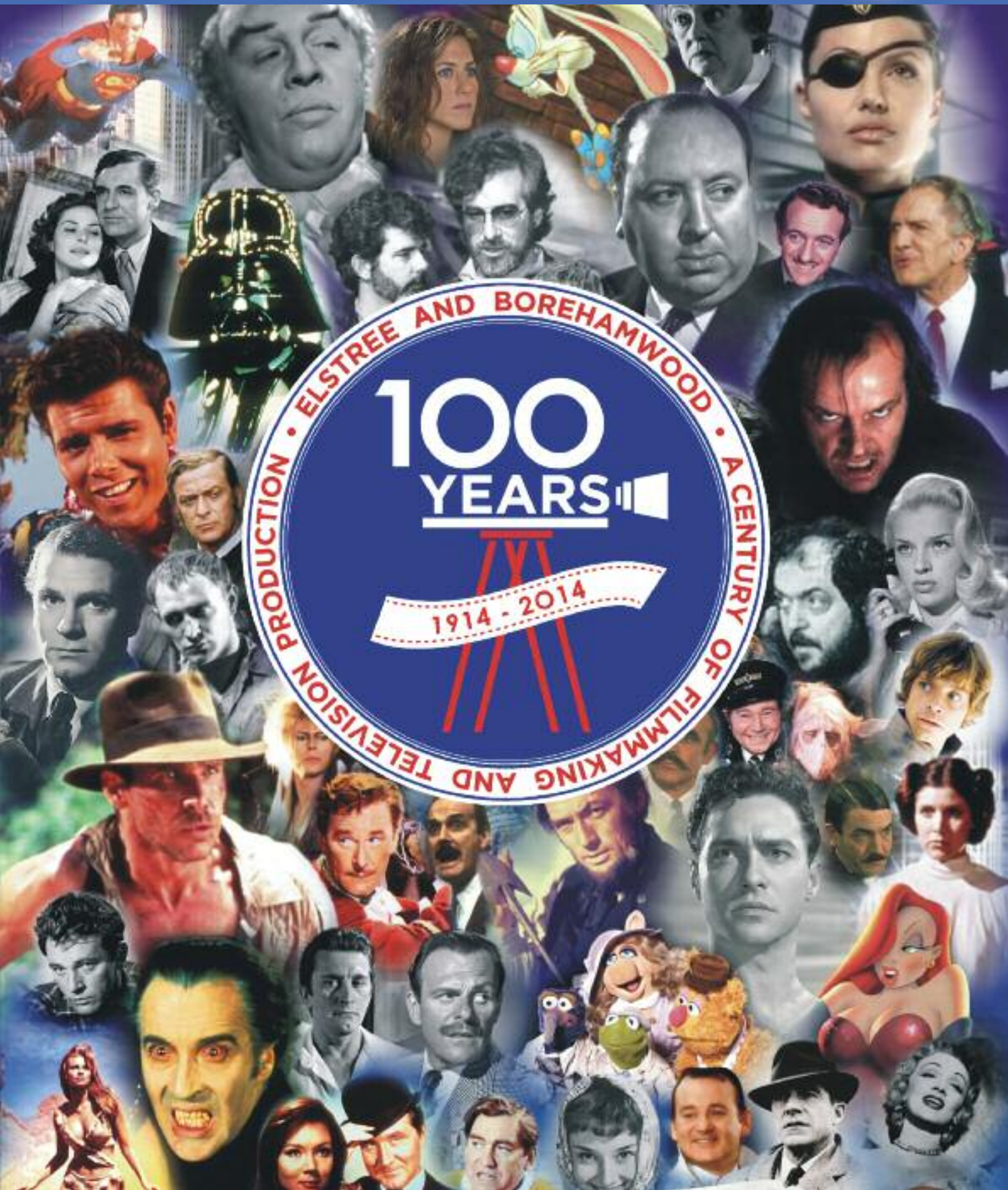


ELSTREE & BOREHAMWOOD **TOWN CRIER**



HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

LETTER FROM THE MAYOR...

Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council is very pleased to be able to support Elstree Screen Heritage and play our part in celebrating this wonderful Centenary of 100 years of film-making in the area.



On behalf of Elstree & Borehamwood Council and all our residents I take this opportunity to thank the Elstree Screen Heritage team for all the hard work they put in.

