August 23rd August 1989

SIDE 1, TAPE 1

GS: Can you please tell me something about who you are, where you come from, your childhood days, anything about your early life.

MT: I come from New Zealand, my parents come from New Zealand as well, and my grandparents went out to New Zealand in the very early days of colonisation of New Zealand and became amongst the earliest citizens there, they went from Scotland on both sides of the family. I suppose one of the most romantic things which happened to me in my early days was before I was born really when my father who was a geologist was chosen to be the chief geologist of Captain Scott's expedition to the Antartic and he went to Sidney where the archives are from previous expeditions and while he was there it was discovered by the famous Doctor Wilson of the Antartic that he had tuberculosis and he couldn't go. But when I was 2 years old, the expedition finally set out from New Zealand and I was taken down to the quayside where my parents told me Captain Scott held me in his arms and I was probably the last baby he probably ever saw. This was quite a legend in my childhood and I remember recounting it to the admiration of my chums.

My mother died when I was 5, my brother was 3, 2. And we were brought up by various aunts both in New Zealand and Australia. And when I was 14, my father found somewhere where we could live with him and he could be looked after medically, because he was still very ill, and he died 3 years later. I had rather a mixed and strange childhood, an unhappy childhood in some ways, and I expect it made me rather unsure of myself in my young days. However I went to university with the greatest joy and pleasure and studied zoology. I took a masters degree in zoology and loved it dearly and would have been very happy to have had a job doing research in zoology for the rest of my life I expect but I hit the depression time and there were no jobs going. I couldn't even teach in New Zealand because, teach zoology in New Zealand, because no zoology was taught in the schools.

So I came to England to get a diploma of education with a view of teaching in England but I found to my horror not only could I not teach but I hated teaching, I didn't have any talent for it at all as class room teaching. So I looked round for something else which would use my zoology and would give me a satisfying life and I had the greatest good luck to hit upon Gaumont British Instructional who at that time were making a great number of natural history and zoological films under the guidance of Julian Huxley and Professor Hewer of Imperial College, they were the days of Mary Field's Secrets of Life and Secrets of Nature. But

apart from these theatrical films, films for general release, they were making a great number of school films, teaching films of all kinds, and they had a programme for films on ecology. Now ecology was a word that the layman never knew in those days, it was a very academic word really, and by an extraordinary co-incidence my thesis had been on an ecological subject, it had been the ecology of a little fresh water insect, a little insect that lived its life in fresh water and running streams and it was part of a research programme that our professor was keen on because he was going into the whole of ecology of New Zealand streams vis a vis the fish population of the streams, so anyhow this was what I had been doing and here they had this programme of 6 films on ecology of different aspects of English natural history, British natural history, no one to do them and nobody had even written any scripts, and I stepped straight into directing and scriptwriting without any training at all, which was really nonsense, but when one's really with inanimate subjects, well when one's dealing with non-human subjects you have to string together what you can get in many ways. And it was an editing job, scripting and editing job as much as anything else.

GS: Did you have any experience at all of film up to that point.

MT: None whatever, I'm ashamed of myself really, I had none whatever. And in fact after those films were finished, they tool about 2 years to do, I had to go back to the cutting room to learn about filmmaking and I spent several years after that as a cutting room assistant, I couldn't even call myself an editor. I'll just give you the titles of these films. I must say that ecology didn't have the broader meaning then, it had a tighter meaning. We think of ecology now as being the concern of everything, every creature and of every influence in the natural world, these were more specific things so we talked about The Ecology of Moorlands but nobody ever mentioned that mankind had any relation to moorlands, it was just the natural history of moorlands really, moorlands, oak forests, the oak-hazel coppice was a man-made feature and that we did acknowledge, it dated back from the great days of ship building when they built the trees to a great size and filled in with the hazel coppices which I suppose were useful for lesser wood and nuts as well. Then there was a film on salt marshes and another one on the downs and one on heathland and one on meadows, I think that's six. They went into schools, our overall adviser was Julian Huxley, our immediate adviser was an English teacher person who taught these subjects in schools, and in fact she wasn't very pleased when I got this job because she rightly thought I wouldn't no much about English natural history, so I was pretty lucky all round really.

GS: Are these films still available to be see if one wanted to.

MT: I don't think so. But I must say before we finish with them. There were two marvellous people who supplied material to

order pretty well on natural history subjects.

GS: Who were they.

MT: One was Percy Smith, he was a very famous man in his day, he was the forerunner of the natural history films that we see so often on television. The other one, I think his name was Oliver Pike, but I wouldn't be quite sure about that.

GS: What was the set up at GBI, who were the people, do you remember any of them.

MT: Yes, I do indeed, Bruce Woolfe was the producer. It was his company, along with Gaumont British, he had actually done this sort of work before with British Instructional Films and he'd also made a lot of films in the 20s on great battles of the First World War, sea battles and so on, he was well known for that. Although he was a commercial man entirely, he had this extraordinary idealism about educational films, he was quite before his time, and I never think he's been given due credit for that pioneering work. Then Mary Field was his co-producer I suppose and made a number of very successful films on nature study subjects which went into the cinemas. And she was really well known, quite famous in that field. Then of the other directors there there were a number of people who became quite world figures, one was Stanley Haws who went with Grierson to Canada and built up the government film unit in Australia, I've forgotten what it's called, Alan Izod who did more or less the same thing in Rhodesia, and there was Jack Holmes, I don't know where he worked, but he was a very significant figure in the documentary field later on.

Prior to the time I went there, and I went there in 1936, Rotha had been there, and in fact one of my jobs in between directing these ecology films was to look after GBI's library and one of the jobs I had was to take a shot by shot description of one of Rotha's films, which was very very revealing indeed, that one was The Face of Britain, it's one I never see mentioned these days, but I thought it was marvellous when I saw it, I thought it was so beautiful and so emotive. The shots were often not more than two or three frames long and it was very very interesting for a young person to have the experience of examining every shot of a film by such a famous director.

GS: How old were you at this time.

MT: I was 25.

GS: Did you leave GBI after that series.

MT: I did but I've forgotten some things I could tell you about GBI which might be interesting. GBI at that time had a studio called Cleveland Hall in Cleveland St and a great deal of it's revenue came from recording daily the programmes from Radio

Luxemburg, and we had people who were famous in those days in the pop music line, like the Carroll Gibbons and the Savoy Orpheans, people of his calibre were often there recording these programmes. One the camera side there were 2 I remember. One was Harry Rignold who very sadly was killed in the first days of the war, I'm not to sure where it was, I had thought it was in Norway but I've been told I'm wrong. The other was a chap called **Jack Groves.** Who else can I remember, Francis Cockburn who became famous in the COI later on was just a young kid of 14 in the cutting room when I was there. There were redoubtable neg cutters whose names I can't remember, these women who were so very powerful in the early days of filmmaking, they were nearly all fierce and powerful, I don't know if other people would agree with that, but I suffered in other units.

GS: Because in those days neg cutting was basically done within the unit.

MT: Yes it was. Then I was out of work, and that's the story of my life. I got a job with Strand Film Unit, not for very long, I can't remember being there for very long.

GS: Doing what.

MT: As a cutting room assistant by this time.

GS: You started at the wrong end of the ladder.

MT: I started at the wrong end, indeed I did, and I knew that too. That was Donald Taylor's unit as far as I know, he was certainly there, but the person who employed me was Stuart Legg who must have been the producer there. The directors I remember working there were Donald Alexander who became the producer of the Coal Board Film Unit, Alexander Shaw who was making a film which was famous in its day called The Future's in the Air. Jack Ellitt was there, he was a sound editor who had really worked as a partner with Len Lye on his famous sound animated films when he drew sound on films, and he was really a genius, not maligned but not nearly enough recognised in my opinion. I don't remember who else was there.

GS: When was this.

MT: It would be about 37, 38. Then I went, with a little bit more unemployment I would say, I had a job, perhaps a year, I don't know, with Marion Grierson. She was in charge of the film unit belonging to the Travel and Industrial Development Association and that later became the British Council. It was a tiny unit. I think most of the work we were doing was editing, I don't remember any shooting going on at all. The people who were there were Alan Izod and Stephen Peet and Marion and myself and one cutting room. We were all very cosy and nice and I loved that little unit very much. Then the Travel and Industrial Development Association became ipso facto part of the British

Council, or it got amalgamated, and we moved from our tiny little hole in Oxford St or Charing Cross Rd or wherever it was into very smart premises near to Saville Row where we had proper film facilities, a theatre and all the rest of it. But my job didn't last very long there.

And I got a job very close to the outbreak oF war with a New Zealand outfit which was called the New Zealand Public Relations Council. It was a public relations job sponsored by the New Zealand International Wool Secretariat, by the New Zealand Meat Board, the New Zealand Fruit Board and the New Zealand Dairy Board. The head of it was a Labour MP called **Gilbert McAllister** who was one of the very first Europeans I ever met in that sense. He was very much given over to the idea of what we now know as the EEC and he also wrote books on town and country planning. Anyway he gathered round him a few people of which I was a filmmaker and others were journalists and we were working on programmes to do a public relations job on New Zealand and we would have made films in New Zealand, Anstey was one of the people from the film and documentary brief on us and I expect it was through him I got the job, but anyhow it faded in the first month or two of the war and nothing was ever done. It was never resuscitated as far as I know.

GS: You said you got a job here, you got a job there, how did you set about getting work, were you a member of ACT at that stage.

MT: No, I hadn't joined ACT by that time, I didn't join ACT till about late 1940, 41.

GS: So you got work how.

MT: Word of mouth, keeping your ear to the ground.

GS: Did you meet with any kind of discrimination.

MT: I personally didn't think that I met any anti-feminist discrimination, the discrimination I thought was that I wasn't one of the old boy net, I was a colonial and unsure of myself, not one of the chaps, that's the discrimination I felt, I couldn't say, I don't know how to answer that one. I never felt discrimination later on when I had more confidence and was known for the work I'd already done, I felt if I got on with people and they liked my work and knew they were capable of doing what they wanted I got the job. If they didn't like me, if I didn't get on with them, I didn't get the job. I thought it was a very personal thing but I didn't feel it was a feminist thing though at all. I know Kay Mander feels very much the other way but I don't personally. In fact we've always had equal money haven't we.

GS: In my own experience yes.

MT: But there was discrimination, no doubt about it. You could be a documentary of a film but you couldn't be director of a feature film unless you had a very powerful personality, or great skill.

GS: You couldn't be a director of a documentary film with any great ease either.

MT: You couldn't. No. I was very lucky I expect, but I was out of work and awful lot. When the New Zealand Public Relations Council packed up, it was about January 1940, so the war had started, we were in the middle of the phoney war, I'd come to Europe 5 years before with a great longing to see more of the world and I'd been hemmed in my the war, I felt hemmed in by the war and I hadn't got a job and no prospect of a job, because there wasn't any work going for anybody then. I decided to take a stab at trying to teach English abroad. At that time we were at war with Germany, France was still free, Italy wasn't in the war and Spain they had finished their war. I wrote to about 6 Berlitz schools, I had a friend who'd done this so I knew what to do, I wrote to about 6 Berlitz schools in the countries which weren't at war such as Italy, Turkey, Spain and Portugal, perhaps France, I can't remember. And I got a job in Spain and I crossed over blacked out France, I was very foolhardy about money, I can't believe it now, I left England with my fare as far as the frontier and I had £5 in my pocket of which I had to pay £1 or so to get a taxi because I didn't know my way around sufficiently to get to the Gare de L'Este which is a difficult one to get to and I had my luggage. I got to the frontier and paid another £1 or £2 to get to Madrid. I got on the Metro and got off at the right street, the metro station was the same name as my street, and rang the bell of the director of the Berlitz school and he said I'm awfully sorry but you've just hit the Easter holliday, the school won't resume for 10 days. He said come in, come in. And he was a very good Nazi German, and his wife was a pro Vichy France lady. But they were so kind. First of all they gave me some tea which I had little knowledge of how rare it was in Spain at that time, it was a terrific treat, he said I've got you accomodation in the pension which was just above the school, don't change any of your English money, let me advance you money, because you won't be able to get it back, so I didn't tell him how little money I had, and I didn't have to pay anything to the pension for a few weeks until I got my first salary. And I was there all the time until France fell, the Consulate told us we ought to have our bags packed in case something happened, if Hitler went on through Spain, I often wonder why he didn't. I tried to get out of Spain to Portugal but you couldn't get into Portugal without a transit visa which proved you would only be there in transit, and I had no way of doing that at that time. Then by another piece of luck in my life, the friend who had already put me onto the Berlitz school situation who was a bit of a linguist had got himself with the British Shipping Control in Lisbon. When I found this out I wrote to him and said I'm stuck here can you do anything at all and he fixed up something or

other and I got to Lisbon. But I still had to get a boat to England and the only boat I could get onto was a Japanese one so I travelled from Lisbon to Liverpool in a Japanese steamer, a great big passenger ship, and we were ablaze with lights because we were neutral, Japan wasn't in the war, but we had to go through the mine field all the same as anybody else. The only people on it were Poles, there were 100 or 200 Poles and about 3 other people, and a ship which would take say 2,000 passengers. it was a scary thing to do really, a foolhardy thing.

GS: Were you frightened.

MT: No, I don't think so. Then I got back to London and I had to look for work again and I got another job with the Strand Film Unit, again in the cutting rooms, by this time they were at Merton Park and they had some relationship with Merton Park. But I didn't get on with Donald Taylor who produced **The Tall Well**, and that job hardly lasted any length of time and I was out of work again. Then I got a job as a trainee electrician at Harrods. After I thought the very stickyness of Strand, because Donald Taylor loved to collect around himself a lot of intellectuals, Dylan Thomas, Steven Spender, again it was the old boy thing again I thought, they were a bit bland about a cutting room assistant I must say, and I hated that job, I really loathed it, it was just at the time when the only recollection of anything out of the ordinary there were all rushed out of the studios at Merton Park to watch a dog fight in the sky, one of the real Battle of Britain dog fights. Anyway I went to Harrods and became the only member of 30 chaps.

