *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Jon Burrows' books are *Legitimate Cinema: Theatre Stars in Silent British Films 1908–1918* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2003) and *The British Cinema Boom, 1909–1914: A Commercial History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), dealing with the pre-First World War boom in cinema-building. Michael Hammond's study of the exhibition and audience reception of wartime films is *The Big Show: British Cinema Culture in the Great War 1914–1918* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2006).
- 8 See, for example, the entry in Brian McFarlane (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of British Film* (London: BFI/Methuen, 2003) and the BFI Screenonline website (<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/>). The entry on the Wikipedia website (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_and_Colonial_Films) is full of quite serious errors. Articles on aspects of the history of B&C by the writer that appear in the foregoing volumes and various journals will be referenced at appropriate points in what follows.
- 9 The table is produced from data in Denis Gifford's catalogues, checked and adjusted against my own filmographies compiled from the trade journals of the period. See Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973); *The British Film Catalogue: Volume 2: Non-Fiction Films 1888–1994* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000); and *British Animated Films 1895–1985: A Filmography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co. Inc., 1987).
- 10 See the filmographies in Pam Cook (ed.), *Gainsborough Pictures* (London: Cassell, 1997); Karol Kulik, *Alexander Korda: The Man Who Could Work Miracles* (London: Virgin, 1990); Allen Eyles, Robert Adkinson and Nicholas Fry (eds), *The House of Horror: The Complete Story of Hammer Films* (London:

- Lorrimer Publishing Ltd); and Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Cameron and Tayleur, 1977).
- 11 Low, *History of the British Film 1906–14*, pp. 92–94.
 - 12 See Gifford, *British Film Catalogue 1895–1970*.
 - 13 See André Gaudreault and Phillipe Marion, ‘A Medium is Always Born Twice’, *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3.1 (May 2005): 3–15; André Gaudreault, ‘The Diversity of Cinematographic Connections in the Intermedial Context of the Turn of the 20th Century’ in Simon Popple and Vanessa Toulmin (eds), *Visual Delights: Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19th Century* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), pp. 8–15; and André Gaudreault and Phillipe Marion, ‘The Neo-Institutionalisation of Cinema as a New Medium’ in Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple (eds), *Visual Delights: Two: Exhibition and Reception* (Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2005), pp. 87–95. Some of Gaudreault and Marion’s propositions have been subjected to critique and qualification in a special edition of *Early Popular Visual Culture* 11.2 (May 2013).
 - 14 Deac Rossell has suggested a similar delay between invention and institutionalization. Having discussed the international creation of the technologies making possible animated pictures, he notes how, in 1896, ‘no definitive patterns had been established, and many questions remained unanswered’; consequently, ‘the remaining years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth would be devoted to answering these questions’. See Deac Rossell, *Living Pictures: The Origins of the Movies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 133, 134.
 - 15 The first few years of British cinema have been covered in meticulous detail by John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England*, Vols 1–5 [1976, 1983, 1988, 1992 and 1997] (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998). Rachael Low’s first volume, written with Roger Manvell in 1948, dealt with the decade of 1896 to 1906 in ninety-nine pages, whereas Barnes’s five volumes cover the years 1894 to 1901 in 892 pages of text and illustrations, an indication of how far research into early British cinema has begun to progress since the late 1940s. For the first decade, see also Christopher Williams (ed.), *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future* (London: University of Westminster Press, 1996); Stephen Herbert and Luke McKernan (eds), *Who’s Who of Victorian Cinema: A Worldwide Survey* (London: BFI Publishing, 1996); Vanessa Toulmin, Simon Popple and Patrick Russell (eds), *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004); Frank Gray, *The Brighton School and the Birth of British Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); and Ian Christie, *Robert Paul and the Origins of British Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

- 16 The crisis of the mid-1920s was followed by the Cinematograph Act of 1927, which contributed to a qualitative change in the structure and fortunes of the British film industry in the 1930s.
- 17 Early British cinemas have been carefully investigated by Nicholas Hiley and Jon Burrows. See Nicholas Hiley, 'Nothing More than a Craze: Cinema Building in Britain 1909–1914' in Andrew Higson (ed.), *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain, 1896–1930* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2001), pp. 111–27; and Jon Burrows, 'Penny Pleasures: Film Exhibition in London during the Nickelodeon Era, 1906–1914', *Film History* 16.1 (2004): 60–91. See also Nicholas Hiley, 'The British Cinema Auditorium' in Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (eds), *Film and the First World War* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), pp. 160–79; 'Fifteen Questions...' in Daan Her Togs and Nico De Klerk (eds), *Uncharted Territories: Essays on Early Non-Fiction Film* (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997), pp. 105–18; and 'At the Picture Palace: the British Cinema Audience' in John Fullerton (ed.), *Celebrating 1985: The Centenary of Cinema* (London: John Libbey and Co. Ltd, 1998), pp. 96–103; and Jon Burrows, *The British Cinema Boom, 1909–1914: A Commercial History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
- 18 On British film censorship, see James C. Robertson, *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896–1950* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); and Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality, 1909–1925* (London: Routledge, 1988).
- 19 The terms are those of the 'cultural materialist' perspective developed by Raymond Williams and given a first schematic formulation by him in 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', *New Left Review* 82 (1973): 3–16. See also Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) and *Culture* (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1981).
- 20 An account of this domain of popular publishing can be found in E.S. Turner, *Boys Will Be Boys* [1948, revised 1957] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975); Louis James, *Fiction for the Working Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974); Peter Haining, *The Penny Dreadful* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1976); Peter Haining, *Terror! A History of Horror Illustrations from the Pulp Magazines* (London: Souvenir Press, 1976); Victor E. Neuberg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); and Kevin Carpenter, *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics: English Periodicals for Children from Victorian Times to the Present Day* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983).
- 21 On nineteenth-century theatre history and stage melodrama, see George Rowell, *The Victorian Theatre, 1792–1914* [1956] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Michael R. Booth, *English Melodrama* (London:

- Herbert Jenkins, 1965); Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967); Michael R. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850–1910* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Gavin Weightman, *Bright Lights, Big City: London Entertained 1830–1950* (London: Collins and Brown, 1992); Glynne Wickham, *A History of Theatre* (London: Phaidon, 2000); Jonathan Law, *The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre* (London: Penguin, 2004); Kerry Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); John Earle, *British Theatres and Music Halls* (Princes Risborough: The Shire Press, 2005); and Rosalind Crone, ‘The “Blood-Stained Stage” Revisited’, chapter four in her *Violent Victorians: Popular Entertainment in Nineteenth-Century London* (London, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).
- 22 On the music hall, see Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *British Music Hall* (London: Gentry Books Ltd, 1974); Roger Wilmut, *Kindly Leave the Stage: The Story of Variety 1919–1960* (London: Methuen, 1985); Peter Bailey (ed.), *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986); J.S. Bratton (ed.), *Music Hall: Performance and Style* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986); Richard Anthony Baker, *British Music Hall: An Illustrated History* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2005); and Nigel Fountain, *Lost Empires: The Phenomenon of Theatres Past, Present and Future* (London: Cassell Illustrated, 2005).
- 23 See *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 8 (1995), p. 787 and Raymond Williams, ‘The Growth of the Popular Press’ in his *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), pp. 173–213.
- 24 Titles listed in note 21 are also relevant here.
- 25 Rowell, *The Victorian Theatre*, p. 103.
- 26 On the New Drama, see Jan McDonald, *The ‘New Drama’ 1900–1914* (London: Macmillan Modern Dramatists, 1986) and essays by Peter Raby, Cary M. Mazer and Sos Eltis in Kerry Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*.
- 27 McDonald, *The ‘New Drama’*, p. 1.
- 28 See Part Three of John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London: Routledge, 1988) and Judith Flanders, ‘Penny a Line: Books and the Reading Public’, chapter five in her *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007). Still useful are ‘The Growth of the Reading Public’ and ‘The Social History of English Writers’ in Williams, *The Long Revolution*, pp. 230–45.
- 29 *Sixpenny Wonders: 6d Gems from the Past* (London: Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press, 1985). All comparative monetary values throughout have

been taken from the website measuringworth.com, where 2019 values were the latest available at the time of writing. As a general rule, 6d in 1910 would translate to about £2.50 today; 6s to approx. £31; £1 to about £103.

Chapter 2. The Bloomfield Years: Period One at B&C, 1908–1912

- 1 'J. B. McDowell Joins the B. & C. Company', *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* (hereafter *KLW*), 3 February 1910, p. 715. See also 'The Advancement of B&C', *KLW*, 21 September 1911, p. 1137 and 'The Enterprising B&C: Some Facts about the Popular British Company', *The Pictures*, 14 December 1912, p. 11.
- 2 Several reports suggest B&C had been founded some eight months before moving to premises in Denmark Street early in February 1909. For example, 'Famous Film Makers of the World and their History: The British and Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.', *Evening News*, 20 November 1913, p. 10. Neither British and Colonial nor A.H. Bloomfield is listed in the *Kelly's Directories* for Twickenham at this time.
- 3 'Famous Film Makers of the World and their History', p. 10.
- 4 See 'Rapid Progress of B and C', *Film Censor*, 17 December 1913, p. 8; 'Mr J.B. McDowell', *The Cinema*, 8 January 1914, p. 81; Fred Dangerfield, 'The Birthplaces of British Films: No.3 The British & Colonial Film Company', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 27 June 1914, p. 426; and 'The B and C: The Rise of an All-British Institution', *The Cinema*, 10 September 1914, pp. xiv–xv.
- 5 'Stroller's Notes', *KLW*, 21 October 1909, p. 1227. See Chapter 6 for more on McDowell's career.
- 6 'The Advancement of "B and C"', p. 1137.
- 7 See Stephen Bottomore, 'From the Factory Gate to the "Home Talent" Drama: An International Overview of Local Films in the Silent Era' in Vanessa Toulmin, Simon Popple and Patrick Russell (eds), *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), pp. 33–48. Bottomore observes that in 1905, a 100-foot local might cost less than £4 to produce, and how even B&C's longer-established rivals, such as Warwick and Hepworth, seem to have felt they continued to be an economically viable genre to handle.
- 8 'The Triumph of the Animated Picture' in L. Carson (ed.), *The Stage Year Book* for 1908, reproduced in Colin Harding and Simon Popple (eds), *In the Kingdom of Shadows: A Companion to Early Cinema* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1996), pp. 216–19.
- 9 Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue: Volume 2: Non-Fiction Films 1888–1994* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000).

- 10 See 'J.B. McDowell joins the B&C Company', p. 715 and 'Rapid Progress of B and C', p. 8.
- 11 'J.B. McDowell joins the B&C Company', p. 715.
- 12 Advertisement placed by the agent Walter Tyler in *KLW* (11 February 1909).
- 13 'Items of Interest', *The Bioscope*, 13 May 1909, p. 7 and *The Bioscope*, 27 May 1909. This race was also photographed by Gaumont and Warwick with ten of the leading London halls taking the latter's version.
- 14 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 9 September 1909, p. 843. See also 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 26 August 1909, p. 787.
- 15 In his catalogue, Gifford identifies six comic shorts as being B&C fiction films released in 1908–1909, four of which, he guesses, may have been made by McDowell. But as they were released before the company's move into dramas and comics in the autumn of 1909, I find these initial attributions doubtful. The trade periodicals of the time are insistent that B&C began as a specialist producer of topical and local, and only branched out into fiction in September 1909. Further, four of the films are attributed to other companies, and two others are not listed in the contemporary trade press—though four were later reissued or remade as B&C films. See Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973).
- 16 'New Films and their Makers', *KLW*, 7 October 1909, p. 1105. I have examined the whole Three-Fingered Kate series in Gerry Turvey, 'Three-Fingered Kate: Celebrating Womanly Cunning and Successful Female Criminal Enterprise', *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 7.2 (2010): 200–11.
- 17 'A Remarkable English Film', *KLW*, 9 September 1909, p. 845.
- 18 'The Improvement in English Staging: British and Colonial Company's Good Work', *KLW*, 9 December 1909, p. 235.
- 19 'B&C Films: A Clever and Progressive English Firm', *KLW*, 23 December 1909, p. 377.
- 20 'J.B. McDowell joins the B& C Company', p. 713, emphasis added.
- 21 *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
- 22 'Taking a Picture Surrounded by Angry Bees', *KLW*, 1 December 1910, p. 62.
- 23 'Famous Film Makers of the World and their History', p. 10. See also 'Mr J.B. McDowell', p. 81. There are no references to a B&C company operating in that area in contemporary business directories, but McDowell was resident in nearby Willesden Green between 1908 and 1914. See *Kelly's Directory of Kilburn, Willesden, Cricklewood, Harlesden etc.* (Kelly's Directories Ltd, 1907 to 1914–15). McDowell and his wife were living in King's Road, Willesden Green. A poster in one scene of *Playing Truant* advertises leasehold villas in neighbouring Harlesden.

- 24 'J.B. McDowell joins the B&C Company', p. 717.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Advertisements in *KLW*, 8 September 1910 and 6 October 1910.
- 27 'J.B. McDowell joins the B& C Company', p. 715.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 See 'J.B. McDowell joins the B& C Company' and 'The Brighton Train Smash', *The Bioscope*, 3 February 1910.
- 30 'The Funeral Procession: A Selection from the Films', *KLW*, 26 May 1910, p. 140.
- 31 'The B & C Co.', *KLW*, 2 June 1910, p. 203.
- 32 'The Bee Hunter', *Film House Record*, 15 October 1910, p. 247.
- 33 'Famous Film Makers of the World and their History', p. 10. See also 'Mr J.B. McDowell', p. 81.
- 34 British Library: Northcliffe Papers: ADD 62211, Item 61. This reference comes from a short unpublished account of McDowell's career compiled by Nick Hiley.
- 35 Dangerfield, 'The Birthplaces of British Films', pp. 426–27.
- 36 'Newfoundland Paper', *Daily Mail*, 11 July 1910, p. 5.
- 37 British Library: Northcliffe Papers: ADD 62211.
- 38 'Weekly notes', *KLW*, 14 July 1910. Unlike the company's other films, for which Cosmopolitan was the agent, W. Butcher and Sons had sole renting rights for this particular subject. They had already spent four months in their own right filming in Canada in 1909 and had premiered a number of Canadian films in London in January 1910. See Peter Morris, *Embattled Shadows: A History of Canadian Cinema 1895–1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978). A full-page advertisement for *From Forest to Breakfast Table* in *The Bioscope* associates the film with Butcher but omits mention of either McDowell or B&C: *The Bioscope*, 14 July 1910, p. 16. This may have led Denis Gifford into confusion, for in *The British Film Catalogue: Volume 2*, he mistakenly associates the film with Frank Butcher and Emile Lauste who did the work on Butcher's own Canadian releases. He suggests the film was an unlikely 2,500 feet.
- 39 'From the Old House to the New', *Film House Record*, no. 23, 1 October 1910.
- 40 Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970*.
- 41 Figures here are based on the total footage or duration of the new films issued by particular companies, and do not take account of the number of prints bought for each of their various films. Computations based on the total print runs for the annual production of all a company's films would give the best indication of their market strength.
- 42 *Film House Record*, 5 March 1910.

- 43 'Playing Truant', *Film House Record*, 25 June 1910, p. 139.
- 44 'Wanted, a Bath Chair Attendant', *Film House Record*, 9 July 1910, p. 155. B&C did not manage to sustain a weekly comic release.
- 45 'Every Wrong Shall Be Righted', *Film House Record*, 3 September 1910, p. 204.
- 46 'Notable productions of the week: Every Wrong Shall Be Righted', *KLW*, 8 September 1910, p. 1149.
- 47 Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 190614* [1948] (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1973), p. 54. Low's figures were compiled from the reviews and film lists published in *The Bioscope*.
- 48 George S. Guy, 'In a Biograph Theatre: Humour, Pathos and Sensation on the Film', *The Strand Magazine*, February 1911, reproduced in Colin Harding and Simon Popple (eds), *In the Kingdom of Shadows: A Companion to Early Cinema* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1996), pp. 162–65.
- 49 In 1910, B&C issued 11,697 feet of new fiction film. This retailed at 4d a foot. Thus, in another rough and very approximate calculation, the company would have had to sell around sixteen prints of each of the twenty-two films it made that year to cover its production costs.
- 50 See Frederick A. Talbot, *Moving Pictures: How They Are Made and Worked* (London: William Heinemann, 1912) and Valentia Steer, *The Romance of the Cinema: A Short Record of the Development of the Most Popular Amusement of the Day* (London: Arthur Pearson, Ltd, 1913).
- 51 Information on B&C as a private limited company is from the National Archives: BT 31/19897/114483. Its registration as a private company was noted in 'Financial Items: New Companies', *The Bioscope*, 16 March 1911, p. 51.
- 52 As a private company, B&C did not have to publish its annual report and accounts for the public, and so financial information is not available in the National Archives.
- 53 'B and C Remove to Larger Premises', *The Bioscope*, 8 June 1911. See also 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 8 June 1911. When the liquidator was sorting out the bankrupt B&C's affairs in 1924, he noted the lease had a further nine years to run. See 'The B&C Co.'s Affairs', *KLW*, 22 May 1924, p. 50.
- 54 'Famous Film Makers of the World and their History', p. 10. See also 'Mr J.B. McDowell', p. 81. The move to a new studio with a large amount of land near London was first signalled in May 1911. See 'Improving the British Product: What "B and C" are Doing', *KLW*, 25 May 1911, p. 41.
- 55 'A Leading British Film Company: The Advancement of "B&C"', *KLW*, 21 September 1911, pp. 1136–37, emphasis added.
- 56 'Items of Interest', 15 June 1911, p. 513.
- 57 Advertisement in *The Bioscope*, 5 October 1911, p. 54.

- 58 'Reports from the Leading Film Manufacturers: British and Colonial Kinematograph Company', *Film Censor*, 24 December 1913, p. 3. The *KLW* recalled in September 1911 how, '[u]ntil comparatively recently, B and C were pre-eminently a topical house'. See 'A Leading British Film Company', p. 1137. The same article also suggested McDowell had joined Bloomfield 'about two years ago', which would have made the association of the two men date from autumn 1909, several months before the February 1910 announcement. At this time, *The Bioscope* seems to have paid most attention to B&C's topical work and rather neglected the company's fiction releases. Given her reliance on *The Bioscope* as a source, this could account for Rachael Low's skimmed coverage of B&C in *The History of the British Film 1906–14*. I have discussed B&C's topical film production in more detail in Gerry Turvey, 'Ideological Contradictions: The Film Topicals of the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company', *Early Popular Visual Culture* 5.1 (April 2007): 41–56.
- 59 See 'M.P. Sales Agency Release a Real Exclusive', *KLW*, 8 February 1912, pp. 796–97; 'The Adventures of a Kinematograph Camera Man', *KLW*, 15 February 1912, pp. 843 and 847; 'British and Colonial Enterprise', *KLW*, 29 February 1912, p. 1021; 'British Picture Success', *Evening News*, 21 February 1912, p. 7; and W. Bool, 'In the Arctic with the Cinema', *Pearson's Weekly*, 4 April 1912, p. 982.
- 60 Bool, 'In the Arctic', p. 982. He seems not to have been considering his film of the whaling expedition.
- 61 'M.P. Sales Agency Release a Real Exclusive', *KLW*, 8 February 1912, p. 796 and 'British Picture Success', *Evening News*, 21 February 1912, p. 7.
- 62 B&C advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 10 August 1911, p. 294.
- 63 'The Advancement of "B&C"', p. 1137.
- 64 Ibid. See also 'Improving the British Product', p. 141.
- 65 These calculations do not take account of the cost of the print runs of the films.
- 66 Lieut. Daring, RN, 'My Tour of London', *KLW*, 21 December 1911, p. 375.
- 67 Gifford seems to think Foster was in the March 1910 *The Baby, the Boy and the Teddy Bear*, but records no subsequent appearances before autumn 1911.
- 68 'New Year Arrangements', *Picture Theatre News*, 20 December 1911, p. 7.
- 69 The duration of the local and topical footage released over the years is, unfortunately, unavailable.
- 70 National Archives: BT 31/19897/114483. See also 'The World of Finance: Mortgages and Charges', *The Bioscope*, 13 June 1912, p. 807.
- 71 'British and Colonial Enterprise', *KLW*, 29 February 1912, p. 1021 and 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 8 February 1912, p. 771.
- 72 W.G. F[aulkner], 'British Pictures in the Programme', *Evening News*, 31 July 1912, p. 7.

- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid. The MPSA handled Kalem and Lubin in Britain.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 ‘The Enterprising B. & C.: Some Facts about the Popular British Company’, *The Pictures*, 14 December 1912, p. 11. B&C’s willingness to spend out on their productions became a standard refrain in the trade press at this time.
- 77 ‘Days in Pictureland’, *Evening News*, 27 November 1912, p. 7 and ‘Reports from the Leading Film manufacturers: British and Colonial Kinematograph Company’, *Film Censor*, 24 December 1913, p. 3, emphases added.
- 78 *Evening News*, 18 September 1912, p. 7.
- 79 ‘B & C Kinematograph Company, Ltd.’, *KLW*, 8 February 1912, p. 789.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 See ‘Weekly Notes’, *KLW*, 28 March 1912 and ‘In the Shadow of Snowdon: An Account of the B&C Welsh Tour’, *The Pictures*, 11 May 1912, p. 9.
- 82 J. Wallett Waller, ‘Our Trip to Cornwall’, *The Pictures*, 7 December 1912, p. 23.
- 83 See *Evening News*, 25 September 1912, p. 7 and Charles Raymond, ‘Bandits in Britain’, *The Pictures*, 30 November 1912, p. 27.
- 84 ‘Off to Jamaica’, *The Pictures*, 2 January 1913, p. 12.
- 85 *Evening News*, 18 December 1912, p. 6. *The Bioscope* and Davison for the MPSA expressed similar sentiments. See ‘Farewell Dinner to B&C artistes’, *The Bioscope*, 19 December 1912.
- 86 Advertisements in *The Pictures*, 18 May 1912, p. ii; 8 June 1912, p. 23; 15 June 1912, p. ii; 20 July 1912, p. iii.
- 87 MPSA advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 9 January 1913, p. 108.
- 88 I have discussed the relation between nineteenth-century cheap fiction and the B&C series films in Gerry Turvey, ‘Cheap Fiction, Popular Periodicals and Early Film Dramas: Some Continuities and Exchanges’ in Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple, eds, *Visual Delights: Two: Exhibition and Reception* (London: John Libbey Publishing, 2005), pp. 32–45.
- 89 ‘A B&C film that Will Get Home’, *The Cinema*, September 1912, p. xx.
- 90 The term is taken from Richard de Cordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).
- 91 ‘B. & C.’s first two-reel’, *KLW*, 18 July 1912, p. 827.
- 92 See ‘British Film Company for Jamaica: Farewell Dinner to the B&C Artistes’, *KLW*, 19 December 1912; ‘Farewell Dinner to B&C Artistes’, *The Bioscope*, 19 December 1912; ‘“B&C” Company Depart for the West Indies’, *Film Censor*, 25 December 1912; and ‘Off to Jamaica’, *The Pictures*, 2 January 1913, p. 12.
- 93 ‘“B&C” Company Depart for the West Indies’. The MPSA’s trade magazine, *The Top Line Indicator*, on 30 October 1912, p. 3, quoted a letter from a

Belfast cinema reinforcing this judgement. B&C had ‘made immense strides in the public’s favour, and the general improvements they have made during the present year have been most wonderful and excellent’.