Cllr. Clive Butchins (Town Mayor)

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This Souvenir Edition of "Town Crier" is one of several contributions made by Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council towards celebrations of a Centenary of film-making.

We also acknowledge the generous support of other organisations, such as Hertsmere Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, First Capital Connect, Elstree Studios, the BBC Elstree Centre, the University of Hertfordshire, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Hertsmere Connect, as well as a range of local companies.

Special thanks go to those local Centenary Sponsors whose financial support has made it possible to provide free copies of this Souvenir Edition to community groups and visitors: Elstree Studios, The Rotary Club of Elstree & Borehamwood, Crossroads Care (Hertfordshire South) and Community Action Hertsmere.

"Hertsmere Borough Council is proud of its long association with local film and television activity, not only as owners of Elstree Studios since 1996 but on behalf of the residents of Hertsmere and far beyond who owe so much to the creative efforts of all of the studios over the past hundred years."

Cllr. Morris Bright *Leader, Hertsmere Borough Council*

"It was home, not just for George (Lucas) and me but for the cast and crew. We were made to feel we were welcome, and the craftsmen there were exceptional. My over-riding memory of working at Elstree was the friendship. I hope that Elstree in some form or other as a film and television studio lasts forever."

Steven Spielberg *Film Director*



To enable you to follow one hundred years of film-making we have included a timeline of key events at the bottom of each page.

Photo credits: Cllr. Clive Butchins, EBTC; Centenary Logo, Howard Berry.





When the early film pioneers arrived in a small rural village called Boreham Wood, in the parish of Elstree, one hundred years ago, who could have foretold the future?

They began a unique legacy of motion picture production and wrapped our town in that 'ribbon of dreams' as Orson Welles once described movies. Later, television production from the 1950s added to the huge output of the studios of Borehamwood.

The six studios that have existed here over the subsequent decades have created stars, seen the final bows of some cinema greats and created screen magic. Cult TV series such as *The Avengers* and *The Prisoner* along with history making movies like Hitchcock's *Blackmail* and blockbusters like *Star Wars* have made our town world famous.

We have a historical legacy of which to be proud and an exciting future ahead of us so let us celebrate this special Centenary.

Paul Welsh MBE MA
Chairman, Elstree Screen Heritage



Photo credits: Barbara Windsor, Barbara Windsor and Stormtroopers, Stormtrooper and kids, Borehamwood Times; Cliff Richard, Brian Burton; The Wall Sculpture, Mike Rollins.



NEPTUNE STUDIOS WHERE IT ALL STARTED!

Neptune Studios was built with what was said to be the first 'dark stage' in the UK; light was provided by an electricity generator rather than relying on uncertain sunlight through a glass roof.

Sadly the timing was not perfect, coinciding as it did with the outbreak of the Great War and within two years it went into liquidation and the Neptune Studio was renamed Ideal.



Over the next two decades the facility changed hands several times; in turn it was known as Blattner, Rock and then under the ownership of Lady Yule, the British National Studios. (See facing page).

Many home grown stars worked at the studios in those years including Old Mother Riley, George Formby, Bud Flanagan and even a young William Hartnell and Bill Owen. Unlike all the other studios of Borehamwood, the studio continued to operate throughout the Second World War on one of its stages.



Photo credits: Scene from The Harbour Lights, Exterior, George Allen & Unwin; Rock Studios, Borehamwood Times.



1936-38

Amalgamated Studio (later MGM) built but remains unused until requisitioned for the Second World War



1938

St. Martin's Lane with Charles Laughton, Vivien Leigh and Rex Harrison



1939

Charles Laughton in Hitchcock's **Jamaica Inn** with Robert Newton and Maureen O'Hara



1939

Just William; House Of The Arrow is final pre-War film (both released 1940)



1939

BIP Studio closes for duration of the Second World War

MORE CHANGES THE ATV YEARS AND THEN THE BBC COMES TO BOREHAMWOOD

In the early 1950s Hollywood star Douglas Fairbanks Jr. rented National Studios and produced 160 made-for-television films with veteran stars such as Buster Keaton to newcomers like Christopher Lee. During the 1950s other TV series were made including **William Tell** and **The Invisible Man**.

At the beginning of the 1960s Lew Grade and his company ATV converted the facility into a television production centre (see the area marked in yellow), going on to produce thousands of programmes from **Emergency Ward 10** to **The Muppet Show**. Even **The Beatles** starred at ATV.