GS: That would be quite unusual even now, it would have been quite extraordinary then.

MT: Yes, it was a job of such pleasure to me I can't tell you, they were so kind, so nice, they thought it was a big joke, having this woman, they were so sweet and lovely except for the foreman who disapproved, he was one of the oldfashioned sort that wore a bowler hat and he disapproved entirely, and I was supposed to become a mate with one of the other electricians and go out in the shop when a fault was found. Our shop was one of two shops, the other one looked after the machinery like the escalators, we looked after the lighting, and when a fault was found, it could be just a bulb, it could be a cable, it could be all sorts of things, he didn't want to have his men disgraced by a female, so he gave me a task to do which he thought would last the duration, they'd taken all the strip lighting out of the show cases, and these were metal boxes with one side open and they were wired in series with a number of bulbs in them, say F5, 6 10 depending on their length and they slotted underneath the glass partitions somehow, the show cases. He wanted me, he had a huge room full of these, right to the ceiling, and he wanted me to paint them all inside and out and wire them in series, I think he really thought that will fix her. But when I really want to do a job I can concentrate and I got them done in a month and he didn't know

what to do with me. So then I became a sort of mate within the shop itself. I learnt repair with tayloring irons and I learnt to cut plate glass and various other jobs which I've forgotten about now, but I loved it very much. And then to my absolute astonishment Frank Sainsbury rang me from Realist. Now I knew Frank and John slightly from when I'd been a librarian at GBI and they'd come to look at material, I'd always had a drink with them here and there.

GS: Who's John.

MT: John Taylor, and they offered me this job at Realist making horticultural films, gardening films. And that was the beginning of my working on a long long series of films to do with the land, to do with agriculture and horticulture.

GS: Do you remember the titles of these films.

MT: Yes, I've got a list here. The first ones were to do with growing vegetables, because we were encouraged very much to grow our own vegetables, people dug up lawns and so on. For film purposes, the Royal Horticultural Society made available a section of their gardens to represent the average allotment and we were filming there about once a week for about a year.

GS: Where was this.

MT: Wisley. And the ones I was concerned with were Summer Work in the Garden, Autumn Work in the Garden, Storing Vegetables Outdoors, Storing Vegetables Indoors, and Making a Compost Heap. A little later the BBC had a little radio feature called Radio Allotment and they gave advice of the same sort. This Radio Alotment was a piece of land at the top of, what's the name of the wonderful crescent at the top of Great Portland St., in one of those little gardens adjacent to Regent's Park, walled off, where the roads go round. That's where they had the Radio Allotment and we filmed there for 2 or 3 films. Those were the gardening ones. Incidentally these were all sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Realist seemed to have a monopoly of doing their films. There were 3 films on grassland management because grass suddenly became frightfully important to keep the dairy industry going and not to use up cattle cake I expect, Making Hay was one, Making **Salads** another. Salads was a new procedure in agriculture in England, and I think it took some persuading to make farmers to it, anyway we made a film about doing it. One was inclined to be rather revolutionary, farming technique was inclined to be revolutionary, and strangely enough it had been employed in New Zealand very successfully for a century possibly, but not in England, and it was called Ploughing up and Reseeding for Better Grass. The idea was that you could get a good grass crop that way, you didn't have to wait through the centuries to get a good turf, you could make a good grass crop like any other crop. I must tell you what happened on that film. We were filming over a long Easter Weekend and that was

the time when the County Agricultural Adviser was available for us and the farm was available and all the rest of it, we had to do this on the holiday weekend. We had superb weather, every shot had beautiful billowing clouds against the hillside, lovely sun, everything was wonderful, we had a team of experts round telling the farmer to do this and to do that and get it right. There was big procedure of ploughing, harrowing, discing, sowing, reharrowing, and then we waited for the results and the whole crop failed, hardly a grain of grass came up. I new knew what went on ever. Anyhow we had to finish the film, we had to show shots in other fields, terribly ignominious.

GS: That's poetic license.

MT: Then there were other farming films, some of them quite simple ones, Hedging and Ditching and Making Hedges.

GS: Funny you should mention those, I was about to ask you did any of your films go into the archives, because when I was working for the Ministry of Agriculture certainly the hedging and ditching films were still in the library, and they were fantastic films, and some of the titles you've already mentioned I have a feeling were still in the library, and I have a sad feeling now subsequently they've probably thrown quite a lot of the films a way, but a lot of films did actually go into the National Film Archive, do you know.

MT: I don't know, but I know one film I made on an agricultural subject, Clean Milk it was called, that is still extant at the Imperial War Museum. And they have a lot of these films as part of the war effort, when I say have a lot of these films I mean a lot of these sort of films, so whether these are there I don't know. Then there was another film in Scotland on the control of weed, I only wrote the script on, then there was Clean Milk, just a very straightfoward exposition of what a cowman should do to produce the best quality clean milk with the primitive cow sheds which were available at the time. But I remember it was written up some years later saying it made a considerable step towards better milk in Scotland, I don't know if that's true or not, I hope it was.

Then some other films I did at Realist were a very very brave series of films sponsored by ICI under the direction if you like, proding, of Basil Wright, they sponsored 11 half hour films on the technique of anaesthesia for medical students, that was a huge programme and we made them at the Westminster Hospital. There were 3 women directors on these, myself, Rosanne Hunter and Yvonne Fletcher, it took us about 2 years to make them. There were, some of them were ordinary straight foward beginners, introduction to anaesthesia, one was called The Signs and Stages of Anasthesis, one called Open Drop Ether, it was strange to make that film at that time because open drop ether had been dropped by the medical profession for about 20 years or so but they reckoned in the conditions of war it might be the only anaesthetic

available to a non qualified doctor, to an ambulance driver, somebody who could stand by and drip the ether onto the mask over a patient's face while the doctor did what he had to do. So we did film and we staged a lot of it in a tent which we put up in one of the theatres in Westminster Hospital, the whole series was made at Westminster Hospital. Another one that probably has an historic value if it still exists now was called **Endotrachyl** Aneasthesia. That is a techinique whereby you pass a tube down a patient's now and deliver the anaesthesia direct to the lungs, bypassing the breathing part of the throat, and it's useful for certain conditions. The man who invented it was a chap called **McGill** and he was the senior anethesist at Westminster Hospital and he gave his name as a sponsor to the whole series but he only appeared in this one and he only had anything to do physically with this one, and he was the anethesist who appeared throughout the film. He had been knighted and was a famous man in his own right and I should think anything who was interested in anaesthetics would be very interested in seeing him at work now, but whether it exists I don't know. ICI might have copies or the Westminster Hospital might have copies. In these films the Hospital wouldn't let us use patients or medical students, I suppose because of insurance risks, we all volunteered to be anaethesized, so there we were flat out of the operation table.

GS: You were literally anaethetised.

MT: Yes, all of us, we were literally anaethetised. I made the one called Signs and Stages of Anaesthesia and if I remember it right there are four stages from being mildly swoony to what they call being surgically anaethetised when they can do an operation. And below that you're on the borderlines of death, and ou very very skilled anethetist, Dr Organe, took one of our own crew down to that stage and we filmed it.

GS: I hope she was heavily insured.

MT: I don't know anything about insurance but she's alive to this day at any rate. I think it was very dangerous, but there you are, but we didn't think those things I suppose.

GS: And the ACT wasn't involved.

MT: It was very interesting. I haven't talked really about the Realist Film Unit.

SIDE 2, TAPE 1

GS: You were continuing with the list of films.

MT: Yes, there are really only two that I remember very clearly now and those were after the war. The Ministry of Education wanted to make some films about children. This was nothing to do with classrooms, nothing to do with teaching, pedagogic messages, it was to show children how they were at their own affairs, and the reason they wanted to make these films was that coming back from the war there would be a lot of people who want to come into teaching and they wouldn't have seen any children perhaps for years, they wouldn't have seen their families, they might not have seen any children at all for years. So these films were made, 2 of them, 2 half hour films, quite a big coverage, we had fantastically generous allocation of stock in those days, I don't know how we got away with such a quantity of stock, it was wonderful, we filmed children doing their own thing. One of the films was called Children Learning by Experience, the other Children Growing up Among Other People, the second one was more or less a sociological or psychological study of the development of children, I suspect that one would be a little more dubious nowadays, people wouldn't have the same thoughts, I don't know. And we had to stage it a bit. But the first one had no staging at all - it was purely children enjoying themselves and doing their own thing. And the thesis was that children want to learn, they're avid to learn, they learn from everything they do, they learn from picking a flower to pieces, or jumping in a puddle or turning upside down or belting the little boy a bit bigger than you or a bit smaller than you, everything they do they're learning from. And as they get older they become more skilful and they now they' re learning a skill, they learn to sow or cut out paper or paint or do things creative, but when they're little they learn through play and experiment and social contact as well, and teachers must, must take notice of that and lead children on to learn. Anyhow we shot wherever we found children, by the round pond in Kensington Gardens or on the river on the mud flats, or in youth clubs, there was a marvellous youth club in Bethnal Green, it had been set up by Save the Children Fund, it was a pub which had been badly bombed and the children there were given a great deal of freedom in the sense that nobody told them to be quiet, the noise was incredible, the joyousness of these children was incredible, the enjoyment, and we got some fantastic shots of children enjoying themselves and learning there and other places. At the cinema we saw children terrified of a spooky film and killing themselves with laughter at a funny film, the enjoyment was so wonderful to see and we knew that this was the process of learning. So this film became quite well know really and is being used today 40 years later.

GS: What was it called.

MT: Children Learning by Experience. We were very very lucky to

be able to make it. We used quantities of stock, we would go out and we were lucky to have a loosely governed unit, where if you went in and it was a nice day and the camera man wasn't doing anything else you just hopped off and did something, it wasn't very organised, it would be very difficult to make a film like that now. You could make it privately, but to do it, well I suppose you could do it with video. Those were the last two films I did at Realist before I went back to New Zealand for a bit. But I would like to before we leave the Realist Film Unit, I would like to tell you who the people there were, or some of them,

John Taylor, it was John Taylor's unit, he had founded it along with Basil Wright, I'm not sure of the dates but the middle 30s or late 30s, and his co-producer was Frank Sainsbury, and these 2 set their own seal on it, it had an atmosphere which was different from any other film unit, for one thing it was very pure. I don't think hardly anyone did anything which they didn't truly believe in, there wasn't any feeling of commercialism about it or showmanship. People didn't make films because they thought that would do them a bit of good, a nice film to make for a director, I don't think that came into it at all. As far as I was concerned my films were nearly all teaching films, it was funny that I should have gone in for teaching films, when I found myself an impossible teacher, teaching in a visual sense, but I loved this type of work and I think that the training that I had as a zoologist which I never used in the whole of my life stood me in good stead because I knew how to pick up an obtuse subject quiet easily, I learnt about anaesthetic, I know far more about it than an average medical student would learn because I had to pull the guts out of it to make a simple teaching film and that goes for many documentary films and many documentary filmmakers. Realist had a sort of idealistic territory, the films I concerned with at Realist were straightforward, but Realist also tried to make, not with the greatest of success because they weren't quite skilled enough in the field of studio shooting, they tried to make films about human relationships, I can't remember the names of them, they also made films about people. Frank Sainsbury made a film about dockers, and also about drifters, not drifters, trawlermen. John made some films, but I can't remember their names now, I hope someone will be recording these, or perhaps John has already.

GS: I don't know what's on his tapes.

MT: It would be terribly useful if somebody just drew out a list and made a separate tape of it really, because I'm not capable of saying much more than what I did and I'm not sure that John would think to talk in those terms. It had great cameraderie. We loved each other's company, it seems incredible, we spent our days together working and then spent our evenings together drikning in the Highlander. It was a halcyon time for us I'm sure, although it was in the middle of the war and bombs were falling, a fantastic time.

GS: I'm sitting here green with envy.

MT: Anyone could be green with envy from that time I'm sure. Well the people there apart from John and Frank were Max Anderson who made a wonderful film about, British Farm Labourers it was called.

GS: I've got a copy of that film.

MT: You have. I'd love to see it.

GS: I borrowed it from the Ministry of Agriculture when I left, it was in our library.

MT: He died sadly at an early age. Len Lye was there. He was a misfit in our outfit because his interest really was the art form rather than the down to earth form if you like but he was a marvellous chap and I'm very pleased to have known him a little. Of course he was a New Zealander and he's now very much idealised by New Zealand art people. Now I never saw any of his paintings in all the years I knew him but he finally left England and went to America and he pretty well gave up filmmaking from the time he arrived in America, from what I can gather, and concentrated on his different art forms which included mobiles and painting and so on and has become quite famous in New Zealand now posthumously and there's an art gallery devoted to him, and he's considered New Zealand's prime artist now which isn't true of course. Who else was there. Alex Shaw was there.

The producers were Don Taylor and **Frank Sedgeway** but we also had the use of Basil Wright who was on the board of directors and was closely associated with Realist and Edgar Anstey. Those are the two producers I worked with mostly during the war. And I can honestly say I never found producers in my ordinary freelance work afterwards anything approaching that calibre. I couldn't find good directors, I nearly always had to flounder on my own. I don't know whether that's been the experience of other people at all but they were nearly always, two thirds preoccupied with the financial aspect, are you going over the top, couldn't they slot you into their busy programme or schedule, if you were a day late it would be disastrous. But not only that, there was a sort of impurity in the aspect of the film itself, they didn't care enough. I would love to know people's opinion's of that.

GS: They might well agree with you.

MT: I wonder.

GS: I don't think producers are the most popular species of mankind.

MT: Yet you see they're so necessary.

GS: Terry Trench used to think producers weren't necessary.

