

## JOHN GRIERSON ARCHIVE

### G3 / Personal papers, October 1 1933 - October 17 1939

#### Scope and Content:

Following the dissolution of the Empire Marketing Board in 1933 Grierson moved with its Secretary, Stephen Tallents, to the General Post Office where he established a film unit which produced a series of acclaimed films including *Coal Face*, *Night Mail*, *Song of Ceylon* and *North Sea*. Grierson gathered an impressive group of filmmakers and artists to work on these films including Humphrey Jennings, Alberto Cavalcanti, W H Auden and Benjamin Britten. Frustrated by the limits imposed on the GPO film unit by its position within a state-sponsored body Grierson resigned in June 1937. He continued to work with documentary filmmakers and advocate the importance of documentaries. He reported on the film industry in US and Canada for the Imperial Relations Trust and in 1939 was invited to form the National Film Board of Canada.

Material relating to this period of Grierson's life includes papers relating to the work of the GPO Film Unit; notes and reports on cinema in the USA and Canada and the establishment of the National Film Board of Canada; typed copies of a series of lectures given by Grierson on 'the art of the cinema and its social relationships' at the University of Leicester (1934); various articles on film written by Grierson for newspapers and journals; notebooks containing notes on the work of the GPO film unit, the Canadian film industry and a proposed book entitled *Eyes of Democracy*; photocopies of material from the British Postal Museum and Archive and the British Film Institute relating to Grierson.

#### Scripts and material relating to the work of the GPO Film Unit and others

<b>G3</b>	<b>1</b>	Draft commentaries for film about Canada House, scripts for 'Rootstock' film <b>7 items</b>
	<b>2</b>	Typescripts of preliminary work on film on the growth of cities and 'the world beyond war', 1939 <b>8 items</b>
		Including: '2nd draft - <i>Growth of a City</i> script, Realist Film Unit Limited', April 5, 1939, with MS notes by JG Long memorandum by JG on 'the city film'
	<b>3</b>	Draft scenarios for a documentary film of <i>The Times</i> , Film Centre, 1939 <b>2 items</b>
	<b>4</b>	Lists and catalogues of documentary and educational films, c. 1937-1938 <b>10 items</b>
		Including: GPO Film Library - supplement to catalogue, 1937 edition

#### Papers relating to The Imperial Relations Trust and to travels in Canada and the USA

	<b>5</b>	Memoranda, minutes and other official papers of the IRT <b>6 items</b>
		Including: JG's 'Report on Canadian Government film activities' (abridged version for circulation to the board of the IRT and

## JOHN GRIERSON ARCHIVE

### G3 / Personal papers, October 1 1933 - October 17 1939

			members of the Trust's film committee), August 1938
<b>G3</b>	<b>6</b>	Canadian papers and articles c. 1938-1939 <b>7 items</b>	
		Including:	<i>Act to create a National Film Board</i> , May 2, 1939 A 'plan for a war-time national film propaganda service' in Canada, September 1939 MSS by JG on Canadian film production and distribution
	<b>7</b>	Papers relating to documentary film in the USA and the distribution of British documentaries there, 1938-1939 <b>7 items</b>	
		Including:	Thomas Baird: 'Report on the distribution of British documentary films in the United States', typescript of a distribution plan by JG
	<b>8</b>	Papers relating to JG's visit to Hollywood, September 1939 <b>14 items</b>	
		Including:	Notes of symposium on 'Channels of communication', July 14, 1939, containing 'check-list of 221 motion pictures most popular at the US box- office . from 1931 to date' Correspondence, August-December 1939 MS notes by JG

### Writings by JG

	<b>9</b>	Typescripts with MS marginalia, and photocopies, of lectures given at University College Leicester, Department of Adult Education, Spring 1934, some incomplete General series title: <i>Art of the cinema and its social relationships</i> <b>6 items</b>	
		Including:	Prospectus Lecture 2: 'The social relationships of cinema' Lecture 4: 'The camera' Lecture 5: 'The cutting bench'
	<b>10</b>	As G3.9 <b>6 items</b>	
		Including:	Lecture 6: 'The naturalist tradition'. Outline

## JOHN GRIERSON ARCHIVE

### G3 / Personal papers, October 1 1933 - October 17 1939

			Lecture 7: 'The symphonic tradition'. Outline Lecture 8: 'The sociological tradition'. Outline Lecture 9: 'Sound'
<b>G3</b>	<b>11</b>	Typescripts for some of the lectures in G3.9 and G3.10 including lecture 3 <b>6 items</b>	
	<b>12</b>	MS notes and drafts, probably for lectures in G3.9 and G3.10, some fragile. <b>14 items</b>	
	<b>13</b>	Typescript articles and lectures c. 1934	
		Contains:	Address to cinema technicians on the documentary movement, n.d. Article on GPO Film Unit for Post Office magazine, January 10, 1934 Review of Pudovkin's <i>Film Technique</i> , n.d. 'Documentary (3)': for <i>Cinema Quarterly</i> , Spring 1934 Review for <i>For Filmgoers Only</i> . <i>The Listener</i> , March 7, 1934: (typescript and press cutting) <b>6 items</b>
	<b>14</b>	Writings, 1935 - 1939	
		Contains:	'As the cinema sees us': cutting from the <i>Daily Herald</i> , October 29, 1935 'Broadcasting and the cinema as means of education': address to the higher education meeting at the Southport conference of the NUT, 1936: reprint. 'The fate of British Films': reprinted from <i>The Fortnightly</i> , July 1937 Preface to Paul Rotha's <i>Fortnightly Review</i> , July-August 1939 'A democratic basis for propaganda', n.d.: typescript <b>7 items</b>

