



RBC/British Pathe Schools Licence FAQs – Draft January 04

This section discusses some frequently asked questions and some frequently made comments.
Draft copy for discussion – RBC Content Development Group.
Please send comments to rbcpathe@dial.pipex.com

Why is it all in black and white?

Not so! A lot of the material is in black and white – as in the early days there was no option – but there is also a lot of full-colour material. Gradually colour was introduced from 1944 and used more and more often though black and white continued to be used as it was cheaper and faster in much the same way as newspapers today still use black and white. Television also began in black and white with colour not coming until the 1970s. For many years black and white was still used for documentary films and photographs as and there was a perception that colour was frivolous – colour might be OK for action films or musicals, travelogues or nature films but not for serious reporting.

All films were black and white in the 1890s. The first experiments in making colour film included painting each frame of the film by colour with inks and a paint brush!!! Films began to use colour in cinema in the 1930s and new improved colour processes – e.g. Technicolor - were introduced over the next 40 years. It was often the case in a cinema programme that the main picture would be in colour and the B movie would be in black and white - right through until the 1950s and early 60s.

Insert Colour Example: the newsreel magazines.

Why has the film no sound?

Probably because it was made pre-1932

The Watermark gets in the way?

The low-resolution versions that are available over the website have a very visible watermark. ITN, has decided that a visual watermark will be required on all British Pathe resources, though, for the high-resolution materials this will be discrete. A number of large commercial users have moved from coded watermarks towards a simple visual one as a better way of engaging correct usage of materials and acknowledgement of their source and rights. For children this can become part of the learning experience and is a clear signal to potential ‘misusers’, safeguarding RBCs, LEAs and schools as well as ITN. Many television channels – e.g. TCM; UKGold, etc. - use watermarks.

Will children be bored by black and white, silent films?

Probably not, if their reason for using the archive has a clear and interesting learning objective. There’s more to black and white than meets the eye!

! There are unsuitable news items recording violence and death?

The archive contains harrowing images recorded when concentration camps were liberated at the end of the 2nd World War in Europe with the most obvious example being the footage recording the scenes in the Concentration camps. Reportage of war and conflict from the First World War to Viet Nam and reports of the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki also contain images that are



shocking and could be upsetting. In some cases the event itself is not recorded but the effects on victims, survivors or relatives are: coal mining accidents are often reported by showing the dead being brought to the surface; the devastation of bombing on urban populations in for instance Spain, contains close-up images of young children.

Protecting children from these images, or responding effectively if they are seen is part of the skill we are all developing in the face of the Internet. Where we draw the line for particular groups or pupils must be a judgment for the teacher or school. It is of course possible to pre-download sets of material that are appropriate and provide the range of resources required to support the learning activities. RBCs will establish some of these resource banks.

The archive is London-centric

a. No, it isn't. The archive has resources filmed all over the UK and from many other parts of the world.

b. Yes, it is! Yes, there is a lot of material of events in London because London is the a) the state capital b) the political capital c) the main transport terminus and d) the financial centre. Things gravitate to London because it is a centre for so many things. However, the Jarrow march is about conditions in Jarrow in the North of England, though the march goes to London. The cup final is (often/usually) between teams from Manchester, Newcastle, Liverpool, wherever, but was, for many years, held in Wembley – does this make it a local or a national event?

c. Media-centric. It was a natural consequence for the media to operate from London, though since digital communications have grown this is less the case. There are probably some items that are done in London simply because that's where Pathe's offices were. "Just nip out and do a piece on traffic..."

d. Our town? Searching for town names may unearth material – some expected and some very unexpected, but clearly there are not stories for every-town. The newsreels produced news for a national market. Not finding a local item should not be taken as a final indicator that there is not local relevance. Try nearby towns, regions or relevant themes. If time and opportunity permit link your own resources, local libraries, archives, newspapers, television to news items: *this is what the national audience saw about the floods in 19 whatever and this is what our local paper said.* Help build the resource by recording good links between resources with your RBC. Perhaps you could contact a school in the town associated with the story you did find in the archive. Perhaps they don't know about it?

e. North of Watford, West of Heathrow. The discussion of the 'North of Watford' effect pertains to many current economic and social realities and issues in much the same way as it does to the archive.

Gender

Women are shown as stereotypes.

The nature of fashion? The nature of the media?

Is it what is presented that's wrong? Or how a) women and b) men c) people respond?

Which items would not be made in the same way today. How does 'Girlfight' differ from the news items of women boxers?

There are certainly a lot of fashion items and beauty contests – why? Is this different from the coverage include in newspapers, magazines or websites today?

Emancipation. There is lot of coverage of the political movement for emancipation - see the Role of Women starter. Compare these stories and their aspirations with the more 'flossy' stories of the same period.

All about Eve. There are a lot of stories purposely showing women in positive roles and challenging stereotypes about strength, fitness, mechanical things, etc. The Pathe newsreel



delighted in these stories and perhaps helped to create a 'new women' stereotype to replace the existing, but 'outmoded' stereotypes. The obvious example of this in the Pathe Archive is the series that ran for twelve years *Eve*. (see 'The Role of Women' starter) To what extent do projects such as this achieve their stated purpose, and to what extent do they re-enforce existing divisions under a candyfloss of change? To what extent do male/female stereotypes survive notions of class, religion or education?