MT: I think a director that thinks a producer isn't necessary is inclined to become very self indulgent, but of course he was an editor so he would act as a producer in some ways. An editor can be a producer because he can see through the follies and extravagancies of the director, can't he, but I found among people who I worked with after that hardly anyone who was critical of the script or of the finished job. They let it go, alright, OK.

GS: A bit discouraging.

MT: Very.

GS: Can I ask you a prosaic question. When you were doing your filming, especially when you were filming with children, what kind of equipment were you using.

MT: Newman Sinclair.

GS: 35mm.

MT: Yes.

GS: Were you shooting sync sound.

MT: No.

GS: You were shooting mute.

MT: Mute.

GS: But were you recording sound at the same time.

MT: No.

GS: Or was it all wildtrack and putting the sound on afterwards.

MT: Sound on afterwards. We just had one session with sound. That was at that club I mentioned in Bethnal Green, and we showed a shot near the beginning of the film of the children playing with a **shocking coil** round a table and at the end of the film we showed it was sound, but we couldn't afford sound and we lost half the story naturally.

GS: If you'd had then the sort of equipment which is around now.

MT: Absolutely, yes.

SIDE 3, TAPE 2

GS: Thommy, can you start by telling us anything about your early life. Where you where born, that sort of thing.

MT: I'd like to go even further back because I am a New Zealander, my ancestor going back 150 years or more went out to New Zealand in the very early days of New Zealand's colonisation. My father's mothers's people went out to New Zealand in 1942 from Scotland, Ayreshire and settled finally in the South Island of New Zealand where the Scottish settlements were, but they preceded the official Scottish settlements by about 7 years. They were very very early pioneers. They were weavers from Scotland, and they went first to Nelson which is at the top of the North Island of New Zealand but after a few years there their position was untenable because that was the site of some of the early Maori wars, and one of, I suppose my great great grandfather travelled overland to Duneden which was going to be the site of the Presbyterian settlement and was there when the first ships arrived in 1847 and became a surveyor, or acted with a surveying party in those early days. They subsequently became farming people and prospered very well. That's my father's mother's people. My father's father also came from Scotland via India where my grandfather was born. And they made a great deal of money and lost it all and went to New Zealand as immigrants in 1867 and they were professional people. My grandfather was a school teacher, he was a chemist and assayist in the goldrush times there, but mostly a schoolteacher, an educationalist and a member of Parliament and finally made a very great name for himself as a naturalist in New Zealand, the grand old man of the world of natural history in those days. He embarked on his magnus opum when he was 80, he was a marvellous chap.

GS: Do you remember him.

MT: Oh yes. He was around all my childhood. He died when I was about 18, 19. My father became a geologist and he was also a brilliant man but had a relatively sad life. He got a Rhodes scholarship, he was the first Rhodes scholar from new Zealand to Oxford and he got his doctors degree there, doctor of science, and then he returned to New Zealand to marry my mother. My mother's people I don't know so much about. They also came from Scotland but we have very little history about them. They came from Edinburgh.

Anyway he went to work as a mining geologist, a geologist attached to mining activities in the gold fields of Australia of

Kalgoulie, Western Australia. And it was about that time that he was chosen to be the chief geologist with Captain Scott's expedition to the South Pole, this was the most fantastic honour and if it had happened it would have put him in the history books. But it was discovered that he had tuberculosis. Now tuberculosis was rampaging in New Zealand in those early days. Out of my immediate family, 4 people died of it, my grandmother, my grandfather's second wife, my grandfather's only daughter and now my father. And it was a terrible scurge. So he couldn't go on that expedition and they returned to New Zealand and he had a very sad life from then on. My mother died 5 years later, I was born in 1910, and my mother died in 1915, and my brother was about 2 years old then and we were sent to live with first one aunt for 7 years and then another aunt. So my father could only see us holiday times and occasionally, he lived out his life partly as a geologist and as an administrator, he was the director of the Dominion Museum in New Zealand, but he also lived in sanatoria on and off over the years trying different cures, but he never got better. And he died when I was 17 and I can only say he must have had a tragic life because his children were more or less estranged from him, he didn't know them very well.

But in the meanwhile he managed to do a piece of very major geological research and publish a book, a very technical book of course on a certain shell fish which has existed over the millenia and is used as a coding animals for various levels of geological times, and this book became a world classic. So much so that when I was back in New Zealand in 1947 doing some filming with the New Zealand Film Unit, it was the time of the Pan Pacific Congress, this is a great get together of scientists from all round the Pacific who meet in a country, a different country every 5 years, and this was New Zealand's turn to be host, and I was there, we were filming them, the geologists, and I happened to mention to quite a young American geologist that my father was geologist and his name was Alan Thomson and he said not Alan Thomson who published the Geomorphology of **Bracket Pods** and I said yes, and he said this book's my bible, and this was 20 years after he died and in America.

So that's a treasured memory for me. In the meanwhile I just had the normal life.

GS: Living with your aunt.

MT: Living with one aunt in New Zealand, in fact she was a very strict and stern woman and I hated and feared her, I think she was doing her best by what you might call Victorian standards by us. You have to remember that New Zealand's progress is always 20 years behind the rest of the world. So when I was being brought up in 1915 to 1923 in New Zealand we were back in 1880 or 1890 as far as progress was concerned or ideas were concerned. Then I went to Australia to another aunt, my brother and I, who was a darling kind woman and we lived in an extremely countryfied area of Australia. It was called **Tomoura** and it was in an area

around the river **Ena**. And again Australia was 20 years behind the times and there were actually seen occasionally bullock waggons in the streets there, it was like a western town. It had hitching posts up and down the streets and nearly all the children were bare footed. That wasn't from poverty, that was just the common way of carrying on. And I went to a school called the **Tomoura** Superior District High School.

GS: Was it superior.

MT: It was a ragamuffin place really. It was like looking at a western film today. They were farming people and it was a very interesting time, even for me, I was 12 when I went there and 14 when I left, there was no running water or electricity in this little town. We used oil lamps for lighting, we used a huge big wood burning stove for cooking and you can imagine with the heat of Australia how hot that was in the kitchens. We used a primer stove for quick cooking, boiling a kettle. And my aunt had a gadget called the hay box for long slow cooking. It was a superior hay box, it was two wooden boxes lined with metal and in these were fitted big round stones with metal hooks on them so you could pick them up and up them on the primer stove and heat them and then you put a fitted pan in and another stone on stop. And she could cook cakes or roasts, or cook porridge over night and lots of things like that.

GS: The real art of cooking.

MT: And she was a wonderful cook. Another thing I remember on the food front, it was in a very rich fruit growing area, and my uncle was a bank manager and farmers, I don't know if this is the practice today, but farmers, to keep in with the bank manager, would bring in fruit in season as presents for my aunt. And we had one of those huge old-fashioned clothes baskets which stand about 2 ft high and 4 ft long and this could be easily full of fruit, melons and guavas and grapes and peaches and apricots, and my aunt had to bottle all this, it was much too much for us to eat, the whole of our life was around her making these jars of bottled fruit, all year round. Anyhow that was a very lovely time.

But in the meanwhile my father found a way we could be looked after, us children, and he could be looked after together in one place. It was a little nursing home. We joined him there. We didn't know him really at all. And I have to say that I never loved him. I respected him, I enjoyed his company, and I think love is a thing that can't be forced and it's always been a great sadness for me that I didn't know that feeling for him at all.

GS: If you were separated in that sort of way you never really had a chance to form a relationship.

MT: He was in bed a great deal of time. But he was still working hard at various things, his geological work. It was a

terminal period for him really. And meanwhile I went to what might be called a grammar school, the Wellington Girl's High School. And I had there an education which I considered was a very good one. I have not found that I'm less well educated than most of my friends who had a similar background, we didn't have in New Zealand much by way of artistic culture at all. I hadn't heard of the Impressionists till I came to England. But as far as literature and English was concerned I think we had a jolly good basic training and it gave me a love of literature. But when my father died I was still at school and we were orphans then but my grandfather was around. But he was a member of Parliament and the upper house of Parliament and I used to see him every week in the Parliament buildings. He used to take me to tea there and we used to sit in the library there every Friday afternoon. It was a very good period.

GS: How was your brother doing.

MT: There was always this dread of tuberculosis hanging around us. When my brother was about 14, he would be 11 when we came back to New Zealand, when he was about 13 or perhaps 14, perhaps it was after my father died he was a bit weakly and they thought he needed bucking up so he was sent back to Australia where my uncle the bank manager had acquired a farm, and he lived on a farm for a year to give him an outdoor life. And this really set him up physically and mentally. It was a very independent life. He was living on this farm, it wasn't a working farm, it wasn't the depression but it was a bad time, and this was a run down farm and he was living there with another lad, and they were shooting rabbits and living off the land in a very primitive way. I expect my aunt and uncle kept and eye on him. But he came back to New Zealand quite a different boy. He toughened up a lot. Then he in due course went to the boy's college and we stayed together in this nursing home where they were prepared to look after us until I was 21 and he was 17 or 18.

I in the meantime went to the university and followed the line of my father and grandfather in wanting to do science. I had not had any schooling in zoology, there was no zoology taught in schools then but as soon as I started to include zoology among my disciplines I fell in loved with it with a huge bang, I really was engrossed in it, I decided that would be my life and I went on to take a bachelors degree majoring, as they would say nowadays, in zoology and chemistry. That's 3 years zoology, 3 years chemistry, 1 year botany and 1 year geology. Then I was preparing to do my masters degree and my brother was wondering what to do with his life and he decided to be a forester. We had lots of relatives sort of guiding us or interfering with our life in a big way and the idea was that we would be kept together which was very sensible but he had to go to Christchurch in the South Island, to Canterbury College as it was then, it's now Canterbury University, because that was where the only forestry course was, and I should also go to Canterbury and change to a different zoology department where there was a young active

zoology professor from England, Professor **Perceval**, and come under his guidance for my research. And that's how it was. This was a marvellous time for us both.

We both lived in halls of residence for a while and then we had a flat together, and I did my research for two years and as far as I was concerned I never wanted to do anything different, I was always a person on enthusiasms and this was the one which had caught me at that time. But it was not to be, I couldn't get a job when I got my qualification, I got a first class honours degree but I couldn't get a job. It was now the time of the depression. I couldn't get a job because no zoology was taught in the schools, that was the last thing, that was always the fall back, but I wanted an academic job, but there wasn't one, there was nothing going at all, I got a job in the university for a bit demonstrating, but that was a very low grade job and not much money, not enough to keep one. And money was running out. It was fantastic how my father saved with all his illness and disability and having to pay for us in separate places and live himself in lodgings and institutions and things and still save money enough for our education. The money was running very low and my brother handn't finished his education yet. So we just halved what was left and I came to England with a view to getting a diploma in education so I could teach zoology.

I longed to come to England, it had been my great ambition for many years.

GS: When was this.

MT: This was 1935. Well I went to the Institute of Education but I hated it, I hated being a new girl when I'd been a senior member of a department and been on the university staff to some extent. I loathed being among only women which it seemed to be. There were some men in this class but I only remember women. We had to go to physical jerks and I hated this, loathed it. I hated teaching, they couldn't understand my New Zealand accent, I taught in Hounslow of all places. I hated the journey there and the cold winter mornings. I lived in Battersea at the time with some New Zealand friends. I might say with £150 which was considered a very adequate sum to see me through a year, £3 a week. But it didn't work out like that because when you're new to a country you can't live as cheaply as a native person does. You don't know the wheezes, you get caught up in all sorts of eventualities you couldn't have foreseen.

GS: You've no comparisons.

MT: No and money was running out. I knew I couldn't get an academic job in England because I had no in to it. The usual way in, I expect it's the same today, you go from your country of origin and attach yourself, unless you've made a name for yourself already, if you're just a beginner you attach yourself to a university department and take often a PhD and then that

department sees you see into other work because there's a network thoughout the whole country. But I hadn't got that, I knew I couldn't get an academic job so what could I do with my zoology. I went through the yellow pages looking at every heading of a trade or industry or occupation which could possibly give me work but which would be allied to my degree in some way, because I had chemistry as well you see, and I tried a cosmetic firm, and I tried a firm that I had known through my work at the university, a zoological supply company, and they were sympathetic to me but hadn't got a job. But funnily enough they offered me a job during the war time, that was 1940 or so. And then, in the cinemas were coming out a number of films about nature studies, these were Mary Fields famous films The Secrets of Life and the Secrets of Nature and they were made by a company called Gaumont British Instructional. I thought hah, there now, that's something. And in the days that we could do these things, I don't suppose New Zealanders could do them now but we're such a small country, I went to New Zealand House and said I want to know about firms who make nature study or scientific films. They said we'll put you onto our film contact which was the British Film Institute, I'm not sure if it was called the British Film Institute then, and I saw a young man called Ernest Lindgren who was just about my age and young and new to it all and he said here's a list of companies we know about and there were two or three but Gaumont British Instructional seemed the most likely. And so I went back to New Zealand House with all the cheek in the world I want a letter of introduction to the producer of Gaumont British Instructional Films. So he gave me a letter of introduction to Bruce Woolfe. I knew nothing about films, I knew nothing really about nature study in England, let's face it. When I got there he said you did a thesis in New Zealand, now Bruce Woolfe wasn't a particularly well educated man, he was a real pioneer and I don't think he's ever had enough credit for the work he did. He wasn't a very well schooled man, he probably left school and educated himself. He said what was the subject of your thesis. I said actually it's a bit remote, it was the ecology of a little insect that lived in the mountain streams of Australia. Now ecology was a very technical word then, it wasn't known outside the realms of science, it wasn't on everybody's lips as it is now. He said that's a funny thing and he produced out of his drawer a blank sheet on which was written just 6 words. We've got an ecology series muted at the moment and we haven't got anyone to make them. Wasn't that extraordinary.

