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Requisitioning film studios in wartime Britain

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To cite this article: Sarah Street (2022): Requisitioning film studios in wartime Britain, Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, DOI: 10.1080/01439685.2022.2091266

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2022.2091266

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Published online: 06 Jul 2022.

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This article evaluates the significance of requisitioning film studios in Britain during the Second World War. In uncovering this history, it offers new perspectives on the nature and process of requisitioning the studios as well as their equally important experience of being de-requisitioned after the war. As important contributors to the wartime economy and culture, any account of studios during the war and immediate post-war years is therefore incomplete without recognising the key impact of requisitioning. In addition, the impact of the war and requisitioning on labour and equipment is considered, both of which were essential aspects of a complex process that became particularly urgent in the immediate post-war years. The article reflects on the role of requisitioning in the evolution of film policy, arguing that the process was directed to affirm and execute the government’s chosen direction for the film industry, as well as evaluating how the various stakeholders involved responded. The case constitutes an instructive example of policy making, execution and the dynamics of governmentality in relation to the film industry.

During the Second World War a considerable amount of land and many buildings were requisitioned by the government to aid the war effort. Their peacetime uses were re-directed using emergency powers for multiple purposes including the provision of battle training areas; civil and military airfields; mines; accommodation; railways; oil pipelines; underground shelters; fire services; factories; schools and hospitals. A total of 14.5 million acres of land, 25 million square feet of industrial and storage premises and 113,350 non-industrial premises were requisitioned. Film studios played a vital part in this national effort with more than half the
amount of studio space that was available in 1939 requisitioned for various periods of time, and affecting major facilities such as Pinewood, Elstree and Shepperton for practically the entire war. The list of requisitioned studios reads as a catalogue of Britain’s film studio infrastructure as it had developed after a decade of expansion, including the various Elstree studios (for the Associated British Picture Corporation, Amalgamated, M.P. Studios and part of ancillary accommodation for British National); Sound City, Shepperton; Pinewood; Denham (one stage only); Twentieth Century Fox, Wembley; Nettlefold Productions, Walton-on-Thames; British Lion, Beaconsfield; Worton Hall, Isleworth, and Twickenham. While many were used for strategic imperatives including storage, aircraft production and emergency accommodation, some were retained for film production, including training and propaganda films made by Services’ Film Units at studios including Denham; Ealing; Highbury; Islington; Lime Grove, Shepherd’s Bush; Merton Park; British National; Pinewood (Crown Film Unit); Riverside; Teddington (Warner Bros.) and Welwyn.

Film studios were at the heart of national requisitioning policies, a fact most historical accounts acknowledge only in passing, with attention focused on requisitioning country houses that were used as military hospitals and schools for evacuees. While the contribution of the British film industry to the war effort has been the focus of studies of wartime propaganda, and the role of the state in galvanising short film production at a time of national emergency, the importance of film studios as essential, material infrastructures within which technical skills and creative energies were harnessed has not been sufficiently recognised, and especially in this context. This article aims to uncover this history and offer new perspectives on the nature and process of requisitioning the studios as well as their equally important experience of being de-requisitioned after the war. The latter occurred at a particularly crucial period for the British film industry, and documentation located in The National Archives and other archival collections illuminates how the Board of Trade influenced and effected the government’s policies for the film industry. The requisitioning and de-requisitioning of studios was intertwined with a broad set of political and economic issues including relations with America, the balance of payments crisis, and perceptions of the film industry as essential for its contribution to military and civilian morale, as well as its capacity to deliver educational and instructional imperatives. This period is also important in the material history of studios, since requisitioning represented a prime example of the practice of re-using architectural structures, an approach that is now commonplace as ‘heritage’ properties are frequently re-purposed so that their historic exteriors are preserved but with the buildings adopting new interior functions. One such example is Denham Laboratories, the former film studio’s processing facility, which has been redeveloped as part of a luxury apartment complex. Although the requisitioned studios did not always take on completely different functions and film production continued in some cases, the principle of flexible re-purposing invested them with a more strategic role at a time of national emergency. As important contributors to the wartime economy and culture, any account of studios during the war and immediate post-war years is therefore incomplete without recognising the key impact of requisitioning. In addition, the
impact of the war and requisitioning on labour and equipment is considered, both of which were essential aspects of a complex process that became particularly urgent in the immediate post-war years. The article reflects on the role of requisitioning in the evolution of film policy, arguing that the process was directed to affirm and execute the government’s chosen direction for the film industry, as well as evaluating how the various stakeholders involved responded. The case constitutes an instructive example of policy making, execution and the dynamics of governmentality in relation to the film industry.

Film studios were particularly suitable for requisitioning for several reasons, particularly their location and size. As the film industry had developed in the 1920s and 1930s, most studios were located to the north-west of London rather than in central London so that they could accommodate larger facilities and backlots which could be used for filming exterior sets and outside scenes. Studios that were nearer the urban centre and therefore potential bombing targets such as at Hammersmith, Ealing and Islington, were not as suitable or sufficiently spacious. The Gaumont-British studios at Lime Grove, Shepherd’s Bush, for example, were built with several floors according to a vertical design, and space was limited. When Denham and Pinewood Studios were built in the mid-1930s they opted for more expansive land and buildings approximately 18 miles outside central London in Buckinghamshire. Denham was designed according to a sprawling, horizontal layout including laboratories and an expansive backlot. Elstree Studios, another major facility that was being extensively developed during this time, were located approximately 15 miles northwest of central London in Hertfordshire.
As factories, storage facilities and workshops in central London became vulnerable to wartime bombing the studios offered large, factory-like facilities that could be adapted for war production, as in the case of Shepperton (Sound City), located in Surrey, that was requisitioned for aircraft production by Vickers. When the Ministry of Aircraft Production (MAP) adopted a policy of dispersing aircraft factories as a means of protecting against bombing, studios were turned to as ‘especially suitable for certain processes in the production of aircraft where an even temperature must be maintained’. Since the introduction of sound cinema in the late 1920s studios required careful environmental control of noise and heat emitted from large incandescent lights. When not being used for making films a studio’s stages were generally empty spaces, and much of the equipment used for filming such as lights and cameras was portable. Such spaces required little adaptation to accommodate war work, as well as the studios’ craft workshops that were ordinarily used for building film sets. Even though a high proportion of film technicians were called-up for military service, those that remained employed at studios could offer vital, transferable skills. Their artisanal expertise at Shepperton and Pinewood proved invaluable for devising decoys such as dummy landing devices and fake vessels to dupe the enemy (Figure 1).