Parallels could be drawn between the development of and then the stereotyping of Lad Culture (the main focus for this was the new magazines) and in its wake *Ladettes*. This shows that some stereotypes have to be given an identity; perhaps historically persistent stereotypes have to be re-formed (clothes, habits, accessories, etc) as society and material culture changes.

Men too. Are men shown as stereotypes in the newsreels? Try [MR UNIVERSE CONTEST 25/09/1969](#) 2227.26 the story of an unknown Austrian, one Arnold Schwarzenegger, winning the Mr. Universe competition in 1969.

How are men portrayed joining up and going to war? ...or how do men look in fashion items?

Education. The news stories about education bear close investigation about roles and opportunities. Search words. Education; learning; schools; playgrounds; children; universities (though there are lots of stories about student rag days (what's that?) - interestingly in many cases earning money for local hospitals (pre-NHS), but that's another story). See [British Pathe](#) website theme list on Education.

Sex-change. There are a series of newsreel stories from the 1950s and early sixties about sex-changes. A first sight this doesn't seem to fit with the picture of the times – of it a) happening or b) being shown on newsreels; or have we got the picture wrong?

Representation

Some representations of countries, ethnic groups and cultures could be upsetting or deemed racist.

The archive covers a wide range of events in the UK and other countries from the 1890s until the 1970's – from horse and tram to space travel; from Victoria to the Beatles. The newsreels are by definition a product of their time – not an objective, uncontaminated mirror.

The process of making news is interpretive: the camera teams go where directed; the camera frames the view selectively; editing selects further and presents the images in a preferred order; narration and titles add "anchorage" and "authority"; the placing of the item in the newsreel programme confers further values. What is constructed by the news-maker has, equally, to be "de-constructed" by viewer.

They are located in political structures (they tend to support status quo, but sometimes explore the argument) and commercial structures (they sell the beans rather than spilling them – but sometimes its raw material, unpackaged where the viewer has to be an editor). As well as the British view other political voices can be heard in the archives; for instance, those from the USA, Spain, [Japan](#) and a number of Russian governments. There is also some material exploring situations that quite specifically gives a voice to those in opposition.

The viewpoint is generally that of the White European and sometimes, quite specifically, that of the British hegemony "appropriating" ideas and cultural tropes as much as wealth and territory from other people.

There is a huge amount of material showing news or documentary footage from countries around the world. Other lands and cultures are often shown within an Empire -and later Commonwealth - perspective and ignore the realities of their situation and the potential and aspirations of their people and cultures.



What is much harder to see and take account of is the viewpoint of the watcher at the time; it would be wrong to suppose a greater submission in the face of the media by people of an earlier decade than we would claim for ourselves.

Within these constraints there is still a lot of material in which a wider view is shown or emerges, and where the gloss of structural power is clear and, once seen, can be accounted for – a skill we [still](#) need to read the news today.

There are many reels that are more detailed – full documentaries or extended news-items – and offer a more consider report and investigation of a subject. Grouping a number of news items over a period of time can help to explain and unfold the context and complexities of a seemingly straightforward report; this often reduces the stereotype images and old-fashioned views, or shows them against the rich complexity from which they emerge.

Insert examples.

There is some material that might upset some people through personal association.

There must be people who are confronted by images of their relatives on the news, in papers and fixed in text books and e-learning packages. The age of the British Pathe Archive material probably lessens this risk in school use - someone born when Pathe closed in 1970 would be 33 today. More likely is the association a person might make with a place, an event or national group.

How do we know what is true and what is false?

How do we know if the report of the event being shown is true, biased or even untrue? The case of the Titanic shows this is quite difficult and sometimes impossible. Classroom activity can raise the awareness that news needs to be questioned.

Scrutinise the source of the news item:

- Where did it come from?
- What's out of shot?
- What happened before the shot... and after the shot?
- How were the different shots put together?
- What might be real'; What stock footage?
- What's missing?
- What's the narration saying that's not in the pictures...
- What other sources could be used for comparison?
- What are the values within which that source operates?

'Reading' the media is a process.

See Titanic starter for example newsreel and discussion of real and unreal.

For similar discussion and activities in terms of the World Wide Web see the Alan November website <http://www.anovember.com/infolit/index.html> and his original article about 'ZACK' <http://www.anovember.com/articles/zack.html>

Some of the descriptions in the archive notes make value judgments ...

These notes were written by one person whose job it was to view and notate the entire footage – all 3,500 hours! S/he had spent many years working for Pathe and knew a lot of the background. From time to time personal values, interests and way of expressing come through. e.g. What they



considered good.. We can only be thankful that the care and accuracy of the majority of this *descriptive material has been captured and given to us before it died with the Pathe generation.*

The titles of the reels and news items are often written, particularly in wartime, from a national point of view in keeping with Pathe's stance to support the National effort.