Lew was so proud of the studio that when he was made a Lord he chose the title of Baron of Elstree.




In 1984 the BBC acquired the studio and have left their own stamp on its history with programmes such as **Top Of The Pops**, **Grange Hill** and today the ever popular **EastEnders** and **Holby City**.

How very fitting that in our Centenary of filming on the site of the original Neptune Studios the BBC Elstree Centre have announced expansion plans and a secure future for the site.

Photo credits: Clapperboard, Film crew, John Spooner; Beatles at ATV, Borehamwood Times; Aerial shot of ATV, Keith Clement.



1940
British International Studio owner John Maxwell dies aged 63



1940-45
National Studios: Old Mother Riley, George Formby, *One Of Our Aircraft Is Missing* during World War II



1946-47
Warner Bros. invests into BIP Studio; finances rebuilding and expansion




1947
BIP renamed Associated British Pictures Corporation

ACROSS THE ROAD BNP, BIP AND THEN ABPC

In 1925 more film pioneers set their sights on Boreham Wood and purchased 40 acres on Shenley Road, creating what was to become what we know today as Elstree Studios.

In the pre-war era it was known first as British National and then British International Pictures. For over twenty years from 1947 it became even more famous as ABPC (Associated British Picture Corporation).

During the 1920s productions included Hitchcock's famous first British talkie *Blackmail* and other pioneering films such as *Atlantic*, the first film shot in three language versions. Even the first French talkie was shot here; sound recording facilities were not yet available in France.



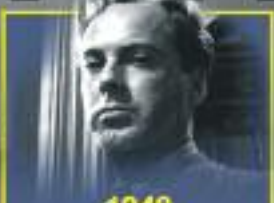
Over 200 films were produced before the studio closed for the war years. Warner Bros. then became a major shareholder and the facility was extensively rebuilt before reopening in the late 1940s with such movies as *The Hasty Heart* starring Richard Todd and future American President Ronald Reagan. Hitchcock returned to direct Marlene Dietrich in *Stage Fright*.

Photo credits: Car, *Blackmail*, British Film Institute; Aerial shot of BIP and B&D, English Heritage.



1947

First post-War film is *My Brother Jonathan*, ABPC based but filmed at National Studios



1948

ABPC proper reopens with *Man On The Run*; Stages 1 and 2 open



1949

Richard Todd in *The Hasty Heart* with Ronald Regan; Stages 3 and 4 open



1940s

MGM British Studios opens its doors at the Amalgamated site in Elstree Way



1949

Hitchcock back for *Under Capricorn* at MGM and *Stage Fright* at ABPC

MORE STUDIOS FOLLOW

...AND NOW IT'S ELSTREE STUDIOS

The 1950s saw the filming of such pictures as *Moby Dick* with its newly-built giant outdoor water tank, *The Dam Busters* and *Look Back In Anger* with young future stars such as Audrey Hepburn, Richard Harris and Sylvia Syms given their first screen breaks.

The 1960s witnessed the production of popular movies such as *Summer Holiday*, *Hammer Horrors* and *The Rebel* alongside such cult television series as *The Saint*, *The Avengers*, *The Champions*, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* and *Dept. S*.

The 1970s were a mixture of real highs and lows. MGM briefly helped fund the facility but in the early part of the decade the studio nearly closed, saved only by scaling down and going 'four wall'.

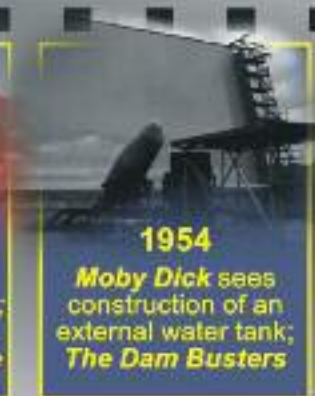
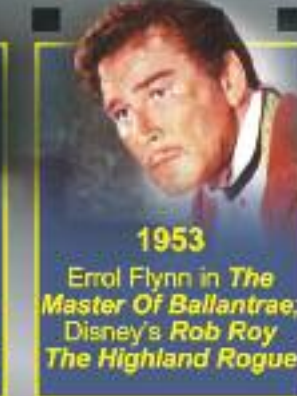
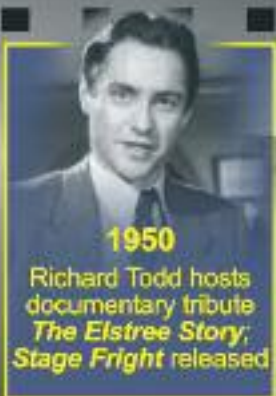
On The Buses and the *Confessions Of* series were followed by blockbusters: *Murder On The Orient Express*, *Star Wars* and *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.

In the 1980s, under the ownership of Cannon and then Brent Walker, the studio again very nearly closed but was saved by an eight year long Save Our Studios campaign by local residents under the chairmanship of Paul Welsh. In 1996 Hertsmere Borough Council intervened, purchasing the site after a three year closure. Twelve acres had been sold to Tesco, but a £10 million pound investment rebuilt the studio.

Today Elstree is the leading studio in London and generates significant profits which benefit all the residents of Hertsmere by reducing their council tax. Film stars such as Brad Pitt and pop stars such as One Direction still come through the studio gates and Elstree produces high-rating TV shows: *Strictly Come Dancing*, *Big Brother* and *Dancing On Ice*. It has been a bumpy ride for Elstree Studios over the past 88 years, but the second oldest dream factory in the town remains busier than ever, with a healthy future.



Photo credits: *Moby Dick*, CanalPlus; Aerial shot of ABPC, English Heritage.



WHEN THE WHITEHALL STUDIOS BECAME THE GATE STUDIOS



The Gate Studio stood in Station Road opposite the railway station and opened in 1928 under the name Whitehall.

It was built from a pre-fab aircraft hangar. Victim of poor timing, it was completed just as silent films were being overtaken by the new sound films. In retrospect the site proved "less than perfect".

Even if trains were less frequent in that era, their noise and vibration could prove a real problem to filmmakers. Poor third assistant directors were positioned on the roof to watch out for trains, and a warning bell rung on the stage to stop filming.

The studio changed hands several times before it closed during the War. It was then purchased by the Rank Organisation as Lord Rank was keen to produce religious films for the Methodist Church and as companions to his larger feature films. Many stars worked at the facility over the decades, as diverse as Cary Grant and Max

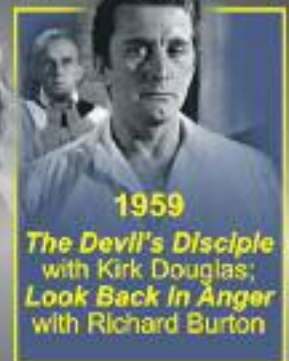
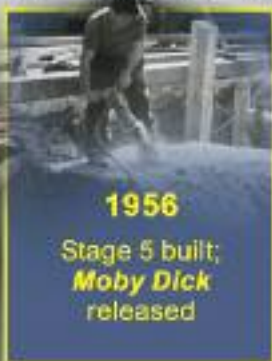
Bygraves. Its most famous film, the 1950s weepie *Odette*, starred Anna Neagle and Trevor Howard.

In the late 1950s the facility was converted to produce cinema screens by Harkness Hall Ltd for export around the world. However, the buildings and in particular the original stage remained virtually unchanged.

A lobby to convert the site into a film museum failed to prevent its purchase by developers and in late 2005 it was demolished to make way for a housing estate.

Today only the film-related names of surrounding roads and buildings give a clue to this fated studio.

Photo credits: Aerial shot of Whitehall Studios, English Heritage; Cast of Ruth, Paddy Vinton; Inside The Gate, Bob Redman.



BRITISH & DOMINIONS STUDIOS

A FORGOTTEN "DREAM FACTORY"

British & Dominions (B&D) Imperial Studios is another of the now forgotten dream factories, but for a few years it contributed significantly to the growth of film production in the UK.

The facility was built in the late 1920s to provide extra stages for the adjacent BIP Elstree Studio, with three other stages for hire. In the early 1930s such Hollywood companies as Paramount, Columbia and United Artists all financed British movies made at the complex.

It is claimed that B&D was the first UK studio built to accommodate the "talkies" that quickly dominated and then replaced silent films. Future stars made their first films at B&D: Vivien Leigh, Leslie Howard, Anna Neagle and Merle Oberon.