Chapter 3. McDowell in Charge: Period Two at B&C, 1913–1918

- 1 Edward T. Heron, ‘A Retrospect of the Year’, *The Kinematograph Year Book 1914* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly), p. 13.
- 2 ‘Round the Trade’, *The Cinema*, 26 February 1913 and 5 March 1913.
- 3 National Archives: BT 31/19897/114483.
- 4 Low Warren, *The Film Game* (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd, 1937), p. 64.
- 5 Robert Humfrey, *Careers in the Films* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1938), p. 31.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 32 and 33.
- 7 The suggestions were £6,000 in ‘Waterloo fight’, *Wellingborough News*, 13 June 1913, p. 11 and ‘The Battle of Waterloo’, *The Pictures*, no. 91, 1913, p. 12; £5,000 in ‘Cinematography: The Battle of Waterloo’, *Evening Standard*, 19 July 1913, p. 14; and £3,000 in the *Evening News*, 12 June 1913, p. 7. In 1938, Humfrey, *Careers in the Films*, claimed the film had cost an unlikely £1,800.
- 8 Low Warren, ‘Important Film Subjects of the Year’, *The Kinematograph Year Book 1914*, p. 30.
- 9 ‘A £5,000 film’, *The Cinema*, 25 June 1913, p. 3. Earlier, the periodical had claimed McDowell and Charles Weston, the director, had ‘risked a fortune in their attempt to prove that Britain can produce the best even in moving pictures’. See ‘How I Met Napoleon’, *The Cinema*, 11 June 1913, p. 3.
- 10 National Archives: BT 31/19897/114483. The distribution of the one hundred £1 shares is not specified, but if Yannedis received Bloomfield’s forty in May, then McDowell must have reduced his sixty shares to ten in June when he passed fifty of them to Stafford. Also on 5 June, the two 1912 debentures to the MPSA were repaid. In 1913–1915, the B&C company secretary was Charles Henry Sharp and in 1916–1917 it was A.R. Hunnings.
- 11 ‘Our View’, *The Bioscope*, 24 July 1913, p. 234; and ‘Trade Notes’, *KLW*, 16 October 1913, p. 2601.
- 12 ‘Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films’, *The Picturegoer*, 1 November 1913, pp. 99–100.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 14 See Fred Dangerfield, ‘My Thrilling Experiences at Finchley’, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 4 July 1914, pp. 444–5 and 458. The lease on the East Finchley studio was not due to run out until June 1916, and the local council granted the company a year’s approval for a temporary building in the grounds of

- Newstead House in August 1914. See ‘Report of Town Planning Committee of 17 August 1914’ in the Minutes of Finchley Urban District Council 1914–1915, held by Barnet Local Studies and Archives Centre. There is a reference to the B&C studios in September 1915 in ‘Gossip’, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 28 September 1915.
- 15 Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1906–14* [1948] (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1973), p. 110.
 - 16 See John East, ‘The Discovery of Boreham Wood’ in F. Maurice Speed (ed.), *Film Review 1975–76* (London: W.H. Allen, 1975), pp. 52–56; and John M. East, ‘Lancelot Speed’ in F. Maurice Speed (ed.), *Film Review 1972–73* (London: W.H. Allen, 1972), pp. 39–42.
 - 17 ‘Round the Trade’, 29 October 1913, p. 9. See also ‘Outbreak of Fire: at B&C Cos. premises’, *KLW*, 23 October 1913; *Moving Picture Offered List*, 25 October 1913, p. 312; *Evening News*, 23 October 1913, p. 7 and 30 October 1913; ‘Trade Topics’, *The Bioscope*, 30 October 1913 and ‘Stop Press’, *Film Censor*, 22 October 1913, p. 1.
 - 18 ‘Shut in the Dark Room’, *Pearson’s Weekly*, 15 November 1913, p. 532. There was some damage to an adjacent building.
 - 19 ‘Weekly Notes’, *KLW*, 12 February 1914.
 - 20 *Film Censor*, 3 December 1913.
 - 21 ‘A Chat with Mr. T.H. Davison’, *KLW*, 28 August 1913; ‘Our View’, 28 August 1913; and ‘Trade Topics’, 1 January 1914.
 - 22 Heron, ‘A Retrospect of the Year’, p. 14.
 - 23 ‘Reports from Leading Film Manufacturers: British and Colonial Kinematograph Company’, *Film Censor*, 24 December 1913, p. 3.
 - 24 Ibid. B&C’s move from the open-market system to the exclusives system is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.
 - 25 Heron, ‘A Retrospect of the Year’, p. 14. *Quo Vadis* was auctioned in February and then shown at the Albert Hall in April. See ‘Round the Trade’, 26 February 1913.
 - 26 ‘The B&C Masterpiece’, *KLW*, 26 June 1913, p. 1017.
 - 27 ‘The Battle of Waterloo’, *The Bioscope*, 3 July 1913, p. 51.
 - 28 ‘Through the Clouds’, *The Cinema*, 20 August 1913, p. 68. The film’s length was 3,158 feet.
 - 29 These statistics are based on data in Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973).
 - 30 VFT, ‘How I Met Napoleon’, *The Cinema*, 1 June 1913, p. 3; and ‘The Battle of Waterloo’, *Illustrated Film Monthly*, vol. 1, no. 2, October 1913, p. 1. *The Cinema* had begun publication in February 1912 and gave very thorough coverage to the work of B&C, unlike *The Bioscope*. Like the *KLW* earlier, it became an enthusiastic sponsor of the company.

- 31 'Through the Clouds', *Kinematograph Monthly Film Record* (hereafter *KMFR*), no. 18, October 1913, p. 37; and 'Motion Picture News: Something Special', *The Pictures*, no. 100, 1913, p. 22. The *KMFR* was a monthly compilation of film reviews from the *KLW*.
- 32 Walturdaw advertisement, *KLW*, 3 July 1913, p. 1075.
- 33 'British Enterprise: The Life of Shakespeare Filmed: A £4,000 Production', *Film Censor*, 17 December 1913, p. 3. *The Kinematograph Year Book 1915* confirmed *The Life of Shakespeare* 'cost at least £4,000' (p. 203).
- 34 'Reports from Leading Film Manufacturers', p. 3.
- 35 Charles F. Ingram, 'Film Gossip', *Illustrated Film Monthly*, February 1914, p. 336.
- 36 Heron, 'A Retrospect of the Year', p. 15.
- 37 'A Daring B&C Actress', *The Cinema*, 20 August 1913, p. 25.
- 38 'Trade Topics', 4 December 1913. See also 'Trade Notes', 4 December 1913.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 'Reports from Leading Film Manufacturers', p. 3.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 See Mrs E.G. Batley, 'How Juvenile Cinema Stars are Trained', *Film Censor*, 15 July 1914, reprinted from 'Training Tiny Cinema Stars', *Pearson's Weekly*, 4 July 1914, p. 57.
- 43 I have written about Burlingham's work at B&C and after in Gerry Turvey, 'Frederick Burlingham: Exploration, Mountaineering and the Origins of Swiss Documentary Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 27.2 (June 2007): 167–91.
- 44 See 'The £5,000 Air Race', *Evening News*, 7 June 1913; and 'Trade Notes', 18 September 1913.
- 45 *Moving Picture Offered List*, 29 November 1913, p. 430.
- 46 'The Enterprising B&C: Some Facts about the Popular British Company', *The Pictures*, 14 December 1912, p. 11.
- 47 'The Master Crook', *The Cinema*, 13 November 1913, p. 75.
- 48 'Famous Film Makers of the World and their History: The British and Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.', *Evening News*, 20 November 1913, p. 10; and 'Reports from Leading Film Manufacturers', p. 3.
- 49 'The Life of Shakespeare', *Film Censor*, 4 February 1914, p. 2. *The Cinema* also declared the studio equipment had 'not its equal in the country'. See 'The B and C: The Rise of an All-British Institution', *The Cinema*, 10 September 1914, p. xiv.
- 50 National Archives: BT 31/19897/114483. The London Project website lists Frith as also being a director for Jury's Imperial Pictures Ltd, Jury's Kine Supplies Ltd and the New Animatophone Syndicate Ltd. See <http://london-film.bbk.ac.uk>.

- 51 'Trade Topics', 11 June 1914, p. 400. See also 'Round the Trade', 11 June 1914.
- 52 'The B and C', p. xiv, emphasis added. This was one of those post-1913 articles that unfairly declined to mention Bloomfield and attributed every initiative at B&C to McDowell.
- 53 'News in Brief', *The Cinema*, 13 August 1914, p. 17. That demand came increasingly to be met by films from the United States.
- 54 'The War: Its Effect on Film Supplies', *The Cinema*, 13 August 1914, p. 11. The latter comment answered the fear expressed at the war's beginning that a shortage of film stock from America might develop.
- 55 See *Evening News*, 18 June 1914, p. 7 and *Film Censor*, 8 July 1914.
- 56 'Film Production in 1914', *The Bioscope Annual and Trades Directory 1915* (London: Ganes Ltd), p. 37.
- 57 Harold Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing* (London: McBride, Nast and Co., 1916).
- 58 Ernest A. Dench, 'For the Photo-Play Writer', *The Cinema*, 8 January 1914, p. 61.
- 59 Dangerfield, 'My Thrilling Experiences at Finchley', p. 445.
- 60 Davison advertisements in *KMFR*, June 1914, p. 116 and *KLW*, 11 June 1914, p. 20.
- 61 'A Retrospect of the Year', *The Kinematograph Year Book 1915* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly), p. 21.
- 62 'The Midnight Wedding: A Lyceum Favourite on the Screen', *The Cinema*, 7 May 1914, p. 44 and advertisement in *The Bioscope*, 2 April 1914.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 'Film Production in 1914', p. 38.
- 65 I have discussed B&C's war films in Gerry Turvey, 'British and Colonial: What the Company Did in the Great War' in Michael Hammond and Michael Williams (eds), *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 39–48.
- 66 Advertiser's announcement: 'Films of Canadian Life and History', *Daily Mail*, 7 May 1914, p. 2. The various sums do not add to the full total. The item suggested eighty prints was a moderate estimate for distribution to the world market and optimistically claimed an especially popular subject might achieve between 150 and 200 copies. Twenty copies, it stated, would go to Canada and the USA, with the rest for Britain and the Continent.
- 67 Clearly, this is very much a rough and ready and potentially highly unreliable 'guesstimate', but it does perhaps give some sense of the company's growth over its short existence. Again, the cost of print runs is not included.
- 68 'A Progressive English Agency: Mr T.H. Davison's Enterprise', *Film Censor*, 23 December 1914, p. 2.

- 69 The table is based on a reworking of the data in Denis Gifford's *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970*. There is a small difference between B&C's total output in Table 3.1 and that in Table 8.1 in Chapter 8, because the latter is based on my own modification of Gifford's material in the light of the actual release dates of the films as indicated in the trade press. Most of the statistical data in this study—apart from the comparative statistics in Tables 2.1 and 3.1—is based on my 'corrected' version of Gifford's initial cataloguing of the material.
- 70 Once again, it would be invaluable to know how many prints of each film the companies sold on the open market and, by this date, the incomes for films taken by renters as exclusives—and even the sorts of cinema they played in (major cinemas or smaller, late-run houses).
- 71 'Film Production in 1914', p. 38.
- 72 They were written by Fred Dangerfield, and B&C was covered in two articles, one each for the Walthamstow and Finchley studios. See 'No.1: The House of Hepworth', 'No.2: The London Film Company', 'No.3: The British & Colonial Film Company' and 'My Thrilling Experiences at Finchley: Continued from No.3 of the Series', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 23 May 1914, pp. 320–22, 6 June 1914, pp. 366–68, 27 June 1914, pp. 426–28 and 4 July 1914, pp. 444–45. A later series on other British studios was published in 1916. A 1939 survey reaffirmed the periodical's assessment by stating: 'During the three years immediately before the war there were three important film-producing companies operating in England, the Hepworth, British and Colonial Kinematograph, and the London Film Companies, and the standard of the films produced was exceptionally high.' See M. Jackson-Wrigley and Eric Leyland, *The Cinema: Historical, Technical, and Bibliographical. A Survey for Librarians and Students* (London: Grafton and Co., 1939), p. 13.
- 73 'Our Free Competition: What is your Favourite Brand of Films?', *The Picture Palace News*, 15 November 1915, emphasis added.
- 74 'Results of our Great "Popular Films" Competition', *The Picture Palace News*, 31 January 1916.
- 75 'Famous Film Makers of the World and their History', p. 10.
- 76 'These are Film Marks', *Pearson's Weekly*, 7 June 1913, p. 1243.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 B&C advertisement, *KLW*, 25 November 1915, p. viii.
- 79 See John Montgomery, *Comedy Films 1894–1954* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954), p. 39.
- 80 'Notes and News: The B&C Kinematograph Co. Ltd.', *The Cinema*, 13 May 1915, p. 13.
- 81 Ibid.

- 82 Ibid.
- 83 'Davison Films Agency Supplement: The British & Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.', *The Cinema*, 29 July 1915.
- 84 'A Retrospect of the Year 1915', *The Kinematograph Year Book 1916* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly), p. 23.
- 85 'Her Nameless (?) Child', *The Cinema*, 29 April 1915, p. 45.
- 86 'Davison Films Agency Supplement: the British & Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.'
- 87 Ibid., emphasis added.
- 88 'Fourteen Exclusives in Thirteen Months', *KLW*, 20 May 1915, p. 8.
- 89 'Trade Notes', 26 August 1915, p. 17.
- 90 'Trade Notes', 9 September 1915. See also 'Trade Topics', 9 September 1915; 'Round the Trade', 9 September 1915; and 'Gossip', 28 September 1915.
- 91 'Trade Topics', 2 December 1915, p. 981. See also 'Davison's Film Sales Agency', *Film Censor*, 24 November 1915, p. 3; 'Pall Mall Photoplays', *The Cinema*, 23 December 1915, p. 48; and 'Gossip', 11 December 1915.
- 92 See Tony Fletcher, 'Sound before *Blackmail* (1929)' in Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *The Showman, the Spectacle and the Two-Minute Silence: Performing British Cinema Before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2001), pp. 6–11; and Rachael Low, 'Appendix to chapter VIII: Sound' in her *The History of the British Film 1906–14*, pp. 265–69.
- 93 'Items of Interest: Shakespeare Synchronised', *The Bioscope*, 17 June 1915, p. 1137. See also 'B&C Talking Pictures', *KLW*, 17 June 1915, p. 12; and 'Taming the Shrew: Famous Wooing Scene as a Talking Picture', *Film Censor*, 16 June 1915, p. 4.
- 94 'The Taming of the Shrew: Heard "Off"', *KLW*, 15 July 1915, p. 52, emphasis added.
- 95 Ibid. See also 'The Voxgraph: B&C Company's New System of Speaking Pictures', *Film Censor*, 30 June 1915, p. 2.
- 96 'Mr. Arthur Backner', *KLW*, 18 October 1917, p. 47.
- 97 'Items of Interest', *The Bioscope*, 8 July 1915, p. 125.
- 98 'What is a Voxgraph?', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 15 July 1916; and *KLW*, 31 May 1917. Arthur Backner had been born in 1887 and educated at the Liverpool Institute. He had travelled widely and developed a sound knowledge of the arts and commerce. After a twelve year association with the theatre he became manager of some of England's most important picture houses before moving into the renting field. He became general manager of the London offices of Grangers Exclusives at their opening in October 1917. See 'Who's What in the Trade', *The Kinematograph Year Book 1921* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly), p. 530 and 'Mr. Arthur Backner', p. 47.

- 99 See East, 'Lancelot Speed', pp. 39–42.
- 100 See 'Anson Dyer (1876–1962)', BFI Screenonline (<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/>). He later went on to work for Hepworth at Walton and gained his own animation studio there in 1935 under Archibald Nettlefold.
- 101 See Paul Ward, 'British Animated Cartoons and Topical Propaganda, 1914–18' in Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *Crossing the Pond: Anglo-American Film Relations Before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2002), pp. 60–65; and David Huxley, 'Kidding the Kaiser: British Propaganda Animation, 1914–1919', *Early Popular Visual Culture* 4.3 (November 2006): 307–20.
- 102 'Magic Squares', *The Bioscope*, 3 September 1914; and 'Magic Squares', *KLW*, 13 August 1914, p. xvii.
- 103 Davison advertisement, *The Cinema*, 26 August 1915, p. 91; and 'Dicky Dee's Cartoons', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 4 September 1915, p. 1983. See also 'Trade Notes', 26 August 1915, which refers to B&C's 'new topical cartoon'.
- 104 'Dicky Dee's Cartoons', p. 1853; and *KMFR*, no. 43, November 1915, p. 82.
- 105 'Alick Richie's Frightful Sketches: Number 2', *KLW*, 3 August 1916, pp. xi and xiv.
- 106 Star Film Service advertisement, *KLW*, 4 March 1915, pp. 96–97.
- 107 'Artistry on Screen', *KLW*, 1 April 1915, p. 84.
- 108 'A Representative British Production', *The Bioscope*, 7 February 1916, p. 648.
- 109 'Round the Trade', 11 May 1916, p. 38.
- 110 'Round the Trade', 24 February 1916, p. 33.
- 111 Before that, however, on a Friday in early February, the company opened the Walthamstow building to entertain wounded servicemen. Four streams of motor cars carrying 250 recovering soldiers and sailors descended on the studio. There, they were given tea, fruit and cigarettes, a speech from McDowell and an informal concert organized by studio staff. Orchestras from two Walthamstow cinemas accompanied, and a contralto, tenor, reciter and comic contortionist performed on stage. The event was filmed by the *Topical Budget* newsreel. See 'B&C Company Entertain Wounded Soldiers', *The Bioscope*, 10 February 1916, p. 655; 'Notes and News: B & C Company Entertain Wounded Soldiers', *The Cinema*, 10 February 1916, p. 57; and 'B & C Entertain Wounded Heroes: Studio as Concert Hall', *Film Censor*, 18 February 1916, p. 9.
- 112 'Cameramen at the Front', *The Bioscope*, 4 November 1915, p. 520G.
- 113 'Under the Arc Lamp', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 6 January 1917, p. 4758.
- 114 See 'Roll of Honour', *KLW*, 27 August 1914, 4 November 1915 and 13 January 1916.
- 115 'Round the Studios', *The Bioscope*, 10 May 1917, p. 565.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 Ibid.

- 118 'Auld Lang Syne', *The Bioscope*, 8 November 1917, p. 48.
- 119 'When Paris Sleeps', *The Cinema*, 1 March 1917, p. xii.
- 120 'Actor, Author and Producer: A Chat with Harold Weston', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 16 December 1916.
- 121 'Trade Notes of the Week', *KLW*, 27 July 1916, p. 17 and 'We Hear...', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 25 November 1916, p. 175.
- 122 'A Striking 1918 Programme: International Exclusives Forecast', *KLW*, 6 December 1917; and letter from Low Warren, *KLW*, 18 July 1918, p. 74.
- 123 'Round the Studios', 6 June 1918.
- 124 B&C advertisement, *KLW*, 12 October 1916, p. xxv.
- 125 B&C advertisement, *The Cinema*, 15 November 1917, p. xxi.
- 126 National Archives: BT 31/19897/114483. Frith's address was Pemberton Drive, Bradford and McDowell's was given as 4 Seaton Mansions, Shaftesbury Avenue, in 1916, and 30 Granville Road, Walthamstow, in 1917.
- 127 National Archives: BT 31/19897/114483. Godal's address was 1 Clarence House, 204a, High Holborn, in central London, and Black-Hawkins was at 36 Rathbone Place.

Chapter 4. Making Films at East Finchley and On Location, 1911–1914

- 1 See 'Rapid Progress of B. and C.', *Film Censor*, 17 December 1913, p. 8; and 'Mr. J.B. McDowell', *The Cinema*, 8 January 1914, p. 81.
- 2 'J. B. McDowell Joins the B. & C. Company', *KLW*, 3 February 1910, p. 715.
- 3 See 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 14 July 1910.
- 4 'Items of Interest: Smart Work by the B and C', *The Bioscope*, 6 April 1911, p. 11. See also full page advertisement, 'A B & C Record!/Easy First Everywhere', *KLW*, 6 April 1911, p. 1538.
- 5 Advertisement in *KLW*, 27 April 1911, p. 1728. A remarkable advance on the ten prints Warwick had put out when they beat B&C with a Derby film in 1909.
- 6 'Weekly Notes', 14 July 1910.
- 7 'A Leading British Film Company: The Advancement of "B&C"', *KLW*, 21 September 1911, p. 1137. In retrospect, *The Pictures* characterised B&C as still a 'struggling little business' in its Denmark Street years. See 'The Enterprising B&C: Some Facts about the Popular British Company', *The Pictures*, 14 December 1912, p. 11.
- 8 See Janet Staiger, 'The Hollywood Mode of Production to 1930', Part Two of David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson (eds), *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 85–153.

- 9 'Items of Interest: Filmites in Picture Play', *The Bioscope*, 13 June 1912, p. 775.
- 10 Fred Dangerfield, 'My Thrilling Experiences at Finchley: Continued from No.3 of the Series "The Birthplaces of British Films"', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 4 July 1914, p. 444.
- 11 Information about the area may be found in Stewart Gilles and Pamela Taylor, *Finchley and Friern Barnet: A Pictorial History* (Phillimore, for Barnet Libraries, Arts and Museums, 1992).
- 12 Much of the information on the studio that follows comes from: W.G.F., 'With the Picture Players', *Evening News*, 7 August 1912, p. 7; 'Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films', *The Picturegoer*, 1 September 1913, pp. 99–104, 124; Dangerfield, 'My Thrilling Experiences at Finchley', pp. 444–45, 458; and Baynam Honri, 'British Film Studios 1900–1920: A Technical Survey', Appendix I in Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1914–1918* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, [1950] 1973), pp. 241–56.
- 13 W.G.F., 'With the Picture Players', p. 7.
- 14 See Baynam Honri, 'From Glasshouse to Gimmick Palace', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 May 1956, pp. 47, 49, 51.
- 15 'J. B. McDowell Joins the B. & C. Company', p. 715.
- 16 Dimensions calculated from data in Honri, 'British film studios 1900–1920'.
- 17 W.G.F., 'With the Picture Players', p. 7.
- 18 *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
- 19 'Filmites in Picture Play', p. 775.
- 20 Arthur Hall, 'Finchley's "Hollywood"', *Finchley Society Newsletter*, January 1980.
- 21 Dangerfield, 'My Thrilling Experiences at Finchley', p. 445. One report in the local newspaper suggested that so many scenes for films had been set up around Finchley by the local 'film depot or manufactory' that people were disappointed when no camera or operator showed up one day for a fire in a nearly ruined building. See 'Multum in Parvo', *The Finchley Press*, 19 September 1913, p. 3.
- 22 'Lieut. Daring, RN: B&C's New Naval Hero', *KLW*, 14 September 1911, p. 1053.
- 23 The National Film and Television Archive has a copy of the film.
- 24 'A Leading British Film Company', p. 1137.
- 25 'Filmites in Picture Play', p. 775. See also 'Filming a Lieut. Daring Subject', *KLW*, 13 June 1912.
- 26 See 'B.&C. Coal Strike Skit', *KLW*, 14 March 1912, p. 1133; 'Picture Notes', *The Pictures*, 13 April 1912, p. 23; and 'How Mickey Dooley Survived the Coal Strike', *The Cinema*, April 1912, p. 11.

- 27 See 'News in Brief: How Ideas Are Inspired and Carried Out in Cinema', *The Cinema*, 15 October 1913, p. 19; 'Trade Notes', *KLW*, 9 October 1913; and 'Trade Topics', *The Bioscope*, 9 October 1913, p. 96.
- 28 Dangerfield, 'My Thrilling Experiences at Finchley', pp. 444–45.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 445, Dangerfield's emphases.
- 30 *Ibid.*; and 'Strong B. & C. Drama', *KLW*, 11 June 1914, p. 20. See also 'The Water Rats of London', *The Cinema*, 28 May 1914, p. 45.
- 31 'The Loss of the Birkenhead', *Film Censor*, 22 July 1914, p. 4.
- 32 See 'The Loss of the Birkenhead, *Moving Picture Offered List*, 1 August 1914, p. 1026, *Evening News*, 16 July 1914, p. 7; and 'The Loss of the "Birkenhead": Trade Show of Great B&C film', *KLW*, 23 July 1914, p. 51.
- 33 Recorded by Denis Gifford, 'The Early Memoirs of Maurice Elvey', *Griffithiana*, no. 60–61, October 1997, p. 85.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 'Mulum in Parvo', 21 February 1913, p. 3.
- 37 See 'News in Brief: B and C Realism', *The Cinema*, 23 April 1914, p. 16; 'Weekly Notes', 14 May 1914, p. 3; *Moving Picture Offered List*, 9 May 1914, p. 835; and 'Screen gossip', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 16 May 1914, p. 309.
- 38 See 'Lt. Daring Returns', *KLW*, 25 September 1913, p. 2323; and "'Lieut. Daring": A New Personality', *Film Censor*, 3 September 1913.
- 39 See 'A Topical Drama', *The Cinema*, 17 September 1913, p. 41.
- 40 'Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films', *The Picturegoer*, 1 November 1913, p. 103.
- 41 'B and C Realism', p. 16.
- 42 See the photograph in the *Evening News*, 3 April 1912, p. 7. A copy of the film from the Netherlands Film Archive was shown at the sixth British Silent Cinema Weekend, Nottingham, April 2003.
- 43 W.G.F., *Evening News*, 13 March 1912, p. 7.
- 44 *Ibid.*; and 8 January 1913, p. 7.
- 45 See 'A "Daring" Producer', *KLW*, 19 September 1912, p. 1515, and the *Evening News*, 25 September 1912, p. 7. Percy Moran acted in and directed the film, which was based on his own script.
- 46 See Advertisement for 'Lily of Letchworth Lock', *Top-Line Indicator*, 4 December 1912, p. 7, and the *Evening News*, 6 November 1912, p. 6.
- 47 See 'News in Brief: Realism on the Film', *The Cinema*, 11 June 1913, p. 5, and the *Evening News*, 26 June 1913, p. 7.
- 48 See 'A Leading British Film Company', p. 1137, 'The B&C', *KLW*, 4 September 1913, p. 1978; 'Our View', *The Bioscope*, 21 August 1913; and 'Scenes from the New Films', *Film Censor*, 28 January 1914, p. 5.
- 49 See 'Accident to B&C Player', *Film Censor*, 4 March 1914, p. 3.