Many reels need more research to identify places, things and people – work which can be on-going and to which many people will be able to contribute.

As with the archive - and with all news - these texts require some interpretation and understanding by the viewer.

See also the notes to the 'Africa' story

It's not relevant to today.

Leaving aside the wider issue of the relevance of history and the dangers of repeating its mistakes let's go straight to specifics.

Issues that are very real to society in Britain today such as the economy, transport, the role of the UN, housing, the health service, the involvement of UK in overseas conflict, are all discussed and explored in the British Pathe Archive. In many cases the reasons why things are as they are today can be seen in these short news items, e.g. the conflict and the situation in Iraq and the Middle East.

Extended example ~ Iraq.

The involvement of Britain in Iraq goes back to the arrangements made during and after the First World War to re-set the boundaries and governance of the countries that made up the Ottoman (Turkish) empire. In 1915 British troops entered Iraq (Mesopotamia) and established a League of Nations mandate in 1920 (stating that they would provide assistance until "such time as they are able to stand alone.") Iraq became independent in 1932.

In the Archive is a documentary about life in Iraq – its political history, religion, traditions and industry called **AGELESS IRAQ** reel 1 1950 - 1959 671.05.

The Ba'ath party gained control in 1968 with Saddam Hussein taking office in 1979.

1914

PRINCE EMIR FEISUL OF HEJAZ 1914 - 1918 1904.15

Prince Feisal sees gymnastics display. Paris, France
[1917-1918 was the 'Lawrence of Arabia' period.]

1920

TRANS JORDAN NEWEST ARAB KINGDOM 06/09/1923 314.31

King Feisal, the ruler of Iraq, goes to see his brother Emir Abdullah in Trans-Jordania.

TROOPSHIPS OF THE AIR (& CUTS) 08/03/1926 456.23

Military aeroplanes being built for service in Iraq.

"The Arab and Kurd now know what real bombing means..."RAF Squadron Leader, 1924.

GREAT FLOODS IN BAGDAD (aka GREAT FLOODS IN BAGHDAD) 29/04/1926

490.09 Men work to evacuate the Royal Palace and try to stop the River Tigris over flowing

ISLAM IN LONDON (version 2 of 2) 07/10/1926 640.20

London's first mosque opened in Southfields

1930

IN AS MANY DAYS 02/02/1933 695.34

Air Minister, Lord Londonderry, returns to London after trip to Middle East.



WITH THE RAF IN THE NEAR EAST Beware - other items share this title 02/04/1934
781.04 Iraq Levies, assembled from native men, serve to protect RAF Station in Iraq

1940

THE WAR IN IRAQ 09/06/1941 1117.11

Allied troops with Arab Legion take Fort Rutbah in the desert

WITH BRITISH FORCES IN IRAQ 19/06/1941 1117.26

British and Iraqi armies working together + Regent Emir Abdul Illah and his ministers

DEMONSTRATIONS AND MILITARY MANOEUVRES IN IRAQ 1947 2206.18

Arabs in Baghdad demonstrate upon hearing of the partition of Palestine

ANGLO - IRAQI TREATY SIGNED 1948 2206.12

Anglo - Iraqi treaty is signed in Portsmouth, Hampshire.

1950

NEW OIL WEALTH FOR IRAQ 21/01/1952 5.03

Iraq Petroleum Company opens new oil field in Desert near Basra.

IRAQ BOMBSHELL 17/07/1958 1537.09

Revolution in Iraq sweeps away King Feisal and his Prime Minister

SELWYN LLOYD'S SPEECH AT UNITED NATIONS 1958 2902.09

Selwyn Lloyd complains about Gromyko's speech & crisis in Jordan and Iraq at assembly.

AGELESS IRAQ reel 1 1950 - 1959 671.05

Documentary about life in Iraq - political history, religion, traditions, industry etc

1960

PRESIDENT OF IRAQ IN INDIA aka IRAQI PRESIDENT IN INDIA 1964 3163 18

President Abdul Arif of Iraq is welcomed to India by President Radhakrishnan and Mr Shastri

REVOLT IN IRAQ 14/02/1963 2631.09

Prime Minister Kassem of Iraq killed in a short revolution.

Iraq - Some websites



Usual website disclaimer...

Wikipedia on Iraq at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq>

Dear Raed A personal view from Iraq at <http://dearraed.blogspot.com/> This blog is written in secret by 'Salem Pax'. Paperback out now. **XXXX**

Café Impala offers a free downloadable book (pdf 2mb) at

<http://www.cafeimpala.com/onasmallbridgelow.pdf>

How could you place text and pictures together to make a statement – as print or 'Powerpoint'

Al-Jareeraz - website <http://english.aljazeera.net/HomePage>

Al-Jareeraz - TV <http://www.allied-media.com/aljazeera/>

CNN <http://www.cnn.com/>

BBC on Iraq

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2002/conflict_with_iraq/default.stm

United Nations <http://www.un.org/News/>

CIA Factbook – Iraq entry <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/iz.html>



End/...

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