

From the archives

Moments in the history of Roehampton Club – captured on film

Film archives are a rich source of background information in which Roehampton Club is featured as far back as 1914 when moving images were still in their infancy without sound. The Pathé news archive in the UK dates back from 1910 to 1970 and is now fully digitised making it a searchable resource available online.

It was founded by Frenchman, Charles Pathé, who was a pioneer of moving pictures in the silent era. His career in the industry started in 1896 in Paris with his brothers when they founded Societé Pathé Frères adopting the national emblem of



BRITISH
PATHÉ

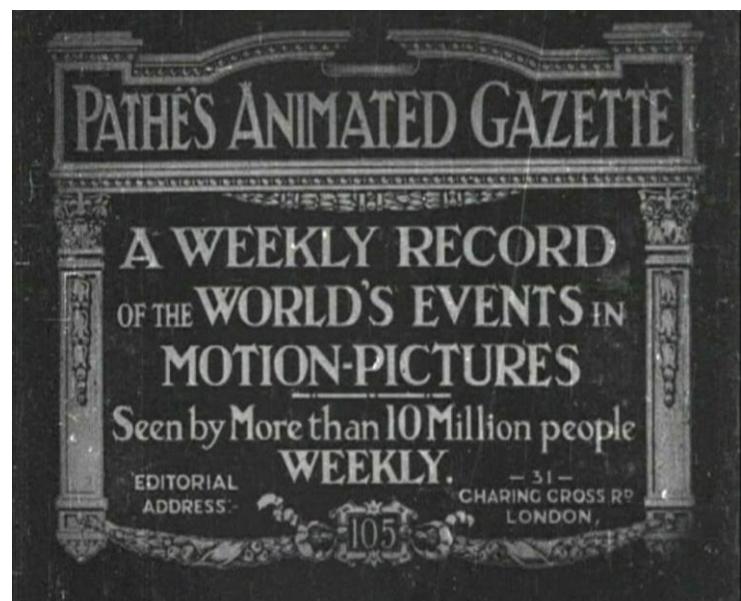
France as their logo – the cockerel which is still used today in the branding of British Pathé. The original company which went on to become Compagnie Generale des

Etalissements Pathé Frères Phonographes and Cinematographes also invented the cinema newsreel with Pathé - Journal. French Pathé began its newsreel in 1908 and opened a newsreel office in Wardour Street, London in 1910. The newsreels were shown in the cinema and were silent until 1928. At first, they ran for about four

minutes and were issued fortnightly. During the early days, the camera shots were taken from a stationery position, but the Pathé newsreels sometimes captured live events such as the fatal parachute jump from the Eiffel Tower and suffragette Emily Davison's protest at the Epsom Derby in 1913 when she threw herself in front of the King's racehorse and did not survive the outcome.

During the First World War, the cinema newsreels were called the Pathé Animated Gazettes and provided competition for the first time with the newspapers. After 1918, British Pathé started producing a series of cinemazines, in which the newsreels were much longer and more comprehensive. By 1930, British Pathé was covering news, entertainment, sport, culture, and women's issues through programmes such as the Pathétone Weekly, the Pathé Pictorial, the Gazette and Eve's Film Review.

In 1927, the company sold British Pathé (both the feature film and newsreel divisions) to First National – an American motion picture production company which went on to become the country's largest theatre chain. It was





also responsible for the first million dollar deals in the history of film involving Charlie Chaplin. Pathé changed hands again in 1933 when it was acquired by British International Pictures, which was later known as Associated British Picture Corporation.

In 1958, it was sold again to Warner Brothers and became Warner-Pathé. Pathé eventually stopped producing the cinema newsreel in February 1970 as they could no longer compete with television. It was during the peak of its success that the narrators became household names with perhaps the most

notable being Bob Danvers Walker who was the voice of Pathé News for many years. His voice was described as 'clear, fruity and rich, with just the suggestion of raffishness'. Working freelance in commercial radio he was initially prevented from taking a role at the BBC to further his career but was prevented from doing so by a rule at the BBC against anyone at the time who had previously worked in commercial radio. Fortunately, the rule was dropped at the outset of the Second World War and Danvers-Walker went on to become a recognisable voice over several decades. During the lifetime of the Pathé News archives, Roehampton Club and/or its Members appear in more than thirty films starting in 1914 with a four-minute silent film showing a military sports day at the Club. Other topics covered from this point forward include polo, swimming, golf, the Arab Horse Show, theatrical garden parties, and other notable celebrities visiting the club. Members are invited to go to the Pathé News website www.britishPathé.com and enter 'Roehampton Club' in the search box for an entertaining look at the past.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist