

JOHN GRIERSON ARCHIVE

G2 / Personal papers, February 1927 - September 1933

Scope and Content:

In 1927 Grierson returned to Britain after a period in the USA studying at the University of Chicago and writing about film. He approached Stephen Tallents, secretary of the Empire Marketing Board, with ideas about developing film as a method of communication for the Board, a promotional body for the products of the British Empire. Tallents, who shared Grierson's views, employed Grierson as a film officer. It was during his time at the Empire Marketing Board that Grierson directed *Drifters*, an acclaimed documentary about the British herring fishing industry. The film owed a great debt stylistically to Russian filmmakers such as Eisenstein, indeed *Drifters* was first screened in London in November 1929 as part of a double bill with *Battleship Potemkin* (Grierson had worked on the English titles for the film). Following the success of *Drifters* Grierson oversaw the production of a series of Empire Marketing Board films including *Industrial Britain* (1931). In 1933 the Empire Marketing Board (and its film unit) was abolished. Tallents was appointed public relations officer for the General Post Office. Grierson followed and set up the GPO film unit.

Material relating to this period of Grierson's life includes: production material including outlines, scripts and music suggestions for *Drifters*; Empire Marketing Board material including correspondence, reports produced by Grierson and notes and production material for films planned and produced by the Board; material relating to international film activity including papers of the International Motion Picture Congress (1927 - 29); film criticism and articles on cinema from various publications; mss and typescript reports, articles and lecture notes; typescript versions of unpublished book entitled *New Worlds for Cinema* on the use of film in education and by the church; press cuttings (including reviews of *Drifters*); notebooks including drafts of articles and notes on documentary filmmaking; photocopies of papers relating to the Empire Marketing Board from the University of Texas and the British Postal Museum and Archive, London

G2 begins with Grierson's invitation by Stephen Tallents to prepare memoranda on the use of films in various countries with a view to setting up a film unit for the Empire Marketing Board. It covers *Drifters* and Grierson's time as Film Officer of the Empire Marketing Board and includes much film criticism as well as other writing on documentary and film in general. For the sake of continuity and convenience, the regular columns of film criticism which Grierson wrote at this time, although they extend from June 1929 to February 1934, have been kept together within this section.

Papers relating to the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit

G2	1	Papers relating to <i>Drifters</i>
		<div>Including:</div> <div> Typescript and MS descriptions, scripts and final shooting script Publicity material Music suggestions Programme for Film Society showing, December 1929 </div>
		Number of items unavailable as yet owing to extreme fragility of some of this material. For press comment on <i>Drifters</i> see G2.24 20 items
	2	Papers relating to EMB production <i>Grasslands of the Empire</i> : background information, scenarios, MS notes by JG and correspondence, 1929 16 items
	3	Scripts, treatments, outlines, descriptions and ideas for films 23 items

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G2		Including:	List of suggested music for <i>Conquest</i> Manuscript and typescript notes on 'Growth of Empire Communications'
	4	Miscellaneous EMB papers. 13 items	
		Including:	Proposal for setting up EMB film library Financial statement, n.d. 'The Empire Marketing Board and the cinema': report on activities, March 1, 1928 MS notes by JG and others MS by JG on possible commercial showing of <i>Drifters</i>

Papers relating to the League of Nations and international film activity

G2	5	Papers relating to the International Motion Picture Congress organised by the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations, 1927-1929 10 items	
		Including:	<i>Resolutions unanimously adopted by the International Motion Picture Congress . Paris, September 27 - October 3, 1926</i> MS by JG headed 'The present situation in the educational film world. Extracts from an address by M. Jean Benoit-Lévy, film adviser of the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation; at the French Film Week, May 1929'
	6	Papers relating to the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations and its efforts to co-ordinate international policy on production and exchange of educational films, 1927- 1928 14 items	
	7	Typescript notes, film catalogues and lists for memoranda on government film services in France and Germany 15 items	

Writings by JG

G2	8	Articles on the work of EMB Film Unit, c. 1933; MSS, typescripts, transcript 7 items	
	9	Film criticism from the <i>Clarion</i> and <i>New Clarion</i> , June 1929 - July 9, 1932; photocopies, one original cutting 40 items	
	10	Film criticism from <i>Artwork</i> , Winter 1930 - Winter 1931; photocopies 5 items	

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G2	11	Film criticism from <i>Everyman</i> , October 15, 1931 - June 30, 1932; photocopies. 36 items
	12	Film criticism from <i>New Britain</i> , May 24, 1933 - February 21, 1934; original cuttings, photocopies, photocopies of transcripts, transcript 30 items
	13	Typescript drafts with marginalia and one MS draft of some of the above; mostly fragile. 18 items
	14	Transcripts of fragile material in G2.13
	15	Typescript drafts with MS emendations of articles on first principles of documentary for <i>Cinema Quarterly</i> , Winter 1932, Spring 1933 6 items
	16	Articles on film-making; typescripts with MS emendations
		Contains: 'Documentary . giving film sequence to natural material'. 2 versions Lecture on documentary as treatment of reality Lecture on Flaherty and the value of documentary as opposed to story films Lecture on film making as a career. 5 items
	17	Articles on the use of films in propaganda and education; press cuttings, typescripts with MS emendations, photocopy, and transcripts of fragile material
		Contains: 'A working plan for 16mm' 'Educational films to-day': headed 'Scottish Educational Cinema Society' Article beginning 'It is widely recognised that films have a marked effect on the receptive minds of children' (2 versions) 'About experts' (2 versions) 'Propaganda film technique - suitable subjects and their treatment'. <i>The Kinematograph Studio</i> , December 18, 1930 'A big movie idea - we must take the talkies to industry'. <i>John Bull</i> , March 21, 1931 Article beginning 'The cinema can play a wonderful part in stimulating the demand for British goods in the world's markets' (2 versions) Article headed 'Teach the world what we have to sell' 'One foot of film = \$1 of trade - the real meaning of propaganda', for <i>Kinematograph Weekly</i> , January 8, 1931 (3 versions) 15 items
G2	18	MS articles