Studios were in addition identified as offering good potential for requisitioning since just before the war began there was a reduction in the number of films produced following the Cinematograph Films Act 1938. This reduced the statutory film quota requirements, first established by the Cinematograph Films Act 1927, for renters to distribute British films from 20% to 15%, and for exhibitors to show British films from 20% to 12.5%. This led to a drop in studio output and vacant stages, the Board of Trade registering 95 British feature films in the year ending March 1939 compared with 225 registered for the year ending March 1937 which had marked a peak of pre-war productivity. The new Films Act stipulated that British films had to have spent a certain minimum in their budget on labour costs, and if that cost was particularly high a film could qualify for double or triple quota. While this indicated that the fewer films produced may have improved in quality, as a result many technicians became unemployed and by 1940 only eleven studios were operating. As the following account demonstrates, requisitioning was far from straightforward, involving debates about which studios were most appropriate to be retained for commercial filmmaking and those that could be immediately requisitioned. These discussions brought the material structures of the studios into visibility to a greater extent than had featured in previous governmental dealings with the film industry. As the process proceeded, key organisations and individuals navigated their way through bureaucratic procedures while trying to secure the studios’ longer-term survival.

Establishing a priority list

The surplus capacity in the studios meant that requisitioning of space by the Ministry of Food and the Army proceeded quite quickly; by December 1940 only nine, and the greater part of the tenth, out of eighteen studios were available for film production. But these were small, relatively ill-equipped and situated in
London, a situation that caused concern that the film industry might be severely impacted. Alerted by the Film Industry Employees Council, the Board of Trade consulted the British Film Producers Association (BFPA) about whether a minimum production programme could be agreed and how studio space might be rationed amongst them. It also negotiated with the MAP in the hope that an agreement could be made concerning ‘a reasonable division of the remaining space’. George Elvin, representing the Association of Cine Technicians (ACT), complained that while film technicians recognised the importance of using studios for essential purposes to aid the war effort, some large, very significant studios including Pinewood and the ABPC studios at Elstree, were being requisitioned by departments not responsible for aircraft production. Arthur Elton, representing short film producers, worried that ‘the space now available left no margin to the industry if one large studio were destroyed by a bomb’.

These concerns were received sympathetically by officials at the Board of Trade, for whom requisitioning was connected to high priority economic and cultural issues. Indeed, the case of requisitioning and de-requisitioning represents a charged conjunction of circumstances when studio interests intersected with both national and international strategic imperatives. The arguments invoked for maintaining film production activity in some studios included maintaining civilian morale, and ‘of preserving a healthy industry capable of filling its proper place in the national life and of winning a valuable export trade after the war’. The British film industry’s role in reducing what was calculated as a $17 million annual drain for the high percentage of American films shown in British cinemas was considered of prime importance. In the post-war period this latter aim became even more acute, placing emphasis on exporting a higher number of British films in the potentially lucrative American market, a policy pursued by the Rank Organisation with some degree of success as Rank manoeuvred the interests of his organisation into a dominant position. Studios that promised to deliver such films were clearly advantaged in the process of requisitioning, a prime example of which was Denham.

When Simon Rowson, a statistician and adviser to the Board of Trade on the film industry, identified studios that might be earmarked for concentrating on film production, he recommended most strongly that Denham was a key facility that should be protected. He emphasised ‘the value of Denham as a negotiating centre in making the best arrangements with producers’, arguing that Denham’s reputation as an up-to-date, modern facility for producing ‘exceptional productions’ must be recognised in any plans for further studio requisitioning. Richard Norton of D & P Studios (the company responsible for managing Denham and Pinewood as a joint enterprise since 1939) wrote a private letter to Lord Beaverbrook at the MAP in which he also made a strong case for preserving Denham for film production, especially since different producers could rent its facilities:

With the exception of Gaumont-British Studio, which is not available for outside producers, there is now only one properly equipped studio left in England, and that is Denham, where good quality pictures have been shot and are continuing to be shot to provide some contribution towards our exports. I
think we may say it has formed a focal point for the British film industry in these dreadful days, and as long as it is possible to make exportable pictures and necessary to make propaganda pictures for the Ministry of Information it would appear the place to have them shot is at Denham.20

Oliver Lyttleton, President of the Board of Trade, duly wrote to Beaverbrook expressing similar sentiments: ‘I attach the greatest importance to the proposal to retain Denham Studios for film production’.21 While sympathetic to a degree, Beaverbrook stressed that aircraft production came first and that ‘the national interest only must be the deciding factor in each case as it arises’.22 The Board’s strategy was however ultimately successful, and Denham remained reserved for film production during the war, except for Stage 4 (the studio had seven stages in total) which was requisitioned to store sugar.

The studio’s reputation as a flagship facility had stood it in good stead, along with founder Alexander Korda’s ambitions to make bigger-budget, quality films. Although his company London Film Productions had made considerable financial losses and he no longer controlled Denham, and as we shall see Korda was still highly regarded in official circles.23 As it turned out, the studio managed good rates of productivity during the war, as detailed in a survey conducted by Spencer M. Reis, managing director of D & P Studios, for the year ending 31 March 1944. This showed that Denham’s stages had been fully occupied and income from tenants was up on the previous year, with 62% yielded by Two Cities Films.24 In production were ten films: Yellow Canary, The Lamp Still Burns, This Happy Breed, English Without Tears, The Way Ahead, Henry V, Hotel Reserve, A Canterbury Tale, Blithe Spirit and They Knew Mr Knight. Of these, This Happy Breed, Henry V and Blithe Spirit were shot in Technicolor, a remarkable feat considering that during wartime the bespoke Technicolor three-strip cameras were in short supply and electricians working on Technicolor films were paid slightly more than the usual rates. Several of the films took longer to make than planned however because of difficulties with scripts and artistes, the call-up of younger technicians and craftsmen and introduction of less experienced labour, and the inferior quality of construction material. Reis also reported that some producers gave their directors and artistes ‘more freedom and say’, encouraging ‘costly experiment’ which ‘in well known cases has led to gross extravagance’. Even so, figures for films produced at Denham by British and American companies for the years 1939-43 show that the studios’ activities were not particularly impaired in the first years of the war (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>British</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although redecoration and repair of damage to Stage 4 was subsequently necessary, Spencer Reis concluded: ‘The condition of the buildings after nearly 5 years of war and little maintenance is, on the whole, quite good’.  