Gaumont British Instructional, to give it its proper name, had set itself up as a commercial organisation to make films for schools and educational purposes under the guise of Julian Huxley and Professor Hewer of Imperial College, and they had between them drawn up ambitious programmes of films, there must have been about 10 programmes on various subjects, on chemistry, mathematics, natural history, we're now 1936, and the basis of all this interest came from Mary Field's work on natural history. Her films were pioneer films in that line but they were for the theatre, they were theatrical distribution, but allied to GBI

were a couple of very specialist camera men. One was called Oliver Pike, there were two bird specialists but I can't remember the name of the other one, but one was Oliver Pike and he was a pioneer in filming birds like say the inside of a tree where a woodpecker would have it's nest which is commonplace nowadays but these were the pioneers who set the work for the natural history film units there are today. And the other one was an even more famous person, there's been a book about him, Percy Smith. One of the other directors at GBI was **Jo Durden** who wrote a book about him which was published in Penguin. I'm a bit hazy about that it might be Dearden. He was a director of films of these styles, he did a lot of the films at GBI. And there was another one called Bryan Salt as well, who was more of a mathmatical man.

GS: Scriptwriter.

MT: Scriptwriter/director, yes. And mechanical genius if you like, not mechanical, he could produce mathematical films. Have you heard of any of these.

GS: Oliver Pike, the name is vaguely familiar. But possibly because you mentioned it before.

MT: Anyhow this was a terrifically far seeing and ambitious undertaking. To put it in context it was running parallel with Grierson who was doing his work, his documentary work, public relations sort of thing, they ran parallel, they never met as afar as I know. A lot of people from GBI joined the documentary field proper as the 30s drew on. Rotha had been at GBI but he'd left by the time I was there. He'd made a film called The Face of Britain and maybe others, I don't know. Jack Holmes was there.

GS: He went on to British Transport Films, didn't he.

MT: He was the head of Crown at one time. Alan Izod was there who was in charge of the Rhodesian Film Unit finally. Another person who was at GBI at that time was Stanley Haws who finally became the film commissioner for Australia, I don't know if that is the title but he found the Australian government film unit and still lives in Australia. The cameramen I remember, Jack Rose was one, and Harry Rignold was one of the people I remember with great affection, he was killed in the war, I thought he was killed in Norway. Another person who was there, probably the youngest person there was Francis Cockburn, who was just a cutting room assistant to Mary Field and others and she even then had the seeds of being, of rising in her profession because she was as a young child almost, she was only 15 perhaps, she looked upon efficiency as being a great virtue and went through being a very good editor and supervisory editor with many documentary units including the Crown Film Unit and Worldwide Films and became head of the Films Division at the COI, she was there then. The studio manager was Frank Bush. One of the directors was Donald somebody whose name I can't remember who was Bruce Woolfe's son in law and he made as far as I remember feature films which

went into the cinemas. One was called The Gap and that was to do with looking forward to the war, I can't remember where the gap was but it was a gap in our defences, that sort of thing but it was a story film.

I should go back a little and say Bruce Woolfe's previous history as far as I know was that he made a number of films for the cinema, silent films, on reconstructions of great battles, or naval events, I'm a little hazy, naval events, Zeebrugge, First World War events, and he had his own company British Films, and that's how it became attached to the Gaumont title. I'm sorry I can't tell you more about him.

GS: Is that the British Films which exist now.

MT: I better take that back, the British Films which exists now had nothing to do with Bruce Woolfe.

I embarked on these ecology films. Each one was a film about a natural history ecological zone, one was about moorlands, one was about woodlands, one was about meadows, salt marshes, there were 6 altogether, I can't remember the other ones. They were correlating the animals and plants which lived on those habitats and were interrelated in their needs to each other, so it was purely natural history. It was for school.

GS: If you had no experience of making films before how did you set about it, did you have any training of any description.

MT: Let's face it. They were compilation jobs. One shot of the habitat, long shot, close up if you like, then you got material relating to the plants and animals living there and in that I had to rely a lot on these specialist natural history cameramen and they did what they could, and I did what I could with the work of the cameraman.

GS: Did you work with an editor then.

MT: No we edited our own as far as I remember. I can't remember having an editor. So I had to learn as I went along. They were just commentary films of course. I have no notion how satisfactory these films were at this distance, but at the time I remember receiving a letter from somebody who was concerned with the teaching of natural history at school saying they were very useful and very helpful, I hope they were, I don't suppose these films are extant any longer. Any how that job lasted me about 2 years, eked out I may say with my also being in charge of GBI's film library. I should explain that GBI was in two places at that time. It had a studio called Cleveland Hall in Cleveland St near the Middlesex Hospital and a lot of its income came from recording every day the material for Radio Luxembourg and we were deafened every day by We are the Ovalteenies. But some very interesting people were interviewed there. For instance there was the woman who had flown from Australia, one of the first, I

can't think of her name.

GS: Not Amy Johnson.

MT: I think it was Amy Johnson. We all crowded to see her. And Carroll Gibbons and the Savoy Orpheans were the resident orchestra for Radio Luxemburg, so it was very lively , a lot was going on there. It was a strange contrast to these serious films which were being made there, the educational films. Then we had cutting rooms in D'Arblay St, that's where Bruce Woolfe had his office, that's where I mostly worked, that's where the library was. I worked along side Francis Cockburn during these years because she was a cutting room girl, we got to know each other very well. One of the editors was Frank Bundy, oh there must have been editors there.

GS: That name rings a bell, where did he go to eventually.

MT: He came from a rich city father and went back into that world, I think, Stephen Peet saw him recently. Then about 1938 I finally finished at GBI, I got the push and was out of work for ages and ages. I did little odds and sods freelance work. I have to explain and anyone hearing this will appreciate I wasn't a film director by any means, I'd written the scripts and I'd known what to find and shoot and I got the idea of compiling a film but I was no means a film technician and I really had to go back to the beginning again and I got jobs and cutting room assistants for the next year or so, on and off, I was at Strand Film Unit, I was at Shell a little bit, I can't remember any others, but there may have been, because they were very brief jobs, I was just learning really.

GS: In amongst all this where were you living.

MT: I was living in old-fashioned digs just off Ladbroke Grove, Charles Sq.

GS: They provided food.

MT: Yes, for 21 sh a week I had dinner and bed and breakfast and quite a nice room. I was getting I suppose about £2 10sh a week so it was quite a lot out of my money. But I existed and I enjoyed being in London and learning about London, learning about music and pictures and things like that which one was starved of in New Zealand really.

GS: Did you know you were starved of it till you came here.

MT: No. Anyhow I had a very thin time until I got a job, oh I did a script I remember for Grierson, again it was a semi natural history job. And now I must tell you of my first meeting with Grierson. Everybody had him in awe. I knew about documentary films not really through the ethos of GBI wasn't in that direction but the people were, people like Jack Holmes and Stanley

Haws were all potential documentary people, and strangely enough where I lived in Ladbroke Grove my newsagent had a new magazine on British films and so I bought no 2 and this was World Film News and I had them until a few months ago. I worked with Marion Grierson later on and one day she said would you like to come to Film Centre, we're packing up World Film News forever and if we've got any spare numbers you want, she knew I collected them, you can pick them up, so I had a complete copy bar one and they weren't in very good nick, I travelled from a to b and they were in boxes and things and I long wondered how I could capitalise on them and make some money but it didn't seem they were worth a lot although they sounded they should be. But just recently I met a New Zealand film man, he was an academic man, he was a professor of English literature at Auckland University, **Bryan Horrocks,** and when I told him about them he said you wouldn't consider giving them to the New Zealand Film Archive would you, I said yes, the very thing, so I collected all my papers, all my magazines, all the ACTT journals I had, all the Sight and Sounds dating back to the 30s, I didn't have complete of anything, also Documentary News Letters, and we packed them all up and he took them off.

GS: They went to a good home anyway.

MT: When I recently did an oral history with Marion Grierson, she was the editor of them, and told her this, she was tickled to death, she really was so thrilled they found a good home. That was nice.

GS: Your first meeting with Grierson. He was sitting at a desk facing a window at Film Centre in Soho.

SIDE 4, TAPE 2

MT: Yes the first time I met John Grierson I was nervous and in some awe. He was reputed to be, and was indeed, frightening to some people, he didn't suffer fools gladly to say the least. Anyway I went along and he was sitting in his office in Soho Sq at a desk facing the window and he was reading a newspaper and the secretary announced me, he didn't bat an eyelid, he didn't say anything to me he just went on reading and I expect he thought this would wear me down and I'd be standing like a goof at the door wondering what to do, instead of which I sat down in the chair by the door and got my newspaper out and by the time he was ready for me I was behind a newspaper, and we got on splendidly from then on.

GS: A great beginning.

MT: That was a little film which was never made I think, it was on root stocks, the East Malling fruit tree/plant station, sort of in my line in a way. Anyhow the most continuous work I had before the war came from then on was with Marion Grierson who was in charge of a unit called the Travel and Industrial Development Film Unit. This outfit was the forerunner of the British Council, The Travel and Industrial Development Association Film Unit. We had two pokey little rooms in I think Charing Cross Rd. The people who were there were Marion Grierson, Alan Izod, Stephen Peet who was then about 16 and myself and we were there for a good 6 months. As far as I remember and as far as Marion remembers as well it was mostly editing work, using material already shot to publicize the British Isles, travel in the British Isles. I don't remember us shooting anything, I certainly wasn't involved in any shooting. Maybe Alan Izard was. Anyway it was a happy little unit and it was lovely to get to know Marion Grierson who I think is a wonderful woman, fabulous woman, and it was nice to get to know Stephen Peet as well.

Then that came to an end when, or it became a different thing when the British Council was formed we moved ourselves to their very grand buildings in Saville Row which I think must be the building that Transport had finally.

GS: 27 Saville Rd., I think that would be the only building in Saville Row suitable.

MT: But our work had come to an end, and Marion left because she now was having a family and it dissolved as far as I remember although we had very grand cutting rooms by this time. Then I had a very good job, a very promising job but the war did come finally and break it up. New Zealand wanted more publicity or more up to date publicity for marketting itself and its product. And four of the institutions in charge of the different types of product put themselves together and formed the New Zealand Public Relation Council. These were the New Zealand

Marketting Board, the New Zealand Fruit Marketting Board, the International Wool Secretariat, and there should be a fourth one, the Dairy Board, and they were formed into the Zealand Public Relation Council. A Scotsman called **Gilbert McAllister** was in charge, he later became an MP and he was a great socialist and a great expert on town and country planning and a go ahead man in the public relations line. It was through Grierson that I got that job, well I mean Grierson gave the push, Anstey was the film consultant on the English side.

In theory we were supposed to be versatile in several disciplines, we were supposed to be able to write articles, we were supposed to be able to speak and write scripts and film. I was fairly alright on the writing front but the speaking front was absolutely hopeless. Gilbert said to get confidence to speak outside I'm going to give you an exercise to do. There were several of us, but I was the only film person, nearly all New Zealanders, go across to, we were in special chambers near to the Savoy Hotel on the Strand and across the road was New Zealand House also on the Strand. He said go across to New Zealand House and get up on the roof there, it's a flat roof and speel to the winds, I want you to do it an hour every day, nobody will hear you above the noise of the Strand but I hated it, I loathed it. I never made out. Then he wanted us to talk to mikes, he tried to train us but I wasn't much good. Anyhow there wasn't long to do all this. I wrote a number of scripts or projects of films in New Zealand or about New Zealand and he was at hand to give advice. We also used to work on things for Picture Post and other magazines which were coming out at the time. But it only lasted 3 or 4 months this whole venture and then the war was on, we were dissolved and that was that. And many other things were dissolved, there was no work going, nearly all the film units had packed up as far as I know, I was really out of work then. And I remained out of work for 2 or 3 months, on the dole I think. I can't think how I lived.

GS: You must have had a riotous time living on the dole then, it's bad enough now.

MT: I can't honestly think how I lived.

GS: Perhaps you had a little bit of savings.

MT: Very little. I did have a little left.

GS: Living was pretty cheap in many ways.

MT: I know I went to a cousin of mine. A cousin of my father lived in London and they were well healed, they had a maid and the maid/cook was taken ill with an appendix and would I like to come and spend a month or two while she was getting better, a paid cook, that was lovely.

GS: This was your cousin.

MT: Yes. This was very nice of them. It was a gesture really, they lived in Finchley, a big big house with an acre of land. I must tell you a little bit about my brother while I'm there, because my brother was in England by this time. He was a forester.

GS: When did he come to England.

MT: I suppose about 1939. Maybe a little earlier, 37 possibly. And he wanted a job, he wanted to extend his experience as a forester and he saw a job in the Times advertising forest officer wanted in Gabon, which was French equatorial Africa in a British mahogany concession, this concession was run by **Holz** the shipping magnate and our cousin, our elderly cousin was a shipping man, engineer, chief superintendent of the Blue Star line, he was a big man in his line. While I was working in this maid's job in his house, he got a sort of semi acceptance for this job and he thought he'd come out and see if our cousin could tell him about Holz as an employer and staying in the house was a nurse, she was looking after somebody, perhaps the sick maid, I don't think so, I think it must have been somebody else sick in the house, a residential nurse for a few weeks, and we all had dinner, and my cousin said what's the name of your boss there, his name is **Binge**, and she said that's my brother, that was an extraordinary coincidence. He went out there for a while but got a tropical disease and had to be shipped back home. He's alright now.

GS: Is he in New Zealand.

MT: Yes. He became the head of the forest service in New Zealand which was a very onerous job, he's now in a sad situation because of the privatisation of the forests. It really breaks his heart to see his beautiful forests sold off the the Japanese say, really heartbreaking, he says his life's work's been rubbished by it, however that's besides the point.

About this time, from the time I left my lodgings which I suppose would be after I left GBI, for some year or two I lived in first one empty room, for which I bought some furniture for which I paid £15 a week in Swiss Cottage

GS: £15 a week.

