

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BRITISH
KINEMATOGRAPH SOCIETY

No. 38

"BEFORE 1910:
KINEMATOGRAPH
EXPERIENCES"

By

R. W. PAUL. C. M. HEPWORTH
and W. G. BARKER

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Delivered to a meeting of the British Kinematograph Society,
held at Gaumont-British Theatre, Film House, 142, Wardour
Street, W.1, on February 3, 1936

The Vice-Chairman: Ladies and gentlemen.—In the unavoidable absence of our President, I have to open this meeting and introduce to you—although I know they need no introduction—Mr. Paul, Mr. Barker and Mr. Hepworth. I understand that Mr. Paul is going to introduce the other two and himself, so I will, therefore, call upon Mr. Paul.

Mr. Paul gave his paper.

Introductory Note

Mr. R. W. Paul said:

At the time when the industry was struggling into existence we three were independent workers. We first came together about thirty years ago in an effort to avert the economic ruin of the British producers. Each of us has faced the initial difficulties of a new art, designing his own apparatus and methods, so we hope that a brief account of our experiences during the fifteen years before 1910 may amuse those now working under very different conditions.

For a vivid and masterly survey of trade conditions we must refer to Col. Bromhead's paper read before the Society on December 11, 1935.

The Kinetoscope Era

My first contact with animated photography

business of manufacturing electrical and scientific instruments which I had started in Hatton Garden in 1891. In 1894 I was induced by my friend, H. W. Short, a Greek who had installed in a shop in Broad Street, E.C., six kinetoscopes from Edison's agents in New York, to charge of twopence per person per picture looked through a lens at a continuous film and saw an animated picture lasting about half a minute. Among the subjects, and the public was such that additional machines were urgently needed. Finding that no one had been taken to patent the machine, I was able to construct six before the end of the year. To supply the demand from theatres and showmen and others, I made about 100 kinetoscopes in 1895, and in conjunction with business friends installed fifteen at the time at Earl's Court, London, showing the first of our British films, including Boat Race and Derby of 1895. The queues of people, waiting their turn, first caused me to consider the possibility of throwing the pictures on the screen. Moreover, it had become evident that the weight of the kinetoscope and the cost at that time, of recharging its accumulators