- 50 'Deathless Song Filmed', *The Cinema*, 23 September 1915, p. 72.
- 51 See *Evening News*, 4 September 1913, p. 7.
- 52 See 'Items of Interest: Lieut. Daring nearly Killed at Brighton', *The Bioscope*, 7 March 1912, p. 655; and 'Interview with Lieut. Daring, R.N.', *The Bioscope*, 28 March 1912, p. 929.
- 53 Advertisement in *The Pictures*, 13 July 1912, p. 1. See also 'A Feature from the B&C Company', *KLW*, 20 June 1912, p. 574.
- 54 See 'More Spy Villainies', *Film Censor*, 16 October 1912, p. 3, and the *Evening News*, 26 June 1912, p. 7.
- 55 'A Romance of the Great Gay Road: "Dick Turpin" by the British and Colonial Company', *The Bioscope*, 16 May 1912, p. 463.
- 56 *Evening News*, 20 June 1912, p. 6.
- 57 'A Romance of the Great Gay Road', p. 463.
- 58 See 'Stand and Deliver', *KLW*, 29 August 1912, p. 1267; and 'Dick Turpin Hunted by Hounds', *The Pictures*, 7 December 1912, p. 24.
- 59 L.D., 'A King in Peril', *Film Censor*, 10 July 1912, p. 2. See also 'The Adventures of Dick Turpin', *KLW*, 4 July 1912, p. 699.
- 60 See *Evening News*, 26 June 1912, p. 7.
- 61 'Dick Turpin's Ride to York', *KLW*, 7 July 1913, p. 1259.
- 62 See Andrew Horrall, chapter six, 'Aeroplanes', *Popular Culture in London, c.1890–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 77–105.
- 63 Information on filming *Through the Clouds* comes from: 'Cinema Acting in the Clouds/Leap from Balloon at 8,000 feet', *The Daily Citizen*, 15 August 1913, p. 3; 'Through the Clouds/Cinematograph Drama in Mid-Air', *The Daily Chronicle*, 15 August 1913, p. 37; and 'Through the Clouds: A Daring B&C Drama', *KLW*, 28 August 1913, p. 1881.
- 64 'Cinematograph Drama in Mid-Air', p. 37.
- 65 'Cinema Acting in the Clouds', p. 3.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 'Through the Clouds: A Thrilling Drama by the B and C Co.', *The Cinema*, 20 August 1913, p. 68.
- 68 'Cinematograph Drama in Mid-Air', p. 37.
- 69 'The B and C: The Rise of an All-British Institution', *The Cinema*, 10 September 1914, p. xiv.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 See 'Weekly Notes', 8 February 1912, p. 771.
- 72 See the photograph in 'B&C. Kinematograph Co. Ltd.', *KLW*, 8 February 1912, p. 789.
- 73 MPSA advertisement for 'A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast', *KLW*, 11 January 1912, p. xxi.

- 74 'A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast: MP Agency Releasing a B&C Top-Liner', *The Bioscope*, 11 January 1912, p. 77.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 'Weekly Notes', 11 April 1912. Information on the Welsh tour comes from: 'In the Shadow of Snowdon: An Account of the B&C Welsh Tour', *The Pictures*, 11 May 1912, p. 9; 'Hiring Armies for Battle Films', *Pearson's Weekly*, 26 July 1913, p. 135; and 'Weekly Notes', 28 March 1912.
- 77 'In the Shadow of Snowdon', p. 9.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 See Charles Raymond, 'Bandits in Britain: How the "Don Q" Stories were Produced in Derbyshire', *The Pictures*, 30 November 1912, p. 27. See also *Evening News*, 25 September 1912, p. 7 and 27 November 1912, p. 7; and 'Motion Picture News: Operating under Difficulties', *The Pictures*, 9 November 1912, p. 31. Denis Gifford seems to think direction of the Don Q films was by Martinek: see Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973).
- 80 *Evening News*, 6 November 1912, p. 6.
- 81 'Bandits in Britain', p. 27.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 *Evening News*, 6 November 1912, p. 6.
- 84 'Operating under Difficulties', p. 31.
- 85 See J. Walleth Waller, 'Our Trip to Cornwall', *The Pictures*, 7 December 1912, pp. 23–24.
- 86 Ibid. The landlord of the hotel later informed Waller that everybody was proposing to visit Plymouth in a body to see themselves in the released picture.
- 87 'Motion Picture News', 30 November 1912.
- 88 J. Walleth Waller, 'Our Trip to Cornwall', p. 24.
- 89 The following account is compiled from various items dealing with the tour, which was covered in some detail by the trade press. For brief reports, see 'British Film Company for Jamaica: Farewell Dinner for B&C Artists', *KLW*, 19 December 1912, and 'Weekly Notes', 30 January 1913; 'Off to Bananaland: How the B&C Company Lives Up to its Name', *The Cinema*, 1 January 1913, p. 41; 'Round the Trade', *The Cinema*, 26 February 1913; 'Off to Jamaica', *The Cinema*, 2 January 1913, p. 12; 'Motion Picture News: Under Sunny Skies', *The Pictures*, 22 January 1913, p. 23; 'Motion Picture News: the B&C Company', *The Pictures*, no. 74, 1913, p. 23; 'Motion Picture News: Home Again', *The Pictures*, no. 76, 1913, p. 22; *Film Censor*, 4 December 1912, p. 3, 18 December 1912, p. 3, "B&C" Company Depart for West Indies', 25 December 1912, p. 4, 12 February 1913, 12 March 1913 and 19 March 1913; *Evening News*, 18 December 1912, 6 February 1913, 20

- February 1913 and 13 March 1913. For more substantial reports, see ‘What the “B and C” Co. Are Doing’, *Film Censor*, 19 February 1913, p. 6; ‘Filming Life in Jamaica: The B and C Company Busy’, *KLW*, 20 February 1913; and V.F.T., ‘Cinematography at 130 Deg. in the Shade’, *The Cinema*, 5 March 1913, p. 19. See also the passenger list for SS *Pacuare*, 17 December 1912.
- 90 ‘The Enterprising B & C: Some Facts about the Popular British Company’, *The Pictures*, 14 December 1912, p. 11.
- 91 See ‘The Rise of an All-British Institution’, p. xiv.
- 92 V.F.T., ‘Cinematography at 130 Deg. in the Shade’, p. 19.
- 93 An item in *KLW* suggests the ‘first fruits’ of the company’s work in Jamaica were seen in theatres there and were received ‘with great acclamation’. If that was the case, it suggests some developing and printing may have taken place in Kingston. See ‘Filming Life in Jamaica’.
- 94 See ‘What the “B and C” Co. are Doing’, p. 4.
- 95 V.F.T., ‘Cinematography at 130 Deg. in the Shade’, p. 19. Earlier, *The Cinema* had carried a photograph of the B&C company before their departure, standing in front of Elder and Fyffe’s London offices. See ‘Off to Bananaland’, p. 41.
- 96 See *Evening News*, 13 March 1913, p. 7.
- 97 ‘“B & C” Company Depart for West Indies’, p. 4.
- 98 V.F.T., ‘Cinematography at 130 Deg. in the Shade’, p. 19.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 ‘What the “B. and C.” Co. Are Doing’, p. 6.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 See *Evening News*, 31 July 1913, p. 6; also ‘A Tragedy in the Alps’, *Film Censor*, 10 September 1913; ‘Alpine Drama’ *Film Censor*, 17 September 1913, p. 2; and ‘Reports from Leading Film Manufacturers’, *Film Censor*, 29 December 1913, p. 3.
- 104 ‘Round the Trade’, 6 August 1913, p. 15.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 H. Winick advertisement for ‘A Tragedy in the Alps’, *The Bioscope*, 11 September 1913.
- 107 ‘Famous Film Makers of the World and their History: The British and Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.’, *Evening News*, 20 November 1913, p. 10.
- 108 The account that follows has been drawn from ‘Waterloo Refought’, *Northampton Daily Echo*, 9 June 1913, p. 4 and reprinted in *Northampton Mercury*, 13 June 1913, p. 7; ‘Napoleon and Wellington Meet at Irthlingborough’, *Northampton Independent*, 21 June 1913, p. 21; W.G. Faulkner, ‘Napoleon Himself Again’, *Evening News*, 10 June 1913, p. 4;

- 'Remarkable Battle Pictures', *Evening News*, 12 June 1913, p. 7; W.G. Faulkner, 'A Maker of History', *Evening News*, 13 June 1913, p. 7; *Daily Mirror*, 12 June 1913, pp. 8–9; 'Cinematography: Waterloo Re-Fought', *Evening Standard*, 14 June 1913, p. 6; W.T.F., 'How I Met Napoleon', *The Cinema*, 11 June 1913, p. 3; 'The Humours of War', *The Cinema*, 18 June 1913; 'Weekly Notes', 12 June 1913, p. 741; and 'The Battle of Waterloo', *The Pictures*, vol. IV, no. 91, 1913. See also Robert Humfrey, *Careers in the Films* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1938), pp. 31–32; and Low Warren, *The Film Game* (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd, 1937), p. 64. Some of this material was used in an analysis of the film in Gerry Turvey, 'The Battle of Waterloo (1913): The First British Epic' in Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *The Showman, the Spectacle and the Two-Minute Silence: Performing British Cinema Before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2001), pp. 40–47.
- 109 'The Man of the Hour: Mr Charles Weston, the World's Youngest Producer', *The Cinema*, 18 June 1913, p. 11.
- 110 W.G. Faulkner, 'A Maker of History', p. 7.
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 V.T.F. in *The Cinema* suggested over £2,000 had been expended before the actors reached Irthlingborough. See V.T.F., 'How I Met Napoleon', p. 3. Weston spent £8 on his preparatory books.
- 113 'Our Screen', *The Pictures*, vol. IV, no. 94, 1913.
- 114 Reports claimed fifty to a hundred horses came up from Tillings.
- 115 Humfrey, *Careers in the Films*, p. 32.
- 116 See Faulkner, 'A Maker of History', p. 7.
- 117 The account here is based, in particular, on Faulkner, 'Napoleon Himself Again'; 'Napoleon Comes to Life', *The Daily News and Leader*, 10 June 1913, p. 7; 'Waterloo Fight: Reproducing the Historic Battle at Irthlingborough', *The Wellingborough News*, 13 June 1913, p. 11. In addition, *Daily Mirror*, 12 June 1913, pp. 8–9; 'Cinematography: Waterloo Refought', p. 6; 'Waterloo Refought', p. 4, V.T.F., 'How I Met Napoleon', p. 3, 'The Man of the Hour', p. 11, and 'The Humours of War', p. 19, *The Cinema*, 18 June 1913; 'England at War with France', *Film Censor*, 8 June 1913, p. 7; and 'The Battle of Waterloo: The "King Making Victory" as filmed by the B and C Company', *The Pictures*, no. 91, 1913, p. 12.
- 118 See 'War Flashes', *Film Censor*, 18 June 1913.
- 119 'Napoleon Comes to Life', p. 7.
- 120 See 'A Famous Trio', *The Cinema*, 2 June 1913.
- 121 'Waterloo Fight', p. 11.
- 122 Ibid.
- 123 Faulkner, 'Napoleon Himself Again', p. 4.

- 124 Ibid.
- 125 ‘Waterloo Fight’, p. 11.
- 126 ‘The Battle of Waterloo: British history Reconstructed by Britons’, *The Bioscope*, 3 July 1913, p. 51.
- 127 ‘Waterloo Fight’, p. 11. Local newspapers also reported on court appearances of participants who had travelled by train without tickets or had stolen properties. See *Northampton Daily Echo*, 10, 11 and 13 June 1913.
- 128 See Robert Humfrey, *Careers in the Films*, p. 32 and Faulkner, ‘A Maker of History’, p. 7.
- 129 ‘The Battle of Waterloo: Interesting Correspondence’, *The Bioscope*, 2 October 1913, p. 58.
- 130 Ibid. Another sequel was the short comic spoof *Pimple’s Battle of Waterloo*, featuring the highly popular grotesque Fred Evans in one of his parodies of current production. This one was released in the week before the B&C epic arrived in selected cinemas. See advert and ‘Pimple’s’ Waterloo’, *The Bioscope*, 7 August 1913, p. 436, and 10 July 1913.

Chapter 5. The Endell Street Plant and the Walthamstow Studio, 1913–1917

- 1 See Janet Staiger, ‘Dividing Labour for Production Control: Thomas Ince and the Rise of the Studio System’, *Cinema Journal* 8.2 (Spring 1979): 16–25; ‘Mass-Produced Photoplays: Economic and Signifying Practices in the First Years of Hollywood’, *Wide Angle* 4.3 (1980): 12–27; and ‘The Hollywood Mode of Production to 1930’, Part Two of David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson (eds), *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 85–153.
- 2 See *The Bioscope*, 13 May 1915.
- 3 Between 1912 and 1914, a series of books was issued providing generalised descriptions of the practices current in British studios and processing works. As B&C was one of the production leaders at this time, these accounts offer useful insights into the company’s production routines. See Frederick A. Talbot, *Moving Pictures: How They Are Made and Worked* (London: William Heinemann, 1912); *Practical Cinematography and its Applications* (London: William Heinemann, 1913); Valentia Steer, *The Romance of Cinema: A Short Record of the Development of the Most Popular Form of Amusement of the Day* (London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd, 1913); *The Secrets of the Cinema* (London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd, 1920); Harry Furniss, *Our Lady Cinema* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith Ltd, 1914); and H.M. Lomas, *Picture Play Photography* (London: Ganes, Limited, 1914). See also L.C. MacBean, *Kinematograph Studio Technique* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd, 1922). Articles by Thomas Bedding in *The Bioscope* in 1909 anticipated the concerns of the

- later books. See Thomas Bedding, 'Practical Moving-Picture Making', *The Bioscope*, August to November 1909.
- 4 'Items of Interest', *The Bioscope*, 15 June 1911, p. 513.
 - 5 'The B and C: The Rise of an All-British Institution', *The Cinema*, 10 September 1914, p. xiv, emphasis added.
 - 6 'The British & Colonial Co. Ltd.', *The Cinema*, 29 July 1915, supplement.
 - 7 See 'Trade News', *KLW*, 22 June 1911, p. 297; and 'Items of Interest', 29 June 1911, p. 665.
 - 8 In 1913, *The Pictures* described B&C's speedy processing of that year's Boat Race film, 'a big "topical"'. On the afternoon of the race, all other work was suspended and all the staff were held ready for action. A car horn in Long Acre warned of the first operator's approach, and he unlocked his camera as he mounted the stairs, ready to hand the film box to the indoor staff. Other operators, placed at different points on the race route, followed, and two hours from the first arrival, the completed film was ready to be screened. Copies were then despatched, first to provincial towns and then to London—the last being sent off at 7.30 in the evening. See 'Motion Picture News: Filming the Boat Race', *The Pictures*, vol. IV, no. 81, 1913, p. 22.
 - 9 Information on Endell Street comes primarily from 'A Leading British Film Company: The Advancement of "B & C"', *KLW*, 21 September 1911, p. 1136–37. See also 'Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films', *The Picturegoer*, 1 November 1913, pp. 99–104, 124.
 - 10 'A Leading British Film Company', p. 1137.
 - 11 *Ibid.*
 - 12 Thomas Bedding, 'Chapter VI: 'The Developing Room: Practical Moving-Picture Making'', *The Bioscope*, 30 September 1909, p. 39.
 - 13 'A Leading British Film Company', p. 1137.
 - 14 See Talbot, 'Developing and Printing the Pictures' in *Moving Pictures*, chapter nine.
 - 15 'A Leading British Film Company', p. 1136.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 1137.
 - 17 According to another photograph in *ibid.*, p. 1136.
 - 18 Recorded by Denis Gifford, 'The Early Memoirs of Maurice Elvey', *Griffithiana*, no. 60–61, October 1997, p. 85.
 - 19 Thomas Bedding, 'Chapter VII: Some Defects of the Negative: Practical Moving-Picture Making', *The Bioscope*, 7 October 1909, p. 31, emphasis added.
 - 20 Eliot Stannard, 'The Secrets of Screen Success: No. 3 – The Unseen', *KLW*, 6 June 1918, p. 97.
 - 21 *Ibid.*
 - 22 *Ibid.*

- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Thomas Bedding, 'Chapter VIII: Toning and Tinting: Practical Moving-Picture Making', *The Bioscope*, 14 October 1909, p. 23.
- 25 Stannard, 'The Secrets of Screen Success', p. 97.
- 26 On Walthamstow, see Margaret O'Brien and Julia Holland, 'Picture Shows: The Early British Film Industry in Walthamstow', *History Today* 37 (February 1987): 9–15; and John Kirk, 'Hollywood E17: Film Production in Walthamstow in the Silent Era', *The Local Historian* 31.1 (February 2001): 31–46. See also Gregory Tonkin, *Showtime in Walthamstow* (Walthamstow: Walthamstow Antiquarian Society, [1967] 1983). Material in the next paragraphs is drawn from these sources. The articles by O'Brien and Holland and by Kirk are thoughtful histories of early film-making in Walthamstow, but inevitably reproduce the shortcomings of the secondary sources they rely on, such as Rachael Low's cinema histories.
- 27 There is some uncertainty about the dimensions of the B&C studio, as discussed. This figure follows Beynam Honri and is the most conservative. See Baynam Honri, 'British Film Studios 1900–1920: A Technical Survey', Appendix I in Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1914–1918* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd [1950] 1973), p. 255.
- 28 See Kirk, 'Hollywood E17'.
- 29 Rachael Low, chapter two, 'Production' in her *The History of the British Film 1914–1918*, p. 55.
- 30 Information about the studio is drawn mainly from 'Pictures in the Making', pp. 99–104, 124; Fred Dangerfield, 'The Birthplaces of British Films: No.3 – The British & Colonial Film Company', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 27 June 1914, pp. 426–28; 'Studio Notes', *The Bioscope*, 8 July 1915, p. 198; 'A Visit to British Studios', *KLW*, 8 July 1915, p. 30; and Frank Ashen, 'Some Recollections of the British and Colonial Film Studios in Walthamstow', unpublished typescript held by Waltham Forest Archives and Local Studies Library, Vestry House Museum, 1987. Ashen worked as a clerk at B&C in 1919–1920.
- 31 See 'Accident to B&C Player', *Film Censor*, 4 March 1914, p. 3; and 'British Studio Directory', *KLW*, 6 January 1921.
- 32 Ashen, 'Some Recollections', p. 3.
- 33 'Studio Notes', 8 July 1915, p. 198.
- 34 'British Studios', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 April 1919, p. 96.
- 35 'Pictures in the Making', p. 100.
- 36 'British Studios', 3 April 1919, p. 96, and 25 March 1920, p. 126; and 'The B.&C. Studios', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 May 1920, p. 183. In spring 1920, a representative from the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments visited the building and deplored the damage he felt the conversion had caused. See 'British Studios', 6 May 1920, p. 106.

- 37 Joan Morgan, *Camera* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1940), pp. 14–15, 16.
- 38 Mrs E.G. Batley, 'How Juvenile Cinema Stars are Trained', *Film Censor*, 15 July 1914. Reprinted from 'Training Tiny Cinema Stars', *Pearson's Weekly*, 4 July 1914, p. 57. I have discussed Ethyle Batley's work at B&C and elsewhere in Gerry Turvey, 'Constrained Emancipation: The Career of Ethyle Batley, Britain's Pioneering Woman Film Director', *Film History* 21.4 (2009): 359–72.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Stannard, 'The Secrets of Screen Success', p. 97.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 He even felt the 'music chooser', brought in shortly before a film's trade show, was a creative artist meriting a status not unlike that of the scenario writer.
- 48 'The B and C', p. xiv.
- 49 For 280 by 130 feet, see 'Trade Topics', 16 October 1913, p. 13; 'Round the Trade', *The Cinema*, 15 October 1913; and 'Pictures in the Making', p. 100 (though the latter prints the width of the studio as 180 feet). For 200 by 80 feet, see 'Studio Notes', 8 July 1915, p. 198. Before opening, it was put at 200 feet by 89 feet in 'Our View', *The Bioscope*, 24 July 1913, p. 234. The floor space was listed as 212 feet by 86 feet in 'British Studio Directory', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 January 1921. Also see Honri, 'British Film Studios 1900–1920', p. 255.
- 50 'Studio Notes', 8 July 1915, p. 198. In 1917–1918, the studio was still recognised as having one of the largest floor spaces in Britain and as being one of the best equipped studios. See 'A Striking 1918 Programme', *KLW*, 6 December 1917; and 'Re-Organisation of a British Production House', *KLW*, 11 July 1918, p. 64.
- 51 'The Life of Shakespeare: Filming a Great Production', *KLW*, 25 December 1913, p. 51. See also 'Pictures in the Making', p. 100.
- 52 See 'Trade Topics', 16 October 1913, p. 79; 'Pictures in the Making', p. 100; and Honri, 'British Film Studios 1900–1920', p. 255. Elsewhere, Honri gives the figure of twenty-eight lamps. See Honri, 'From Glasshouse to Gimmick Palace', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 May 1956, p. 47.
- 53 See 'Inside the Trade', *The Bioscope*, 21 October 1915; 'Globes for Arc Lamps', *Film Censor*, 20 October 1915, p. 5; and *Moving Picture Offered List*, 23 October 1915, p. 3002.

- 54 'The B. & C. Studios', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 May 1920, p. 183.
- 55 Honri, 'British Film Studios 1900–1920', p. 244. By 1919, there were occasions when two cameras would be used to film a particular scene, the second offering insurance against accidents with the first. See 'British Studios', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 April 1919, p. 96. Sometimes, apparently, four cameras could be operating.
- 56 'J. B. McDowell joins the B&C Company', *KLW*, 3 February 1910, p. 715.
- 57 See 'Trade Topics', 16 October 1913, p. 79; 'Pictures in the Making', p. 100; Dangerfield, 'The Birthplaces of British Films', p. 427; 'Filming a Great Production', p. 51; 'Round the Trade', 15 October 1913; and 'A Visit to British Studios', 8 July 1915, p. 50.
- 58 'Pictures in the Making', p. 102.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 'Studio Notes', 8 July 1915, p. 198.
- 61 Nestor, 'An All-British Tour', *The Cinema*, 8 July 1915, p. 64.
- 62 'News from the Studios', *The Cinema*, 14 January 1915. See also *Evening News*, 21 January 1915, p. 7.
- 63 'A Wonderful Set: Naples without the Smell: B&C Co. Stage a "Bit of Old Italy"', *The Cinema*, 16 March 1916, p. 61.
- 64 References to *Fatal Fingers* and its sets appear in 'Editorial', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 18 March 1916 and 3 June 1916; 'Round the Trade', 11 May 1916, p. 38; and 'A Splendid "Bramble-Stannard" Film: Masterly Work from the B and C Studios', *The Cinema*, 25 May 1916, p. 21.
- 65 See 'A "John Strange Winter" Story Filmed: Jimmy', *The Film-Renter*, 4 March 1916, p. 14; and 'Jimmy', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 12 February 1916, p. 4164.
- 66 Recorded by Gifford, 'The Early Memoirs of Maurice Elvey', p. 89.
- 67 Maurice Elvey, 'Memories of British Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 May 1956, p. 53.
- 68 Recorded by Gifford, 'The Early Memoirs of Maurice Elvey', p. 81.
- 69 Talbot, chapter thirteen, 'How a Cinema Play is Produced', in *Moving Pictures*.
- 70 Dangerfield, 'The Birthplaces of British Films', p. 428.
- 71 Recorded by Gifford, 'The Early Memoirs of Maurice Elvey', pp. 81, 83.
- 72 Ibid., p. 91.
- 73 'Trade Topics', 16 October 1913, p. 79.
- 74 Recorded by Gifford, 'The Early Memoirs of Maurice Elvey', p. 91.
- 75 Batley, 'How Juvenile Cinema Stars are Trained'.
- 76 'Filming the Old Bailey', *The Cinema*, 26 August 1915, p. 21, emphasis added.
- 77 In 1914, H.M. Lomas also identified the scenario-writer, director and photographer—representing, respectively, 'Literature, Drama, and Pictorial

- Art’—as the three significant figures in making a picture play. See Lomas, *Picture Play Photography*, pp. 5–6. Any major contribution from an art-director was not yet a factor for either Lomas, Elvey or Stannard.
- 78 Maurice Elvey, ‘The Position of Producer and Scenario Writer’, *KLW*, 18 April 1918.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 ‘Eliot Stannard on the Cameraman and the Scenario Writer’, Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 February 1921, p. xx.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Harold Weston, ‘The Kine Camera from the Producer’s Point of View’, *KLW*, 3 December 1914, p. 33.
- 83 ‘The Life of Shakespeare’, p. 16. Much of the information on the film comes from this article; ‘British Enterprise: The Life of Shakespeare Filmed: A £4,000 Production’, *Film Censor*, 17 December 1913, p. 3; and ‘The Life of Shakespeare: Unique Scenes at Stratford-on-Avon’, *Film Censor*, 4 February 1914, p. 2. See also ‘Gossip’, *The Picturegoer*, 14 February 1914, pp. 602–03; ‘Weekly Notes’, *KLW*, 11 December 1913; p. 6; and ‘Trade Notes’, *KLW*, 5 February 1914, p. 67.
- 84 A never-completed B&C biopic about Henry V—to be called *King Harry of England* and begun early in 1915 with Elvey as director—would similarly have introduced ‘[a]ll the principal incidents of history’ into a story ‘through which [ran] a charming romance’. See ‘Trade Notes’, 7 January 1915, p. 83. The aim of this film, which probably reveals some of the thinking behind the earlier Shakespeare production, was ‘not so much to recreate the political influences at work in Henry V. days as to depict the pageantry of that period, which was so rich in the picturesque’. See ‘News from the Studios’, 4 February 1915, p. 73.
- 85 Some of the issues raised here are discussed at length in the second chapter of Jon Burrows, *Legitimate Cinema: Theatre Stars in Silent British Films, 1908–1918* (University of Exeter Press, 2003) and in his ‘It Would Be a Mistake to Strive for Subtlety of Effect: Richard III and Populist, Pantomime Shakespeare in the 1910s’ in Andrew Higson (ed.), *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896–1930* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), pp. 78–93. See also John Collick, *Shakespeare, Cinema and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).
- 86 ‘The Life of Shakespeare’, *Moving Picture Offered List*, 31 January 1914, p. 537.
- 87 ‘British Enterprise’, p. 3.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 See Garry Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (London: Vintage, 1991).