In 1933 legendary actor Charles Laughton won the Best Actor Oscar® for his performance of Henry VIII in the very successful *The Private Life Of Henry VIII*. This film inspired a short-lived boom in British film production. Legendary Hollywood silent screen swashbuckler Douglas Fairbanks came to the studio for his final screen appearance in *The Private Life Of Don Juan*.

Then in February 1936 Anna Neagle and her husband film producer/director Herbert Wilcox were awoken in the night at their home in Deacons Hill Road to see the studio engulfed in a fierce fire that destroyed all the stages. Rather than rebuild, the company decided instead to invest in building a new studio: Pinewood.

The main part of the site was purchased by Bullens in 1939 but some buildings, the Imperial film vaults and the Gate Recording Theatre, retained the film link. In the 1980s the whole site was demolished and replaced by a large office complex which took the name Imperial in recognition of the dream factory that was now just part of history.



Photo credits: Henry VIII, Rex Features; After the fire, Paul Welsh.



MGM BRITISH “THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN”

If ever there was a “Rolls Royce” of British studios it was MGM British which stood on 115 acres off Elstree Way from 1936 until 1970. For over three decades it produced world famous films, attracting Hollywood's most legendary stars.

The studio was built in 1936 as Amalgamated Studios but never opened. The facility was purchased by Lord Rank and with the impending onset of war was immediately leased to the Ministry of Works. In 1944 MGM decided to invest in UK film production and purchased the studio plus additional acreage.

After modernisation MGM launched its film production programme with *Edward My Son* starring Spencer Tracy. The 1950s saw Clark Gable, Grace Kelly, Robert Taylor, Gene Kelly and Elizabeth Taylor filming at MGM. MGM needed a castle for *Ivanhoe* (Elizabeth and Robert Taylor) and a Chinese village for *The Inn Of The Sixth Happiness* (Ingrid Bergman and Robert Donat in his final role). So, this being Britain's Hollywood, MGM built them!



The 1960s were just as busy years, filming *The Dirty Dozen*, whose night time backlot explosions kept local residents awake, Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Where Eagles Dare* with Clint Eastwood and low budget but popular efforts like *Village Of The Damned* and *Quatermass And The Pit*. MGM British Studios also played host to television series, the best remembered being *Danger Man*, the Gerry Anderson classic *UFO* and cult series *The Prisoner*.

By 1970 the Studio's parent company in Hollywood had been taken over and was awash in red ink. A “fire sale” ensued and the 115 acre studio was sold off for under £2 million. The buildings were demolished and the backlot developed for housing. The white clock tower, visible from the nearby A1 and a landmark in our town, survived longer than the rest of the studio, escaping demolition for another thirteen years until 1986 when it was destroyed despite attempts to list it.

Photo credits: The Castle, English Heritage; Aerial shot, English Heritage.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?



Throughout Elstree and Borehamwood, many local road names acknowledge people who helped create our unique film and television heritage, while others celebrate some of the UK's famous film studios.

Here are thirty-five people who have been honoured in this way by naming roads on what was once the site occupied by the MGM British Studios.

You'll find these people and eight film studios on a plaque panel by the old MGM site. If you can't visit the site simply ask for a free copy of the artwork when you next visit the Museum.

IS ONE OF THESE THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE?



Key
 People ☆
 Studios 🏠

Parade Film Studios
 A. MGM British
 B. EMI
 C. Denham
 D. Denham
 E. EMI
 F. EMI
 G. EMI
 H. EMI

What's In A Name?

Made in **ELSTREE**

This area was occupied by the M G M British Studios (1944-1970). Local road names acknowledge many who helped create the unique film and television heritage of Borehamwood, as well as celebrate some of the UK's most famous film studios.

1. Bob Brown - Film and TV producer	2. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	3. David Lynch - Screenwriter and film director	4. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor	5. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	6. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor
7. David Bowie - Musician and actor	8. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	9. David Lynch - Screenwriter and film director	10. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor	11. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	12. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor
13. David Bowie - Musician and actor	14. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	15. David Lynch - Screenwriter and film director	16. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor	17. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	18. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor
19. David Bowie - Musician and actor	20. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	21. David Lynch - Screenwriter and film director	22. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor	23. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	24. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor
25. David Bowie - Musician and actor	26. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	27. David Lynch - Screenwriter and film director	28. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor	29. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	30. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor
31. David Bowie - Musician and actor	32. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	33. David Lynch - Screenwriter and film director	34. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor	35. John Gielgud - Actor and theatre director	36. Noel Coward - Playwright and actor

Photo credits: Plaque panels, Bob Redman; Names and photos, Mike Rollins.