Besides Denham the Warner Bros. studio at Teddington was prioritised for protection because it was considered important not to discourage American producers from making bigger budget films in Britain. This was consistent with the Board of Trade’s longer-term policies as expressed in the multiple quota provisions of the Cinematograph Films Act 1938. By December 1940 the MAP had requisitioned British Lion, Beaconsfield; Nettlefold, Walton-on-Thames; Sound City, Shepperton; Worton Hall, Isleworth and Twickenham. The Board of Trade produced a list of other studios, in order of preference, which might be made available for the MAP: ABPC, Amalgamated (already leased to the government) and M. P. Studios at Elstree; Fox, Wembley; Warner Bros, Teddington; Pinewood; Rock Studios, Boreham Wood; Ealing, and lastly Denham. The list of studios the Board wanted in large part to earmark for film production included facilities at Elstree (Rock) and Ealing (Associated Talking Pictures), Lime Grove (Gaumont-British), Islington (Gainsborough Pictures), Highbury Studios and Hammersmith (Riverside). The Board of Trade’s meetings with the BFPA advanced a plan to ensure that studios produced an output of forty or fifty feature films each year, a relatively modest target compared with pre-war output but realistic in terms of the considerable amount of disruption caused by the war, and evidence that renters and exhibitors were struggling to meet annual quota requirements. This resulted in first, halting the annual rise of quotas, and in 1942 the requirements of the monetary quota were reduced. To help orchestrate a workable process for requisitioning studios, the Board of Trade negotiated with the various Service departments and the Crown Film Unit that needed studio space for producing short instructional, propaganda and training films, as well as the ministries seeking studio spaces for storage, office accommodation and war work. The whole operation drew attention to studios as facilities that were of strategic importance, while at the same time the reputation of British films was enhanced when their potentially crucial contribution to the war effort was repeatedly affirmed.

**Requisitioning and post-war planning**

The extent to which careful handling of studio requisitioning was pivotal to ensuring the film industry’s survival is indicated by discussions in 1943, when attention turned to how it might fare in the post-war period as concerns continued to be raised about the industry’s long-term sustainability. At the beginning of 1942 the film industry was struggling to make films, production the previous calendar year described as reaching a ‘low ebb’ when fifty-one films were made in eight operating studios (Denham, Shepherd’s Bush, Ealing, British National, Warner Bros., Nettlefold, Welwyn and Highbury) of 29 stages and 257,248 square feet of space. Just as it had proved difficult to decide on requisitioning priorities in 1939-40, deciding on which studios should be cleared first after the war was on the Board of Trade’s agenda in April 1943. Simon Rowson advised that enabling the film industry to produce films that could be distributed abroad should be a high priority, provided that
preparatory groundwork be undertaken to ensure that as with other industries, the British film industry was integral to broader planning for the post-war economy. This was followed by an approach in June 1943 by Alexander Korda to the Board of Trade concerning his own plans for producing films in Britain again after working in Hollywood for a few years. Korda wrote of the need to make ‘great and successful’ pictures in Britain and take advantage of American finance to produce films that were ‘British in character’ and served ‘the national interest’. This argument began to be used repeatedly in the press as well as being absorbed by officials, so much so that a report by executives of the American distributors United Artists in 1945 observed that ‘these British pictures are jamming the British studios…however practically all of them are wholly unsuitable for the American market’. This comment raised the issue of films directed at British audiences rather than international markets. Exports were a challenging issue, especially because increased budgets tended to be associated with films destined for overseas. On the other hand, it was by no means the case that big budgets assured success in America, and there were some well-documented examples of films that had not necessarily had large budgets, such as *In Which We Serve* (David Lean, 1942), that did very well there for communicating, in spite of its obvious ‘Britishness’, what American producer Sam Goldwyn termed ‘the intimate universality of everyday living’ in wartime. In this way discussions about studios accelerated pressure on producers to ensure their survival by trying to anticipate, and promise to deliver, the expansive policies that the Board of Trade was advocating. Rhetoric used by both Alexander Korda and J. Arthur Rank are prime examples of producers who strategically used their standing to exploit this viewpoint (Figure 2).
Korda’s reputation with the British government was confirmed when he received a Knighthood in 1942, and he briefly became head of MGM-British in 1943. He sought studio space at Denham to make a film of *War and Peace* and made representations to the Board of D & P Studios to resume the control of Denham he had been forced to relinquish in 1939. He used his new position at MGM to promise distribution of British films in the American market. Korda argued that a special case should be made for him on the understanding that his ‘official connections’ might help to get Denham’s Stage 4 de-requisitioned. This was the context for Korda’s approach to the Board of Trade, the tone of which became more urgent when D & P Studios only offered him a restricted amount of time at Denham in the winter months when the costs of film production were higher than in the summer, and he was not given the managerial control of the studio he desired. In flagging up his personal issues he had however drawn attention to the industry’s wider problems.

Following Korda’s representations Hugh Gaitskell at the Board of Trade invited the BFPA to prepare a report on the main problems the film industry was likely to encounter when the war ended, and how these might be overcome so that pre-war productivity could be restored. Korda’s emphasis on the importance of film exports weighed heavily as Britain’s balance of payments problems would be exacerbated by further debts to America following the cessation of war. When Gaitskell met Simon Rowson and the BFPA in August 1943 the topic was the main point of discussion, with Gaitskell recording in his notes the importance of securing world markets for British films that would help to sell British products and grant general prestige value ‘to which the Government inevitably attach importance on political grounds’. The linking of Denham, and subsequently the Amalgamated Studios at Elstree, for which Korda purchased the freehold in 1944, to these ambitions, is a clear indicator of how official perceptions of the studios’ relative merits as spaces for high-quality productions were evolving. Rather than interpret the formation of post-war policy as a short-term reaction to immediate circumstances, these documents reveal the extent to which the Board of Trade was pursuing a consistent policy that conceived of the British film industry and its studios as integral to wider debates about post-war economic and political planning.

The Board of Trade’s consultations with the BFPA and the Film Industry Employees Council were picked-up in the trade press, leading to complaints from the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees (NATKE), one of the main film industry trade unions, that their opinion should also be central to post-war planning. A more integrated approach followed, and two major reports were produced in 1944 about post-war reconstruction of the film industry, one by the ACT, and the report the Board had requested from the BFPA. The ACT advocated a radical overhaul of the industry’s management, focussing on salaries and conditions; opposition to the Rank Organisation as a monopolistic concern that left little opportunity for independent producers; increased state control of the film industry, including a government film bank, and the nationalisation of cinemas. The plan also involved reciprocal exchange of technicians between Britain and other countries, the development of new techniques, and installation of state-of-the-art
Although the ACT undoubtedly uncovered several of the industry’s most serious issues, the plan was not however well-received by Board of Trade officials who concluded its proposals were ‘not constructive’. The call for state control was a step too far for them, a stance confirmed by subsequent developments in film policy.

The BFPA’s report was however more influential and contained considerable detail on the key issues involved in the film industry’s reconstruction. It confirmed that production had fallen to its lowest level in 1941-42 and drew attention to the main obstacles to progress: lack of studio space, equipment, personnel, skilled technicians, materials, buildings, and war damage. A list of nine requisitioned studios recorded the extent of re-structuring, damage, and disruption to equipment (Table 2).