- 90 'Filming a Great Production', p. 51.
- 91 Growcott wrote Denis Gifford a couple of letters in the winter of 1965–1966. There seems to have been a certain amount of mis-remembering in them, but he recalled working on the script, securing furniture for the London studio and gaining access to several of the Stratford locations, including to an ox-roasting in the square. He also claimed to have written and directed B&C's *Dick Turpin's Ride to York*, released in August 1913, and *The Bargee's Revenge*, released in November 1912 and, in his account, filmed on the Shropshire Canal. But the contemporary trade press records the latter as being made at Rickmansworth, with Percy Moran trying his hand at both scripting and direction, and the former as being the work of Charles Raymond. Growcott also recalled starting up his own theatre company between leaving Benson and working for B&C. See Frank Growcott, letters of 12 December 1965 and 27 January 1966, in Denis Gifford Special Collection at the Reuben Library, British Film Institute.
- 92 The phrase appeared more than once. See 'British Enterprise', p. 3 and 'The Life of Shakespeare', *The Pictures*, 14 February 1914, p. 16.
- 93 'The Life of Shakespeare', p. 16. See also *Evening News*, 29 January 1914, p. 7.
- 94 See *Evening News*, 11 December 1913, p. 7; 'Filming a Great Production', p. 51; and 'Film Gossip', *Illustrated Film Monthly*, February 1914, p. 336.
- 95 'The Life of Shakespeare: A Magnificent Biographical Production by the B and C', *The Cinema*, 19 February 1914, p. 71.
- 96 *Evening News*, 12 February 1914, p. 7.
- 97 'Filming a Great Production', p. 51. See also 'Shakespeare on the Screen', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 13 December 1913, p. 450.
- 98 Ibid. See also *Evening News*, 11 December 1913, p. 7.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 'A Magnificent Biographical Production', p. 71.

Chapter 6. On Screen: Performers and Picture Personalities

- 1 The trade magazine data in this chapter and the next has been supplemented at times by snippets of information from *The Kinematograph Year Books* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, Ltd); *The Picturegoer's Who's Who and Encyclopedia of the Screen Today* (London: Odham's Press Ltd, 1933 [compiled by The Picturegoer Weekly]), Denis Gifford, *British Cinema: An Illustrated Guide* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1968) and its later incarnation as *The Illustrated Who's Who in British Films* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1978); Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970: A Guide to Entertainment Films* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973); Andrew Spicer's entries

- in Brian McFarlane (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of British Film* (London: Methuen, 2003); and various census and genealogy websites such as Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>) and Findmypast (<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>).
- 2 Richard de Cordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 35.
 - 3 ‘Every Wrong Shall Be Righted’, *KLW*, 8 September 1910, p. 1149; and *Film House Record*, no. 21, 3 September 1910, p. 204.
 - 4 ‘Stroller’s Notes’, *KLW*, 7 December 1911, p. 261.
 - 5 ‘Messrs. Markt & Co. Handle “B. & C.” Films’, *KLW*, 11 January 1912, p. 569.
 - 6 See Geoffrey Macnab, chapter one, ‘Of Knights and Clowns’, in *Searching for Stars: Stardom and Screen Acting in British Cinema* (London: Cassell, 2000).
 - 7 ‘Editorial and Business Notices’, *The Cinema*, April 1912, p. 4, emphasis added. Alternatively, it would be an indoor event at Holborn Town Hall or one of the big studios. It is unclear whether the event actually happened, as some copies of *The Cinema* are missing from the British Library newspaper collection.
 - 8 These numbers have been calculated from a corrected filmography based on Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970*. The limited number of identifications that can be made for 1909–1911 are largely retrospective.
 - 9 De Cordova, *Picture Personalities*, p. 73.
 - 10 See, for example, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 20 May 1916, p. 180.
 - 11 ‘The Cleverest British Film Players’, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 23 January 1915.
 - 12 ‘Result of Greatest British Film Players Contest’, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 3 July 1915, p. 247.
 - 13 In addition, the company received a continuous flow of letters from fans offering themselves as picture-play actors, including for such top roles as Lieutenant Daring. See ‘What Picture Actors Earn’, *The Pictures*, 21 September 1912, p. 20; J.B. McDowell, ‘Concerning Would-Be Picture Actors’, *The Pictures*, 26 October 1912, p. 4; and ‘Motion Picture News: Mr J.B. McDowell’, *The Pictures*, no. 88, 1913, p. 22.
 - 14 ‘Filming the Old Bailey’, *The Cinema*, 26 August 1915, p. 21.
 - 15 ‘Lieut. Daring, RN, B&C’s New Naval Hero’, *KLW*, 14 September 1911, p. 1053; *Evening News*, 21 February 1912, p. 7; and ‘Picture Notes’, *The Pictures*, 6 April 1912, p. 23.
 - 16 ‘Those Were the Days’, *The Guardian* [Walthamstow edition], 17 April 1959, p. 19.
 - 17 In 1912, there was even a plan to train Nero, the B&C St Bernard, as a rival to the dog featured in Vitagraph films. See *Evening News*, 10 July 1912, p. 7.

- 18 F.D., 'The Girl without Fear: A Chat with Ivy Montfort', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 1–8 September 1917, p. 275, Ivy's emphasis. Information on Ivy Martinek has been taken from this item and 'Kings and Queens of Cinema: Miss Ivy Martinek', *Pearson's Weekly*, 1 February 1913, p. 805. Ivy was the only British 'queen' and only British performer in the series; the rest were American. See also F.D., 'The Girl without Fear: The Actress, the Elephant and the Snakes', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 19 December 1914, p. 293; 'Popular Picture Players: Miss Ivy Martinek', *Film Censor*, 14 August 1912, p. 2; and 'Popular Picture Players', *The Picturegoer*, 24 January 1914, p. 499.
- 19 Quoted from *Film Censor*, F.D. in *Pictures and the Picturegoer* and Ivy from *Pearson's Weekly*.
- 20 *Film Censor*, 4 November 1914, p. 6.
- 21 F.D., 'The Actress, the Elephant and the Snakes', p. 293.
- 22 Macnab, 'Of Knights and Clowns', pp. 14, 13.
- 23 The Martineks' antecedents were elusive, and they were long thought of as brother and sister. But their great niece, Sally Freytag, has meticulously researched the family tree and resolved many of the obscurities. She kindly gave me access to her material, and much of it has been woven into the account here and into that on Oceano in the next chapter.
- 24 The 1911 Census records her name as Ely, presumably short for her full name, Elfride, and her date of birth as 1883.
- 25 'Kings and Queens of Cinema', p. 805.
- 26 Interestingly, her character name in *Lieutenant Daring Defeats the Middleweight Champion*, released by B&C in August 1912, is Ivy Montfort. See the cast list in *The Pictures*, 27 July 1912. Gifford has Mountford in his catalogue. In F.D., *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 1–8 September 1917, she is referred to as Ivy Montfort.
- 27 F.D., 'The Actress, the Elephant and the Snakes', p. 293.
- 28 Oceano died in April 1935, and the following September Ivy married a news editor from Pathé Freres. She died in 1965.
- 29 I have discussed Ivy's work as Three-Fingered Kate in Gerry Turvey, 'Three-Fingered Kate: Celebrating Womanly Cunning and Successful Female Criminal Enterprise', *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 7.2 (2010): 200–11.
- 30 On Haley, see W. Gladstone Haley, 'The Adventures of "Snorky"', *The Pictures*, 28 December 1914, p. 12. All quotations are from this source.
- 31 See Richard Abel, *The Ciné Comes to Town: French Cinema 1896–1914* (London: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 227–45.
- 32 Information on Moran's career comes from 'Lieut. Daring, RN by Himself', *Pearson's Weekly*, 27 August 1912, p. 229; 'Interview with Lieut. Daring, RN', *The Bioscope*, 28 March 1912, p. 929, also in *The Pictures*, 11 May 1912, p. 17;

- 'Leaves from the Life of Cinema "Stars": Lieut. Daring', *Film Censor*, 2 April 1913; 'Programme Fill Ups', *Top-Line Indicator*, 12 March 1913, p. 4; 'Popular Picture Players: Lieut. Daring', *Film Censor*, 14 August 1912, p. 2; and 'Picture Notes', *The Pictures*, 6 April 1912, p. 23.
- 33 'Filming a Lieut. Daring Subject', *KLW*, 13 June 1912. Percy had a sister and a brother, Mike, who was also briefly an actor with B&C but who died in June 1912. See *KLW*, 20 June 1912.
- 34 Percy Moran, 'When I Was a Boy Boxer', *The Pictures*, 16 November 1912, p. 4.
- 35 'Motion Picture News', *The Pictures*, no. 77, 1913, p. 22.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 'Dick Turpin: Walturdaw's Latest All-British "Exclusive"', *The Bioscope*, 10 July 1913, p. 140.
- 38 See Richard Anthony Baker, *British Music Hall: An Illustrated History* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005), pp. 175–77.
- 39 'Interview with Lieut. Daring, RN', p. 929.
- 40 Denis Gifford suggests he was working on chase comedies for Gaumont in 1904. See Gifford, *British Cinema: An Illustrated Guide* and *The Illustrated Who's Who in British Films*.
- 41 'Lieut. Daring, RN by Himself', p. 229.
- 42 'Motion Picture News', *The Pictures*, 24 August 1912, p. 31.
- 43 He also developed a number of production skills. He could operate a camera and took topical pictures of the king and queen's return from India at Portsmouth. He began to write scripts, including, he claimed, some for Daring, and he was given the opportunity to direct. See 'Lieut. Daring, R. N. by Himself', p. 229.
- 44 'Leaves from the Life of Cinema "Stars": Lieut. Daring', p. 3. See also 'Cinema News in Brief', *Film Censor*, 1 October 1913, p. 6.
- 45 Advertisement, *KLW*, 10 September 1914.
- 46 Moran died in 1958.
- 47 'Interview with Lieut. Daring, RN', p. 929. See also 'Photoplay Gossip', *The Pictures*, 6 April 1912, p. 21 and 'Items of interest: Lieut. Daring Nearly Killed at Brighton', *The Bioscope*, 7 March 1912, p. 655. The earlier accounts suggest Moran suffered only a strained wrist.
- 48 'Picture Notes', 20 April 1912, p. 23; and 'Interview with Lieut. Daring, RN', p. 929.
- 49 'Interview with Lieut. Daring, RN', p. 929.
- 50 'Round the Trade', *The Cinema*, 6 November 1913.
- 51 'Powerful Naval Drama: Lieutenant Daring and the Stolen Invention', *Film Censor*, 6 May 1914, p. 3.
- 52 *Film Censor*, 15 July 1914 and 2 September 1914.

- 53 *Film Censor*, 9 September 1914, p. 6, emphasis added.
- 54 ‘Important Notice to Exhibitors and their Patrons’, *The Cinema*, 1 September 1914, p. 24.
- 55 Patrick Glynn, ‘Miss Dorothy Foster’, *The Pictures*, 25 May 1912, p. 19. Other information on Foster is from ‘Miss Dorothy Foster’, *The Pictures*, 19 February 1913, p. 13; and *Evening News*, 22 May 1912, p. 7.
- 56 *Film Censor*, 5 March 1913, p. 3; and Glynn, ‘Miss Dorothy Foster’, p. 19.
- 57 Glynn, ‘Miss Dorothy Foster’, p. 19.
- 58 *Evening News*, 22 May 1912, p. 7.
- 59 ‘Items of Interest: Well Again’, *The Bioscope*, 11 July 1912, p. 87, ‘Picture Notes’, 3 August 1912, p. 24 and *Evening News*, 15 May 1912, p. 7, and 10 July 1912, p. 7.
- 60 ‘The Passing Show: Obscured “Stars”’, *Film Censor*, 1 July 1914, p. 3.
- 61 W.G. F[aulkner], *Evening News*, 21 February 1912, p. 7.
- 62 ‘Versatile English Actor: George Foley of B&C Films’, *Film Censor*, 8 April 1914, p. 2.
- 63 ‘Popular English Actor’, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 21 November 1914.
- 64 ‘Mr. Walleth Waller’, *The Pictures*, 3 August 1912, p. 24. See also J. Walleth Waller, ‘Our Trip to Cornwall’, *The Pictures*, 7 December 1912, pp. 23–24.
- 65 ‘Trade Topics’, *The Bioscope*, 14 October 1915 and ‘The B and C: The Rise of an All-British Institution’, *The Cinema*, 10 September 1914, p. xv.
- 66 Much of the information on Trimmingham is from Stephen Bourne, ‘Ernest Trimmingham’, *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television* (London: Continuum, 2001), pp. 7–9.
- 67 He appears in a still for ‘The Tattooed Will’ in *KLW*, 29 January 1914.
- 68 On the 1925 electoral roll he was living at Nottingham Court, 139 Shaftesbury Avenue, near McDowell at 123.
- 69 ‘Daring and Teaching’, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 24 October 1914, p. 163.
- 70 An alternative date may have been 1886. See Gifford, *British Cinema: An Illustrated Guide* and *The Illustrated Who’s Who in British Films*.
- 71 ‘Daring and Interesting Episodes with the Camera: The Man who Dares’, *The Kinematograph Year Book* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly Ltd, 1915), p. 81. See also ‘Lieut. Daring: A New Personality: Mr. Harry Lorraine Thrown from Walton Bridge’, *Film Censor*, 3 September 1913.
- 72 ‘Mr. Harry Lorraine: The Handcuff King’, *Film Censor*, 19 March 1913, p. 4. Gifford’s catalogue has Lorraine playing Lieutenant Rose in the September 1912 episode of the Clarendon series.
- 73 ‘Round the Trade’, 6 November 1913 and ‘Trade Notes’, *KLW*, 6 November 1913.
- 74 He continued in acting till 1929, but died in New York in August 1934.

- 75 Leonard Crocombe, 'The Girl on the Film: No.2: Miss Dorothy Batley', *The Picturegoer*, 29 November 1913, pp. 226-28. See also 'Talented Juvenile Actress in B&C Films: Miss Dorothy Batley', *Film Censor*, 11 March 1914, p. 2.
- 76 She was born on 18 January 1902 and died on 8 December 1983.
- 77 Crocombe, 'The Girl on the Film', pp. 226-28.
- 78 'A Cinema Actor's Marvellous Escape', *The Cinema*, 20 August 1913, p. 27. See also 'Our View', *The Bioscope*, 21 August 1913.
- 79 'The Broken Chisel', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 13 September 1913, p. 178.
- 80 'Dorothy Batley Injured in Cinema Drama', *Film Censor*, 24 September 1913. See also 'News in Brief: B&C Actors Injured in a Fire Scene', *The Cinema*, 24 September 1913, p. 25.
- 81 She continued working in films with her parents before re-entering the theatre in 1920, debuting in a revival of *Charlie's Aunt*. She later became the third wife of film actor Guy Newall.
- 82 'Through the Clouds', *The Cinema*, 20 August 1913, p. 68. See also 'A Daring B&C Actress: Miss Marie Pickering', *The Cinema*, 20 August 1913, p. 25. She was a Londoner.
- 83 Leonard Crocombe, 'The Girl on the Film: No.4: Miss Ethel Bracewell', *The Picturegoer*, 24 January 1914, p. 482. See also 'News in Brief: Another B&C Capture', *The Cinema*, 4 December 1913, p. 15; and 'Trade Topics', 4 December 1913.
- 84 *Ibid.*, pp. 482, 484, Bracewell's emphasis.
- 85 *Ibid.*, p. 484.
- 86 By June 1915, Ethel Bracewell was appearing in a British Empire film.
- 87 'Miss Elizabeth Risdon', *The Pictures*, 25 January 1914, p. 6. For information on Elizabeth Risdon's career, see Leonard Crocombe, 'The Girl on the Film: No.11: Miss Elizabeth Risdon', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 17 December 1914, pp. 150-52; 'A Popular English Player: Miss Elizabeth Risdon of the B and C company', *KLW*, 12 November 1914, p. 121; 'Artistry on the Screen: Miss Elizabeth Risdon's Fine Achievement', *KLW*, 1 April 1915, pp. 84-85; 'Famous Artiste helps Belgians: A Chat with Elizabeth Risdon', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 15 May 1915, p. 112; G.A.A., 'Mr Elvey and Miss Risdon', *The Cinema*, 20 May 1915, p. 28; 'A Charming Leading Lady', *KLW*, 15 January 1914; 'A Popular British Player: Elizabeth Risdon', *Film Censor*, 18 November 1914, p. 4; 'The Rise of an All-British Institution', p. xv; and *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 3 July 1915.
- 88 *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
- 89 Crocombe, 'The Girl on the Film: No.11', p. 150.
- 90 Ashley Exclusives advertisement for 'Her Luck in London', *KLW*, 3 December 1914, pp. 68-9.

- 91 Crocombe, 'The Girl on the Film: No.11', p. 150.
- 92 Ibid., pp. 150, 152, Risdon's own emphasis.
- 93 'Artistry on the Screen', p. 84.
- 94 G.A.A., 'Mr. Elvey and Miss Risdon', p. 28.
- 95 'A Popular British Player', *Film Censor*, 18 November 1914, p. 4.
- 96 'Artistry on the Screen', p. 84. See also 'A Picture of Entertaining Interest: The Life Story of Florence Nightingale', *KLW*, 11 March 1915, p. 16.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 G.A.A., 'Mr. Elvey and Miss Risdon', p. 28.
- 99 The attractions of her first love, the theatre, proved persuasive and she spent the 1920s alternating stage appearances between London and New York. In 1934, she settled in Hollywood and began taking on character parts in films,—often tough matriarchs. She had appeared in over ninety films at the time of her death on 20 December 1958 at Santa Monica, California.
- 100 Groves was born in London on 8 August 1880 and died there in 1955. Bramble was born in Portsmouth, possibly in 1880, and died in Friern Barnet, London, on 17 May 1963.
- 101 For information on Fred Groves, see Dollie Tree, 'A Busy British Player', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 8 April 1916, pp. 34–35 and 'Popular Picture Players: Fred Groves', *The Picturegoer*, 31 January 1914, p. 533.
- 102 'Popular Picture Players: Fred Groves', p. 533.
- 103 'Studio Notes', *The Cinema*, 18 February 1915.
- 104 His film career later graduated to character parts and continued into the start of the 1950s; his stage career ran in parallel until 1945.
- 105 'Mr. Harold Weston's "Shadows"', *The Cinema*, 17 June 1915, p. 17; and *Evening News*, 30 September 1915, p. 6.
- 106 'Notes and News', *The Cinema*, 13 May 1915, p. 13; and 'A. V. Bramble as Producer', *The Cinema*, 15 July 1915, p. 45. Gifford lists Bramble as the director of a comic short, *The Boy and the Cheese*, as early as January 1915, but this might be a misattribution.
- 107 'A. V. Bramble as Producer', p. 45.
- 108 'The Anti-Something-or-Another People; and the Film Play of Today', *KLW*, 15 June 1916, p. 17.
- 109 Bramble's career as director continued into the early 1930s.
- 110 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 4 June 1914.
- 111 'News from the Studios', *The Cinema*, 31 December 1914, p. 52.
- 112 Davison advertisement, *Film Censor*, 13 January 1915, pp. 2–3.
- 113 *Evening News*, 15 January 1915, pp. 10 and 7, original emphasis.
- 114 'A Retrospect of the Year', *The Kinematograph Year Book* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, 1916), p. 23.

- 115 'A New Screen Star: Milton Rosmer Yields to the "Picture" Lure', *KLW*, 21 October 1915, p. 83. Like Groves, Rosmer, born Arthur Milton Lunt at Southport in 1882, came from a theatrical family and, like other Period Two B&C actors, he gained a variety of early stage experiences: the chorus in burlesque, Shakespeare, melodrama with the Melvilles at Drury Lane, time with Martin Harvey's company, touring America and Canada, repertory work 'with ultra-modern drama' and appearances at the progressive Court Theatre in Galsworthy. The latter experiences would have appealed to Weston. Rosmer's film appearance proved a salutary one because it persuaded him that 'the best "intimate" English effects' were on the way to being best produced in films—possibly an indirect tribute to Weston's directorial skills—and taught him 'the camera [was] so much more calculating and cold blooded [than an audience]. But it [was] a splendid discipline for an actor.'
- 116 'Another Capture by the B&C: Mr. Arthur Finn Joins the Stock Company', *The Cinema*, 22 October 1913, p. 61.
- 117 'Round the Trade', 11 December 1913, 'British Enterprise: The Finn-Weston Film Publishing Co.', *Film Censor*, 16 December 1914, p. 2 and *The Bioscope*, 10 June 1915. In the 1920s, Finn concentrated on a stage career and then returned to character parts in Hollywood in the late 1930s.
- 118 F. D., 'The Man with a Hundred Faces', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 20 March 1915, p. 525. See also 'News in Brief', *The Cinema*, 30 July 1914, p. 25. After appearing with B&C, Barlow went on to film with London, Barker and other British companies.
- 119 Ibid.

Chapter 7. Behind the Screen: Policy-makers, Directors and Writers

- 1 Information on Bloomfield is to be found in 'J. B. McDowell joins the B&C Company', *KLW*, 3 February 1910, pp. 713, 715, 717; 'A Leading British Film Company: The Advancement of "B&C"', *KLW*, 21 September 1911, pp. 1136–37; and E.L., 'The Cameraman: He Rarely Enters the Limelight of Publicity', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 23 December 1916, p. 274. As with the biographies that follow, information has been checked against census and other information on the Ancestry and Findmypast websites.
- 2 On Biograph, see Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise: The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897–1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999).
- 3 Unlike its competitors, Biograph had developed a specialised 70 mm gauge film and did not adopt the standard 35 mm stock until around 1902.

- 4 Luke McKernan, 'Edward George Turner' in Stephen Herbert and Luke McKernan (eds), *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1996), p. 143.
- 5 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 17 November 1910, pp. 3–6. In the 1911 census he was living at Hunsdon Road, New Cross, London, with his wife, young daughter and a female servant.
- 6 F.D., 'The Boom in British Films: "Pictures" Visits Broadwest's Biggest Studio', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 22 June 1916, pp. 316–17. His profile on the website of the British Universities Film and Video Council suggests he did some wartime service with the RAF. <http://bufvc.uk/newscreenscreen/search/index.php/person/102>
- 7 Luke McKernan, *Topical Budget: The Great British News Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992). He died some time before 1937. See *The Kinematograph Year Book* of 1937, in which he is referred to as the 'late' A.H. Bloomfield.
- 8 'Right in the Thick of It: Mr McDowell's Experiences with a Kine Camera in "the Big Push"', *KLW*, 13 July 1916, p. 11. See also 'The B and C: The Rise of an All-British Institution', *The Cinema*, 10 September 1914, p. xiv; and *The Kinematograph Year Book* (London: The Kinematograph Weekly Ltd, 1937). McDowell's father died in January 1913 after a long illness, having recently retired on a pension from the Royal Arsenal. See *The Bioscope*, 16 January 1913.
- 9 Brown and Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise*, p. 242, note 68.
- 10 Lt.-Col. A.C. Bromhead, 'Reminiscences of the British Film Trade', *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society*, 11 December 1913, p. 9. Richard Brown, in his history of the company, suggests the status of Biograph's cameramen was that of 'a semi-skilled worker with narrow responsibilities'. See Brown and Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise*, p. 42, note 66.
- 11 'J. B. McDowell Joins the B&C Company', *KLW*, 3 February 1910, p. 713. In the 1911 census, McDowell was living with his Woolwich-born wife Emily in King's Road, Willesden Green, north-west London. They had been married in 1900 but there were no children.
- 12 J. Brooke Wilkinson, chapter eleven, 'The War Years', *Films and Censorship in England*, Public Record Office, INF.4/2; and Brown and Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise*, p. 235. Biograph had ceded the Palace to the Warwick Trading Company in December 1902.
- 13 *The Kinematograph Year Book*, 1937, p. 322.
- 14 'Taking a Picture Surrounded by Angry Bees', *KLW*, 1 December 1910, p. 62.
- 15 'Topical Pars', *KLW*, 19 September 1907; and 'The Trade Today', *KLW*, 19 September 1907.
- 16 'Topical Pars', *KLW*, 2 April 1908, p. 359.