1970
 MGM British Studios closes in Elstree Way; EMI accommodates MGM and the Studio is renamed EMI-MGM

1970
 Hoffman with Peter Sellers; Michael Caine in *Get Carter*; *The Go-Between*; *The Railway Children*

1971
 First of three *On The Buses*; Vincent Price as *The Abominable Doctor Phibes*

1971
 Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* post-production is first use of Dolby sound

1973
Digby, The Biggest Dog In The World; *The Legend Of Hell House*

DANZIGERS THE ONLY STUDIO IN ELSTREE

One of the shortest lived of our film studios and the only one actually located in the Elstree part of the Parish was the New Elstree Studios.

Harry and Ed Danziger were two American brothers who always had an eye on how to make a quick buck. They spotted a market for second feature films and TV series made in the UK, if only they could be made quickly and produced cheaply.

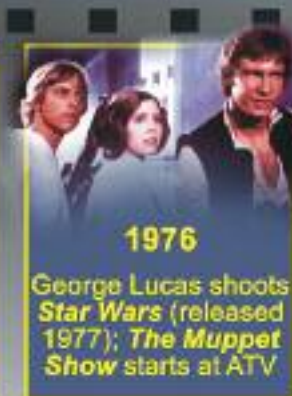
Harry and Ed spotted an old engine testing facility near the reservoir in Elstree and in the mid-1950s converted it into a film studios. They produced TV episodes in just two or three days. Feature films took longer, two or three weeks. This soon gave the studio a poor reputation. However, it did provide work for film crews, gave young actors a start and employed veteran actors.

Writers such as Brian Clemens learnt their craft there. As he told us for The Elstree Project (see Page 15) "Once you had worked for the Danzigers anything else in your subsequent career was a piece of cake". Veteran actor and later DJ Pete Murray recalled "They would phone you on a Friday asking if you were free to star in a film, send you a script on Saturday and you'd start on the Monday. Two weeks later you finished and collected your £250 fee!"



The market for such productions dried up at the start of the 1960s; the Danzigers closed the studio and in 1965 they sold the site to RTZ. Today a modern business park stands on the site where once Richard The Lionheart rode and Professor Quatermass tackled alien invaders.

Photo credits: Crew at ease, Filming, Behind the camera, Derek Pykett.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE STUDIOS OF ELSTREE & BOREHAMWOOD!!!



"I had spent many years in Hollywood but on a visit to England in the 1930s I saw that Elstree had grown into the Hollywood of Britain."

Charlie Chaplin (1960)

"Elstree & Borehamwood has made a unique contribution to the history of film-making. I have personally great affection for and many happy memories of my main place of work for sixteen years."

Richard Todd (1989)

"My films at Elstree were a highlight of my career. Long live Elstree Studios."

Cliff Richard (1989)

"Without Elstree the British cinema would have lost half its history."

Bob Hoskins (1989)

"Please remember me to Stage 5. The crews at Elstree were the best in the business and it was a joy to work there."

Patrick Macnee (2011)

*"I have always enjoyed working at Elstree and as you grow older the memories of films I have worked on there grow ever more vivid. I have particularly happy memories of **Ben Hur**, **La Dolce Vita**, **Intolerance** and **Back To Africa**. What fun Gina Lollobrigida and I had in the canteen."*

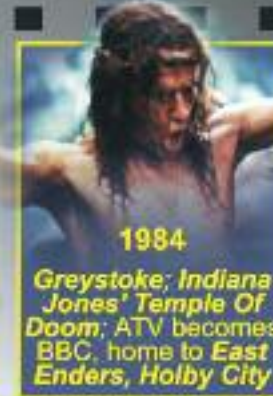
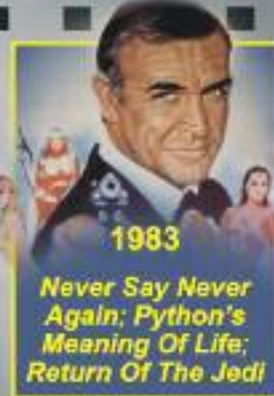
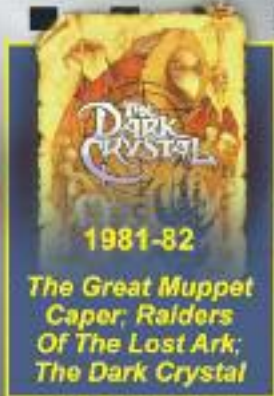
John Cleese (1997)