De-requisitioning studios was declared the highest priority, and that the first studios to be released should be those already equipped or where equipment could easily be placed. The BFPA recommended that this method of release should be combined with some system of pooling studio space while producers awaited the release of their own facilities. It became clear that wartime damage to some studios would need to be repaired before production could resume, and equipment that had been used by Service Film Units should be made available to the industry. Crucially, the report considered conditions holistically so that studios were conceived as complex infrastructures involving not only buildings but also labour, materials, and equipment. This emphasis was important in influencing subsequent discussions, bringing to light their fundamental interdependence. It also facilitated longer-term thinking about technical developments and innovations including the advance of colour films, training schemes and co-operation between film and the developing television industry. In this respect the report echoed some of the recommendations that had been made by the ACT but without the controversial political charge of nationalisation. The report was discussed at a meeting held in August 1944 at the Board of Trade which included representatives from the Ministry of Information and the BFPA. Hugh Gaitskell gave the assurance that ‘all possible steps would be taken to release some at least of the requisitioned studios at the earliest possible moment’. It was agreed that the Board would assist with applications to the Ministry of Labour for the early release of key technicians from the Services and Service Film Units. The report’s recommendations for a pooling scheme for space and equipment were affirmed, as well as the longer-term development of technologies including colour films.

De-requisitioning the studios

The machinery of determining the priority release of studios involved assessing the capabilities of their capacity to deliver, in Gaitskell’s words, ‘first class’ films that could be distributed abroad. The key spaces identified for priority de-requisitioning were Shepperton (Sound City), Isleworth (Worton Hall), Elstree (ABPC and Rock) and Stage 4 of Denham. The ABPC facility at Elstree however required re-equipment with a new sound installation, and the sugar stored at Denham had caused damage to the floor which needed to be repaired. Shepperton (Sound City)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studio</th>
<th>Current use (1944)</th>
<th>Condition of structure and location of equipment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beaconsfield (British Lion)</td>
<td>Fully requisitioned by MAP</td>
<td>Parts of structure altered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parts damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practically all equipment removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinewood</td>
<td>Fully requisitioned except for administrative buildings</td>
<td>Structure entirely camouflaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupied by Crown and Army Film Units</td>
<td>Various internal alterations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment still in situ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepperton (Sound City)</td>
<td>All stages requisitioned; used by MAP as offices and factories</td>
<td>Some structural alterations made to all stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment either on premises or hired elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walton-on-Thames</td>
<td>Fully requisitioned by MAP</td>
<td>Structure altered and damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment on premises but much destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated, Elstree (MGM British)</td>
<td>Fully requisitioned by MAP</td>
<td>Portion of one stage damaged by enemy action and wooden floors on all stages replaced by concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other alterations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All equipment acquired by other studios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denham</td>
<td>One large stage requisitioned by Ministry of Food for storage</td>
<td>Floor badly damaged by overloading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Considerable damage to administrative offices by enemy action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National, Boreham Wood</td>
<td>Carpenters shop, property room, stores, second theatre, space in power house and boiler house requisitioned by MAP</td>
<td>Structural alterations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doors bricked and gantries removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theatre converted and partitioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Heating plant altered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment in full use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime Grove, Shepherd’s Bush</td>
<td>Some dressing rooms, part of wardrobe department requisitioned by Hammersmith Borough council ARP</td>
<td>Alterations made to structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Damage to structure and equipment by enemy action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment otherwise in use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wembley</td>
<td>Requisitioned by MAP as aircraft assembly factory</td>
<td>Small structural alterations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No equipment other than power plant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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and Isleworth (Worton Hall) were considered important because Simon Rowson advised that Sound City could accommodate three or four productions simultaneously, and Isleworth (Worton Hall) two or three. This capability was considered key to accelerating the post-war production drive, while studios that were less known for feature film production were relegated to the bottom of the list. One studio that was added was Amalgamated Studios at Elstree which had recently been purchased by Alexander Korda but were currently occupied by the MAP. Korda sought the Board of Trade’s support in getting them de-requisitioned, using his familiar argument that he intended to produce films aimed at world market distribution. Gaitskell agreed, writing to the MAP that the Board approved of Korda’s purchase of the studios because ‘he is an outstandingly successful producer and director’ who would use finance provided by MGM to produce high quality films in Britain, and thus vindicate the policies enshrined in quota legislation to encourage American participation in British film production. The dovetailing of these issues ensured that studios featured prominently in ensuing de-requisitioning debates, as well as how the process could be managed to ensure that the industry was performing at pre-war capacity as soon as possible. To this end the Board of Trade advised studio owners to contact the Board’s regional Controllers of Factory and Storage Premises to discuss which parts of premises could be released first, reiterating that they ‘attached great importance to an early and rapid re-expansion of British feature film production’.

Although the emphasis on feature film production might imply that short, instructional and educational films were being downgraded in longer-term plans for the industry, it nevertheless signalled a desire for commercial entertainment productions to take the essential first steps in advancing the industry’s economic recovery. In 1940 Harold Boxall of Denham Studios was commissioned to investigate the future of the GPO Film Unit, and one of his recommendations was that the unit left its studio at Blackheath and moved to Denham. After relocation to Denham the unit was renamed the Crown Film Unit and moved to Pinewood in 1942 where it produced films alongside the Army Film and Photographic Unit and the RAF Film Production Unit, both of which expanded rapidly during the war before being disbanded soon after it ended. Many of the films were shot partly on location and with sets built and shot in the studio. The Crown Film Unit was particularly appreciated for its contribution to wartime propaganda and continued to produce films after the Ministry of Information was closed and replaced by the Central Office of Information in 1946. After the war the Crown Film Unit was subsequently based for its remaining years of activity until 1952 at Beaconsfield, studios that had been requisitioned during the war by the MAP for motor manufacturer Rotax to make aircraft engine magnetos. Once cleared, the studios were reconstructed and re-equipped to suit the Crown Film Unit’s requirements (Figure 3).