- 17 'Trade News of the Week', *KLW*, 12 August 1909, p. 655.
- 18 *KLW*, 26 August 1909, p. 757 and 'Stroller's Notes', *KLW*, 28 October 1909, p. 1227.
- 19 J. B. McDowell Joins the B&C Company', p. 713.
- 20 Kenneth Gordon, 'Cinema Log', *The Cine Technician*, July–August 1949, p. 110.
- 21 Will G. Barker, 'The Little Worries of a Gatherer of News in Animation', *KLW*, 28 October 1909, p. 1300.
- 22 'Round the Trade', *The Cinema*, 27 April 1916, p. 16.
- 23 When McDowell joined B&C, two of its more important employees were Oceano and Ivy Martinek. Oceano had a sister, Aimee, who, from some time in 1911, when she was thirty-three, entered into a relationship with McDowell. There is a signed portrait postcard sent to him at Finchley in August that year, and in 1915, they had a daughter, Adrienne—even though McDowell was long married. Aimee did some work with B&C, appearing, for example, as Queen Elizabeth in 1914's *The Life of Shakespeare*, which McDowell part-directed. This information comes from Sally Freytag's researches into the Martinek family history.
- 24 'Cameramen at the Front', *The Bioscope*, 4 November 1915, p. 520G; and 'Roll of Honour', *KLW*, 13 January 1916.
- 25 See McKernan, *Topical Budget*.
- 26 'Kinematographers at the Front: Farewell to Cameramen', *KLW*, 4 November 1915, p. 14.
- 27 Brooke Wilkinson, 'The War Years', p. 298.
- 28 'Right in the Thick of It', p. 11; 'Why Every Exhibitor Should Show The Battle of the Somme', *KLW*, 17 August 1916; and advertisement in *The Bioscope*, 10 August 1916, p. 474.
- 29 See McKernan, *Topical Budget*.
- 30 'Popular Picture Personalities: Official Cinematographer's Honour', *KLW*, 27 June 1918, p. 58. See also 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 20 June 1918, p. 52.
- 31 On the 1925 electoral register, John B. and Emily McDowell are living in a flat at Seaton Mansions, 213 Shaftesbury Avenue.
- 32 Advertisement, *KLW*, 23 October 1919, p. xxiv; and page advertisement in Valentia Steer, *The Secrets of the Cinema* (London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd, 1920).
- 33 'March of the Guards', *The Cinema*, 27 March 1919, p. 73; and Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue: Volume 2: Non-Fiction Films 1888–1994* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000).
- 34 'Gossip and Opinions', *The Bioscope*, 2 March 1922, p. 6.
- 35 Kenneth Gordon, 'Cinema Log', *The Cine Technician*, July–August 1949, p. 110. See also *The Cine Technician*, December 1936–January 1937. He died at Pitsea, Essex, in November 1954.

- 36 George Rowell, *The Victorian Theatre, 1792–1914* [1956] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 80–81.
- 37 The statistics that follow are based on attributions made in Gifford's catalogue—including his estimates and guesses—but corrected, at times, by myself. A number of films in the B&C filmography lack director credits, but may have been directed by one or other of the listed figures. The year 1915 has a significant number of uncredited films, which may reflect the company's search for a more permanent 'house' director that year. See Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970: A Guide to Entertainment Films* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973).
- 38 Other directors working briefly for the company were Sidney Morgan, who made a couple of films in 1915 and 1917, Lawrence Caird, who was brought in to direct a 1912 Christmas special, and Frank Growcott, who was secured to assist McDowell on *The Life of Shakespeare*. Several other company members also directed: the actors Percy Moran, Wallett Waller and Charles Calvert each made one or two films, and the writers Harold Brett and Eliot Stannard both directed a couple.
- 39 'A Chat with Oceano Martinek', *The Pictures*, 21 December 1912, p. 12. Information on Martinek is from this, and also from 'A Well-Known English Producer: Oceano Martinek', *KLW*, 11 July 1912; also as 'A Versatile British Producer: Oceano Martinek', *Film Censor*, 19 February 1913.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Materials from Sally Freytag's researches into the Martinek family have been woven into this account, along with data from the contemporary trade press.
- 42 There is a family photograph of him in the bullring.
- 43 'A Chat with Oceano Martinek', p. 12.
- 44 Leonard and his wife were part of the team. Later, Leonard would appear on the halls around England.
- 45 Interestingly, the title card of *Lieutenant Daring Quells a Rebellion* (September 1912) presents the film as 'by O. Martinek', a very rare crediting of a film's director.
- 46 Gifford lists him as making a documentary in 1922, *Glastonbury Past and Present*. See Denis Gifford, *British Cinema: An Illustrated Guide* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1968); and Denis Gifford, *The Illustrated Who's Who in British Films* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1978). Oceano Martinek died from tuberculosis in April 1935.
- 47 'Mr J. B. McDowell Joins the B&C Company', pp. 715, 717, *KLW*, 2 May 1912; and 'Picture Notes', *The Pictures*, 25 May 1912, p. 23. Information on Raymond is from V.T.F., 'Experiences of a Producer: A Chat with Mr. Charles Raymond of B and C Fame', *The Cinema*, 15 January 1913, p. 28; 'A Versatile Producer: Mr. Charles Raymond of the B&C company', *Film*

- Censor*, 22 January 1913; ‘Picture Notes’, *The Pictures*, 25 May 1912, p. 23; and ‘A Pioneer of the Film Industry’, *KLW*, 17 August 1916, p. 27.
- 48 See Gavin Weightman, *Bright Lights, Big City: London Entertained 1830–1950* (London: Collins and Brown, 1992), pp. 88, 94.
- 49 V.T.F., ‘Experiences of a Producer’, p. 28.
- 50 He was still directing at the end of 1918 and died in 1930.
- 51 ‘Every Wrong Shall be Righted’, *KLW*, 8 September 1910, p. 1149.
- 52 A Wikipedia entry (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_Northcote) has Sidney Webber Northcote born in Liverpool in 1884 and dying in London in 1952. It suggests he also made some non-B&C films in 1913–1915 and one in 1932. A ship’s crew list on the web has a fifteen year old of the same name apprenticed into the RNVR in January 1899, but seems to suggest he deserted from a voyage in 1900!
- 53 Aylott, ‘Reminiscences of a Showman’. Information on Aylott is from this and from ‘Dave Aylott, Producer’, *KLW*, 1 August 1912, ‘Who’s What in the Studio’, *The Kinematograph Year Book* (London: The Kinematograph Weekly Ltd, 1921), p. 556; and Denis Gifford, *British Cinema* and *The Illustrated Who’s Who in British Films*.
- 54 At his demobilization in 1919, he joined Samuelson, and in 1921, formed his own short-lived production company, Brilliant Photoplays. He was still making shorts at the end of the 1920s, but with the introduction of sound, became a prominent make-up artist. He died at Hatfield in 1969.
- 55 In fact, Aylott’s was one among several claims to have invented the brave lieutenant. Direction of later films in the series was divided up at first between Martinek and Raymond and later between Charles Weston and Ernest Batley. Thus, like the playing of the hero, the direction of the films in the Daring ‘franchise’ was shared over time by several company members.
- 56 Information on Fitzhamon is from Denis Gifford, ‘Fitz: The Old Man of the Screen’ in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1986), pp. 314–20; and Gifford, *British Cinema*.
- 57 He died in London in 1961.
- 58 W.G. Faulkner, ‘A Maker of History: Romantic Career of Youngest Film Producer’, *Evening News*, 13 June 1913, p. 7. Information on Weston is from this, and also V.T.F., ‘The Man of the Hour: Mr. Charles Weston, the World’s Youngest Producer’, *The Cinema*, 18 June 1913, p. 11; and ‘Programme Fill-Ups: Charles Weston’, *Top-Line Indicator*, 25 June 1913, p. 4.
- 59 V.T.F., ‘The Man of the Hour’, p. 11.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 ‘Round the Trade’, 11 December 1913.
- 62 ‘British Cinema Enterprise: The Weston-Finn Publishing Company’, *Film Censor*, 16 December 1914, p. 2. In February, Weston fell from a wire 100

- feet up and broke his leg, and so Finn took over direction whilst his partner wrote scripts until he could return to work in June. Their joint production activity continued through to March 1915, at which point Weston assumed control as the Weston Feature Film Co. By 1919, however, he was dead—apparently committing suicide in New York.
- 63 Information on Youngdeer is from Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907–1915* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 159, 173; Matthew Sweet, ‘The Forgotten Film Hero of Finchley’, *The Guardian*, 24 September 2010; and Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Young_Deer). More recently, Youngdeer’s Native American ancestry has been questioned.
- 64 Back in America, Youngdeer’s career never seems to have recovered, and he worked either as a second-unit director or on low-budget B-movies and serials in the 1930s. He died in New York in 1946.
- 65 Information on the origins of Ernest and Ethyle Batley has been derived from the census data on genealogy websites such as Ancestry and Findmypast, and from copies of their birth, marriage and death certificates.
- 66 ‘Studio Notes’, *Film Censor*, 15 January 1913, p. 4.
- 67 At least, according to the listings in Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue 1895–1970*.
- 68 ‘The Humours of War’, *The Cinema*, 18 June 1913.
- 69 Projector, ‘Gossip and Opinions’, *The Bioscope*, 3 May 1917, p. 389; also ‘Death of Mrs. Ernest G. Batley’, *The Era*, 2 May 1917, p. 20.
- 70 ‘The B and C’, p. xv.
- 71 ‘The Midnight Wedding: A Lyceum Favourite on the Screen’, *The Cinema*, 7 May 1914, p. 44.
- 72 See ‘Gossip’, *The Picturegoer*, 24 January 1914.
- 73 See ‘Trade Topics’, *The Bioscope*, 29 October 1914, p. 397.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 28 January 1915, p. 303; and ‘New from the Studios’, *The Cinema*, 4 February 1915, p. 73.
- 75 Burlingham Standard films were sold through the New Agency Film Company, which, in April 1915, bought out Burlingham’s share in his own company. The Batleys were retained in the takeover and put in charge of the small studio at Ebury Street, near Sloane Square, and the new production company, first named New Agency and then British Oak. Both specialized in releasing the films they individually wrote and directed. In April 1917, after a serious operation in the Chelsea Hospital for Women, Ethyle died of cervical cancer and heart failure. Ernest’s career petered out shortly after when, in 1919, he scripted and directed his last film, *The Sins of Youth* (May 1919), with Dorothy and himself performing. He died at Bournemouth in 1955. See ‘New Agency Film Co. and Burlingham Standard

- Films', *Film Censor*, 28 April 1915; 'New Agency Studio', *Film Censor*, 5 May 1915, p. 2; Nestor, 'Round the Trade', *The Cinema*, 29 April 1915, p. 11; Projector, 'Gossip and Opinions', 3 May 1917, p. 389; and Ethyle's death certificate. I have discussed Ethyle's career in greater detail in Gerry Turvey, 'Constrained Emancipation: The Career of Ethyle Batley, Britain's Pioneering Woman Film Director', *Film History* 21 (2009): 359–72, and 'Adopting a Female Perspective: An Account of the Films of Ethyle Batley, 1912–17', *Journal of British Film and Television* 15.2 (2018): 271–90.
- 76 Maurice Elvey, 'Memories of British Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 May 1956, p. 53. Information on Elvey is from Linda Wood, *The Commercial Imperative in the British Film Industry: Maurice Elvey, A Case Study* (London: BFI, 1987), pp. 3–35, itself based on an interview with Elvey by Denis Gifford subsequently published as 'The Early Memoirs of Maurice Elvey', *Griffithiana*, no. 60–61, October 1997. See also 'The B and C', p. xv.
- 77 'Maurice Elvey in Conversation with John Sharp', a broadcast of 29 November 1963 in Wood, *The Commercial Imperative*, p. 55.
- 78 'The Hidden Life of London: A Feast of Melodrama in Her Luck in London', *The Cinema*, 26 November 1914, p. 53.
- 79 'Deathless Song Filmed', *The Cinema*, 29 September 1915, p. 72.
- 80 G.A.A[tkinson], 'Mr Elvey and Miss Risdon', *The Cinema*, 20 May 1915, p. 28; 'Editorial chat', *The Cinema*, 20 May 1915, p. 11; and 'Fourteen Exclusives in Thirteen Months: Interview with Mr Maurice Elvey', *KLW*, 20 May 1915, p. 8. Consequently, he could afford a cosy flat overlooking London's Green Park.
- 81 G.A.A[tkinson], 'Mr Elvey and Miss Risdon', p. 28.
- 82 'A Star of the Film-Producing World', *KLW*, 13 September 1917, p. 83.
- 83 Maurice Elvey, 'The Birth and Growth of an Idea', *KLW*, 14 November 1918, p. 100.
- 84 'The Individualism of All-British Films: A Talk with Mr Maurice Elvey on Producing', *KLW*, 21 February 1918, p. 81, emphasis added.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Maurice Elvey, 'The Position of Producer and Scenario Writer', *KLW*, 18 April 1918, p. 64.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 'Fourteen Exclusives in Thirteen Months', p. 8.
- 90 Elvey, 'The Birth and Growth of an Idea', p. 100. He also accused manufacturers of financial parsimony for their refusal to allow screen credits to such creative workers as directors and scenario writers.
- 91 From Diploma, he moved over to direct for the London parent company, during which time he sustained a serious injury. Whilst on duty with the

- Red Cross, an explosion during a Zeppelin bombing raid caused a brain concussion and induced a mastoid paralysis. He nearly died, underwent a major operation and had to take six months' enforced rest. He returned to direction and his career continued through to 1957, during which time he became Britain's most prolific director. He died at Brighton in 1967. See 'Round the Trade', 9 November 1916; and 'A Star of the Film Producing World', p. 83.
- 92 Introduction to Harold Weston, 'In Defence of British Films!', *The Cinema*, 7 October 1915, p. 16; 'Mr. Harold Weston', *The Bioscope*, 15 July 1915, p. 273; and 'Mr. Harold Weston: Author, Actor and Producer', *KLW*, 10 June 1915, p. 96.
- 93 'Mr. Harold Weston: Author, Actor and Producer', p. 96.
- 94 G.A. A[tkinson], 'Pall Mall Photoplays: First of New B&C Series', *The Cinema*, 23 December 1915, p. 48.
- 95 Career information comes from a series of magazine profiles on Weston. See 'Mr. Harold Weston: Author, Actor and Producer', p. 96; 'Mr. Harold Weston', *The Bioscope*, 15 July 1915, p. 273; 'Author-Actor-Producer', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 4 September 1915; and R. Judd Green, 'Actor, Author, and Producer: A Chat with Harold Weston', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 16 December 1916. The 1911 census records a twenty-five-year-old Harold Weston as lodging with fellow actors and a theatrical manager at a hotel in Brighton, where, presumably, they were performing. He had been born the son of a grocer in Birmingham in either 1886 or 1884 (depending on the evidence of either the 1911 or 1901 censuses), and, in 1901, was working as a clerk in a restaurant. If this is B&C's Harold Weston, as seems likely, he must have travelled to Australia in the early years of the century before returning to England several years later. This census information was accessed at Findmypast.
- 96 Harold Weston, 'The Call of the Drum: How a Young Man Atoned for his Lapse from Honesty', *Pearson's Weekly*, 19 December 1914, pp. 563–64.
- 97 See Harold Weston, 'The Kine Camera: From the Producer's Point of View', *KLW*, 3 December 1914, p. 33; and 'Correspondence' or 'Our Post Bag', *The Cinema*, 24 December 1914, p. 41, 7 January 1915, p. 20, and 14 January 1915, pp. 49, 53. Weston's ideas on 'atmosphere' are discussed further in Chapter 9.
- 98 See 'The Truth about Weak Films', *The Cinema*, 24 June 1915, pp. 2–3, 'The Tyranny of Author-Producers', *The Cinema*, 1 July 1915, pp. 2–3, and 8 July 1915, p. 45; and 'Our Post Bag', *The Cinema*, 8 July 1915, p. 52, and 15 July 1915, p. 62.
- 99 See 'Trade Topics', 2 December 1915, p. 981 and 'Gossip', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 11 December 1915.

- 100 Harold Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing* (London: McBride, Nast and Co., 1916).
- 101 'Mr. Harold Weston', *The Bioscope*, 15 July 1915, p. 273, emphases added.
- 102 'Mr. Harold Weston: Author, Actor and Producer', p. 96, emphasis added.
- 103 'Author-Actor-Producer'.
- 104 Weston, 'In Defence of British Films!', p. 16.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 I have discussed Weston's aesthetic principles in Gerry Turvey, 'Enter the Intellectuals: Eliot Stannard, Harold Weston and the Discourse on Cinema and Art' in Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *Scene-Stealing: Sources for British Cinema before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2003), pp. 85–93.
- 107 Harold Weston, 'Shadows', *The Kinematograph Year Book* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly, Ltd, 1916), p. 456.
- 108 'Strategy Withdrawn from the Open Market', *Film Censor*, 8 September 1915, p. 4. See also 'Trade Topics', 9 September 1915, p. 1093 and *Moving Picture Offered List*, 11 September 1915, p. 1996.
- 109 Ibid. See also 'Trade Topics', *Film Renter*, 29 January 1916.
- 110 At the same time, several of the company's directors worked on their own scripts, including Charles Weston, Ernest Batley and, most thoroughly, Harold Weston.
- 111 See 'British and Colonial Enterprise', *KLW*, 29 February 1912, p. 1021; and 'Lieut. Daring's Tour', *KLW*, 18 January 1912, p. 647. In the 1911 census, he was living with his wife and a small son and daughter at Turners Road, Bow, East London. He acted in several films, usually taking 'semi-heavy parts', and directed a couple of films from his own scripts. See 'A Clever British Producer: Mr B. Harold Brett of the B and C Company', *Film Censor*, 5 February 1913. See also 'More British Films: Mr B. Harold Brett Enters the Field', *Film Censor*, 1 July 1914, p. 4.
- 112 *Evening News*, 8 January 1913, p. 7.
- 113 'The Author of some Well-Known Films', *The Cinema*, 8 January 1913, p. 34.
- 114 'A Clever British Producer', p. 4.
- 115 B. Harold Brett, 'Can English Authors Write Scenarios?', *The Pictures*, vol. IV, no. 84, 1913, p. 19.
- 116 'A Clever British Producer', p. 4. See also *Evening News*, 8 January 1913, p. 7.
- 117 'War Flashes', *Film Censor*, 12 August 1914, p. 2. He returned home in 1919. See 'Events of the Year', *The Kinematograph Year Book* (London: The Kinematograph Weekly Ltd, 1920), p. 28. See also British Army World War I Medal Rolls.

- 118 Information from 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses.
- 119 On John Strange Winter, see Joanne Shattock, *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft (eds), *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., [1936] 1987).
- 120 ‘Mainly about People in the Trade’, *KLW*, 21 December 1916, p. 13.
- 121 ‘Introducing the Author: Mr Eliot Stannard’, *Cinema: Practical Course in Cinema Acting: In Ten Complete Lessons: Lesson Six* (London: The Standard Art Book Co., Ltd, [1920]), p. 3.
- 122 See in particular Eliot Stannard, ‘The Secrets of Screen Success: No. 3 – The Unseen’, *KLW*, 6 June 1918, p. 97.
- 123 ‘A John Strange Winter Novel on the Screen’, *KLW*, 15 October 1914, p. 56.
- 124 ‘Trade Notes’, *Film Renter*, 19 February 1916, p. 3.
- 125 ‘Notes and News’, *The Cinema*, 13 May 1915, p. 13.
- 126 Eliot Stannard, ‘The Scenario Writer as Author’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 May 1915, pp. 82–83. *The Bioscope* approved of it as ‘a strong and singularly clear article’. See William J. Elliott, ‘The Picture Playwright’, *The Bioscope*, 10 June 1915, p. 1059.
- 127 Eliot Stannard, ‘What’s in a Name?’, *KLW*, 24 June 1915, p. 78.
- 128 Eliot Stannard, ‘Advice to Authors Submitting Work to Film-Manufacturing Companies’, *The Author*, July 1921, p. 140.
- 129 Eliot Stannard, ‘On the Cameraman and Scenario Writer’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 February 1921, p. xx. Stannard may have had some screen credits as David LeStrange.
- 130 Janet Todd (ed.), *Dictionary of British Women Writers* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 726. Stannard’s nickname was ‘Bootles’ after his mother’s biggest success.
- 131 Mark Lane, ‘Pioneers of Progress’, *The Cinema*, 15 October 1914, p. 36; and ‘A John Strange Winter Story Filmed’, *Film Renter*, 4 March 1916, p. 14.
- 132 ‘Introducing the Author: Mr. Eliot Stannard’, p. 3.
- 133 Eliot Stannard, *Cinema: Practical Course in Cinema Acting*. I have discussed Stannard’s ideas on film as art in Turvey, ‘Enter the Intellectuals’.

Chapter 8. Comics, Dramas and Series Films: The B&C Film in Period One

- 1 Tables in this chapter are based on my ‘correcting’ of Denis Gifford’s initial cataloguing of the material, modified in the light of the actual release dates of the films as indicated in the contemporary trade press. See Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue, 1895–1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973).

- 2 These titles were the only two actuality films to be released as ‘exclusives’. B&C released forty-six minutes of actuality material in 1910 and four hours, seven minutes in 1913.
- 3 Copies of those that films have survived are held in the BFI National Archives. There are some Period Three films in existence too. Of the films discussed here, the following are held by the archive: *Her Lover’s Honour* (September 1909), *Playing Truant* (July 1910), *A Plucky Lad* (August 1910), *Her Father’s Photograph* (March 1911), *Weary Willie and Tired Tim: The Plum Pudding Stakes* (April 1911), *The Puritan Maid* (November 1911), *A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast* (February 1912), *The Gentleman Ranker* (July 1912), *Three-Fingered Kate: Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents* (August 1812), *Lieutenant Daring Quells a Rebellion* (September 1912), *Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Minefield* (November 1912), *The Mountaineer’s Romance* (December 1912), *The Antique Vase* (April 1913) and *With Human Instinct* (June 1913).
- 4 ‘The Artist’s Ruse’, *KLW*, 8 December 1910, p. 239.
- 5 ‘Improving the British Product: What B and C Are Doing’, *KLW*, 25 May 1911, p. 141.
- 6 Thomas Bedding, ‘Chapter I: The Play and its Production’, *The Bioscope*, 26 August 1909, p. 13. In another article, Bedding expressed his regard for ‘well defined pictures which show beautifully sharp, crisp, clear images under very great magnification on the screen’. See ‘Chapter V: The Lens’, *The Bioscope*, 23 September 1909, p. 41.
- 7 Thomas Bedding, ‘Chapter III: The Studio’, *The Bioscope*, 9 September 1909, p. 13.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 E.L., ‘The Cameraman: He Rarely Enters the Limelight of Publicity’, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 23 December 1916, p. 274. This was a rare *Pictures and the Picturegoer* profile of a film cameraman, although there had been an earlier one on B&C’s actuality cameraman, Frederick Burlingham.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 ‘The Improvement in English Staging’, *KLW*, 9 December 1909, p. 235, emphases added.
- 15 ‘Improving the British Product’, p. 141.
- 16 ‘A Romance of the Great, Gay Road’, *The Bioscope*, 16 May 1912, p. 77.
- 17 ‘A Remarkable English Film’, ‘New Films and their Makers’ and advertisement, *KLW*, 9 September 1909, pp. 845, 879, and 2 December 1909, p. 188.
- 18 ‘New Films and their Makers’, *KLW*, 9 September 1909, p. 879.