MT: 15 sh a week, sorry, and I bought 2 or 3 sticks of furniture. Again in Swiss Cottage I moved higher up the scale and bought and empty flat of 3 rooms for 15sh 6d a week, use of bathroom on the landing, use of gas cooker on the landing, and I bought, I had already one of two sticks of furniture but very little, I bought £25 of furniture on the never never through one of these never never companies in Tottenham Court Rd. That

included a square of carpet, a bed an easy chair, a table, 2 sit up chairs and a couple of cushions and those cost me 2/6 a week to hire. And when I left the room I let them all go back to the hire company. That's the way I lived.

GS: It rings bells to me, the cost of things. My first place across the road, my 2 rooms and kitchen which was gas lit and I got £25 worth of furniture from Maples, this table is one of the pieces, and the two kitchen chairs.

MT: I didn't keep them because I went to Spain after that. I was really stuck, it was the winter time of 39/40 and there was no sign of any work in hand. Now one of the reasons I'd come to Europe was to see the world and I'd been too poor for most of the time I'd been in England, I'd been in Paris a few times but I hadn't seen a lot of the world and now we were hemmed in by the war. But I had a friend who told me of a way you could travel easily if one could get a job was the Berlitz School of languages and he had had one in Budapest. He says the pay's very little but you can live and it's a great way of living in another country. So I wrote off, it was while I was with the New Zealand Public Relation Council so I could get facility for roneoing, typing and roneoing, I wrote off the all the Berlitz Schools which were not in countries not then involved in the war which was then Italy, Greece, Turkey, Spain and Portugal and I got a reply back from Spain saying yes, come immediately.

Well the system was that you paid your fair but they paid you a meagre wage. So off I went in the early months of 1940, it was running up to Easter time 1940. I was so poor that I had paid my fair as far as the Spannish frontier but I only had £5 on me. And I had to have a night in Paris and pay my fares from the frontier to Madrid and get to the address of the proprietor of the Berlitz school, which I managed and I had 25 sh left by the time I got there. I used the Metro, I mananged to get there alright, I had a pack with my luggage in a small suitcase, and I met him there. He said it's very unfortunate that you've come just now because we're closed for 10 days. However he said but we'll pay you and we've got a pension for you which was just above the school. And he was a Nazi German, a supporter of Hitler, and his life was a French Vichy, French woman, Vichy supporter, but they were such darlings to me, they were so lovely, I can only say that no matter what they were politically, they were so nice. They'd got in some tea for me, because English people like tea and they'd got in some butter because English people like butter, it was really fantastic. I was there for 4 or 5 months while France fell, when we didn't know whether Hitler would come over the Pyrenees and snap up Spain which after all was on their side, and go to Gibralter, a very anxious time, but it was a very enjoyable time for me, I was footloose and fancy free. I had various Spanish boyfriends, I went dancing every night.

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GS: Did you speak Spanish.

MT: No, I'm very poor at languages and didn't learn very much because all these people were longing to speak English. And the teaching method at Berlitz was only to speak English. They had their own system, they spent about a week teaching me their system, and I loved doing it although I hated teaching zoology I loved teaching English because you can't be faulted in your own language. But I suppose there are generations of Spanish still going round with a slight New Zealand accent. It was a very hard job, hard days, we worked from 9 till 1, and then we had the siesta and worked till 5 at night, 6 days a week, that's a 48 hour week. Quite a tough week.

GS: I think that was fairly standard at the time.

MT: Teaching is very concentrated you see, you taught for 55 minutes. And then you had a break of 5 minutes while the new class assembled. Tough going but very enjoyable, I really loved it, and I only left because the British consulate, I wanted to get back to England, the phoney war was coming to an end. And it was the time of the Norway business and France had fallen and all that and I was dying to get back.

To get back would be through Portugal and the Portuguese consulate wouldn't give me a travel permit because I hadn't any proof I would leave Portugal, they would only give transit visas if you were actually in transit, there were three quarter of a million people waiting to go through Portugal, Poles and Czechs and French I expect were sitting on the borders, but I had a piece of luck with the very chap who had been teaching in the Berlitz school in Budapest was now in Portugal in the British shipping control, so I wrote to him and he got a letter through to me saying something would be arranged, it would be alright. Then I wrote to my cousin in England and said could you let me have £12 please and £12 was to see me to England. It shows you the difference of money, I still had the 25 sh which I'd arrived with, I didn't spend a penny of it. I travelled finally to Lisbon and finally got on the only ship which was available at that time, a Japanese passenger ship, Japan was not in the war but we knew it was on the side of the Axis, we knew war was almost inevitable. I don't know when the Burma Rd was started, we knew it was all very dicey and there were only about 90 passengers on that ship and they were nearly all Poles, but I went among them, I was really quite fearless in those days. We were, of course a neutral ship ablaze with lights, our decks were fully lit with the Japanese flag painted on it and all the cabin lights were left on all night, ablaze with light. But of course we had to go through the mine fields. However we arrived in Liverpool and all was well. And then I was out of work again.

GS: When did you travel back.

MT: September 1940, it was just before the Blitz started. So I got back to England early September 1940 just in time for the

Blitz. I was out of work again for a bit but I did occupy myself with helping to evacuate some of the children which were being evacuated. There was a school near us and the children were brought there during the morning and I was co-opted now and then to help the teachers who were very short staffed and to take them to the trains. It was a pretty gloomy business. Once I went with them on the train to **?born**, and we got to the reception centre quite late at night, because it was a long day's journey because everything was very slow on trains in those days, and we got to the village hall and all the children were apportioned homes and houses and all that was left was me who was not part of the staff, I was just a helper and there was quite a consternation in trying to find somebody who would put me up for the night, because obviously I couldn't travel back, although it would probably be a 2 hour journey nowadays it was probably an 8 hour journey in wartime.

GS: Were people hospitable.

MT: Oh yes, very friendly, but it was a terribly sad business. It was an exciting for the children in some ways but heart breaking on the platforms, simply heartbreaking.

GS: I was an evacuee.

MT: I got a job for a while with the Strand Film Unit which was either part of the Film Producers Guild or perhaps they just used the cutting rooms at Merton Park, I don't know which, Donald Taylor was in charge then, and it was a very intellectual film unit at that time. Donald Taylor was a person who loved the intelligentsia. He collected around him some very famous people, Dylan Thomas, Stephen Spender, Day Lewis, architectural experts, all sorts, and they were there coming and going, scriptwriters, I don't know whether they were part of the staff or not. I was just in the cutting rooms there and I didn't particularly get on with Donald Taylor, we really were antipathetic to each other. I didn't last very long there either, so I was out of work again and decided that I had had enough of films. I hated the Strand Film Unit, I hated intellectual elitism, and I was made to feel I was very stupid and not out of the top box at all, not gone to the right school and was probably not very good at my job anyhow.

I went to the Labour Exchange then and tried to get jobs but I only wanted a temporary job, ever hopeful I thought something would crop up, and I couldn't get a job, this was in about October or November of 1940. One thing I've just remembered, while I was at Merton Park it was the time of the Battle of Britain and we used to all troop out to watch the dog fights over the sky at Merton, I remember that very clearly, on those cloudless days to see the two planes clashing together and one of them circling down in flames, moving really. Anyhow the Labour Exchange said to me, because I said I only wanted a temporary job I couldn't get anything, they said don't let on you're temporary

and how would you like to become a trainee electrician at Harrods and that's where I went. I had 3 or 4 months at Harrods.

In the electrical department at Harrods there are two shops. One was the maintenance shop which dealt with the lighting throughout, and the other was the machinery shop which dealt with the lifts and the escalators and all those things. I was in the maintenance shop and I was given a very smart uniform which was a pair of navy blue bell bottomed trousers and a navy blue shirt and a navy blue turban.

GS: Turban.

MT: In those days that's what women wore, turbans were all the go then. This was terribly smart. But the foreman was so ashamed of having a woman he wouldn't let me go out with the chaps. I was supposed to be a mate and learn about maintenance which would be anything from putting a new bulb in to putting new cables in, depending on what the fault was. But he couldn't bear to think that his precious department would be demeaned by having a woman fooling around so he gave me a job which he presumed would last the duration. All the show cases had been stripped of their lighting, their banks of lights, and all these had been stacked in a large room in the basement, there were long tins, say 4, 5, 6 ft long, about 8 inches deep and they were wired in series to take say 6 or 8 bulbs. And he said your job is to paint all these inside and out and wire them in series and he had me doing this. And he really thought he had me captive forever, because there were hundreds of these, hundreds and hundreds,

GS: These were display cabinets.

MT: Yes, they'd been stacked away for the duration and were being wired up and prepared but when I get my teeth into a job I can really go at it and I got them all done in about a month, he couldn't believe it. He didn't know what to do with me then, but he let me become a mate within the shop where there were people working on **xxxxxxxxx** irons, and I learnt to cut plate glass, I learnt a lot of jobs of different kinds, and it was a lovely time for me. After the Strand Film Unit which was so elitist and intellectually smug, I though very unpleasant altogether, here were these ordinary chaps doing a job and they were absolutely marvellous to me apart from the foreman. They use to shush each other up if a bad word came up, ladies present, not like today, they were very careful about their language and they used to call me mate, it was just lovely, I just adored it, and I would have stayed there forever really if I hadn't got an offer from the Realist Film Unit and I knew the people at Realist already.

I knew John Taylor and Frank Sainsbury, I knew the documentary people quite well from little jobs I'd had and pub things, and so I went to Realist and I stayed there for 7 years, all through the rest of the war and I suppose it was my big opportunity, I went straight into directing very simple films on gardening and

horticulture, summer work on your allotment and winter work on your allotment and autumn work on your allotment, and how to store vegetables in clamps and how to store vegetables in the house. And that lead to a lot of agricultural films. England, the British Isles were a little backward in their management of grass land. It transpired that New Zealand had lead the way in grass land management and they wanted to instruct farmers on how to manage their grassland better and I made 3 films on that subject, not easy to shoot, grass growing is not the easiest thing to shoot, but very interesting to do.

GS: I have a feeling they had those films when I worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, they were in that library.

MT: They would be because it would be the Min of Agriculture which asked for them.

GS: I didn't realise you had anything to do with them or I'd have filched them out of the library before I left if I'd known.

MT: What a pity. But I must tell you a story about the main one. The main one, the main thing which farmers needed to now about which wasn't done in England then but is common practice now, is what they call ploughing up and reseeding. It had been going on in New Zealand for decades apparently but not in England. It was to improve the quality of the grass so that you got a grass that cows wanted to eat rather than any old grass which grew there. We had an adviser who was the Bucks County Agricultural Officer, and he found a farm for us to film upon, and he had his advisers around, half a dozen of them, it was a very nice far at High Wycombe, on one of those lovely Bucks hills, those pretty hills they have around there, and I remember we were shooting at Easter time and it was lovely weather with lovely puffy clouds on the horizon, every shot a Rembrandt as they say, and we spent this weekend ploughing and disking and harrowing and seeding and rolling and all this process, and then we waited for the grass to come up and not one blade of grass came up. I never know to this day what went wrong, it was a disaster, because it was such an indivdual location.

GS: You couldn't match it up.

MT: No, so we didn't match it up. We just had to say something in the film about it. Here's grass which has grown, I think it was a sparse crop, but there was obviously something very wrong. It could have been the weather, we had a very dry spell while the seed was germinating, or birds. Then there were films about milk production, Clean Milk, that was a film I made for Scottish agricultural people, Hedging and Ditching,

GS: That I do know we had a copy of. Because I think that is one I took away with me.

MT: I think Hedging might have an historic value.

GS: It's in the National Film Archive anyway. It will be as just as vallid in 200 years time, unless we get rid of any more hedges.

MT: I remember there was a film mooted on pasture which we couldn't make because it was the management of pastures but that was on a four year rotation and the only way to make it would be through animation because it's a very static subject, a field this year looks the same as a field next year, even if you say it's rotated it didn't look very different. They used to have a partially grazed fields with electric wires and let it lie fallow and them reseed it, it never got made that film. I remember I did a script on clean farming in Scotland and that didn't get made, well it wasn't made by us anyhow. So I was very involved in the agricultural scene for a long time.

Then I must say that Realist Film Unit had rather a different attitude to filmmaking than any other of the film units. The GPO Film Unit was, which was Grierson's own unit and became the Crown Film Unit was more directly concerned with public relations and the war and the values we stand for and all those sorts of things. Realist, although they made one or two films like that, but not by me, by John Taylor and Frank Sainsbury, and by Max Anderson, I was always concerned really with instructional films and I didn't consider this was a lesser form than the others. I've thought this was equally valid and always have done and never thought I was the poor relation whilst doing what I could do and I enjoyed doing it and always thought it was worthwhile.

GS: When you were doing these films did you have advisers from the Ministry of Agriculture with you.

MT: Yes we did.

GS: How did you deal with those.

MT: In varying ways. I remember the gardening films, that wasn't through the Ministry of Agriculture, it may have been but our adviser was the secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society who was a frightfully pedantic man dressed in pin stripped trousers every time we went on location and we shot those films at Wisley. We went down once a week, right through a year to shoot those gardening films, but these grassland films, the acknowledged expert on that subject was a man we better not mention.

GS: Why not, this is a history project.