In the discussions about post-war de-requisitioning the BFPA pressed for the early release of studio space occupied by the Service Film Units and Ministry of Information. While releasing studios from wartime activities that had not involved film production was one issue, competition between these units and commercial film producers for the space, skilled labour and equipment necessary for making...
films created conflicting demands for policymakers. This led to a somewhat piece-
meal, slow release of Pinewood, not least because its reputation for excellent
equipment and facilities made it ‘difficult to dislodge’ the Ministry of Information,
and the site was designated a Protected Area for secret work. During the war
parts of the studios were also requisitioned for the Royal Mint, Lloyds of London
and for storage by the Ministry of Food. In February 1945 Ralph Nunn May, dep-
uty director of the Ministry of Information’s Films Division, wrote to Hugh
Gaitskell at the Board of Trade asking if they could retain studio space at
Pinewood, and by April only one sound stage and a painters’ shop had been
released. While this might appear to be punishing for J. Arthur Rank who
owned Pinewood, the Board’s view was that since he had not pledged to share stu-
dio space in his organisation’s control with other producers, and in view of preva-
lent concerns that his vertically-integrated operations monopolised the film
industry, Pinewood’s case would not be privileged even though its reputation had
undoubtedly been enhanced by its wartime contribution. Rank was nevertheless
in control of key studios: Denham, Pinewood, Highbury, Islington, the M & P.
Studios (Elstree) and Shepherd’s Bush. In July 1945 Pinewood, described in the
trade press as ‘a studio in battledress’, was still home to the Crown Film Unit
which was producing educational films for schools, and the Army and RAF Film
Units continued to use its space and facilities. By 1946 Pinewood was however

Figure 3. The production of Coastal Command at Pinewood. The scene features an audience awaiting the
beginning of an RAF ‘Gang Show’ in a village hall set in the studio. The production crew are in the left
background. Source: IWM D 7204.
finally back in civilian operation and the first film to re-open the studios was *Green for Danger* (Sidney Gilliat, 1946).

Pinewood’s experience illustrates the complexities of requisitioning and de-requisitioning high-profile studios, in this case one that continued its primary function of producing films and operated as a training facility but generated no commercial profits. The film industry however benefited in other ways since many technicians who had worked in the studios before the war were recruited into the Service Film Units, often finding themselves in the same workplace for war work and, as in the case of sound engineer Larry Thompson, benefited from training initiatives at Pinewood to learn new skills. Yet for commercial producers the studio was not available, and Denham became the studio that apart from the requisitioned Stage 4, continued to serve the film industry. This stage’s floor was damaged by its storage of sugar, and D & P studios sought compensation for this and in respect of Pinewood’s inability during the war to hire its facilities and services to commercial tenants. In some cases requisitioning left a physical legacy, as at Nettlefold, where two large corrugated hangars built by Vickers were later purchased them from the MAP and converted into a carpenter’s shop and a sound stage. In this way negotiations regarding the studios’ post-war recovery involved often detailed investigations into their spatial dimensions and plans, and with the Board of Trade liaising with the BFPA in relation to the agreed pooling scheme for released space and equipment.

Variable approaches to de-requisitioning were applied to studios in terms of their place on the Board’s ‘priority list’. Alexander Korda’s request for the Board of Trade to hasten the de-requisitioning of the Amalgamated Studios (now owned by MGM) at Elstree continued throughout 1944. In this case an investigation was made to determine whether the space could be divided between aircraft manufacture by Handley-Page and film production. An architect examined the stages, concluding that only one studio was in fact ‘essential’ for the war work and that the rest could be released, provided adequate sound proofing was put in place. Korda had threatened to abandon his plans for producing fourteen films in Britain if the studios were not released. Gaitskell thought that Korda was bluffing about quitting production, remarking that: ‘He puts out this rumour from time to time in order to induce the MAP to speed things up’. The plan for the studios’ gradual release did not commence until April 1945, beginning with one of the four stages. Even then a considerable amount of building was required, the installation of plant and re-introduction of film equipment. By September 1945 three of the four studios had been cleared but the fourth stage continued to be used by Hadley-Page as a press shop and in June 1946 Amalgamated was still being repaired after damage caused by wartime manufacture. Korda’s production plan did not commence, he directed *Perfect Strangers* (1945) at Denham and resigned as head of MGM-British. In 1946 he purchased Sound City that was renamed the British Lion Film Studio Company.

In September 1945 some progress had been made in clearing the other requisitioned studios so that they could once again resume film production. ABPC’s studios at Elstree were nearly free; at Sound City, Shepperton, two of the surviving sound stages were already released, with two more about to be cleared. Bombing
had razed to the ground the fifth Sound City stage, and very little remained of the sixth stage. Even so, Wesley Ruggles had begun production on London Town, an ambitious Technicolor musical which aimed to lighten the national mood of post-war Britain. Other released studios included Nettlefold at Walton-on-Thames, but at Wembley the Army Kinematography Service was still in occupation, and Twickenham continued for a short time to be used by the MAP. The Board of Trade considered that once Pinewood was cleared ‘we shall have back nearly four-fifths’ of space, and that they had done well, all things considered, giving particular credit to Sir Philip Warter, chairman of ABPC, and W. O’Dea of the Board of Trade for their role in the negotiations. By February 1946 it was reported that 95% of studio space had been de-requisitioned although not all of the remaining 5% was immediately able to resume productive operation.

Labour, materials and production equipment

The question of studio space was closely connected with post-war problems concerning labour, the availability of materials and equipment. These were essential elements of the studios’ infrastructures, and as the war was in its closing stages film producers lobbied the Board of Trade to help them recover pre-war levels of productivity, as well as to expand feature production to approximately 100 films a year and make a concerted effort to secure their international distribution. The BFPA reported that in 1938 there were approximately 8,000 employees (excluding crowd artistes) in British film production; by the end of 1943 this figure had dropped to 3,305 (2,707 men and 598 women). Following the outbreak of war the industry was badly affected by unemployment. In August 1940 representatives of the film producers and trade unions sent a memorandum to Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, making the case for including key actors, technicians and artisans aged under 41 on the Schedule of Reserved Occupations. Unless this happened, they argued, it would be difficult to sustain film production, including instructional films, or to meet the requirements of the Cinematograph Films Act. They appealed to Bevin because he was ‘the first Cabinet Minister to recognise and apply the valuable aid to industrial efficiency which proper entertainment brings’, as evidenced by his initiation of the ‘music while you work’ programmes as well as factory and canteen concerts in rest periods.

An Advisory Committee which included invited individuals from the industry and trade unions was established in November 1940 to comment on requests for deferrals which became the route to releasing labour from early 1941. Various lists were obtained by the Board of Trade, including one from Fay Allport (who was not a member of the Advisory Committee), the European manager of the Motion Picture Association of America, who recommended reserving film directors Anthony Asquith, Thorold Dickinson, Leslie Fenton, Brian Desmond Hurst, David Macdonald, Herbert Mason, Michael Powell, Carol Reed and Pen Tennyson, as well as actors known for ‘outstanding roles and as box office’ which included as priorities Jack Buchanan, Robert Donat, George Formby, Rex Harrison, John Mills, David Niven, Michael Redgrave and Ralph Richardson. The Board was
generally supportive because in making these suggestions American film interests clearly wanted to ensure that their quota obligations could be met.