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		Contains:	'Au naturel': article on documentary Article on the making of <i>Drifters</i> Article on Russian directors 3 items
	19	Articles on film; typescripts with MS emendations, cutting, transcript of fragile material	
		Contains:	"Film Showmanship's Blind Spot", <i>Kinematograph Weekly</i> , December 1 1932 (3 versions) 'The holy alliance', 1932 Letter replying to O'Casey's 'furious fanfare against the cinema' (2 versions) Review of Rudolf Arnheim's <i>Film</i> , 1933 (2 versions) Review of C H Dand's <i>Men against Death</i> Short notes on various films 'The function of the producer', for <i>Cinema Quarterly</i> , Autumn 1933 12 items
	20	Miscellaneous articles	
		Contains:	'A British producer tells the terrible truth about British films - you gave us a mandate to free the cinema from American domination - and we have let you down', <i>Tit-bits</i> , November 30, 1930 'Bitter tragedy lurks among the herring fishers - Silver scales - But not the scales of justice', <i>Tit-bits</i> , February 1, 1930 'The New Generation in Sculpture', <i>Apollo</i> , 12, July-December 1930' galley-proofs Article on Barcelona Exhibition, 1929, transcript 4 items
	21	Typescript versions of an unpublished book entitled <i>New Worlds for Cinema</i> , on the use of film in education and by the church, with MS emendations; page of comment by Stephen Tallents; letter from the Student Christian Movement Press concerning publication, 1931 5 items	

Correspondence

G2	22	Correspondence 1927-1933 - with, among others:	
			Lord Beaverbrook Stephen Tallents 26 items
		Including:	Rough draft of possible circular to local educational authorities: from G T Hankin

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Articles by other authors

G2	23	Reprint and transcripts of articles by Russian film directors, c. 1929	
		Contains:	<p>S Nalbandov: 'Technique of sound film production', reprinted from <i>Cinema</i> , August 7, 1929</p> <p>V Turin: Untitled article on Soviet film</p> <p>S M Eisenstein: 'Mass movies'</p> <p>V Pudovkin: 'Formal questions of my first sound film'</p> <p>4 items</p>

Press cuttings

G2	24	Press cuttings and reprint of newspaper comment on Grierson and the EMB Film Unit, 1929-1932 21 items	
		Including:	Reviews of <i>Drifters</i> and <i>Conquest</i>
	25	Press cuttings of film and general interest, 1928-1933 20 items	
		Including:	<p>Articles from <i>The Times</i> on sound in films</p> <p>'Britain on the screen'. <i>Daily Record and Mail</i> , September 22, 1930</p> <p><i>Worker's Cinema</i> , 1(1), November 1931</p>
	26	Book of press cuttings, 1928-1932 and undated plus 8 <i>Drifters</i> posters 1 item	
	27	Book of press cuttings: Krazy Kat and other cartoons, 1926-1933 1 item	

Miscellaneous

G2	28	Miscellaneous papers, 1924-1933 26 items	
		Including:	<p>MS notes by JG</p> <p>Catalogues of Swiss films, 1923-1926</p> <p>Correspondence with Inland Revenue</p> <p>Publicity notes on <i>Contact</i> : from British Instructional Films</p> <p>Brochures for De Vry camera and Newman-Sinclair tripod</p>

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Notebooks

G2	N1	Buff SO book 1929, c. 1931
		Including: Reviews Articles
	N2	Buff SO book 129, c. 1932 Including: Articles on documentary film-making
	N3	Buff SO book 129, c. 1932 Including: Reviews for <i>Everyman</i>
	N4	Buff SO book 129, c. 1932-1933 Including: General articles on documentary

Publications

G2	P1	<i>The Dial</i> , 85(3), September 1928
	P2	<i>The Dial</i> , 85(4), October 1928
	P3	Beresford Egan and P R Stephenson: <i>The Sink of Solitude</i> , London, 1928
	P4	<i>The Realist</i> , 1(5), August 1929
	P5	<i>Cinema Quarterly</i> , 1(3), Spring 1933 Article by JG: 'Documentary (2)

Acquisitions

G2A	1	The Grierson-Strauss correspondence: letters from JG and Marion Grierson to Frances Strauss, 1927-1934; photocopies from The Humanities Research Center, the University of Teas at Austin (may not be reproduced without donor's permission), 333pp
	2	Official documents and correspondence relating to the EMB Film Unit, 1927 - 1933 (photocopies from Post Office Records) 17 items
	3	Press cutting on JG: 'Empire on the screen - John Grierson's pioneer work for marketing board - Tapping a great educational source', <i>Dispatch</i> , December 15, 1930 (from HFH) Article by JG: 'Better popular pictures', <i>Transactions of SMPE</i> , Aug 1927 (photocopy) 2 items
	4	Article by JG: 'The new generation in sculpture', <i>Apollo</i> , 12, July-December 1930 (photocopy from HFH) Review by JG of 'Cinema: a review of thirty years' achievement by C A Lejeune, Sept 1931 (photocopy)

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		2 items
G2	5	Leaflet on 'Drifters' for use by schoolteachers (photocopy) 1 item
	6	Review of 'Drifters', <i>Evening Dispatch</i> , January 9, 1930 (photocopy) Newspaper articles on Gorno marionette films, 1930-31 3 items
	7	<i>Coconino Chronicle</i> , 1927-1928, reprinted August 1988. Contains article on Herriman's Krazy Kat cartoons (see G2:27) 1 item