*"Elstree Studios has played a very important part in my films. Without the outstanding facilities I would not have been able to make the **Star Wars** and **Indiana Jones** trilogies. Elstree Studios has been vital to filmmakers around the world and is an historical landmark."*

George Lucas (1997)

*"Elstree Studios has been my home many times in the past twenty years. George Lucas had made **Star Wars** there and enthused about the spirit and flair, the magic that could be found behind an ordinary suburban high street. **Indiana Jones** was born on the sound stages of Elstree although conceived somewhere warmer on a beach in Hawaii. When I needed an English studio there was no question in my mind where I wanted to be."*

Steven Spielberg (1997)



FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE STARS

ON OUR FILM AND TELEVISION HERITAGE TRAIL

In 1996 the British Film Institute celebrated the Centenary of Film in the UK, providing over 200 plaques to be erected around the UK.

Eighteen of these were awarded to our Town Council. More have followed; new plaques continue to be added as part of the First Impressions project. One of the key aims of this project is to encourage more people to take pride in our film and television heritage. Each plaque is mounted on an explanatory panel, forming a heritage trail throughout Elstree & Borehamwood.

On the trail you'll also see a wall sculpture in tribute to the men and women who worked behind the camera, iconic images on banners and even "film stars" in the pavement at the railway station.

Why not pick up your free copy of this guide at the Museum at 96 Shenley Road or at the Council offices?

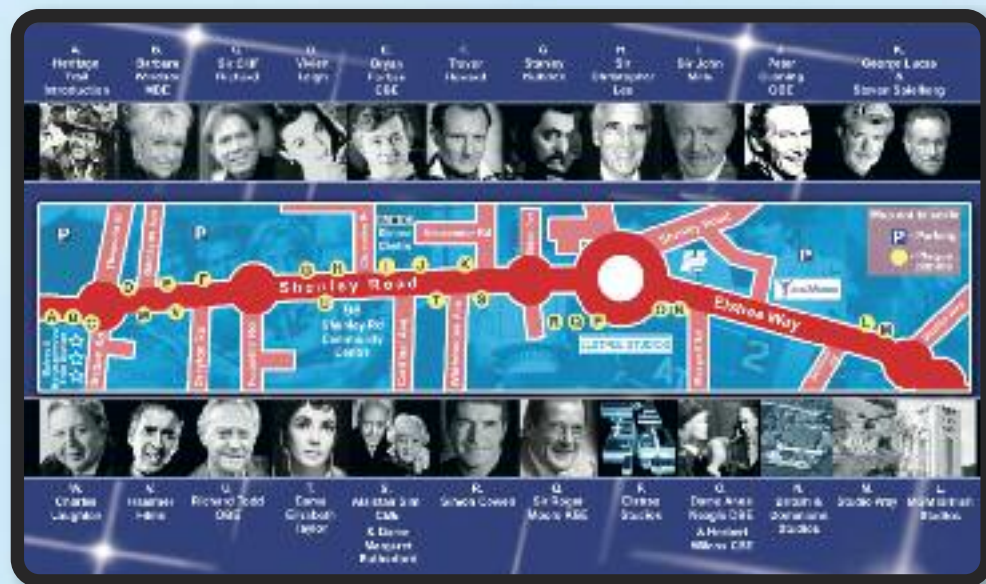
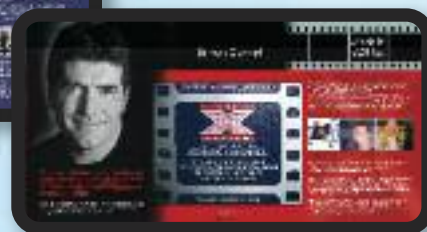
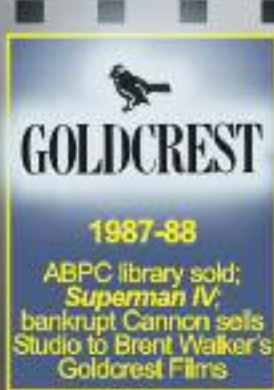


Photo credits: Roger Moore, Simon Cowell, Guide to the trail, Mike Rollins.