Film technicians who were ACT members were designated by the Ministry of Labour in 1941 as in a reserved occupation, thus exempting them from conscription so they could work in film production, particularly in the Service Film Units. This increased the ACT’s membership, put the union in a stronger bargaining position and in March 1943 a Charter was signed between the ACT and BFPA which included clauses on minimum wages, a 47-hour working week, sick pay rates, arbitration for disputes, overtime and sick pay rates. In August 1944 a National Agreement was signed between the BFPA, the Electrical Trade Union and NATKE. The boost in union membership encouraged by the technicians’ reserved occupation status increased opportunities for women working in studios and in the service film units. ‘War emergency’ union membership could be obtained, a provision which underlined the view that women were nevertheless viewed by some ACT members as ‘second-tier technicians’, and the union’s support of equal pay was in part influenced by its concern that women’s employment would not undercut men’s after the war.66

As well as securing the release of labour to support the film industry generally, in the case of the scarce number of workers skilled in crafts such as electricians, carpenters and joiners, plasterers and modellers, painters, riggers and scaffolders, there was a potential conflict of interest for the Ministry of Labour since ‘these craftsmen are just the people who are needed for the housing programme’, and so should be allocated into a ‘building pool’. For this the Ministry of Works prioritised house building while recognising that such workers could secure higher pay in studios than from building contractors. The most practicable source of labour for the studios was therefore workers outside the control of the Ministry of Labour, that is those aged under eighteen or over forty and returning ex-servicemen on leave. If this labour was insufficient more could be sourced from the Employment Exchanges. While the Board of Trade pledged to help film producers secure fair treatment in the allocation of labour, they would ‘resist any proposal that they should, or need, aspire to equal priority with house building’.67 In October 1944 the Ministry of Labour requested that ten per cent of the film industry’s craftsmen, especially plasterers and carpenters, would be needed to work on bomb damage repairs.68 Various studios complied with this, amounting to a total of thirty skilled craftsmen, a relatively small number that confirms their scarcity.

The Labour Party’s general election victory in July 1945 and the escalation of the balance of payments crisis gave debates concerning the film industry extra momentum and urgency. J. Arthur Rank, as President of the BFPA, wrote to Stafford Cripps at the Board of Trade in September 1945 asking them to persuade the Ministry of Labour and National Services to immediately release 878 craft workers, promising to step-up output to produce films that would earn dollars through exportation, constituting in his calculation an annual saving of $10 million.69 In addition, he was keen to secure the release of technical and administrative workers including sound recordists, editors, production managers and art department personnel. Rank estimated that the total number of craft workers and
technicians required for the next six months to March 1946 was 2,768. He urged
that this was an essential part of the process of de-requisitioning and reconstruc-
tion: ‘Proper use of de-requisitioned studios such as Pinewood, Amalgamated and
B.I.P. Studios, Elstree, could not be made unless the requisite technical staff were
made available’. In addition Rank advocated the attraction of specialised techni-
cians from overseas to Britain to support the production drive and train British
technicians in the process. The Ministry of Works duly agreed to accord the film
industry an allocation of labour ‘with the same priority as that enjoyed by other
non-housing projects’. Technicians formerly employed in the studios were
urgently required to accelerate film production, and the Board pressed the
Ministry of Labour to release them from munitions work as soon as possible.
Richard Pares wrote to H. H. Montgomerie in October 1945 explaining the need
to boost film production to help alleviate the dollar drain problem: ‘Now that
Lend Lease has ended and we are having to economise on dollars in every direc-
tion, these remittances are causing great concern to the Treasury and ourselves’. He added: ‘We are playing here for really big stakes, and the President has made
it clear to the industry they shall have the full support of the Board of Trade’ in
securing the specialist craft labour required. In this way debates about studio
buildings and facilities were intimately caught up in focussing attention on labour
requirements, as well as the full spectrum of expertise necessary to reconstruct
the industry.

The BFPA’s report of July 1944 and Rank’s letter sent to Cripps in
September 1945 both contained a considerable amount of data concerning materi-
als and equipment. The BFPA drew attention to the shortage of materials required
for building sets such as hessian, plaster, timber, paper, rubber and canvas, as well
as shortages in celluloid film base, developing chemicals, carbon and electric light
bulbs. Although these seriously hampered film production, particularly the scarcity
of timber, studios turned to substitutes such as salvaged materials and using stock
patterns of wallpaper with considerable resourcefulness. When Spencer Reis at D
&P Studios learned in August 1944 that fuel supplies were to be ‘drastically
reduced’ he received little sympathy from the Regional Coal Officer. Ralph Nunn
May, Deputy-Director of the Ministry of Information however intervened, and the
studios’ full requirements were agreed to by the Coal Office. Art directors were
urged to be as economical as possible, making use of stock sets, standard doors
and windows. In the early post-war years the Board of Trade helped studios
with rehabilitation through obtaining building licences, allocating timber for set
construction and other materials. Rank’s letter made a strong pitch for technical
innovation, including emphasis on the latest American Mitchell cameras; tubular
scaffolding; interlock motors and screens to improve back projection; camera
cranes; optical printers; improved lighting and sound equipment. The Board of
Trade was keen to support re-equipping studios as quickly as possible, stating that:
‘Equipment is to the film industry what machine tools are to the engineering industry.
Without first class equipment the quality of British films must suffer’. Even though
the superiority of American equipment was recognised, the Board’s aim was to produce
more film equipment in Britain ‘which will be the equal of the American’, and thus
reduce the need for importation. In the short-term however importation was
authorised, and orders were put in to cover the next two years. In the war it appeared that only two kinds of British camera were used mainly by the Service Film Units: Vintens’ studio cameras and Newman Sinclair for filming exteriors. Denham had a good stock of Mitchell cameras and used the French manufactured Debrie cameras for filming on location.

For lighting, American Mole-Richardson lamps were used both before and during the war, the parts being imported from America and assembled in Britain. Denham’s stocks of incandescent and high intensity arcs were the largest in the country but during the war worn parts proved difficult to replace. The lamps’ condenser lenses were however manufactured in Britain, an enterprise it was hoped would increase so that there was some degree of British input. For sound recording, British Acoustic Films manufactured equipment before the war, but new models could not be developed because of the demands of the Service Film Units. Editing equipment which had previously been imported from America was being replaced where possible by British models. Orders for new equipment, both American and British, increased and at the end of 1947 the trade press reported large deliveries of American-manufactured lighting gear, and RCA and Western Electric’s equipping of sound-recording plants. Debates about the desire to reduce reliance on American suppliers echoed those concerning Hollywood’s films more generally. At the same time the government’s policy of encouraging American investment in British filmmaking made the Board of Trade cautious about actively supporting the ACT’s demands for greater independence from Hollywood. The union however supported inviting French technicians to work in Britain, but this conflicted with the BFPA’s request for assistance from specialised technicians from Hollywood.