MT: Well he's probably not alive now. I think his name was **Davies**, he was something to do with **Aberystwyth** and it was the time I had to do a script on this 4 year rotation of crops and he was very difficult to get hold of, he was never in London or he was never available for me to see. Then it transpired he was

going to go on a tour of the Yorkshire grasslands with one of the Yorkshire grassland advisers, county advisers and I could tread alongside with them. So we trailed along from one pasture to another, one vale to another, and they talked together, and I stood as near as possible to hear what they were saying, never a word of explanation addressed to me, and if ever I put my oar in and said why, I was ignored, he just didn't want me to be there, maybe he didn't approve of the film, maybe he didn't approve of a woman I don't know but he just ignored me and it was a pretty invidious situation. Finally we were travelling back to London, it was all over and we were sitting side by side in the train, and I said to him I've come all this way to get the information for a script and I'm going to get it. Will you please tell me what your opinion is about this project and what you want to say to farmers about it. He said alright, seeing you're a New Zealander and I had a lot of hospitality when I was in New Zealand, I'll tell you. And in half an hour he gave me enough just to write a script on, but that was one of the advisers I had. But most people who are expert on their subject like nothing better than to talk about it. It's just a breath of fresh air to find somebody who wants to hear what they say and is prepared to listen and to listen carefully. And this is where my scientific training stood me in good stead. Because although I might know nothing about anaesthesia or grassland management I knew how to get the eyes out of situation, or a piece of knowledge, and then after that to go to the literature if I had to and in those ways one amassed an awful lot of material, much more than you needed for the film, but you could sift out the essentials and ask the right questions and also ask questions only they could answer about the audience, what any given audience would want to know or would need to know or could assimilate. And so there was quite a lot in getting a script together in a way, and I loved all this, I probably loved scriptwriting more than anything else. We were, as well as these agricultural films, went on pretty much through the war in different forms, but I can't remember the others though

GS: But you were still with Realist.

MT: Yes. There was a wonderful sponsorship came forward from ICI via Basil Wright. I must tell you about Realist before I get any further. Realist was founded by John Taylor and Basil Wright, I understood that Basil Wright's father was a wealthy man in the City and it was his father which set it up, but Basil Wright himself didn't have much in the say of it as far as I knew, it was John Taylor and Frank Sainsbury that ran it, and who set up its style and ethos, but all the documentary lieutenants under Grierson acted as producers of our films, Elton, Anstey, Basil Wright as well John and Frank himself. Basil Wright got hold of ICI and managed to make them sponsor the most fantastic series of films, there were 11 half hour films on the technique of anaesthesia to be made for medical students. We made them in Westminster Hospital, it took us 2 years to make them, a lot of them will be quite out of date now because techniques have

changed so much. I hope they're still extant because one of them at least is of historic value, the chief anaesthetist at Westminster Hospital was **McGill** and he had invented a method of

SIDE 5, TAPE 3

MT: I think he was something **McGill.** He was a famous anethesist who invented a method of delivering anaesthetic via a patient's nose and direct to the lung and bypassing the mouth and oesophagus and he was nominally in charge of the films, but effectively it was his assistant who ran the whole thing and his name was Organe, he became Sir Geoffrey Organe, anyhow we made a film about McGill's method of anaesthesia with McGill himself showing us how to do it and also he spoke the commentary, so this is a record which I think is pretty unique in medical history of a man who was a pioneer doing his own thing, and I do hope somebody has a copy of that.

GS: Those sort of films which are probably in the National Film Archive, like the Ministry of Agriculture films.

MT: Actually the Imperial War Museum have some of these films, you know, I saw Clean Milk in the Imperial War Museum. By this time at Realist there was an influx of women because so many people had been called up. I'll try and remember all the people who were at Realist anyhow, John Taylor was the producer, with Frank as his assistant, Frank Sainsbury, Max Anderson, a very good filmmaker was there and he made a film, it was an agricultural subject, I don't know how much the Ministry of Agriculture had to do with it, its working title was The Farm Labourer,

GS: Harvest will Come, I've got a copy of it downstairs which I did borrow from the Ministry of Agriculture. Beautiful film.

MT: That was more or less a feature style film, a young feature film and it was do do with the terrible deprivation of agricultural workers during the period between the two wars.

GS: John Slater.

MT: Yes. It was a great film. There were one or two other films which were made, but none as good as that though, which were of a socialist style using artists and telling a story but I'm sorry to say I can't remember their names now. Another director there was Len Lye who was famous for his early cartoon style films in which he painted on film and made very surrealist style films and were used by the GPO Film Unit as trailers. Post Early for Christmas, and they were wonderful, fascinating films, I always thought if I was a millionaire I would have lots of them to play all the time. I couldn't get enough of them. But when he was at Realist he was just like the rest of us, onto things for the war effort and that wasn't very suited to his talents. I remember he did one on camouflage, but I don't remember what films he made quite honestly. Alex Shaw was also at Realist, I haven't mentioned him before, he was one of the

stalwarts in the Grierson stable and an exceptionally helpful and perceptive film producer. He directed films and produced them at Realist. Then there was an influx of women there, there were 2 or 3 or 4 women who came in there. One was Rosanne Brownery, or as she was then Rosanne Hunter, that was her working name, Yvonne Fletcher, I can't remember who else. It was those two, Rosanne and Yvonne and I who made those anesthaetic films. Some I directed and produce the others were directed by these two. They were a fantastic piece of sponsorship, exemplary, because they didn't use to our knowledge any drug or product which ICI used or made. So it was ideal documentary sponsorship of which I don't think there's a lot around.

GS: Not today. Ford was the next one with Every Day Except Christmas. That series. They were much later, late 50s.

MT: Then as the war went on people were looking to beyond the war and a lot of the socialist filming that Realist did was in that category, looking towards socialism or towards neighbourliness, or people helping each other beyond the war. And I was lucky enough to get a couple of films from the Ministry of Education about children. It was presumed that in a year or two when the war ended there would be lots of people coming out of the forces who wanted to be teachers but they wouldn't know children at all, they wouldn't have seen children, they'd hardly know their own children, and a HM inspector had thought up the idea of making 2 films purely about children at their own ploys and these were 2 films, one was called Children Learning by Experience and the other was called Children Growing up among Other People. The thesis was that children want to learn. They learn by everything they do, they learn by touching things, tasting things, grabbing things, knocking themselves, fighting, loving, tumbling over and then they learn through social mores, what they can do and what they can't do among other people. And these were marvellous opportunity, I didn't know much about children, I've never had children, I've learnt to see what this inspector meant by seeing in a child that look of achievement or gaining of knowledge or understanding which comes when a child is doing what it wants to do. So we roved around London, just a tiny unit, for weeks and weeks on end, a nice day, is there a cameraman free, lets go, and we'd go all over London looking for children, playing by the river, playing by the Serpentine, in youth clubs, on bomb sites. Then we did more structured things by going into schools and watching the classes and playgrounds and crafts and painting.

GS: Were you recording sound when you were doing this.

MT: No, in those days sound was too cumbersome. We recorded sound for the very last shot of one film, that was all. So we had, considering this was all on 35mm, we used endless footage. We might spend a whole morning and not get anything very spectacular, but now and then we'd get something absolutely dazzling. And I must tell you this, this is a nice little

compliment I had, Dennis Forman, he was the production controlling officer of these, or he inherited them, and he has always been very keen on them - Dennis Forman was married to Helen De Moulpied who as well as production controlling officer and one of the most helpful people to me in my career when she died 3 or 4 years ago and they had a memorial service for her at the National Film Theatre, one of the films they showed was from one of my films and Dennis Forman said, I don't know if he was right or not but it was a great compliment, in his opinion although the French said they invented cinema verite this was cinema verite 20 years earlier. So that was rather nice. And apparently these films are still being used and it's 50 years later. This set me on a new line after natural history and agriculture I was now onto a children kick if you like which developed as I went along. Those were finished in 1947 and it was 1947 that I went out to New Zealand to the New Zealand Film Unit where I stayed a couple of years. That made a break in my life.

GS: What made you do that, home sick or you'd been offered something.

MT: No, Realist was breaking up really, John Taylor was going to Crown Film Unit as a producer and everything was changing a bit. And I had been very home sick for New Zealand in the past and I did want to go back and my family was there and so on so I wrote and they offered me a job. I stayed there for two years. I didn't want to stay there permanently, I really longed to get back to England really, as soon as I got there I realised that my homesickness was over. But I enjoyed it very much. I found a lively film unit going there. It had been founded by Grierson, Grierson visited New Zealand before the war - he went round the world you know - first he set up the Canadian Film Unit, then he went to Australia and stirred things up there and then he went to New Zealand and in due course a film unit was founded there. And they did sterling work there by producing the reel they called it, New Zealand Film Review or something like that, there was no newsreel in New Zealand so this was partly newsreel but I should think in any month they'd donate one reel to a subject, so mini documentary or mini news item up to 10 minutes and really considering they started from scratch, not one of them had used a movie camera I suppose, though New Zealand always had a very good reputation for still camera work for many years it was a terrifically credible effort, very enthusiastic, perhaps a bit naive, but I enjoyed working there very much.

I was a disappointment to them in some ways because I'm not a bit mechanical and I never felt the need to know much about mechanical things because one's cameraman knew all that and the sound men knew all that and you had enough to do with getting on with your own job without needing to know much about the mechanical side. But they were a jack of all trades, they all knew, men very often do like mechanical things and know a lot and almost every cameraman can talk about the sound equipment, etc. They had a lot of equipment. At Realist we had 2 cameras, 2

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Newman Sinclairs, one belonged to John Taylor and one belonged to Basil Wright and that was our equipment. We rented cutting rooms. But there they had uncrated cameras which were surplus to their needs, they had all sorts of equipment. I'm told the reason they got hold of all this was that a royal tour had been arranged to take place a year before I went out there but the king was not well enough to go but they'd had a grant to cover the whole of the royal tour so

GS: They got all the gear.

MT: Yes.

GS: What films did you do there.

MT: I did one which they like now, it's a classic for New Zealand, that's all I can call it, it's called The Railway Worker, I think why they like it very much is that it's full of steam and anybody who loves trains loves that sort of thing. I found it rather onerous because I had Night Mail at the back of my mind. And I had to device a film which wasn't anything like Night Mail, utterly different. I found it very hard going.

GS: What was the aspect of the film.

MT: The railway worker, the lives of people.

GS: Different from Night Mail which was about the post office.

MT: It was harassing, I don't know how you got on at Transport with trains but my experience was they're immutable, they're on a timetable, you can't stop them to make another take.

GS: I think when I was working at Transport we had trains available for us and nobody on film ever travelled in a 3rd class carriage I might tell you which is a bit ridiculous.

MT: An example of this is we wanted to have a train come into a platform, pick up some people who were going to go to a railway club dance, right in the sticks of New Zealand, to do this they nominated a Saturday night would be the best time to do it, so we were doing it in the dark and we had to have our arcs and so on, quite a big job and all we wanted was a train to go out of a platform and come back in with our people on board, and they said that would throw the signals throughout the whole of the south island, I wonder if that's true, anyhow that's how difficult it was. We had to schedule it so we were available on Saturday night and the whole of the south island had to be alerted this was happening. But it was lovely, we were riding on the footplate, who can fault it, Bob Allen was on that film.

MT: He was a young man, he was 21 when I was there.

GS: And he was working for the New Zealand Film Unit as well.

MT: Yes. I made a film, following on my children's films, I made a film called The First 2 Years at School which was about nursery teaching, I think New Zealand has lead the way in nursery teaching to some extent and the impression I got was they were pretty advanced in their teaching and that was a pleasure to make because I was able to produce a lot of the little stunts I learnt to do with children in Learning by Experience and introduce them in another film such as getting children looking at what's in your hand and then it turns out to be a spider or a lizard and the camera is only on their faces and you get this wonderful expression of horror, amazement or intrigue or whatever it is that they feel. That was lovely to do. Then I did a film about the forests, my brother was a forester so that was lovely to do.

GS: Was your brother in the film.

MT: I don't remember him being in the film. I don't think so. Because they put out this reel every week they always welcomed a suggestion and when I was in **Red Rourke**, where my brother lived, and where we were filming the forests to some extent a little family circus visited there, it consisted of about 3 families all related and everybody did everything and I spent a week filming them as 24 hour round the clock, from bringing the big clock down at night to packing up the animals and midnight, to leaving with the caravans and setting up a new site and ready for a matinee performance, and it was wonderfully interesting. And the clown was the electrician and the lion tamer was the man who sold the tickets at the box office. It was intriguing and very nice and the children were trained every day, they were always practicing and training.

GS: And you had complete freedom to shoot films as you liked.

MT: Yes, I just rang them up and said look there's this circus there, would you like me to make a reel on it and so in a week I had a film.

GS: You didn't have producers breathing down your neck saying you mustn't do this, you mustn't do that.

MT: No they were always short of subjects you see. There was a terrific demand on any film unit to put a reel out a week, isn't it.

GS: It must be.

MT: Especially as some of them were considered as documentaries and might take some 3 months to make. I felt I was a bit of a failure though because I couldn't talk about their equipment to them. And I know I didn't get on with the producer very well, if I can be indiscreet. What I felt was that he was a Grierson nominee and in theory should have know better. But he was in the pocket of the Labour Party and I felt the whole attitude to

filmmaking was impure in a way I never felt it at Realist anyhow. I don't know whether one could say that in general but everything was slanted towards the Labour Party, you couldn't criticise the Labour Party, if there was a new housing estate and you wanted to film it, you could only praise it, you couldn't say it was a bit near to the something or other, it's a blot on the landscape, you couldn't say a word of this and there was an inquiry of some kind and I gave evidence to this effect, and I was very naive to have done it, I was somewhat lead along by some activists I think who didn't want to appear themselves and I felt a bit ashamed of it and I didn't do it very well because I was too frightened to speak out and say everything I ought to have said. My motives were fairly pure in a way. I really, in theory, was a civil servant, but I wasn't a civil servant because nobody signed me up as such. They would have had me in gaol if they could have, I would have been kicked out, but I had only taken the job on and somebody else had slipped up, I'd never signed a form of confidentiality. Did you at

GS: I was a civil servant.

MT: You were a civil servant and you would have to wouldn't you.

GS: Yes.

MT: I was working for a civil servant department but I never signed anything and when I came back to England and told Grierson about it he threw the book and me and told me I that no right to do anything like that.

GS: It must have been a miserable period.