THE ELSTREE PROJECT

THE AUTHENTIC VOICES OF OUR STUDIOS

We love the stories told by the stars and directors, but we also want the stories you don't normally get to hear. That's why our interviews range from director Steven Spielberg to actors and crew members – everyone's role and everyone's story is unique and important. During these interviews we discovered tales about what it was really like to work with Roger Moore on **The Saint**, how the backdrops were matted in for **Ivanhoe**, and what Elizabeth Taylor said when one of the crew on **The VIPs** suggested that her diamond engagement ring was from Woolworths!

We now know how Darth Vader's costume was painted for **Star Wars**, secrets of the craft of cinematography from the cameraman on Stanley Kubrick's **2001: A Space Odyssey** and just how much attention you need to pay to continuity from the script supervisor on **The Shining**.

And we have also discovered other amazing stories no one has ever heard, including a heartbreaking tale of the temporary closure of Elstree Studios in the 1990s.

A partnership between Elstree Screen Heritage and staff and students of the Film and TV Course (School of Creative Arts) at the University of Hertfordshire (Hatfield), The Elstree Project has started its fourth year. We've recorded over forty interviews and have a growing list of people who we still need to interview. If you would like to join that list, why not contact us at howard@theelstreeproject.org



To hear and see the authentic voices from the studios please visit us on-line at www.TheElstreeProject.org or visit the film and TV display in the Community Museum at 96 Shenley Road where you'll be able to enjoy highlights from over twenty-five of our interviews.

Photo credits: Mosaic, Howard Berry.



ELSTREE SCREEN HERITAGE



Elstree Screen Heritage was founded in 2006 by local residents who believe our unique film and television heritage makes Elstree & Borehamwood a very special place to live. Our aims are to record, preserve and share that heritage.

To do that we screen classic Elstree films and TV, write books, run events and much, much more.

Under the leadership of our Chairman Paul Welsh, we have prepared an ambitious programme of activities to commemorate this year's Centenary of Film, including:

Displays

A new Centenary Banner will be "flown" from lighting columns all the way from the railway station down Shenley Road to Elstree Studios. In June we'll add a Centenary Exhibition to our display of film and TV sights and sounds already in the Museum at 96 Shenley Road.

Events

On 21st June the BBC Elstree Concert Band will return to perform a special concert at The Ark, featuring music from local films and TV productions. We plan to screen classic films made at Elstree, and are working with Elstree Studios on plans to host several special events, and with several fan groups also wishing to celebrate the anniversary.

The Film and TV Heritage Trail

Each visitor to the Museum will receive a free guide showing the location of the panels which make up the Heritage Trail. Later in the year new panels will be added to mark the start of film-making at Neptune Studios as well as all the activity which has continued on that site, including Lord Lew Grade's years with ATV and thirty years of the BBC Elstree Centre.

Signage

In association with Hertfordshire County Council, new signs will be placed at key gateways into Elstree & Borehamwood, "Home of Film and Television".

Books and DVDs

Our Centenary Exhibition will include copies of Paul Welsh's popular *Elstree Confidential* as well as the re-released DVD of *Elstree Story*. We hope to release additional publications.

Our Management Group is Paul Welsh, Bob Redman, Brian Burton, Ben Simon and Maryse Willett.

For further details about Elstree Screen Heritage please visit us at www.ElstreeScreenHeritage.org or join us on Facebook.

You can contact us care of bob.redman@btinternet.com or simply leave a phone message at 020 8953 2903.

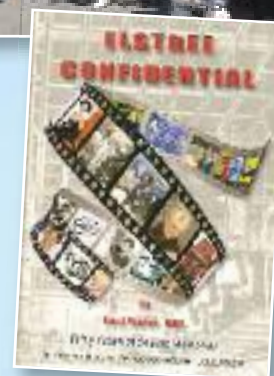


Photo credits: ESH Logo, Ben Simon; Film and TV Stars, Simon Wallace; Elstree Confidential, Paul Welsh; Classic locations tour, Bob Redman; Window sticker, Mike Rollins.