The legacy of requisitioning

The studios’ strategic importance in the war placed emphasis on their visibility as adaptive building structures. Several studios suffered damage from bombing and fires. At Shepperton, for example, two stages were destroyed, a theatre and cutting room; the stage roofs were damaged at Ealing and Islington closed temporarily when it was directly hit during a bombing raid. Although the Board of Trade introduced an insurance scheme in 1940 to protect producers against such risks to personnel and equipment, the war undoubtedly made filmmaking more hazardous. The studios’ subsequent need for renovations, repair and equipment as they resumed commercial production, provided an opportunity for new development and planning to respond to urgent pressures for post-war expansion. Some studios, such as Teddington, were largely rebuilt after the studio had suffered severe bomb damage, while other premises, such as at the ABPC studios at Elstree, were modernised and Warner Bros. acquired a major interest in the studios. An extensive operation of re-equipment and expansion was undertaken at the Amalgamated studios at Elstree. At Denham, a new, high-quality music recording centre was installed on Stage 1. The priority status of Denham in the war did not ensure its long-term survival as a film studio, which closed in 1952. At the beginning of 1950 the Board of Trade had requested information from the Rank Organisation
on film production and distribution. This exposed the company to scrutiny, including studio overhead costs in respect of Denham and Pinewood.\footnote{One particular film, \textit{Caesar and Cleopatra} (1945) was much criticised for its escalating budget while in production at Denham. A programme of retrenchment ensued, headed by manager John Davis, and this involved concentrating production activities at Pinewood. The recording facility at Denham however survived and was used for many productions until 1980 and the laboratories were used until 2014.} At Pinewood efforts were concentrated on developing new technologies and existing practices such as back-projection, in a programme collectively known as the ‘Independent Frame’. Pioneered by David Rawnsley, head of research at Rank, this was designed to reduce the time and costs associated with film production, primarily through pre-planning methods and new technologies. While in the short-term the Independent Frame’s methods were not widely adopted by the industry, it was nevertheless influential in the longer-term development of Pinewood’s reputation for technological innovation and state-of-the-art facilities.\footnote{In the shorter-term, it responded to contemporary debates about rising film production costs which appeared to hamper the industry’s planned expansion. At the end of 1948 a committee chaired by Lord Gater examined rising costs and recommended that studios needed to economise, institute time management, and make more efficient use of space. Rank’s films cost less from 1948 and the average shooting schedule for first features was reduced. Yet the industry’s instability was signalled by studio closures and dismissals reported at Denham and Ealing, British National, and smaller studios. Gainsborough Studios were closed in 1950, and as referenced regarding the demise of Denham, Rank concentrated production and technical innovation at Pinewood. The government attempted in the late 1940s to address the film industry’s broader structural problems through maintaining quota protection, and by instituting the National Film Finance Corporation and the British Film Production Fund (known as the Eady levy) as an indirect means of directing funds to production through, respectively, distributor British Lion, and a tax on box-office receipts.\footnote{The complex processes involved in requisitioning and de-requisitioning studios had required intricate negotiations between various branches of the civil service and the film industry. Rank’s dominant voice in discussions concerning de-requisitioning and position as chair of the BFPA meant that as a stakeholder he was able to reassure the Board of Trade that his company represented the way forward they desired for the British film industry. In this respect Rank’s control of D & P Studios, plans to secure distribution for British films in the American market and statements that his operations were cutting costs, worked to accelerate the evolution of policies that had been articulated particularly through the 1938 Cinematograph Films Act. As has been argued, the requisitioning exercise confirmed official preferences for American producers to assist British production, with preference given to companies such as MGM and Warner Bros., as well as to producers such as Korda who promised to ensure that any films produced with American finance were ‘British’ in character. The Board of Trade’s reliance on the BFPA for information and data ensured that the decisions that were made responded both to immediate pressures and dominant interests, particularly in the}
case of Alexander Korda and American companies operating in Britain. Although trade union interests were increasingly being consulted, the ACT’s radical proposals for nationalising the film industry were not seriously considered by the Board of Trade. As stakeholders they were consulted, but their recommendations ultimately held less sway.

Yet the need for studios to play an active part in the war, both for film production and as spaces requisitioned for other essential activities, left a legacy of positive perceptions of the film industry’s role in the national economy and culture. The detail required for the operation of requisitioning enabled civil servants to gain expertise that was crucial for the slate of protective legislation enacted in the late 1940s, as well as developing a network of consultancies involving specialists such as Simon Rowson and prominent organisations representing both producers and employees. Some of the Board of Trade’s civil servants, such as Rupert Somervell, had been involved with film policy for many years, and he later reflected on how the challenges of the war intensified the complexity of this experience. The Board of Trade’s engagement with the industry was generally more positive than that of the Bank of England, an institution which when reporting on financial aspects of film policy in 1941 referred to British producers as guilty of ‘commercial immorality’ and inefficiency. As some of the rhetoric used by civil servants has however shown, presenting studios as factories that could be compared to industries such as engineering or building, proved effective in making arguments concerning their national importance. Although film production was not the government’s top priority in securing adequate labour, materials and labour, its vital relevance to the dollar crisis and generally perceived heightened cultural and social role enabled it to claim some economic advantages. In 1945 it was announced by the new Labour government that studio building and renovations were given an equal priority standing with government building work, although domestic housing only was granted the import of certain equipment. At the end of 1947 Stafford Cripps who had just assumed office as Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that while new cinema building was not permitted, film studios were grouped in the factory expansion programme. This inclusion of studios in Labour’s post-war planning agenda confirmed their enhanced status even though as we have seen, bolstering British film production had been on the Board of Trade’s agenda for nearly a decade.

Despite the studio-factory analogy, due to the prominence of production by the Service and Crown Film Units, the role of filmmaking was not rendered invisible, nor was the entertainment, morale-boosting value of commercial feature films. At the same time the film industry was able to exploit its expertise and ensure that its requirements for compensation, labour and equipment were not bypassed once the war was over. The industry, particularly the Rank Organisation, was receptive to pressures to boost exports and produce ‘quality’ films while making some attempts to cut costs and streamline production. To some extent these were contradictory aims but the industry’s engagement with them was nevertheless well received in official circles. The various stakeholders involved in the debates, particularly the producers, learned to align their aims with those expressed by the Board of Trade as well as to develop their own lobbying tactics. The process of
requisitioning had permitted these to be articulated on several occasions as the industry’s survival became intertwined with longer-term policy aims. The centrality of the studios during the war brought the physical, material infrastructures of filmmaking more prominently into the contours of debate. In the final analysis, requisitioning and de-requisitioning were disruptive processes which in the longer-term generated material gains for studios, heightening both governmental knowledge and perceptions of their strategic value at a crucial juncture of twentieth-century history.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 832346 - STUDIOTEC).