MT: Not really. I felt I didn't do it very well. I got a fright really and I realised I was left on my own and the people who wanted me to do it weren't there to stand by me. It made headlines in the papers. There are cutting but I don't have them. But this girl who wants to make a film about me said she's read it up, she knew about it.

GS: It would be nice to get copies.

MT: I'll reserve judgement. I'll see what they say first. Anyhow it was very enjoyable in general but I couldn't wait to get back to England. And then John Taylor had left Realist and had gone to be the producer of Crown and when he offered me a job at Crown I snapped it up.

GS: I didn't realised you'd actually worked for the Crown Film Unit.

MT: yYes.

GS: And this was when.

MT: 49. So when I arrived there John had left Crown and I had this letter of engagement and Don Taylor was there, who I'd never liked or got on with at all. I remember going to see Grierson and he rang up Donald Taylor and Donald Taylor obviously at the other end of the phone said I'm not having her. Grierson said he had to, so that wasn't a very happy situation. But he was OK, it was alright. He wasn't there awfully long when Ralph May took over as producer of Crown. Ralph's brother, Nunn May

GS: He was one of the spy blokes

MT: He gave some information to the Russians, they were our allies, I can't see why he was considered a traitor at the time. But Nun May who was a dullish sort of man, I do take my hat off to him, he was utterly loyal to his brother and visited him every week and so on. I didn't enjoy my time at Crown. By this time there was a tiny core of the people who had been at the GPO Film Unit right through Crowns' great and glorious days when they made Target for Tonight and Western Approaches and so on, these were the people who were left, they were very cliquey, they hated newcomers, not very sociable and I felt very unhappy there, and I wasn't the only one, there were one or two of us who were new to it, we realised we all felt the same. But I do owe Crown a great deal in teaching me much more about film technique because all their films were beautifully polished, very expert films, gone were the days when you cut your own film, you might even have somebody to write the commentary for the film, or the script even, there was a studio to shoot in, a very good sound department, well organised, everything was well organised, more like a professional job than anything I'd worked with before. And one learnt how to be professional, I don't think documentary people were ever really professional filmmakers, they bumbled along. Do you agree.

GS: It's difficult for me to comment on it because I came into the profession much later anyhow. And they were all much more professional at that stage and I was the envious one of the bumbling along earlier thing because a lot of people just happened into film rather than set their heart into it, they just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

MT: Now I've got a list of the people who were there. This is just a little run down as I remember it about Crown. I was there in 1949 and Crown very sadly packed up in 52. I was there about 2 years. The producer when I went there was Donald Taylor and later Ralph Nunn May. An associate producer who came soon after I was there was Helen De Moulpied and I'd known Helen at MOI who'd been a production controlling officer and I'd got very friendly with her and very happy to find her there finally because I wasn't very happy at Crown. The other directors who were there Humphrey Jennings was still there and there was a film I'm sure he made, Lili Marleen, I don't know if he made it at that time, I haven't heard people mention at all. I remember

seeing it there but I don't know if he made it at that time. I don't know what else he was doing. It was cliquey you see. Phil Leacock was there. Gerry Bryant, **Cyril Frankel** and **Sidney Sharples**, there must have been others. In the editing department Joss Jackson, Pat Jackson's sister, and John Legard, Ralph Shelton, I don't know if he was in the editing department.

GS: He was in the editing department but he may not have been an editor by that stage.

MT: I think he was an assistant.

GS: Was McAllister still there.

MT: No he'd be in Canada by then.

GS: No, Stewart McAllister, was he still there.

MT: I don't remember.

GS: You would have remembered. If the British Transport Film Unit had already been set up he would have been with them and I think that's probably at the time they set up.

MT: Of course Ken Cameron. Cameramen

GS: Did you know a chap called **John Haggerty**.

MT: He wasn't there when I was there, but I worked for John Haggerty for British Films. Was he at Crown.

GS: He went to Crown as a trainee.

MT: Did he. I was there only two years out of a very long span.

GS: But I think he came after you left, that last year before they closed down.

MT: No, I was there when they closed. He might have been there but I didn't know him.

GS: I didn't know him from the film business, I knew him from my seamy Soho days.

MT: Cameramen, Dennie Densham, Jonah Jones, Freddy Gamage, there might be others I don't remember. Camera assistant, one was Arthur Worcester, the production manager was Henry Geddes. And **Tony Stevens** was scriptwriter but he might have been on a freelance basis, I'm not sure, and James Cameron, ditto was used by Crown.

GS: He would be freelance.

MT: Yes he would be freelance. Grierson was back from Canada by

this time and he was at the COI and also at the COI were people like Angus Ross and Dennis Forman, or perhaps Dennis Forman had already left by then.

But the films I made at Crown were, I did a lot of scripts to start with on nutrition which I didn't make. I made a medical film called Cross Infection in Children's Wards. Now this turned out to be a very good film. I was very pleased with it at the time, I don't know how it would stand up now. It was based on a lucky break I had. I was sent for some reason or other the Common Cold Research Institute on Salisbury Plain and I suppose there was a script going or something, but listening to them about the spread of infection, the principal there told a little anecdote about how there'd been a meeting somewhere in a hall and unknown to the audience they'd had some fluorescent powder, they'd handed round books or objects round the audience which had this powder on, the powder was almost invisible, and when these objects had gone the rounds of the audience they turned ultra violet lights onto the audience and there was this powder on their noses, their hands, the back of their ears, all over, because they'd picked it up from these books which they'd passed round and I immediately thought what a wheez. So when I had to do this film on cross infection in children's wards I wrote it with the help of one of the sisters in Great Ormond St Hospital and she showed me round, my initial visit was to be shown round a children's ward at Great Ormond St. And when anyone if very infectious, especially children, they put them in little side wards on their own, and they barrier nursed them, which means whichever infection they've got should never leave that cubicle. So as we were watching a nurse doing something with a very sick baby she did something wrong, and the sister pounced on her and said you didn't wash your hands after doing something or other. So based on that I wrote a little detective story where we saw a nurse going around her duties in relation to a sick baby and making a mistake and leaving the cubicle with some of the baby's infection on her hands. Then she takes her pen out to sign her thing and passes the pen to somebody else who gets it onto their hands. And we did it all with this fluorescent powder and it was very effective and it became a story of a perfectly well little baby entering the hospital and being cross infected from a sick baby and all done with this powder. It was quite a good little film.

GS: Did it have a happy ending.

MT: Yes it did because the baby got well in the end. Again we had some corny luck because I said all we want now is a very sick baby and they said luckily we don't have very sick babies any longer, this was gastro-enteritus, because the great thing about gastro-enteritus, it's like cholera, it's a loss of body fluid, and they go down hill from being plump and filled out, they get like little old men, wrinkles and water loss, nowadays they push water into them introvenously, they said it's most unlikely we'll get a baby as ill as you'll want to show it because by the time

you can get here with your camera we'll have given enough introvenous fluid to make them better already, but I was just going into the gates of the hospital one afternoon to finalise our arrangements for shooting when the event came, and we'd installed our lights there when at the lodge they said if you're Margaret Thomson will you contact the matron immediately please, go straight there, and I went there and she said we've got a frightfully ill baby, we haven't seen any as ill as this for years, can you film it, so I rang up Crown which was Beaconsfield but they had a cameraman in London on another job. Somehow or other they got a cameraman there within an hour, this was in Harringay and we filmed this baby. Then we filmed it in the stages of getting better and then well. And then we reversed the shots that it came into the hospital well and went downhill. That was a very interesting job to do.

I did some odd jobs sort of films. One on industrial dermatitis. Then there was a whole series of films we were making called Is this the Job for You. This was for young people coming out of the forces, perhaps not coming out of the forces but young people wanting to know what was available for them. I did one in a shoe factory. Then I did one on competitive work on a conveyer belt which we did at Lyons factory, the big factory at Olympia. Six scripts on nutrition I did, then I did a film on children in care. It was a bit new in those days to have children fostered out, this was sponsored by the Home Office, and it always surprises me, that was in say 1951, how they still haven't got it right. In those days they thought it was the answer. All you've got to do is find kindly people and that would be it. They still haven't got it right. They still don't know what to do. They don't know whether it's best to have a bad natural mother or a good foster parent or what, very complicated. That was almost a romantic film really. And shot, it was a nice film to make, we shot it by saying do you remember the days when you were young when all the world was beautiful sort of thing, bang and then we went onto horrors, and the commentary was written by James Cameron, that put it into a category on its own. Those were the ones I did at Crown.

SIDE 6, TAPE 3

MT: Did I mention the films shown in Wardour St.

GS: No.

MT: Well when Crown packed up they had a open house at a theatre in Wardour St and a number of shows of recent Crown films and out of their programme of 4 films 2 were mine. I got a lot of pleasure out of that, especially as we'd been considered such interlopers at Crown by some of the old hands. There is a certain cameraderie which still continues among the few of us who are left who were there at that time. People like John Legard and Gerry Bryant and Denny Densham and

GS: Was Terry Trench there when you were there.

MT: He was in charge of the cutting rooms.

GS: In charge of the cutting rooms.

MT: Wasn't he.

GS: I wouldn't have thought so somehow but he may have been. You were there, I certainly wasn't.

MT: I'm sorry I missed out Terry. After Crown packed up I pretty much freelanced for the rest of my life with one minor exception, the first film I did came through the Central Office of Information. It was a mental hospital film for recruiting psychiatric nurses and it was sponsored by the North West Metropolitan Board and I made it with Dennie Densham who was once a Crown cameraman and Joss Jackson edited it and we made it with Anglo Scottish. That was the beginning of a love affair I had really with mental hospital films. That one was a recruiting film and I don't know if it was very special as a film but later on I was able to do 2 more for the Ministry of Health which I'll come to later one.

Then in 1952, Crown packed up in 52 and I suppose it must have been about 53 that Grierson and Michael Balcon founded Group 3 which was to make minor feature films using youngish or new talent. I made one of them. It was called Child's Play and I can't say I'm particularly proud of it and after that experience I never wanted to make another feature film. I don't think that was my metier at all. But they did some very good work. I'll just mention some of the names. One of the producers was Bob Dunbar and he and I would like to suggest the history project does an item on Group 3 because there are a number of people who'd be very rewarding to make a separate item. Lewis Gilbert was one of them. It was funded by the Film Finance Corporation I understand. Of the directors they ones I can remember Cyril Frankel did a film, he was from Crown, called Man of Africa, I

don't think it was ever shown, it's been shown on television recently but I didn't see it. I think the politics were there, I think it was made in Uganda and I think it was a matter of politics. Phil Leacock's film was called the Brave Don't Cry which was about a mining disaster. John Eldridge made a film which may be called Brandy for the Parson. Lewis Gilbert made a film. He made more than one. And Terry Bishop made one. Most of them are people who have gone on, he's died terry Bishop. But most of them have gone on onto bigger things. And it was a very brave effort. I don't know why it didn't go further, I don't know anything about its politics at all. We shot them at was it Riverside, Southall Studios, that would be about 52. Mine was Child's Play. After it was over I was talking with Phil Leacock and he said he was going to make a film with some children in it and he said what were the problems that I found. I said that I was so busy with the mechanics of directing I didn't have time to coach the children and see that they knew their lines and knew what to do, so it all had to be done on the set and was very time consuming. So the next thing I knew was that he asked me if I'd come onto a film which he was making at Pinewood to find a very special child for a film and to coach 2 children, they had one already and wanted a second one and would I coach them as well. So this was quite a new departure for me and opened up a subcareer because I did this for two or 3 years. The boy they had already was called Jon Whiteley, he'd already made a name for himself at the age of 7 by either appearing on television or being heard on the radio reciting The Owl and the Pussycat and he was an intelligent and charming little Scottish boy from the country area around Aberdeen. And they wanted a younger brother for him, so I went off to Aberdeen and I saw hundreds, literally hundreds of little boys from the primary schools there, 5 year olds, every school teacher was thrilled to have their children looked at by a talent scout. And in the end I found 12 possible children and brought them and their mums down to Pinewood for a screen test and a little boy called Vincent Winters walked away with the part, and he was an utter little charmer, he was 5, he was a sturdy little man but still a baby. I don't know if you've seen the film ever, The Kidnappers

GS: Fantastic children.

MT: We shot it at Pinewood and on location up in Scotland. It really was supposed to be shot in Nova Scotia. Anyhow it was very enjoyable and it absolutely hit the jackpot that film. I have here a cutting from the Times, March 55, it's an advertisement from the Rank Organisation saying "a king's ransom for The Kidnappers, there's a price on their heads which runs to millions, it will be paid in more than half a hundred country's currencies, these two small boys who play the leading parts in The Kidnappers are capturing the hearts of cinemagoers everywhere". It's just an advertisement, but there were rave notices for the performances of these two boys and in fact they got an Oscar for their performance. In 1954 it was. For the information of anyone who wants to research on this, this Academy

Award for Jon Whiteley and Vincent Winters, Bob Allen sorted all this out, he got all this material from "Pictorial History" published by General Publishing Co Ltd., edited by Paul Michael. That was under a heading the 27th Year, 1954 in a section for Special Awards. He got this in the BFI Library. That's something I didn't know about until he sussed it out. I'd be well out of touch with the production office at Pinewood by then and Phil Leacock may well have gone to America by then.