### Correspondence

	<b>15</b>	Correspondence, largely relating to travel and work for the IRT, and the outbreak of war, late 1930s <b>145 items</b>	
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## JOHN GRIERSON ARCHIVE

### G3 / Personal papers, October 1 1933 - October 17 1939

#### Writings by other authors, or unattributable

<b>G3</b>	<b>16</b>	Miscellaneous articles c. 1935 - June 1939, with MS notes by JG <b>6 items</b>
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#### Press cuttings

<b>G3</b>	<b>17</b>	Press cuttings 1939 <b>5 items</b>	
		Including:	Basil Wright: 'Films and the war', <i>The Spectator</i> , October 13, 1939
	<b>18</b>	Miscellaneous papers <b>18 items</b>	
		Including:	Analysis of 'origin of news items in four British newsreels during the last six months of 1937' <i>First Report of the Cinematograph Films Council</i> , London, 1939 Analyses of the foreign news in the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , September-October 1939 MS notes by JG Film-making exercise showing how a 'simple description of what happens' is developed into a shooting script Passport, 1929-1939

#### Notebooks

<b>G3</b>	<b>N1</b>	Brown folder, 1938	
		Including:	Letters Notes Writings on the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau and Canadian film situation
	<b>N2</b>	Black ledger, c. 1939	
		Including:	Articles Letters Notes Article on the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau and means of improving documentary production in Canada
	<b>N3</b>	Black ledger, c. 1939	

## JOHN GRIERSON ARCHIVE

### G3 / Personal papers, October 1 1933 - October 17 1939

		Including:	Letters Notes for <i>Eyes of Democracy</i> . See G4.18
<b>G3</b>	<b>N4</b>	Maroon ledger, c. 1939	
		Including:	Writings on setting up the NFBC Article: 'A democratic basis for propaganda'
	<b>N5</b>	Black ledger, c. 1939	
		Including:	Letters Articles ff. 16-29: article: 'The documentary film and social purpose'
	<b>N6</b>	Black ledger, c. 1939	
		Including:	Notes for a film on cities and city-life
	<b>N7-9</b>	Small notebooks, mid. 1930s	
		Including:	Notes on films, personnel and other topics relating to the GPO Film Unit
	<b>N10</b>	Small buff notebook, c. 1930s and 1960s	
		Including:	Notes on, e.g., 'Films to be done', by the GPO Film Unit

### Publications

<b>G3</b>	<b>P1</b>	<i>Cinema Quarterly</i> , 3(1), Autumn 1934	
		Including:	JG: 'Bruce Woolfe, Rotha and <i>Rising Tide</i> , pp. 37-38 JG <i>et al</i> : 'Films of the quarter', pp. 39-54
	<b>P2</b>	<i>Life and Letters</i> , 11(58), October 1934	
	<b>P3</b>	<i>Life and Letters Today</i> , 14(4), Summer 1936	
		Including:	R Herring: 'Selected films', pp. 173-178: criticism of <i>Night Mail</i> and Len Lye's <i>Birth of the Robot</i>
	<b>P4</b>	<i>Sight and Sound</i> , 6(23), Autumn 1937	
		Including:	J B Holmes: 'GPO film', pp. 159-160

## JOHN GRIERSON ARCHIVE

### G3 / Personal papers, October 1 1933 - October 17 1939

<b>G3</b>	<b>P5</b>	<i>Propaganda Analysis</i> , 2(9), June 1, 1939	
	<b>P6</b>	<i>Propaganda Analysis</i> , 2(10), June 10, 1939	
	<b>P7</b>	<i>The Citizen</i> , 10, July 1939	
		Including:	S C Leslie: 'The formation of public opinion', pp. 3-7
	<b>P8</b>	<i>The Scottish Bookman</i> , 1(6), February 1936	
		Including:	JG: 'Notes for a film on the Highlands', pp. 14-28

### Acquisitions

<b>G3A</b>	<b>1</b>	Papers relating to GPO Film Unit, 1934-1939 (photocopies from GPO) <b>10 items</b>	
		Including:	'Interim report of the Post Office Film Unit committee', 1934 Correspondence relating to the British Film Institute, 1936-1937
	<b>2</b>	Papers relating to the GPO Film Unit, 1935-1937 (photocopies from GPO) <b>21 items</b>	
		Including:	Correspondence relating to collaboration with Swiss Pro Telefon company on film released as <i>We Live in Two Worlds</i> and others, 1935-1937 Personnel documents relating to, among others, Benjamin Britten, Len Lye, Stuart Legg
	<b>3</b>	Press cuttings on JG, 1937 (photocopies from BFI) <b>18 items</b>	
		Including:	Comment on his resignation as head of the GPO Film Unit
	<b>4</b>	Scripts for BBC radio programme featuring JG: <i>Men and Matters</i> : 'Film Making in Scotland', March 31, 1938; 2 versions (photocopies from BBC) <b>2 items</b>	
	<b>5</b>	Published articles by JG on propaganda and film <b>2 items</b>	
	<b>6</b>	Newspaper cuttings of articles by JG, 1935 <b>2 items</b>	

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**G3 / Personal papers, October 1 1933 - October 17 1939**

<b>G3A</b>	<b>7</b>	Press cuttings on JG's films, 193- <b><i>2 items</i></b>
	<b>8</b>	MS letter from JG to HFH, December 29, 1936 <b><i>1 item</i></b>
	<b>9</b>	Letter JG to HFH congratulating him on review of Rotha book 4.2.36
	<b>10</b>	Article by JG "The Film Situation" in <i>London Mercury Bookman</i> , 36 no. 215; 1937 (pp. 459-63)