- 19 Thomas Bedding, 'Chapter VIII: Toning and Tinting', *The Bioscope*, 14 October 1909, p. 23.
- 20 'A Remarkable English Film', *KLW*, 9 September 1909, p. 845, emphases added.
- 21 'B&C Films: A Clever and Progressive English Firm', *KLW*, 23 December 1909, p. 377, emphases added.
- 22 'The advancement of B&C', *KLW*, 21 September 1911, p. 1137.
- 23 For a good basic discussion of *mise-en-scène*, see David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, chapter four, *Film Art: An Introduction* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 75–98, or chapter six of the seventh edition (McGraw Hill, 2004), pp. 176–228.
- 24 Thomas Bedding, 'Chapter I', p. 13.
- 25 W.G.F., 'With the Picture Players', *Evening News*, 7 August 1912, p. 7.
- 26 'A Remarkable English Film', p. 845.
- 27 'Three-Fingered Kate: Her Victim, the Banker', *Film House Record*, 14 May 1910, p. 98.
- 28 'B&C Going Strong', *The Bioscope*, 21 September 1911, p. 603.
- 29 'Messrs. Markt & Co. Handle "B&C" Films', *KLW*, 11 January 1912, p. 569. The film's hero was an artist seeking out attractive views. Later, an opening title for *The Mountaineer's Romance* assured audiences: 'This photograph was enacted around the beautiful Peak District, Derbyshire.'
- 30 'Lieutenant Daring and the Ship's Mascot', *KMFR*, no. 1, May 1912, p. 100.
- 31 'Lieutenant Daring beats the middleweight champion', *KMFR*, no. 4, August 1912, p. 91, emphasis added.
- 32 *Evening News*, 1 January 1913, p. 2.
- 33 *Evening News*, 8 January 1913, p. 7.
- 34 'Dick Turpin and the Gunpowder Plot', *KMFR*, no. 4, August 1912, p. 98.
- 35 J. Wallet Waller, 'Our Trip to Cornwall', *The Pictures*, 7 December 1912, p. 23.
- 36 'The Chronicles of Don Q – No.1: The Dark Brothers of the Civil Guard', *The Bioscope*, 21 November 1912, p. 599.
- 37 'A Remarkable English Film', p. 845 and 'A Romance of the Great, Gay Road', p. 463.
- 38 See synopsis in *The Bioscope*, 7 September 1911, p. xxv.
- 39 'Lieutenant Daring RN, "B and C's" New Naval Hero', *KLW*, 14 September 1911, p. 1053.
- 40 See synopsis in *The Bioscope*, 12 January 1911, p. 36.
- 41 See synopses in *The Bioscope*, 1 June 1911, p. xi, 13 April 1911, p. vii, and 27 April 1911, p. xxii.
- 42 See synopsis in *The Bioscope*, 11 April 1912, p. xxx.
- 43 See synopses in *The Bioscope*, 24 April 1913, and 22 May 1913.

- 44 *KMFR*, no. 2, June 1912, p. 21.
- 45 ‘New Films’, *KLW*, 7 July 1910, p. 575.
- 46 ‘The Fairy Doll’, *The Cinema*, December 1912.
- 47 See synopses in *The Bioscope*, 24 November 1910, p. 61; and *KMFR*, no. 2, June 1912, pp. 19–21.
- 48 ‘A Cheap Removal’, *KLW*, 25 August 1910, p. 1049.
- 49 ‘A Lightning Bill Poster’, *The Bioscope*, 8 April 1915, p. i.
- 50 ‘A Romance of the Great, Gay Road’, p. 467.
- 51 ‘Popular Picture Players: No. VIII – Lieutenant Daring’, *Film Censor*, 14 August 1912, p. 2.
- 52 See synopsis in *KLW*, 10 October 1912, p. 15.
- 53 ‘Motion Picture News: A B&C Triumph’, *The Pictures*, 16 November 1912.
- 54 Charles Raymond, ‘Bandits in Britain: How the “Don Q” Stories Were Produced in Derbyshire’, *The Pictures*, 30 November 1912, p. 27.
- 55 Advertisement, *The Pictures*, 30 November 1912, p. ii.
- 56 ‘A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast’, *The Bioscope*, 11 January 1912, p. 77.
- 57 Advertisement, *Top-Line Indicator*, 4 December 1912, p. 7.
- 58 ‘Stroller’s Notes’, *KLW*, 22 September 1910, p. 1285.
- 59 Two excellent books on the history of developments in film form are Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (London: Starword, 1983) and David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985). See also Noel Burch, *Life to Those Shadows* (London: BFI Publishing, 1990).
- 60 The only, very unusual, exception was several scenes in *Her Lover’s Honour*, where the camera was set lower, at about waist level. The explanation for this may have been a similar usage in the model upon which Martinek’s film was based, Pathé’s prestigious Film d’Art *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise*. I have examined the relationship between *Her Lover’s Honour* and the French Film d’Art in Gerry Turvey, ‘Her Lover’s Honour (1909): the French Film d’Art and British Cinema’, *Early Popular Visual Culture* 16.4 (2018): 1–13.
- 61 Although, unusually, the cameraman did photograph a corridor set in *Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents* from an oblique angle.
- 62 ‘Notable productions of the week’, *KLW*, 8 September 1910, p. 1149, emphasis added. See also ‘Every Wrong Shall Be Righted’, *Film House Record*, 3 September 1910, p. 204.
- 63 ‘Trust Those You Love’, *Film House Record*, 1 October 1910, p. 221. See also ‘A Tangle of Fates’, *Film House Record*, 24 December 1910, p. 312.
- 64 Ben Brewster, ‘Deep Staging in French Films, 1900–1914’ in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), pp. 45–55.

- 65 Actually, there is a slight continuity glitch because Kate backs into her own fireplace but comes out into her neighbour's head first!
- 66 Charles Raymond, 'Bandits in Britain', p. 27.
- 67 As they are supposed to happen around midnight, the original prints would have been tinted blue.
- 68 See synopsis in *The Bioscope*, 7 September 1911, p. xxv.
- 69 Noel Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, p. 93. See also Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, p. 55; and Tom Gunning on 'the introductory shot' in 'The Non-Continuous Style of Early Film', in Roger Holman (ed.), *Cinema 1900–1906: An Analytical Study* (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), p. 227.
- 70 'New Films and their Makers', *KLW*, 9 September 1909, p. 879.
- 71 'Dick Turpin's Ride to York', *KMFR*, no. 16, August 1913, p. 164. Even *The Battle of Waterloo* that triumphantly opened B&C's Period Two ended on a patriotic image of the union flag. In fact, nearly all the B&C fiction films held by the BFI National Archives close with an emblematic shot.
- 72 'The Puritan Maid', *KLW*, 30 November 1911, p. 227.
- 73 *Evening News*, 10 July 1912, p. 7.
- 74 'The Pick of the Programmes', *The Bioscope*, 21 November 1912, p. 599. There is a photograph of Pritchard together with Raymond impersonating Don Q accompanying Raymond's 'Bandits in Britain', p. 27.
- 75 For Charles Musser's account, see 'The Nickelodeon Era Begins: Establishing the Framework for Hollywood's Mode of Representation', *Framework* 22/23 (Autumn 1983): 4–11; and chapter ten of *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 325–71.
- 76 *Film House Record*, 19 February 1910, p. 2.
- 77 'To Introduce Ourselves', *The Pictures*, no. 1, 21 October 1911, p. 1.
- 78 *Film House Record*, 30 April 1910, p. 92, and 1 October 1910, p. 221; and 'The Adventures of Dick Turpin', *KLW*, 4 July 1912, p. 699.
- 79 'Can You Write Scenarios?', *The Pictures*, 16 March 1912, p. 9.
- 80 'The Picture Playwright', *The Bioscope*, 8 August 1912, p. 407.
- 81 B. Harold Brett, 'Can English Authors Write Scenarios?', *The Pictures*, vol. IV, no. 84, 1913, p. 9.
- 82 J. O'Neill Farrell, 'Writing a Picture Play', *Pearson's Weekly*, 27 August 1912, p. 245.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Ibid., emphases added.
- 86 On this, see Gerry Turvey, 'Weary Willie and Tired Tim Go into Pictures: The Comic Films of the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company' in

- Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *Pimple Pranks and Pratzfalls: British Film Comedy before 1930* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), pp. 69–75.
- 87 *Film House Record*, 6 August 1910, p. 173, emphases added.
- 88 See synopsis in *The Bioscope*, 1 December 1910.
- 89 These exchanges are discussed in more detail in Gerry Turvey, ‘Cheap Fiction, Popular Periodicals and Early Film Dramas: Some Continuities and Exchanges’ in Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Poppel (eds), *Visual Delights: Two: Exhibition and Reception* (Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2005), pp. 32–45.
- 90 Kate’s series appeared to end with her arrest in exploit four, but she was revived to take on the competition offered by the newly imported American ‘serial queens’ in 1912. See Gerry Turvey, ‘Three-Fingered Kate: Celebrating Womanly Cunning and Successful Female Criminal Enterprise’, *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 7.2 (2010): 200–11.
- 91 ‘A Romance of the Great, Gay Road’, p. 463; and *The Pictures*, 22 June 1912, p. ii.
- 92 Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1995); and Michael R. Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), p. 13.
- 93 See synopsis in *The Bioscope*, 18 May 1911, p. ix.
- 94 Advertisement, *Top-Line Indicator*, 8 January 1913, p. 3.
- 95 See synopsis in *The Bioscope*, 22 February 1912, p. xxiii.
- 96 See synopsis in *The Bioscope*, 22 February 1912, p. xxiii.
- 97 See synopses in *The Bioscope*, 22 May 1913, 22 May 1913 and 21 August 1913, p. xxvi and *KMFR*, no. 14, June 1913, no. 13, May 1913, p. 35, and no. 17, September 1913, p. 43.

Chapter 9. Spectacle, Sensation and Narrative: The B&C Film in Period Two

- 1 ‘Lieutenant Daring and the Mystery of Room 41’, *Moving Picture Offered List*, 20 September 1913, p. 204.
- 2 ‘A Famous Trio’, *The Cinema*, 2 July 1913, p. 21. This was a ‘testimony to the manipulator of the [camera] handle’, Isidor Roseman.
- 3 ‘The Life of Shakespeare’, *The Bioscope*, 19 February 1914, p. 847.
- 4 ‘Their “Infinite” Variety’, *The Cinema*, 16 December 1915, p. 15.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 ‘Review of the Latest Productions’, *KLW*, 10 October 1907, p. 383. The item went on to report how, with the assistance of Mr Jones from the Palace Theatre, McDowell had completed that section of his film by eight in the evening and had exhibited it to an enthusiastic audience at eleven.

- 7 H.M. Lomas, *Picture Play Photography* (London: Ganes Ltd, 1914), p. 48.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 9 'The Life of Shakespeare', *The Cinema*, 19 February 1914, p. 71; and 'Sentiment and Humour', *The Cinema*, 26 August 1915, p. 49.
- 10 'Grip', *The Film-Renter*, 28 August 1915, p. 14.
- 11 Maurice Elvey, 'The Position of the Producer and Scenario Writer', *KLW*, 18 April 1918, p. 64.
- 12 Mark Lane, 'Pioneers of Progress', *The Cinema*, 15 October 1914, p. 37, emphases regarding colour added. The *KLW* claimed, 'Photographically the picture is of remarkably even quality, and the lighting of the interior scenes is in several instances particularly well done.' See 'A John Strange Winter on the Screen' and a still, *KLW*, 15 October 1914, p. 56. See also 'Beautiful Jim', *The Bioscope*, 19 November 1914, p. 797.
- 13 'Filming "Tommy's" Marching Song', *The Cinema*, 19 November 1914, p. 57.
- 14 'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary', *KLW*, 19 November 1914, p. 14, colour emphasis added. *The Bioscope* of 19 November 1914, p. 801 also registered the applause for the tinting and toning of the scene.
- 15 Still of the singing in *KLW*, 19 November 1914, p. 14. *The Cinema* also has an image of a group of ten men crouching in the foreground close to the camera, their rifles at the ready; bushes are blocking the space behind them; it is night and they are lit from the left, the light striking upwards. See *The Cinema*, 3 December 1914, p. 64.
- 16 'Her Nameless (?) Child', *The Cinema*, 29 April 1915, p. 45.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Harold Weston, 'The Kine Camera: From the Producer's Point of View', *KLW*, 3 December 1914, p. 33.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Harold Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing* (London: McBride, Nast and Co., 1916), p. 126.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 23 Harold Weston's script for *Shadows*, Appendix 3 in Rachel Low, *The History of the British Film, 1914–1918* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1950), p. 270. Also in Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*.
- 24 Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*, p. 29.
- 25 'Shadows', *The Bioscope*, 17 June 1915, p. 1217, emphasis added. The review also noted the use of 'some very effective double exposures'.
- 26 Weston's script, p. 272.
- 27 Weston's script, pp. 270–71. See also Harold Weston, 'Shadows', *The Kinematograph Year Book*, 1916, p. 456. A similar 'atmosphere' was attempted in parts of Weston's *Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (December 1915).

- 28 'When Paris Sleeps', *KMFR*, no. 59, March 1917, emphases added.
- 29 'The Two Father Christmases', *The Bioscope*, 27 November 1913, p. 898. *KLW* observed that 'the huge department store [was] crowded with customers making their Christmas purchases, while outside in the snow the sandwich men dismally parade[d]'. See *KMFR*, no. 20, December 1913, p. 36.
- 30 *Evening News*, 21 January 1915, p. 7.
- 31 'Editorial', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 18 March 1916.
- 32 'The Life of Shakespeare', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 14 February 1914, p. 626. See also *The Cinema*, 19 February 1914, p. 71.
- 33 'The Master Criminal Turns Detective', *The Cinema*, 11 June 1914, p. 37.
- 34 'A First-Rate Detective Drama', *The Bioscope*, 30 July 1914, p. 450. See also 'New L and Y Exclusive' and a drawing of the sectional view, *KLW*, 6 August 1914, pp. 87, 28 and *KMFR*, no. 29, September 1914, pp. 54-55.
- 35 'The Individualism of All-British Films: A Talk with Mr. Maurice Elvey on Producing', *KLW*, 21 February 1918, p. 81, emphasis added.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 *KMFR*, no. 27, July 1914, p. 48.
- 38 'Black-Eyed Susan', *The Cinema*, 21 May 1914, p. 37; and 'Black-Eyed Susan', *The Bioscope*, 21 May 1914, p. 37.
- 39 'Pioneers of Progress' and still, *The Cinema*, 15 October 1914, pp. 37, 36.
- 40 'Round the Trade', *The Cinema*, 10 December 1914, p. 13; and 'Trade Notes', *KLW*, 10 December 1914, p. 14.
- 41 'The Hidden Life of London', *The Cinema*, 26 November 1914, p. 53. *Film Censor* of 2 December 1914, p. 4 also noted that in the Night Gambling Club 'a very effective *scène du bal* is given'.
- 42 L.W., 'A Picture of Entrancing Interest', *KLW*, 11 March 1915, p. 16 and A.J.H., *Evening News*, 19 March 1915, p. 10.
- 43 'Studio Notes', *The Cinema*, 18 February 1915, p. 2.
- 44 'London's Yellow Peril', *The Bioscope*, 1 April 1915, p. 75.
- 45 'Auld Lang Syne', *The Bioscope*, 8 November 1917, p. 48.
- 46 'Sentiment and Humour', *The Cinema*, 26 August 1915, p. 49.
- 47 'A.V. Bramble as Producer', *The Cinema*, 15 July 1915, p. 45.
- 48 Harold Weston, 'In Defence of British Films', *The Cinema*, 7 October 1915, p. 16.
- 49 See the editorial, *The Cinema*, 24 December 1914, p. 41. The precipitating review was G.A.A., "'All-British": Three Good Films by the Cunard Co.', *The Cinema*, 3 December 1914, p. 65.
- 50 Harold Weston, letter, *The Cinema*, 24 December 1914, p. 41, emphasis added.
- 51 Harold Weston, letter, *The Cinema*, 14 January 1915, p. 49, first emphasis is Weston's, the others are added.

- 52 Harold Weston's script, p. 270.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Harold Weston, letter, *The Cinema*, 14 January 1915, p. 53.
- 55 Eliot Stannard, *Cinema: Practical Course in Cinema Acting* (London: The Standard Art Book Co., Ltd, [probably 1920]), pp. 8, 11. Earlier, he had suggested 'atmosphere' involved 'a knowledge of character, costume, periods of history and archaeology'. See 'Eliot Stannard at the SPT Club', *KLW*, 18 April 1918, p. 66.
- 56 'A "John Strange Winter" Story Filmed', *The Film-Renter*, 4 March 1916, p. 14, emphasis added. There is a more condensed version of this in the *Moving Picture Offered List*, 12 February 1916, p. 4164, which refers to the care bestowed on the production by 'the buyers'. There is a page of stills of five interiors in *KLW*, 24 February 1916, p. ii. See also *Evening News*, 10 February 1916, p. 5.
- 57 'The Battle of Waterloo', *Pictures and Pleasures*, 5 January 1914, p. 22; and 'The Lady with the Lamp', *The Cinema*, 11 March 1915, p. 25.
- 58 See stills in 'The Ashley Exclusive Album', *KLW*, 24 December 1914, pp. xxi–xxiv.
- 59 W.G.F., *Evening News*, 10 February 1916, p. 5.
- 60 'Through the Clouds', *The Bioscope*, 21 August 1913, p. 621.
- 61 Charles Calvert, 'The Art of Screen Acting', *The Picture Palace News*, 27 December 1915, p. 195. All quotations in this paragraph are from this source.
- 62 'The Life of Shakespeare', *The Cinema*, 19 February 1914, p. 71, 'A John Strange Winter Novel on the Screen', p. 56; and 'A Splendid "Bramble-Stannard" Film', *The Cinema*, 25 May 1916, p. 21.
- 63 'Studio Notes', 8 April 1915, p. 48 and 'A Busy Picture Player', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 8 April 1916, p. 35.
- 64 Davidson advertisement, *Moving Picture Offered List*, 12 December 1914, p. 1357; 'In the Days of Trafalgar', *The Cinema*, 9 July 1914, p. 71; 'Black-Eyed Susan', *The Bioscope*, 21 May 1914, 'Studio Notes', 8 April 1915, p. 48; and 'Her Nameless (?) Child', *The Cinema*, 29 April 1915, p. 45.
- 65 'A Popular English Player: Miss Elizabeth Risdon of the B and C Company', *KLW*, 12 November 1914, p. 121.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 'A Picture of Entrancing Interest', *KLW* 11 March 1915, p. 16, 'The Lady with the Lamp', p. 25; and 'Florence Nightingale', *The Bioscope*, 11 March 1915, p. 971. See also A.J.H., *Evening News*, 19 March 1915, p. 10.
- 68 Weston's script, pp. 272–75.
- 69 'Shadows', *KMFR*, no. 39, July 1915, p. 70, emphasis added.
- 70 *Evening News*, 25 March 1915, p. 3 and 'Motherhood', *Film Censor*, 22 December 1915, p. 3. See also 'The World's Desire', *The Bioscope*, 18 March 1915, p. 1062.

- 71 *KMFR*, no. 36, April 1915, p. 94.
- 72 ‘The Master Crook Turns Detective’, *KLW*, 18 June 1914, p. 99; and ‘The Suicide Club’, *KLW*, 9 July 1914, p. 85.
- 73 V.F.T., ‘How I Met Napoleon’, *The Cinema*, 11 June 1913, p. 3.
- 74 Stills of ‘Jimmy’ in *KLW*, 24 February 1916, p. ii.
- 75 Still in *The Cinema*, 25 May 1916, p. 21.
- 76 Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*, p. 38.
- 77 Weston’s script, p. 276.
- 78 Stills of ‘The Midnight Wedding’ in *Pictures and Pleasures*, 4 May 1914, pp. 12–15.
- 79 Eliot Stannard, ‘The Art of Kinematography: No.1 – Symbolism’, *KLW*, 23 May 1918, p. 76.
- 80 Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*, pp. 16, 26. Later, he suggested, ‘The art of painting has assisted us in giving the values of ... “Picturisation” (p. 125).
- 81 ‘The Battle of Waterloo’, *Moving Picture Offered List*, 26 July 1913, p. 7.
- 82 Still of ‘The Suicide Club’ in *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 17 October 1914, p. 151.
- 83 Weston’s script, p. 276; and still, *KLW*, 6 May 1915, p. lxxviii.
- 84 Supplement on ‘A Soldier and a Man’, *The Cinema*, 2 March 1916.
- 85 Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*, p. 41.
- 86 ‘It’s a Long, Long Way to Tipperary’, *The Bioscope*, 19 November 1914, p. 802.
- 87 ‘The Life of Shakespeare’, *The Cinema*, 19 February 1914, p. 71.
- 88 ‘A Honeymoon for Three’, *The Bioscope*, 28 January 1915, p. 340; and ‘A Honeymoon for Three’, *KMFR*, no. 34, February 1915, p. 145.
- 89 ‘In the Days of Trafalgar’, *The Cinema*, 9 July 1914, p. 71. This is very similar to a moment in Griffith’s *Enoch Arden* (1911).
- 90 Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*, p. 35.
- 91 *Ibid.*, p. 37. This technique had been put to use earlier in 1912’s *A Gentleman Ranker*. See Chapter 8.
- 92 The women also figure in two flashbacks interpolated into the café scenes.
- 93 Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*, p. 41
- 94 The sixty-nine scenes of the film were deliberately divided up into a three-part structure, which made it comparable to developments that were similarly under way in early Hollywood. Kristin Thompson’s researches led her to conclude that there ‘most early features fell into three large-scale parts’, roughly thirds. See Kristin Thompson, ‘Narrative Structure in Early Classical Cinema’, pp. 225–238 in John Fullerton (ed.), *Celebrating 1895: The Centenary of Cinema* (London: John Libbey and Co., Ltd, 1998), here p. 234.

- 95 'The Life of Shakespeare', *The Cinema*, 19 February 1914, p. 71; and *Moving Picture Offered List*, 14 February 1914, p. 626. See also *Evening News*, 12 February 1914, p. 6.
- 96 'The Drawn Blind', *The Bioscope*, 4 June 1914, p. 1082; and 'Revolution', *Pictures and Pleasures*, 17 August 1914, p. 7.
- 97 See, for example, Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant Garde', *Wide Angle* 8.3–4 (1986): 63–70; 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the In/Credulous Spectator', *Art and Text* 34 (Spring 1989): 31–45; and *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
- 98 'The Battle of Waterloo', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 26 July 1913, p. 17; Advertisement, *The Daily Mirror*, 7 July 1913, p. 16; and *Evening News*, 3 July 1913, p. 7.
- 99 'The Battle of Waterloo', *The Bioscope*, 3 July 1913, p. 51.
- 100 *Evening News*, 3 July 1913, p. 7; *KMFR*, no. 17, September 1913, p. 179; and *The Bioscope*, 3 July 1913, p. 51.
- 101 *The Bioscope*, *ibid.* Also on *The Battle of Waterloo*, see *The Era*, 28 June 1913, p. 24; *Pictures and Pleasures*, 5 January 1914, pp. 22–23; and *KLW*, 4 August 1913, p. viii.
- 102 'The Loss of the "Birkenhead": Trade Show of Great B.&C. Film', *KLW*, 23 July 1914, p. 51, and *KMFR*, no. 28, August 1914, p. 165.
- 103 'At the Torrent's Mercy', *Pictures and Pleasures*, 20 November 1915, p. 19.
- 104 'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary', *KMFR*, no. 32, December 1914, p. 133.
- 105 The forty-three major films are all the exclusives plus the long *Fatal Fingers*.
- 106 'Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films', *The Picturegoer*, 1 November 1913, p. 99.
- 107 'Through the Clouds', *The Cinema*, 10 August 1913, p. 68; and *KLW*, 28 August 1913, p. 1881.
- 108 *Evening News*, 14 May 1914, p. 7.
- 109 'In the Days of Trafalgar', *The Cinema*, 9 July 1914, p. 71.
- 110 'Black-Eyed Susan', *The Cinema*, 21 May 1914, p. 37.
- 111 'In the Days of Trafalgar', *Pictures and Pleasures*, 13 July 1914, p. 17; and 'Black-Eyed Susan', *The Cinema*, 21 May 1914, p. 37, emphasis added. See also *KLW*, 28 May 1914, p. 21; and *KMFR*, no. 27, July 1914, p. 48.
- 112 'A First-Rate Detective Drama', *The Bioscope*, 30 July 1914, p. 450.
- 113 Advertisements in *The Bioscope*, 21 May 1914 and 28 May 1914, p. 956. See also *The Cinema*, 28 May 1914, p. 45; and *KLW*, 11 June 1914, p. 20.
- 114 'When London Sleeps', *KLW*, 1 October 1914, p. 21, emphasis added; and *KMFR*, no. 31, November 1914, p. 45.

- 115 'When London Sleeps', *The Bioscope*, 1 October 1914, p. 82.
- 116 'The Mystery of a Hansom Cab', *KMFR*, no. 43, November 1915, p. 121.
- 117 Ibid. There was a narrational problem because, whereas Hume had concealed the identity of the perpetrator until his book's end, in the film the mystery was disclosed early on because audiences were shown the murder as it was committed. It would appear neither Stannard nor Weston thought of leaving the revelation to a flashback.
- 118 'London's Yellow Peril', *KMFR*, no. 36, April 1915, p. 53; and *The Bioscope*, 1 April 1915, p. 75.
- 119 G.A.A., 'Mr Elvey and Miss Risdon', *The Cinema*, 20 May 1915, p. 28, emphases added.
- 120 'The Suicide Club', *KMFR*, no. 28, August 1914, p. 40, and *The Bioscope*, 9 July 1914, p. 171. The *KMFR* did, however, suggest the opening was 'a trifle vague' because the audience was 'plunged into the most sensational happenings before being given an adequate explanation of who is who and what is what' and suggested 'a few more (and fuller) sub-titles ... would [have helped] considerably'.
- 121 'Moss Empires Big Exclusive', *KLW*, 30 April 1914, p. 57, and *KMFR*, no. 26, June 1914, p. 59.
- 122 'Home', *KMFR*, no. 42, October 1915, p. 155.
- 123 'Round the Trade', 28 January 1915, p. 13.
- 124 'Her Luck in London', *KMFR*, no. 33, January 1915, p. 43
- 125 Mark Lane, 'Virtue versus Villainy', *The Cinema*, 8 March 1915, p. 19.
- 126 'When Paris Sleeps', *KMFR*, no. 59, March 1917.
- 127 'When Paris Sleeps', *The Cinema*, 1 March 1917, p. xii.
- 128 Advertisement, *The Cinema*, 12 February 1914, pp. 50–51, and *KLW*, 12 February 1914, pp. 50–51.
- 129 'The Life of Shakespeare', *The Bioscope*, 19 February 1914, p. 847.
- 130 'Florence Nightingale', *Film Censor*, 17 March 1915, p. 4.
- 131 'A Picture of Entrancing Interest', *KLW*, 11 March 1915, p. 16.
- 132 A.J.H., *Evening News*, 19 March 1915, p. 10.
- 133 Eliot Stannard, 'The Scenario Writer as Author', *KLW*, 27 May 1915, p. 82.
- 134 Ibid., p. 83.
- 135 Ibid., pp. 83, 82.
- 136 Ibid., p. 83. In a 1916 discussion of crime films, Stannard proposed in future 'the *motive* for the crime should be the important factor and *not* the crime itself. We are not interested in what people do but only in *why* they do this or that action'. As a consequence, 'the absurd gang films and serial adventures' would cease. See 'The anti-something-or-another-people', *KLW*, 15 June 1916, p. 17. This would appear to have been another rejection of B&C's past.