I did this sort of think on several other films. Another one of Phil Leacock's called Innocent Sinners and can I just continue on with the Kidnappers. Blow one's trumpet a little. This was a cutting from the New Yorker, 1954, it's called the Children's Hour. "Early in the English picture called The Kidnappers, a pair of small boys take command and before it ends they have the situation completely in hand, in the list of screen credits a lady named Margaret Thomson is given recognition as children's coacher, it is an uncommon designation but Miss Thomson evidently has an uncommon way with her since her pupils aged 5 and 8 have none of the irritating gloss which makes - I can't read it now - their methods of achieving it are always surprising, some times alarming and endlessly diverting" and so on. It was Phil who directed the film and I can only take a little bit of the credit but we were a very good team, we did together very well and he's a life long friend so I expected that did help. Then I did a film for George Brown at Pinewood which had one of our comedians in and another one a chap called Kevin McClory who made a film called The Boy on the Bridge, that was another one I worked on. But it was after I made Innocent Sinners, the actor in that was a little girl aged 12 who happened to live quite close to me in Islington. And I saw what happened to her, she became coarsened and really degraded by this experience. Her parents were a pretty smart couple and they wanted to exploit her and she was 12 when the film was made and the time she was 13, 14 she'd become very unlikeable, noisy, she died, she and her father were killed in an accident, it was about a sensitive little slum girl who wanted to make a garden in bomb site and she was very delicate, and when I saw this child turn into a little coarse brat I just felt I couldn't do it any more, I didn't want to have anything to do with children in films again. And I haven't done so in that sense since. But I must say I enjoyed working in the studios enormously. I particularly enjoyed the discipline of the floor which is something that we never have in documentary films, It was like a ballet, one step lead to another to another, everybody knew what they were doing. And no wonder British film technicians have such high regard because I thought it was wonderful. Terrific, I loved that, but I didn't do any more coaching for children, I thought it was too dangerous altogether, so I went back to documentary filmmaking which I'd never left really because these were just intermittent jobs.

GS: This was when, 55.

MT: Round about then. And I freelanced from then on with all

sorts of companies and people. British Films was for example with John Haggerty and Gilkinson, would that be Radiant Films, and the Film Producers Guild. But I made 2 more films about mental hospital work and I consider one of them one of the best films I ever made. By this time I really knew about filmmaking from a technical point of view and they're both sponsored by the Ministry of Health. And they were both for viewing by psychiatric nurses. One was about depression and actually I had been depressed during my earlier life and I knew what it was about to some extent anyhow. And these were films in which you could bring a lot of insight and a lot of allusion if you could find the right way of saying it and doing it.

GS: Who was this with.

MT: I can't remember. I was just working freelance. I was making all the Ministry of Health's films at the time, they were making one a year and I must tell you about this time I had a BBC board, somebody put me up to a BBC board and I turned them down. They were so rude. It was after the Group 3 episode and some agent got hold of me and said would you like me to act for you. I said I've never had anyone act for me, they said you don't have to pay us anything until we get you work. So I said alright and the next thing I knew I got a board. And I was ushered into a room with a lot of people sitting there, it was in Broadcasting House, and they said sit down, nobody said I'm so and so, they just said who are you. And I said if I come to you I make all the films the Ministry of Health makes, I didn't tell them there was only one a year, I don't want to give up that contact, they said perhaps you can keep that as a special thing, but I thought they were so snooty and rude that I said no I don't think I will thanks very much, I think I'll stick to what I'm doing. And they said would you like to try a script with us so I said alright. But I never did it. Was there a chap called Michael Barry.

DR: Yes

MT: He was the chairman of this board. And he didn't say I'm Michael Barry please sit down.

GS: At least at civil service boards the chairman always introduced the members of the board.

MT: I thought it was dreadful.

DR: That was typical of the Beeb before commercial television started because they could pick and chose, they were rude it wasn't until after they had to be very careful, I had a thing rather like that.

GS: Just to go back, the award, the Oscar, I've got what it actually was, it was a special academy award for outstanding juvenile performances.

MT: The next mental hospital film I did was called Understanding Aggression and that was made with Film Producers' Guild, Ronnie Riley, and they offered me a job after that and I turned it down as well. I was cheeky when you think about it but I enjoyed my status so long as I got work. That was the best film that I ever made because I felt very deeply about this problem of aggression in mental patients, it's a very intractable, it really is because so many people who are mentally ill are aggressive and what we tried to point out was that aggression leads to aggression, it nearly always does and i f a nurse feels aggressive she may be acting quite kindly, but if she feels in her heart aggressive to a patient, that patient will pick it up, nobody's a fool, even if you're mentally ill, in fact you're probably more open to these intuitive suggestions than an ordinary person would be, so it was a very interesting film to make and I wish I had the opportunity of making more of that sort because that was where I was able to bring in any talent I had for intuitive for creative thinking, I hope it is still extant,with these medical films, things change so drastically, ideas change, certainly drugs change, techniques change, they become out of date in no time at all.

GS: But often they're kept because of historic reasons to see how things have changed, and what was done in the year dot.

MT: I went on to do other medical films. I didn't do much more with children. I did do one film on foster parents with children but I didn't consider that was a highly successful film, I did that again with the Film Producers Guild, Ronnie Riley, I found them quite a nice unit to work with. So many of these producers have such a commercial eye, oh we can save a bit of money there can't we. They're watching the pennies so carefully, I suppose they have to. I didn't find their motives were very pure really.

GS: Ronny Riley, didn't he have some foster children himself.

MT: Did he really.

GS: I believe so.

MT: He was quite a nice man.

GS: Yes, I only got to know him relatively late in the situation, when we used to have the film shows at Shell Mex in the Strand and I remember after one of the shows we were talking in the pub and it transpired that he either had foster children or adopted children or something like that.

MT: Then I seemed to be in to medical films almost entirely and I got a job through Arthur Elton with a strange outfit which was called Eothen Films at Boreham Wood which was run by a doctor. He was a doctor called film buff and he was a film nutter, he really was, he gave up his practice in order to make medical

films, Dr Philip Sattin. And he had a little studio in this garden and a resident cameraman and a resident electrician and an assistant cameraman and we'd introduce other people as necessary. And he had masses of work. Because he was a doctor he could call on any drug house you'd like to name, they were delighted to have a film made by a real doctor. And a lot of them were very bread and butter things and I did take my hat off. Everything was made on a commercial basis, he wasn't a fool, he wouldn't make a film unless he could make money out of it. He wasn't as nutty about films as to make them for nothing and he made lots of films which had nothing to do with medicine but were teaching films for technical colleges or technical schools, films on all sorts of aspects of carpentry, all sorts of aspects of handling of iron work, basic skills of drilling and sawing and cutting iron. Some of them were very short films, 3 - 5 minutes. Some of them were loops. I don't know if loops are still made.

GS: They were still making them at Transport.

MT: Dozens of loops, loops on everything you can think of. I got involved with some of these loops on nursing techniques. How to wash a patient in bed, how to make a bed, how to take a pulse, how to push in a syringe, all these things, lots and lots and lots of them. But I also made 3 or 4 quite serious films on medical subjects. They were because he hadn't really, he wasn't a producer at all, he couldn't read a script, I had my own way to a some extent, he didn't know what I was getting at till the film was finished and by that time it was too late sometimes so I managed to slip in a certain amount of what I thought ought to be there and never mind about Philip Sattin and the drug houses.

There was one for example on tuberculosis and that's a strange subject because tuberculosis was rife in my childhood and in my family and I found it very strange to be making this film. In fact tuberculosis when that film was made in the 60s was almost wiped out in the Western world, I think it's come back a little lately, but owing to the drugs available and health care it was 95% eradicated in the Western world but by no means in the Third World, two reasons for this, tuberculosis is a disease of poverty and overcrowding, it's an infectious disease, and the drugs available aren't easy to take, they're great big horse pills and you had to take two separate ones a day, A and B, and you had to take them for two years, no matter whether you felt well or ill, and the course was say two years and the way they worked was something like this, drug A would kill 90% of that particular strain of tuberculosis you had, drug B would kill 90% of what was left, but there's still something left, perhaps I'm wrong in the percentage, but you have to go on and on, hoping to catch up with the others, if you don't catch up with the others those are the immune ones, and if you affect someone else you are infecting them only with the immune strain. That's why it's so frightfully important to get rid of everything. That's why in areas of overcrowding and malnutrition it can spread like wildfire till this day. That's why when we made those films, it

was still considered the world's second most important notifiable disease, so it's still a great thing. So I did a history of it through the nineteenth century with pictures from the Illustrated London News and the British Museum and all the sanatoria which abounded throughout Europe and New Zealand and America and all the cures which were tried. It was quite interesting for me to do and it was quite a good documentary film because I was able to push in quite a lot what I believe in in the way of how the world should go.

Another good film was based on by old ultra violet light and powder, I made a film for the London Rubber Company who are the people who make Durex but they also make rubber gloves for surgeons and it was called Theatre Techniques for Nurses and it was right through from cleaning of a ward through to an operation and beyond and showing infection has to be kept to nil by the use of **xxxxxxx** powder, it was quite a good film. Another one which I found very interesting was on anti natal care for doctors, for GPs, because evidently there are plenty of GPs who are very careless about anti natal care and the incidence of perinatal deaths is higher than it ought to be and a lot of it is due to things slipping by in the early stages of pregnancy. I did quite a lot there.

After that I couldn't get back into the ordinary documentary swim very well, I'd been there about 3 years at Beaconsfield and I felt isolated by then and I took a job outside the film industry, a very menial job, but it suited me domestically. Oh we'd had our own company, I'd forgotten about that. Bob and I founded our own company.

GS: We haven't talked about Bob yet, he appeared out of nowhere.

MT: I met Bob Ash when I was working for British Films, he was an electrician, that would be in 1956 or 7 and we were together for about 30 years, he died 2 years ago and he became a production manager, we had our own company, he got and ACT ticket finally. And his son Bryan also is in the film industry and he does commercials mostly, Bob and I set up our own company for a while, he enjoyed it because he had a mathematical and methodical mind and he enjoyed doing the books and working out the expenses but I hated it and I didn't enjoy the responsibility at all.

GS: What did you call the company.

MT: **Philamel.** We did a few films for the COI, nothing much, we did a few commercial, industrial films. It was not a time of my life I look back on with any pride at all, I found it a chore. Then when I thought it was all over and past I got a job at last at the **Carboard** Film Unit to make some film strips, and these were first aid strips for miners underground, to my surprise, making film strips was extremely like making films, because although you're only dealing with stills, you've still got to write a script. You've got to suss out how each shot tells you

something very clearly and succinctly and you've got to write a commentary, and Kitty Marshall was producing them, it was a great pleasure for me to work for Kitty.

GS: Had you known her before.

MT: Oh yes, I knew Kitty in the past, and we thought together on these things because she has a clear mind and has a good sense of what is clear English, what is concise and well spoken. So we worked together on those. It took an awful long time for which neither of us can take the blame because the experts couldn't make up their mind, it took ages and ages but there were 17 of them in the end and I found them very interesting, interesting technique and interesting subject, fascinating really. Do that was my last effort.

GS: Did you go down the mines.

MT: I did once but I didn't shoot down the mines. It was mostly close up stuff. We mocked up something at Hobart House in the basement.

GS: It's a bit like going down the mines there anyway.

MT: We had polystyrene blocks which we knocked up, and it was so much in close up you see, afterall what were we concerned with accident, we weren't concerned with the caverns, but the person lying on the ground under a heap of rubble and that was that.

GS: Did you edit those films.

MT: We had a lot of cut in work, diagram work, it was **Hayden Pearce.** He was very good indeed, really excellent, his drawings were beautiful and his watercolours are a dream, he was great to work with, really nice, I haven't seen him for years. I went on working till I was 67 which was in 77.

GS: You just stopped.

MT: I didn't look for anything, nobody had heard of me, nobody had heard of the Realist Film Unit, nobody had heard of Grierson or anything.

GS: Do you miss it.

MT: I was depressed when it ended, I really had another fit of depression when it ended. Quite serious. But now no, because I enjoy other things, I enjoy painting, coping with the garden. I like all things to do with my hand.

Just to sum up I can't think of a more enjoyable life than I had, I absolutely loved it all, I loved the people I worked with and the ideals of documentary are firmly embedded in me I hope although largely my films are instructional films, or in the early

days they were. And as I've said before, perhaps I'm a teacher at heart after all, I enjoyed that part of it, but I also enjoyed finding the wider field of emotion and creativity in some of the others I did.

GS: No regrets.

MT: Regrets of course, everybody has regrets, I regret not having more push. I hated job hunting, I absolutely loathed it. If I made one phone call and they were out I thought that's my job for the day done, I just loathed it, now looking back on it I wonder how I got along, especially as I turned these jobs down.

GS: Strong principals too which are difficult to hang onto.

MT: Now we haven't said a word about the ACTT.

GS: Well let's say a word about ACTT or ACT. When did you join ACT.

MT: I joined ACT when I went to Realist in 1941. And it was Ralph Bond who got me in. He was disgusted to find I'd been doing films all that time and I still hadn't joined. At Realist because there were so few of us we took it in turn to be shop steward, one a year sort of thing.

GS: Very democratic.

MT: So I did my stint there, and I was on the shorts committee for a few years. I got a bit disgusted with the ACT on their closed shop policy after I'd been to New Zealand because various New Zealanders were coming over to England wanting to get into the industry and there were plenty of English people working in the New Zealand Film Unit, some were ACT members, but nobody would listen, there was no sympathy for that, none whatsoever, then political things intervened, and then a chap I knew from New Zealand who was a Communist got in as easy as pie and I felt disgusted, I really did, I don't think that happens now.

GS: The whole thing has had to change now because of government policy on trade unions. But you can't compare it now to the past because television and pop promos and all this sort of thing has brought in a lot of completely untrained people if you like so it's a rat race now much more than it ever was.

MT: But in general for many years before I went to New Zealand I was very enthusiastic, it was only after this experience I lost interest in being active at all.

GS: Do you still hold an ACT card.

MT: It's lodged which I suppose it shouldn't be. When I was out of work I lodged it.

DR: You're entitled to become a paid up member now.

MT: Just a final thought when I was a student my professor believed in living the life of the mind and he said to me don't put your trust in people, they'll let you down, but if you live a life of the mind, a mental life, an intellectual life you'll always be happy. So I tried to live on those principals for a few years until I went to Realist where I found the exact opposite, exact opposite philosophy. And that was that John Taylor and Frank Sainsbury believed, like Hitler, you can shoot the intellectual but hang onto to real people