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Notes

2. Elstree Studios is a generic term for different studios based in or around Borehamwood and village of Elstree in Hertfordshire.
4. TNA BT 64/95: Post-war discussions with the BFPA. ‘The Future of the British Film Production Industry’, British Film Producers Association (BFPA) report 1 July 1944.
8. TNA BT 64/61: Contraction of film Industry owing to requisitioning of studios. Board of Trade notes for deputation of Film Industry Employees Council 12 December 1940.
11. TNA BT 64/61: Board of Trade notes for deputation of Film Industry Employees Council 12 December 1940.
12. Ibid.
13. The ABPC studios were under military control in the war as a depot and workshop facilities.
14. TNA BT 64/61: Note of Film Industry Employees Council deputation, 12 December 1940.
15. TNA BT 64/61: Board of Trade note on requisitioning of film studios, n.d.
16. TNA BT 64/95: Post-war release of film studios. Figure quoted in draft note by A. G. White (Board of Trade) to Hugh Gaitskell, 26 November 1943. This sum was in respect of an agreement on American film remittances signed in November 1939 in which funds ‘blocked’ in the UK could be used for film production.
18. TNA BT 64/61: Note on Denham by Simon Rowson, 12 October 1940.
19. TNA BT 64/61: Note by Simon Rowson, 14 October 1940.
20. TNA BT 64/61: Richard Norton to Lord Beaverbrook, 15 October 1940.
21. TNA BT 64/61: Oliver Lyttleton to Lord Beaverbrook, 18 October 1940.
22. TNA BT 64/61: Lord Beaverbrook to Oliver Lyttleton, 20 October 1940.
25. Ibid.
26. TNA BT 64/61: A. Kilroy (Board of Trade) to G. E. Millward (Ministry of Aircraft Production), November 1940.
27. TNA BT 64/61: G. Hughes-Roberts (Government Cinematograph Adviser) to Winter (Ministry of Works and Buildings), 20 December 1940.
30. TNA BT 64/95: Note of meeting at Board of Trade, 2 April 1943.
31. TNA BT 64/95: Alexander Korda to Capt. Waterhouse (Board of Trade), 16 June 1943.
33. Street, Transatlantic Crossings, 94.
34. Prudential Assurance Company Archives, D & P Studios minutes, 10 June 1943.
35. TNA BT 64/95: Note by Hugh Gaitskell, 17 August 1943.
37. TNA BT 64/95: Board of Trade minute, 15 February 1944.
38. TNA BT 64/95: ‘The Future of the British Film Production Industry’, BFPA report 1 July 1944.
39. Three more studios were referenced in the chart but with no recorded information: ABPC, Elstree; Worton Hall, Isleworth, and M. P. Studios, Elstree.
40. TNA BT 64/95: Note of meeting at Board of Trade, 16 August 1944.
41. TNA BT 64/95: draft note by A. G. White to Gaitskell 26 November 1943.
42. TNA BT 64/95: Alexander Korda to Board of Trade, 14 January 1944.
43. TNA BT 64/95: Hugh Gaitskell to Ministry of Aircraft Production, 24 January 1944.
44. TNA BT 64/95: A. G. White (Board of Trade) to E. W. Wingrove (Secretary, BFPA), 11 March 1944.
46. For a plan of the Crown Film Unit’s studios at Beaconsfield after they had been reconstructed after the war, see Kinematograph Weekly, 26 May 1949, British Studio Supplement, vii. For an assessment of the Unit’s work see Alan James Harding, ‘Evaluating the Importance of the Crown Film Unit, 1940-52’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Southampton Solent University, 2017).
48. TNA BT 64/95: note of meeting at Board of Trade, 13 December 1944.
49. TNA BT 64/95: R. Nunn May to Hugh Gaitskell, 10 February 1945.
50. TNA BT 64/95: Gaitskell to A. B. F. fforde (Treasury), 5 April 1945.
51. Kinematograph Weekly, 5 July 1945, 21. During the war Pinewood was literally ‘in battledress’ since its roofs were painted with camouflage to prevent detection from the air.
53. Prudential Assurance Company Archives, Report by Spencer M. Reis, Managing Director, D&P Studios to Board of Directors, 30 June 1944. The compensation received for Denham and Pinewood was £101,547.
55. TNA BT 64/95: note by O’Dea (Board of Trade), 18 November 1944.
57. TNA BT 64/95: Gaitskell to A. B. F. fforde, 5 April 1945.
59. Threadgall, Shepperton Studios, 45.
60. TNA BT 64/95: Board of Trade minute A. G. White to R. Somervell, 3 September 1945.
62. TNA BT 64/2178: Note on Film Studio Manpower requirements. During the war an average of 60 long films a year was produced: Political and Economic Planning, The British Film Industry (London: Political and Economic Planning, 1952), 83.
63. TNA BT 64/95: ‘The Future of the British Film Production Industry’, BFPA report 1 July 1944.
64. TNA BT 64/61: Memorandum to Ernest Bevin, 1 August 1940.
65. TNA BT 64/61: F. W. Allport to R. G. Somervell, 1 November 1940. Officials pointed out that some people on the list were not actually of call-up age.
67. TNA BT 64/2178: Note on Film Studio Manpower requirements.
68. Prudential Assurance Company Archives, D & P Studios minutes, 12 October 1944.
69. TNA BT 64/2178: Rank to Cripps, 26 September 1945.
70. Ibid.
71. TNA BT 64/2178: note on Labour for the Film Studios (Board of Trade), 22 October 1945.
72. TNA BT 64/2178: Pares (Board of Trade) to Montgomerie (Ministry of Works), 1 October 1945.
74. Prudential Assurance Company Archives, D & P Studios minutes, 10 August 1944.
75. Prudential Assurance Company Archives, D & P Studios minutes, 26 November 1942.
77. TNA BT 64/2178: Film Studio Equipment, 13 September 1945.
78. TNA BT 64/2178: note for BFPA deputation on equipment, 13 September 1945.
79. Prudential Assurance Company Archives, Report by Spencer M. Reis, Managing Director, D&P Studios to Board of Directors, 30 June 1944.
81. TNA, Note by A. G. White on BFPA deputation, 4 October 1945, BT 64/2178.
82. *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 August 1940, 46.
86. TNA BT 64/4490: Overhead costs and earnings of British films.
88. For the history and details of these policies see Dickinson and Street, *Cinema and State*, 150–226.

**Notes on contributor**

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