- 137 ‘The Picture playwright’, *The Bioscope*, 9 September 1915, p. 1181, emphasis added.
- 138 Stannard, *Practical Course in Cinema Acting*, p. 27.
- 139 ‘A Representative British Production’, *The Bioscope*, 17 February 1916, p. 684.
- 140 ‘Beautiful Jim’, *The Bioscope*, 19 November 1914, p. 797.
- 141 ‘Beautiful Jim’, *KMFR*, no. 31, November 1914, p. 39.
- 142 ‘A “Domestic Problem” Play’, *The Cinema*, 18 March 1915, p. 48. See also ‘The World’s Desire’, *KMFR*, no. 36, April 1915, p. 94; and *The Bioscope*, 18 March 1915, p. 1062.
- 143 Ibid.
- 144 Harold Weston, *The Art of Photo-Play Writing*, p. 53.
- 145 Ibid.
- 146 Ibid., p. 34.
- 147 ‘A Problem Film Play’, *KLW*, 29 April 1915, p. 73, and *KMFR*, no. 39, July 1915, p. 70.
- 148 Advertisement, *KLW*, 29 April 1915, p. 72, and *The Cinema*, 29 April 1915, p. 38.
- 149 Advertisement, *Moving Picture Offered List*, 20 November 1915, p. 3064.
- 150 ‘Wild Oats’, *KMFR*, no. 43, November 1915, p. 65.
- 151 ‘Round the Trade’, 10 June 1915, p. 9.
- 152 G.A. A[tkinson], ‘Pall Mall Photoplays’, *The Cinema*, 23 December 1915, p. 48.

Chapter 10. From the Open Market to the Exclusives System

- 1 Material relevant to the above paragraphs and the next are to be found in: E.S. Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, [1952] 1968); E.J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969); James Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830–1950* (London: Longman, 1978); J.M. Golby and A.W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England 1750–1900* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1984); and Jose Harris, *Private Lives. Public Spirit: Britain 1870–1914* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994).
- 2 Harris, *Private Lives. Public Spirit*, p. 95.
- 3 Rachael Low rather underplays the role of the agencies when she discusses distribution in the first chapter of her second volume: Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1906–1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, [1948] 1973). Simon Brown discusses the early emergence of the renter in his *Cecil Hepworth and the Rise of the British Film Industry* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2016).
- 4 ‘Stroller’s Notes’, *KLW*, 4 November 1909, p. 1341.

- 5 See 'The Film House', *KLW*, 3 June 1909, p. 157 and 'Items of Interest', *The Bioscope*, 3 June 1909, p. 13.
- 6 'Introductory', *Film House Record*, no. 1, 5 February 1910, p. 2. The *Record* claimed it had been created in response to showmen's letters asking for more information about Film House releases.
- 7 'Selecting a Programme', *Film House Record*, 5 March 1910, p. 30.
- 8 Cosmopolitan advertisement, *KLW*, 9 September 1909, p. 848. A subsequent advertisement read: 'B&C Films ... Sole Agents Great Britain and Colonies, Cosmopolitan'. See *KLW*, 14 October 1909, p. 1137. Cosmopolitan began placing advertisements regularly in the periodical in September 1909.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Cosmopolitan advertisements, *KLW*, 9 February 1911, p. 963; and *The Bioscope*, 23 March 1911, p. 36.
- 11 'Advertise your Subjects', *Film House Record*, 19 February 1910, p. 18.
- 12 *Ibid.* These were half-page descriptions. Full-page descriptions for better quality films were 7s 6d (or an equivalent of £38.50 at 2019 values) per 1,000. See 'Advertising Reprints', *Film House Record*, 28 May 1910, p. 114. For a while, offers of reprints were a regular feature in the *Record*.
- 13 'Advertising Reprints', *Film House Record*, 12 March 1910, p. 38. The *Record's* last reference to leaflets was in the *Film House Record*, 9 July 1910, p. 156, so it must be assumed the tactic was discontinued. *The Record* itself ceased publication at the end of September to be replaced, it was claimed, by *Weekly Film Bulletins* concerning B&C and other trademarks. See *Film House Record*, 16 September 1911.
- 14 Free poster offer in the *Film House Record*, 19 March 1910, p. 46, and purchasable posters in 30 April 1910, p. 86.
- 15 *Film House Record*, 26 March 1910, p. 55 and 1 October 1910. See also Cosmopolitan advertisements, *KLW*, 24 April 1910, p. 1084 and 6 October 1910.
- 16 *Film House Record*, 12 November 1910.
- 17 'The B and C: The Rise of an All-British Institution', *The Cinema*, 10 September 1914, p. xiv.
- 18 That is, except for the fourth *Weary Willie and Tired Tim* release, *A Noble Revenge*. See the *Film House Record*, 13 May 1911, p. 478. With the leaflet and the poster, agency advertising to audiences was taking place at the site of exhibition, but as mainstream journalism was paying scant attention to cinema and films in B&C's Cosmopolitan years, there was as yet little reaching out to the general public through the popular press.
- 19 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 11 January 1912, p. 553.
- 20 'Messrs. Markt & Co. Handle "B&C" films', *KLW*, 11 January 1912, p. 569. See also 'Financial Items', *The Bioscope*, 15 February 1912; 'New Companies',

- KLW*, 8 February 1912; and advertisements in *The Bioscope*, 21 March 1912 and *KLW*, 21 March 1912.
- 21 Advertisement for the MPSA, *The Bioscope*, 30 May 1912, p. 648.
 - 22 ‘A Chat with Mr T.H. Davison’, *KLW*, 28 August 1913, p. 1881. On Davison, see also ‘Our View’, *The Bioscope*, 28 August 1913 and ‘An Old Friend in a New Role’, *Moving Picture Offered List*, 6 September 1913, p. 142.
 - 23 ‘Mr. T.H. Davison’, *The Cinema*, 1 January 1914, p. 69.
 - 24 ‘A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast: M.P. Sales Agency Releasing a B&C Top-Liner’, *The Bioscope*, 11 January 1912, p. 77.
 - 25 MPSA advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 30 May 1912, p. 648.
 - 26 These are included under ‘Publicity matter’ for the films listed on the MPSA releases pages of *The Pictures* from 6 July 1912. Poster sizes were usually two-sheet (30 by 40 inches), occasionally four-sheet (40 by 60 inches) and six-sheet (40 by 90 inches) for only a limited number of releases. See ‘M.P. Banners’, *The Pictures*, 14 September 1912, p. 12.
 - 27 *Top-Line Indicator*, 20 November 1912. This special supplement also asserted that ‘posters drag the public in’.
 - 28 Inside front cover, *The Pictures*, 17 August 1912.
 - 29 Inside front cover, *The Pictures*, 27 July 1912 and 31 August 1912.
 - 30 Quoted from *The Era*, May 1901, by Catherine Haill, *Fun Without Vulgarity: Victorian and Edwardian Popular Entertainment Posters* (London: The Stationery Office, 1996), p. 12, emphasis added. In 1909, Stafford’s were offering their services to cinema proprietors: ‘The best up-to-date PRINTERS. Write for catalogues and prices of our Wonderful POSTERS and lithos for Kinematographs’. See Stafford and Co. Ltd advertisement, *KLW*, 21 October 1909, p. 1219. On the history of posters, see John Barnicoat, *Posters: A Concise History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003).
 - 31 See ‘Special Supplement’, *Top-Line Indicator*, 20 November 1912.
 - 32 ‘The Motion Picture and Photoplay’, *The Evening Times*, 30 October 1911, p. 6.
 - 33 Ibid.
 - 34 ‘To Introduce Ourselves’, *The Pictures*, no. 1, 21 October 1911, p. 1.
 - 35 Advertisement, *The Pictures*, 4 November 1911, p. 17.
 - 36 MPSA advertisement, *KLW*, 11 January 1912, p. xxi. See also *The Bioscope*, 11 January 1912, p. 98.
 - 37 See *The Pictures*, 11 May 1912, p. 9, 30 November 1912, p. 17, 7 December 1912, p. 23, 2 January 1913, p. 12; 26 October 1912, p. 4, and 14 December 1912, p. 11.
 - 38 ‘The Bargee’s Revenge’, *The Pictures*, 21 September 1912, p. 26.
 - 39 See *The Pictures*, 25 May 1912, p. 2, and 24 August 1912, front cover.
 - 40 See *The Pictures*, 24 February 1912, p. 2, and 19 October 1912, front cover.

- 41 'Miss Dorothy Foster', *The Pictures*, 25 September 1912, p. 19, and 'When I Was a Boy Boxer', *The Pictures*, 16 November 1912, p. 4.
- 42 'Motion Picture News', *The Pictures*, 21 December 1912, p. 23. Messrs The Queenhithe Printing and Publishing Company, Ltd were at 13, Bread Street Hill, London, EC. See 'Change of address', *The Pictures*, 14 December 1912, p. 22. Henceforth, *The Pictures* covered releases besides those of the MPSA and went through a further sixty-three issues before merging with *The Picturegoer* in February 1914. The last copy of *The Pictures*, vol. V, no. 123, for 14 February 1914, told of a change of proprietor and a new issue number for the following week. The magazine joined *The Picturegoer* to become *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, vol. VI, New Series, no. 1, on 21 February 1914.
- 43 See Tom Phillips, *The Postcard Century: 2000 Cards and their Messages* (Thames and Hudson, 2000). In parallel with this, postcard images of theatre and music hall stars were also in circulation.
- 44 Advertisement, *The Pictures*, 29 June 1912, back page.
- 45 Advertisement, *The Pictures*, 13 July 1912, back page.
- 46 'Our Postcards', *The Pictures*, no. 79, 1913. In April 1914, and for several weeks thereafter, *Pictures and the Picturegoer* also provided postcards of Daring, Foster, Martinek and Haley, even though by this time they were no longer working for B&C. Advertisement, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 11 April 1914 and several weeks thereafter. Intriguingly, there may also have been postcards representing scenes from the company's films, for there exists one depicting shipwreck victims on a raft taken from *The Tattooed Will* released in March 1914 (after the company had broken with the MPSA). This card is held by the Stills, Posters and Designs Department of the British Film Institute.
- 47 *Top-Line Indicator*, no. 1, 30 October 1912. Issue 1 also offered portrait photographs of performers.
- 48 'Editorial', *Ibid.*, p. 4. Previously the MPSA had been mailing a twice-monthly 'Calendar' to theatres. The second edition referred across to *The Pictures*, observing, 'Our Press Department issues a weekly magazine expressly to keep alive and increase the public's interest in moving-pictures.' See the *Top-Line Indicator*, 6 November 1912, p. 4. But the sixth edition of the *Indicator* allowed that the fan magazine had 'accomplished its purpose. It has helped the M.P. industry by creating hundreds of thousands of moving picture enthusiasts'; it was therefore to be disposed of to Messrs The Queenhithe Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd. See the *Top-Line Indicator*, 4 December 1912, p. 5.
- 49 See the *Top-Line Indicator*, 12 March 1913, p. 4, 7 May 1913, p. 6 and 25 June 1913, p. 4.
- 50 'A Factory Girls' Honour', *Top-Line Indicator*, 8 January 1913, p. 3.
- 51 'Just a Girl', *Top-Line Indicator*, 4 June 1913, p. 1.

- 52 MPSA advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 19 December 1912, p. 876. An advertisement in the *Top-Line Indicator* also mentioned Prichard and the million readers, but added translation of the stories into half-a-dozen languages too. See the *Top-Line Indicator*, 13 November 1912, p. 4.
- 53 ‘B&C’s First Two Reel: Silas Hocking, Scenario Writer’, *KLW*, 18 July 1912, p. 827.
- 54 The *Film Censor*’s last edition was February 1916.
- 55 Edward T. Heron, ‘A Retrospect of the Year’, *The Kinematograph Year Book 1914* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly Ltd, 1914), p. 14.
- 56 ‘A Retrospect of the Year’, *The Kinematograph Year Book 1916* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly Ltd, 1916), p. 23. Statistically, between 1914 and 1916, numbers of the shorter, cheaper open-market films from Britain and abroad dropped by two-thirds (to 2,324), whereas the longer, more expensive exclusives more than doubled (to 823). See ‘A Retrospect of the Year’, *The Kinematograph Year Book 1917* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly Ltd. 1917), p. 20.
- 57 ‘The Future of the Film Trade’, *KLW*, 29 April 1915, p. 11.
- 58 See Low, *History of the British Film 1906–1914*, p. 44. Jon Burrows discusses the transition from the open-market to the exclusives system from the perspective of the cinema business in chapter five of his *The British Cinema Boom, 1909–1914: A Commercial History*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- 59 Double page advertisement, *KLW*, 26 June 1913, pp. 958–59, and *The Bioscope*, 26 June 1913, pp. xxxii–xxxiii.
- 60 *Moving Picture Offered List*, 22 April 1916, p. 4302.
- 61 See the regular page 7 articles in *Evening News*, 20 February 1913 and 15 May 1913.
- 62 George Prince Film Service advertisement, *KLW*, 24 July 1913, p. 1390, emphasis added, and double page advertisement, *KLW*, 26 June 1913, pp. 958–59, and *The Bioscope*, 26 June 1913, pp. xxxii–xxxiii, emphasis added.
- 63 Low, *History of the British Film 1906–1914*, p. 48.
- 64 ‘Topic of the Week’, *KLW*, 22 July 1915. See also *The Cinema*, 22 July 1915.
- 65 B&C advertisement, *The Cinema*, 18 June 1913, pp. 18–19.
- 66 ‘A £5,000 film: The Battle of Waterloo Sold by Auction’, *The Cinema*, 25 June 1913, p. 3. See also ‘The B&C Masterpiece’, *KLW*, 26 June 1913, p. 1017. An article in *Pearson’s Weekly* explained the process and technicalities of selling films by auction in December 1913. See ‘Films Sold by Auction’, *Pearson’s Weekly*, 1 November 1913, p. 482.
- 67 Double page advertisement, *KLW*, 26 June 1913, pp. 958–59, and *The Bioscope*, 26 June 1913, pp. xxxii–xxxiii.
- 68 Supplement to *KLW*, 3 July 1913, pp. lxvi–lxvii.
- 69 ‘Our View’, *The Bioscope*, 4 September 1913.

- 70 Supplement to *KLW*, 3 July 1913, pp. lxvi–lxvii; *The Bioscope*, 3 July 1913, pp. xxxii–xxxiii; and ‘The Atlas Feature Film Co., Ltd.’, *The Cinema*, 2 July 1913, p. 44.
- 71 See *The Cinema*, 13 August 1913, *The Bioscope*, 14 August 1913, and *KLW*, 14 August 1913.
- 72 Ruffells’ Exclusives advertisement, *KLW*, 17 July 1913.
- 73 Ruffells’ Exclusives advertisement, *KLW*, 14 August 1913, p. viii.
- 74 Ruffells’ Exclusives advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 14 August 1913, pp. xxiv–xxv.
- 75 Ruffells’ Exclusives advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 25 September 1913, p. vi.
- 76 *Evening News*, 7 August 1913, p. 7. In August Ruffells’ had been using flags to chart the sources of booking letters on a map. See *Evening News*, 10 July 1913.
- 77 ‘Memos about “Movies”’, *Pearson’s Weekly*, 11 October 1913, and ‘Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films’, *The Picturegoer*, 1 November 1913, p. 104. The relation this figure had to Atlas-Ruffells’ initial fifteen prints was not clarified. These figures suggest the initial rental take on the film may have been in the region of £60,000!
- 78 ‘The Battle of Waterloo’, *The Bioscope*, 11 September 1913.
- 79 ‘Trade Notes’, *KLW*, 28 August 1913 and ‘News in Brief’, *The Cinema*, 3 September 1913.
- 80 ‘Our Poster Gallery’, *The Bioscope*, 14 August 1913, p. 487.
- 81 ‘Weekly Notes’, 21 August 1913; and ‘Our View’, *The Bioscope*, 21 August 1913. There is a copy of the souvenir in The Stills, Posters and Designs Department of the British Film Institute.
- 82 ‘The Battle of Waterloo’, *The Bioscope*, 11 September 1913.
- 83 See, for example: *The Weekly Despatch*, 20 July 1913, p. 6.
- 84 ‘News in Brief’, 16 July 1913, p. 17. See also ‘Trade Notes’, 17 July 1913.
- 85 Ruffells’ advertisement, *The Cinema*, 16 July 1913, pp. 74–75.
- 86 ‘Trade Notes’, 14 August 1913. See also *Evening News*, 14 August 1913, p. 7; and ‘News in Brief’, 20 August 1913.
- 87 ‘Trade Notes’, 21 August 1913
- 88 ‘News in Brief’, 17 September 1913.
- 89 Quoted in Ruffells’ Exclusives advertisement, *The Cinema*, 17 October 1913, and *The Bioscope*, 18 September 1913.
- 90 ‘Characteristic Napoleon’, *KLW*, 11 September 1913.
- 91 *Evening News*, 18 September 1913, p. 7.
- 92 ‘News in Brief’, 26 February 1914.
- 93 See David R. Williams, *Cinema in Leicester 1890–1931* (Loughborough: Heart of Albion Press, 1993), p. 88.

- 94 'The Best Known Man in the Trade', *The Cinema*, 27 August 1913, p. 45. See also 'A Chat with Mr. T.H. Davison', p. 1881, 'Our View', *The Bioscope*, 28 August 1913; and 'Mr T.H. Davison', *The Cinema*, 1 January 1914, p. 69.
- 95 'A Progressive English Agency: Mr T.H. Davison's Enterprises', *Film Censor*, 23 December 1914, p. 2.
- 96 Ibid. See also *The Bioscope Annual and Trades Directory 1915* (London: Ganes Ltd, 1915), p. 474. In February 1914, Davison's was releasing for Martin, C&E, Empire, Planet, Films de Paris and Filma. See 'News in Brief', 26 February 1914. In March 1916, in an important addition, the agency became the representative in the British Isles and Colonies for the open-market films of Kalem and Biograph, who clearly were no longer with the MPSA. See *The Picture Palace News*, 20 March 1916.
- 97 'A Record of Progress', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 31 July 1915, p. 1889.
- 98 Davison advertisement, *Film Censor*, 2 September 1914, p. 5.
- 99 Davison full page advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 25 November 1915, p. 938.
- 100 Davison advertisement, *The Kinematograph Year Book 1915* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly Ltd, 1915), p. 95.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 'Gossip and Opinions', *The Bioscope*, 3 May 1917, p. 389. See also *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 12 May 1917. The agency was wound up on 7 May 1917. See The London Project website at <http://londonfilm.bbk.ac.uk>.
- 103 'Round the Trade', *The Cinema*, 11 December 1913.
- 104 'Mr. T.H. Davison', *The Cinema*, 1 January 1914, p. 69.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 'Trade Topics', *Pictures and Pleasures*, 22 June 1914, p. 2.
- 107 'A Record of Progress', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 31 July 1915, p. 1889. See also Supplement, *The Cinema*, 29 July 1915.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 'Round the Trade' and 'Studio Notes', *The Cinema*, 24 February 1916, p. 33, 8 April 1915, p. 48, 15 April 1915, p. 24 and 10 June 1915, p. 9.
- 110 Though, in one exceptional case in 1913, Birmingham's Royal Film Agency enquired after and secured the rights to a film about Guy Fawkes even before it entered production and when it was still only a plot outline. See 'News in Brief', 15 October 1913, p. 19.
- 111 Davison's advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 4 September 1913, pp. 736–37, and *KLW*, 4 September 1913, p. 1978.
- 112 Davison's advertisement, *The Cinema*, 25 June 1914, p. x.
- 113 Davison's advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 30 July 1914, p. 472.
- 114 'Launching an Exclusive', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 26 February 1916, p. 501. The first British trade show was held in March 1912 for Selig's

- Christopher Columbus*. See Stroller, 'The Future of the Film Trade', *KLW*, 1 April 1915, p. 6.
- 115 Ibid.
- 116 'The Loss of the "Birkenhead": Trade Show of Great B&C film', *KLW*, 23 July 1914, p. 51.
- 117 Davison's advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 1 October 1914, p. 80.
- 118 Renters' advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 3 December 1914, p. 1042.
- 119 See 'Launching an Exclusive', p. 501.
- 120 Ideal Renting Company advertisement, *KLW*, 17 September 1914, back page.
- 121 Kinema Exclusives Limited advertisement, *The Cinema*, 29 October 1914, p. 22.
- 122 'What we Think', *The Cinema*, 14 January 1915, p. 3.
- 123 Ibid.
- 124 'Filming "Tommy's" Marching Song', *The Cinema*, 19 November 1914, p. 57.
- 125 'Moss Empires' Big Exclusive Feature: Walter Howard's "Midnight Wedding"', *KLW*, 30 April 1914, p. 57.
- 126 See 'Launching an Exclusive', p. 501.
- 127 'Trade Notes', 9 April 1914 and 30 April 1914. Bookings for the film in London and the provinces beat all records and were full for two months ahead, so several extra copies of the film had to be ordered from B&C.
- 128 Low Warren, *The Showman's Advertising Book* (London: E.T. Heron Co., 1914), p. 52.
- 129 Renters' Limited advertisement, *KLW*, 8 October 1914, p. liii.
- 130 'Pioneers of Progress: The "Classic" Work of Renters, Limited', *The Cinema*, 15 October 1914, p. 36. See also 'A John Strange Winter Novel on the Screen', *KLW*, 15 October 1914, p. 56; and *Moving Picture Offered List*, 24 July 1915, p. 1877. *Beautiful Jim* sold so well, with exhibitors booking it a second and third time, that Renters had to have new copies printed. See 'Round the Trade', 25 February 1915.
- 131 Ibid. Presumably *The Cinema* was referring to the cheap editions Cassell, Routledge and Ward Lock had been publishing since the late 1880s and to Chatto and Windus's 6d paper-covered editions of 'middlebrow' fiction reprints with their inviting illustrated front covers. See Victor Neuberg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977) and *Sixpenny Wonderfals* (London: Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press, 1985). In the third month of the war, *The Cinema's* article also praised Renters' releases for being 'of English manufacture and thoroughly English in sentiment'.
- 132 'A Phenomenal Record', *The Film-Renter*, 23 October 1915.

- 133 *Moving Picture Offered List*, 25 December 1915, p. 4048, emphasis added.
- 134 Ideal advertisement, *KLW*, 14 January 1915, p. 37.
- 135 Ideal advertisement, *KLW*, 11 March 1915, p. 65.
- 136 Supplement, *KLW*, 1 April 1915.
- 137 Ideal posters are reproduced in ‘Posters of the Week’, *KLW*, 24 June 1915, pp. 61–62, and 28 October 1915, p. xxxvii. There is also an Ashley Exclusives poster for *Her Luck in London*, in *KLW*, 24 December 1914, p. xxi.
- 138 Information from Ideal advertisements, *KLW*, 1915–1916. There is also information on the distribution of two non-Ideal exclusives from 1914. *The Midnight Wedding* was released in May and had booked into 400 towns by early June, whilst *Queen of the London Counterfeiters* was released in August and booked into over 250 theatres in four months. See *The Bioscope*, 9 July 1914 and 26 November 1914.
- 139 See ‘Financial Items’, *The Bioscope*, 10 November 1910, p. 53. Thanks to Simon Brown for pointing out this reference to me.
- 140 Transactions ceased in June 1912 and the company was dissolved in February 1914. See The London Project website at <http://londonfilm.bbkc.ac.uk>.
- 141 ‘The Soldier’s Sweetheart’, *The Bioscope*, 28 December 1911, p. 897.
- 142 MPSA advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 30 May 1912, p. 648.
- 143 *Evening News*, 21 February 1912, p. 7, and 26 June 1912, p. 7.
- 144 ‘Motion Picture News: Cinema Censorship Begins’, *The Pictures*, 15 January 1913, p. 22.
- 145 ‘Our View’, *The Bioscope*, 24 July 1913, p. 234.
- 146 *The Bioscope*, 11 September 1913; and ‘Cinema News’, *Film Censor*, 20 August 1913, p. 4.
- 147 ‘The Tattooed Will’, *The Cinema*, 15 January 1914, p. 70; and ‘Mr. J.B. McDowell’, *The Cinema*, 8 January 1914, p. 81.
- 148 ‘Cooperative Film Exchange Ltd.’, *KLW*, 23 July 1914, p. xl.
- 149 ‘Round the Trade’, 14 May 1914, p. 7.
- 150 Advertisements for B&C and Warners, *The Cinema*, 4 June 1914; and *KLW*, 4 June 1914.
- 151 ‘Trade Topics’, *Film Renter*, 26 December 1914, p. 1.
- 152 ‘Weekly Notes’, 1 July 1915, p. 5.
- 153 ‘Weekly Notes’, 16 December 1915.
- 154 W.G.F., ‘Seen on the Screen’, *Evening News*, 10 February 1916, p. 7.
- 155 ‘Here and There in the Trade’, *KLW*, 2 November 1916; and Ideal advertisement, *KLW*, 28 December 1915.
- 156 Ideal advertisement, *KLW*, 8 March 1917.
- 157 See ‘Here and There in the Trade’, 28 June 1917; and ‘Trade Notes and News’, *The Bioscope*, 28 June 1917, p. 1269.

Chapter 11. Promoting B&C and Its Films

- 1 'British and Colonial Enterprise', *KLW*, 29 February 1912, p. 1021. Information on O'Neil Farrell is to be found in 'The Experiences of a Publicity Manager', *KLW*, 12 August 1915, p. 57; 'Popular Film Man's Experiences', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 11 September 1915; 'Weekly Notes', *KLW*, 20 March 1913; 'Trade Topics', *The Bioscope*, 12 August 1915, 11 November 1915; and 'An Old Friend Returns', *The Cinema*, 12 August 1915, p. 27.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 See H.G., 'The Life of Shakespeare: Filming a Great Production', *KLW*, 25 December 1913, p. 51. A.W. Heath seems to have served briefly as publicity manager between O'Neil Farrell and Pain. He had left Fleet Street to take on the job and later became a cameraman, first with Pathé and then as official photographer to the American Red Cross during the war. See 'Pictures in the Making: A Birthplace for British Films', *The Picturegoer*, 1 November 1913, p. 102; and 'Who's Who in the Studio', *The Kinematograph Year Book* (London: The Kinematograph Weekly Ltd, 1921), p. 592. Pain enlisted with the Public Schools Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers and was killed in action with the Somerset Light Infantry in 1916. See 'Death of Captain E. Davy Pain', *KLW*, 28 September 1916, p. 31.
- 4 'Items of Interest: Filmites in a Picture Play', *The Bioscope*, 13 June 1912, p. 775. See also 'Filming a Lieut. Daring Subject', *KLW*, 13 June 1912.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 W.G. F[aulkner], 'With the Picture Players', *Evening News*, 7 August 1912, p. 7.
- 7 The former in both *The Northampton Daily Echo*, 9 June 1913, p. 4, and *The Evening Standard*, 14 June 1913, p. 6; and the latter in *The Daily News and Leader*, 10 June 1913, p. 7.
- 8 'Trade Topics', 16 October 1913, p. 79.
- 9 H.G., 'The Life of Shakespeare', p. 51. See also *Moving Picture Offered List*, 13 December 1913, p. 452.
- 10 Nestor, 'An All-British Tour', *The Cinema*, 8 July 1915, p. 64. See also 'A Visit to British Studios', *KLW*, 8 July 1915, p. 30.
- 11 Ibid. and 'Studio Notes', *The Bioscope*, 8 July 1915, p. 198.
- 12 'Filming the Old Bailey', *The Cinema*, 28 August 1915, p. 21.
- 13 'Our Doll Matinee', *Evening News*, 7 November 1912, p. 3.
- 14 See Atlas-Ruffells advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 3 July 1913, pp. xxxii–xxxiii, 'Trade Notes', *KLW*, 3 July 1913, and 'Round the Trade', *The Cinema*, 2 July 1913.
- 15 'Distinguished People View Shakespeare Film', *Film Censor*, 18 February 1914, p. 6.

- 16 'The Life of Shakespeare', *Evening News*, 12 February 1914, p. 6.
- 17 'The Life of Shakespeare', *The Cinema*, 19 February 1914, p. 71.
- 18 'Weekly Notes', 21 January 1915, p. 2.
- 19 'A Picture of Entrancing Interest: The Life Story of Florence Nightingale', *KLW*, 11 March 1915, p. 16.
- 20 'Trade Topics', *The Film-Renter*, 29 January 1916.
- 21 'Trade Notes', 3 January 1916; *KLW*, 4 January 1912, p. 507; and *The Bioscope*, 3 February 1916.
- 22 'A Film that Led to Legal Proceedings', *The Cinema*, 4 June 1913, p. 29. See also 'Programme Fill-Ups', *Top-Line Indicator*, 18 June 1913, p. 4.
- 23 'Advertising: Two Great Films', *The Cinema*, 10 September 1913, p. 27. See also 'The Battle of Waterloo', *The Bioscope*, 11 September 1913.
- 24 'Advertising Up to Date', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 6 December 1913, p. 435.
- 25 'Weekly Notes', 18 June 1914, p. 55.
- 26 'Weekly Notes', 16 July 1914.
- 27 'Stroller's Notes', *KLW*, 7 December 1911, p. 261 and 'With the Metropolitan Showmen', *The Bioscope*, 21 December 1911, p. 831.
- 28 'With the Metropolitan Showmen', p. 831.
- 29 Lieut. Daring, RN, 'My Tour of London', *KLW*, 21 December 1911, p. 375.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 'Lieut. Daring's Tour', *KLW*, 18 January 1912, p. 647.
- 32 See 'Stroller's Notes', 14 December 1911; 'Interview with Lieut. Daring, RN', *The Bioscope*, 28 March 1912, p. 929; *KLW*, 11 April 1912; *KLW*, 11 July 1912; *Film Censor*, 3 July 1912; and *Evening News*, 26 June 1912.
- 33 'News in Brief', *The Cinema*, 3 September 1913; and 'Characteristic Napoleon', *KLW*, 11 September 1913.
- 34 'Editorial Chat', *The Cinema*, 27 May 1915. See also 'The Success of the Florence Nightingale Film', *KLW*, 29 April 1915, p. 25; 'Studio Notes', *The Cinema*, 6 May 1915; and 'Famous Artiste Helps Belgians', *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 15 May 1915, p. 112.
- 35 Full-page advertisement, *The Pictures*, 16 March 1912, p. 9.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 *The Pictures*, 13 July 1912, p. 24.
- 38 'B&C's First Two-Reel', *KLW*, 18 July 1912, p. 827.
- 39 'Items of Interest: Picture Prizes', *The Bioscope*, 25 July 1912, p. 239; *Film Censor*, 31 July 1912, p. 2; and *The Pictures*, 17 August 1912. The latter also suggested the sum would be £500. See advertisement in *The Pictures*, 3 August 1912, p. 9.
- 40 'The Great Anarchist Mystery', *Evening News*, 21 August 1912.
- 41 Ibid., 6 March 1913; and 'Great Anarchist Mystery', *The Pictures*, no. 76, 1913, p. 20. £14 14s 3d was received in competition entrance fees and the

MPSA topped this sum up to £50 to cover the prize money. Four females and eight males received prizes.

- 42 ‘Do You Cinema?’, *Pearson’s Weekly*, 27 August 1912, p. 229.
- 43 ‘The Picture Playwright’, *The Bioscope*, 8 August 1912, p. 407.
- 44 John O’Neill Farrell, ‘Writing a Picture Play’ and ‘Do You Cinema?’, pp. 245, 229.
- 45 ‘Lieut. Daring and Pearson’s Weekly’, *The Pictures*, 14 September 1912.
- 46 Advertisement for ‘Ideas Wanted’ competition, *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 28 November 1914.
- 47 *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 23 January 1915.
- 48 ‘Daily Sketch film to be shown today’, *Daily Sketch*, 11 May 1914, p. 5.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 ‘Lucky Cinema Critics’, *Daily Sketch*, 15 June 1914, p. 5. See also ‘Amateur Critics at the Cinema Theatre’, *Daily Sketch*, 10 June 1914, p. 3, where the unfounded claim is made that *The Midnight Wedding* was ‘specially filmed for the competition’.
- 52 *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 8 (1995), p. 787. See also Raymond Williams, ‘The Growth of the Popular Press’ in his *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), pp. 173–213.
- 53 See ‘chapter five, ‘The British Mutoscope and Biograph Company’, in Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise: The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897–1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999).
- 54 Edward T. Heron, ‘A Retrospect of the Year’, *The Kinematograph Year Book 1914* (London: The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly Ltd, 1914), p. 13.
- 55 What follows depends on a light sampling of some of the more popular papers from 1911 to 1914, so my conclusions are only tentative. *The Pictures* had identified the *Evening Standard*, the *Evening Times*, the *Daily Express* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. See Advertisement, *The Pictures*, 4 November 1911, p. 17.
- 56 W. Butcher and Sons Ltd. full-page advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 14 July 1910, p. 16, and 28 July 1910, p. 16. See also *KLW*, 28 July 1910.
- 57 *KLW*, 8 June 1911.
- 58 ‘Trade Notes’, 18 September 1913; and ‘The £5,000 Air Race’, *Evening News*, 7 June 1913.
- 59 ‘Street Perils Filmed’, *Evening News*, 6 November 1912, p. 6, reprinted in *The Pictures*, 30 November 1912. See also *Evening News*, 24 July 1912, p. 7, and 25 November 1912, p. 7, where a picture from the film illustrates another item on London traffic.

- 60 'The Traffic in London', *The Bioscope*, 27 February 1913, p. xviii and *KMFR*, March 1913, p. 15.
- 61 'A Film that Led to Legal Proceedings', *The Cinema*, 4 June 1913, p. 29.
- 62 'An "Evening News" Doll Film', *Evening News*, 9 October 1912, p. 7; and 'The Doll Festival', *Evening News*, 2 November 1912, p. 3. Photographs of the dolls and lists of dressers regularly appeared in the *Evening News*. Daring's offer was in the *Evening News*, 6 November 1912, p. 6.
- 63 'The Doll Fund Film', *The Pictures*, 9 November 1912, p. 26. See also 'The Fairy Doll', *Evening News*, 16 October 1912, p. 7. News of the film's making also appeared in the first *Top-Line Indicator*, 30 October 1912, p. 2, and in 'Motion Picture News', *The Pictures*, 26 October 1912, p. 31.
- 64 'The Fairy Doll', *The Cinema*, December 1912.
- 65 'Our Doll Matinee', *Evening News*, 7 November 1912, p. 3.
- 66 'Our Great Doll Matinee', *Evening News*, 29 November 1912. *The Cinema* encouraged participation in 'Our View of Things', *The Cinema*, November 1912, p. 5. There was also a matinee for the Fund in the Waldorf Hotel Ballroom on 6 December. See *Evening News*, 27 November 1912.
- 67 W. Bool, 'In the Arctic with the Cinema', *Pearson's Weekly*, 4 April 1912, p. 982; Mrs Ernest G. Batley, 'Training Tiny Cinema Stars', *Pearson's Weekly*, 4 July 1914, p. 57; 'These Are Film Marks', *Pearson's Weekly*, 7 June 1913, p. 1243; 'How the B and C Filmed the Boat Race', *Pearson's Weekly*, 9 August 1913, p. 184; and 'Films Sold by Auction', *Pearson's Weekly*, 1 November 1913, p. 482.
- 68 'Lieut. Daring, RN by Himself', *Pearson's Weekly*, 27 August 1912, p. 229; and 'Kings and Queens of Cinema: Miss Ivy Martinek', *Pearson's Weekly*, 1 February 1913, p. 805.
- 69 'The New Adventures of Lieut. Daring', *Pearson's Weekly*, 3 September 1912, p. 263.
- 70 'Commander Daring, RN', *Pearson's Weekly*, 13 September 1913.
- 71 'The Picture Playwright', *The Bioscope*, 8 August 1912, p. 407.
- 72 'The Trafalgar Cup', *Pearson's Weekly*, 7 December 1912, p. 603.
- 73 *Pearson's Weekly*, 4 January 1913.
- 74 'Don Q and the Artist', *The Pictures*, no. 83, 1913, p. 3. See also *The Pictures*, no. 71, 1913, p. 5, and no. 96, 1913, p. 16.
- 75 'The Drawn Blind', *The Bioscope*, 4 June 1914, p. 1082.
- 76 'Trade Topics', *Pictures and Pleasures*, 18 May 1914, p. 17; and 'The Drawn Blind', *Moving Picture Offered List*, 16 May 1914, p. 850.
- 77 Davison advertisement, *The Bioscope*, 14 May 1914, p. 754.
- 78 'The Drawn Blind', *The Bioscope*, 4 June 1914, p. 1082; and 'The Drawn Blind', *KMFR*, June 1914, pp. 86–87.

- 79 'The Drawn Blind', *KMFR*, June 1914, pp. 86–87. See also *KLW*, 21 May 1914, p. 81.
- 80 'News in Brief: Cinema Patrons Generosity', *The Cinema*, 21 May 1914, p. 18. Photographs of the dive appeared in *The Daily Mirror* and were also displayed on a poster for the newspaper. See *Moving Picture Offered List*, 9 May 1914, p. 835. *The Daily Mirror*, 18 April 1914, pp. 8–9, has three photographs of the dive on its middle pages, including one with the B&C camera in shot.

Chapter 12. Conclusion: Godal, Aspiration and Bankruptcy—Period Three at B&C, 1918–1924

- 1 Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film, 1918–1929* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1971), p. 92.
- 2 Copy of Register of Directors and Managers, 4 June 1918, National Archives BT 31/19897/114483.
- 3 'The B&C Co.'s Affairs', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 May 1924, p. 50.
- 4 Special Resolutions of Extraordinary General Meeting, 15 March 1920, National Archives BT 31/19897/114483.
- 5 Register of Directors and Managers, 24 June 1920 and 16 December 1920, National Archives BT 31/19897/114483.
- 6 'Opinions on British Production' and 'Breaking into America', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1 May 1919, pp. 73–74 and 12 February 1920, pp. 108–10.
- 7 Information on Godal's career was gleaned from 'Personal Pars', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 May 1915; 'Personalities in Film Land'; *The Kinematograph Year Book, 1916* (London: Kinematograph Publications Ltd), p. 160; 'The Founder of a Successful Business', *The Picture Palace News*, 10 June 1916, p. 104; 'Here and There in the Trade', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 September 1916, p. 16; 'A Cinema College and Studio', *The Era*, 14 February 1917, p. 20; 'Who's What in the Trade', *The Kinematograph Year Book, 1921* (London: Kinematograph Publications Ltd), p. 538; and Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue, 1895–1970* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973).
- 8 'British and Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.: Pioneer Producers Reorganise', *The Cinema*, 4 July 1918, p. 48.
- 9 In February 1917, he was serving as a part-time lieutenant in the Cadet Corps attached to the 10th London Regiment.
- 10 'British Studios', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 July 1919, p. 86.
- 11 'British Studios', 15 January 1920, p. 118, and 3 July 1919, p. 86.
- 12 Page advertisement, Valentia Steer, *The Secrets of the Cinema* (London: C. Arthur Pearson Ltd, 1920).
- 13 'Breaking into America', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 February 1920, p. 109.

- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Edward Godal, 'What Is the Best Thing that Can Happen to the Trade in 1921?', *The Cinema*, 30 December 1920, p. 39.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Edward Godal, 'British Producers' Programmes', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 January 1921, p. 161.
- 19 'Breaking into America', p. 109.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Godal, 'What Is the Best Thing that Can Happen?', p. 39.
- 22 'Breaking into America', p. 109.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 'Opinions on British Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1 May 1919, p. 73. See also "'Twelve-Ten" company at the Savoy', *The Cinema*, 1 May 1919, p. 65.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Edward Godal, 'The Best Thing for the Trade in 1923?', *The Cinema*, 4 January 1923, p. 17.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 'British and Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.', p. 48; and a similar report in 'Reorganisation of British Producing House', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 July 1918, p. 64.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., first emphasis added.
- 31 Godal, 'British Producers' Programmes', p. 161.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 'Breaking into America', p. 109. See also 'British and Colonial Joy Feast', *The Cinema*, 12 February 1920.
- 35 Ibid., p. 110; and 'British films in U. S.', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 February 1920, p. 108.
- 36 'British Studios', 6 February 1919, p. 88, and 20 February 1919, p. 74; and 'Film Town Rambles', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 November 1918, p. 56.
- 37 'Breaking into America', p. 109.
- 38 Ibid., p. 110.
- 39 Edward Godal, 'British Films in U. S.', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 February 1920, p. 108.
- 40 'Breaking into America', p. 110.
- 41 Ibid., p. 109. See also 'Opinions on British Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1 May 1919, p. 74, where he admitted expense was a matter of 'commercialism' and that 'so long as they received a bigger return' it did not matter if they spent money.

- 42 'Opinions on British Production', p. 74.
- 43 'Breaking into America', p. 109.
- 44 Herbert Brenon, 'The British Film: Its Chance in the World's Race', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 February 1919, p. 67.
- 45 'British Studios', 10 July 1919, p. 106, and 19 June 1919, p. 73.
- 46 'British Studios', 19 June 1919, p. 73.
- 47 'British Studios', 15 January 1920, p. 118, and 4 March 1920.
- 48 'The B&C Studios', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 May 1920, p. 183; 'Activity in the B and C Studios', *The Cinema*, 22 April 1920, p. 44; 'B&C Studio Improvements', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 April 1920, p. 109; and 'British Studios', 24 June 1920, p. 97.
- 49 'British and Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.', p. 48.
- 50 'Opinions on British Production', p. 73. See also Brenon, 'The British Film', p. 67. On Brenon, see Brian McFarlane (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of British Film* (London: Methuen, 2003).
- 51 'Big British Film Deal', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 April 1919, p. 83. See also 'British studios', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 February 1919, p. 88; and the advertisement proclaiming 'The B&C – HERBERT BRENON – MARIE DORO film ... is the First of the Series which this combination is now producing', *The Cinema*, 3 April 1919, pp. vi–vii.
- 52 'Opinions on British Production', p. 74.
- 53 See 'British Studios', 19 June 1919, p. 73, 3 July 1919, p. 86, 18 December 1919, p. 111, and 4 March 1920, p. 93.
- 54 See 'British Studios', 28 August 1919, p. 87, and 4 March 1920, p. 93. By May 1920, he appears to be working at the studio as an art director. See 'The B&C Studios', p. 183.
- 55 See 'British Studios', 4 March 1920, p. 93; and 'British Films', *The Cinema*, 18 March 1920, p. 47.
- 56 See 'British Studios', 24 June 1920, p. 97; and entry in McFarlane., *The Encyclopaedia of British Film*.
- 57 George Ridgwell, 'What a Director Should Know', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 August 1920, p. 113.
- 58 'British and Colonial Kinematograph Co., Ltd.', p. 48.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 'Personalities', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 August 1918, p. 67; and 'B&C Studio Improvements', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 April 1920, p. 109.
- 61 'Big British Film Deal', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 April 1919, p. 83.
- 62 'Opinions on British Production', p. 74.
- 63 'The Case for a British Producer's Society', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 January 1920, p. 101. The case for a manufacturer's association had also been proposed

- at a B&C company dinner in April 1919 by the MP, A.E. Newbold. See ‘Opinions on British Production’, p. 73.
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- 72 ‘British Studios’, 9 October 1919, p. 60; and ‘Matters of Moment’, *The Cinema*, 9 October 1919, p. 44.
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- 79 ‘British Studios’, 3 April 1919, p. 96.
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- 82 Ibid.
- 83 ‘The Temptress’, *The Cinema*, 30 October 1919, p. 34.
- 84 ‘British Studios’, 25 March 1920, p. 126.
- 85 ‘British Studios’, 19 June 1919, p. 73.
- 86 ‘British Studios’, 2 September 1920, p. 77.
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- 91 ‘British Studios’, 20 February 1919, p. 74; and ‘Important Items of Latest Trade Doings’, *The Cinema*, 3 April 1919, p. 47.
- 92 ‘British Studios’, 15 January 1920, p. 118; and ‘Matters of Moment’, 15 January 1920, p. 34.
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- 94 ‘British Films in the US’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 February 1920, p. 108; ‘General and Trade News’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 January 1920, p. 126; and ‘British Films’, *The Cinema*, 5 February 1920, p. 30.
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- 96 Godal, ‘British Producers Programmes’, p. 161.
- 97 ‘Matters of Moment to Many Men’, *The Cinema*, 21 August 1919, p. 35.
- 98 ‘Butcher’s Purchase Four B and C Productions’, *The Cinema*, 29 July 1920, p. 29.
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- 100 ‘Big British Film Deal’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 April 1919, p. 83.
- 101 Leslie Wood, *The Romance of the Movies* (London: William Heineman Ltd, 1937), p. 234. See ‘British Films’, 15 May 1919, p. 62.
- 102 ‘Butcher’s Purchase Four B and C Productions’, p. 29. See also Butcher advertisement, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 July 1920, p. 87.
- 103 ‘Celebrating “A Sinless Sinner”: World Film Renters Buy the Rights’, *The Cinema*, 21 August 1919, p. 25.
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- 107 ‘Reviews of the Week’, 19 August 1920, p. 86.
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- 137 Godal, 'The Short Film Specialist', p. 62.

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- Bioscope*, 5 October 1922, pp. 19–22; also ‘From the Renters’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 September 1922, p. 72; and ‘Romance of History’, *The Cinema*, 28 September 1922, p. 14 for the trade show announcement.
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- 198 Appointment of Receiver, 5 May 1924 and Receiver's or Manager's Abstract, 24 October 1924, National Archives BT 31/19897/114483. See also 'The B and C Company Ltd', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 May 1924, p. 57; 'Cinema

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- 200 See 'The B&C Co.'s Affairs', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 May 1924, p. 50; 'Cinema Finance: Voluntary Liquidation', *The Cinema*, 29 May 1924, p. 18 and 'Meeting of Creditors', *The Kinematograph Year Book, 1925* (London: Kinematograph Publications Ltd), p. 200.
- 201 All sums have been stated to the nearest pound. If the syndicate-funded films were part of the company's assets and realized a profit, it would have received half that profit, but if they made a loss, B&C's liabilities to the syndicate would have been reduced by half the loss.
- 202 Henry Morgan himself became receiver to B&C on 3 June 1924 and only ceased acting in that capacity on 15 March 1930. The final winding-up meeting for the company was held on 13 May 1930. See *The Kinematograph Year Book, 1925*, p. 193; and notice of meeting, National Archives BT 31/19897/114483.
- 203 Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America and the World Film Market, 1907–1934* (London: BFI Publications, 1985), p. 105. In fact, the problem was Europe-wide.

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See Tables 8.1 and 8.2 for statistics on B&C's full output of fiction, actuality and animated films.

1909

Her Lover's Honour, 645 feet, Drama

1910

The Funeral of the World's Greatest Monarch: King Edward, The Peacemaker, 973 feet, Topical

Playing Truant, 355 feet, Comic

A Plucky Lad, 695 feet, Drama

The Tables Turned, 375 feet, Comic

1911

Her Father's Photograph, 980 feet, Drama

Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, 160 feet, Topical

Wearly Willie and Tired Tim: The Plum Pudding Stakes, 435 feet, Comic

Naval Review at Spithead, 204 feet, Topical

Henley Regatta, 204 feet, Topical

Natural History Studies at the Zoo, 560 feet, Actuality

The Puritan Maid, 980 feet, Drama

1912

A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast, 1,050 feet, Drama

The Inhabitants of Jungle Town, 524 feet, Actuality

The Gentleman Ranker, 975 feet, Drama

Three-Fingered Kate: Kate Purloins the Wedding Presents, 877 feet, Series

Lieutenant Daring Quells a Rebellion, 1,177 feet, Series

Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Minefield, 1,425 feet, Series

The Mountaineer's Romance, 1,432 feet, Drama

1913

The Antique Vase, 609 feet, Comic

The Favourite for the Jamaica Cup, 967 feet, Drama

Europe's Winter Playground, 473 feet, Scenic

With Human Instinct, 845 feet, Drama

The World's Smallest Car in the World's Largest City, 438 feet, Actuality

From Montreux to Rochers de Naves, 424 feet, Scenic

1914

There's Good in the Worst of Us, 908 feet, Drama

1916

Dicky Dee's Cartoons: No. 3, 352 feet, Cartoon

1919

Nobody's Child, 5,200 feet, Drama

1921

The Puppet Man, 5,818 feet, Drama

1923

Wonder Women of the World: No.2: Simone Everard or Deathless Devotion,
2,000 feet

*Wonder Women of the World: No.4: Lady Jane Grey or The Court of
Intrigue*, 2,000 feet

Gems of Literature: No.2: The Taming of the Shrew, 2,016 feet

Gems of Literature: No.2: Scrooge (A Christmas Carol), 1,600 feet

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