

## Guidance on using The Asher Archive

The principal files and MSWord format documents are stored in four directories, each with a separate index –

- Main - Archive entries on individual film or TV titles.
- Biographical - Files on individual boy and girl actors, separated by gender.
- Subject categories - Annotated lists under some 200 thematic headings.
- Images - Jpegs, Gifs, Tiffs etc for use in the main entries. These too are sorted into Film / TV / Boys / Girls / Sundry.

Files in the main archive refer users by hyperlink to the relevant subject categories and or child actors. Each child actor listing contains a full filmography of known titles hyperlinked back to the main archive, and all images are assigned long file names giving the full title where possible. Entries are fully indexed and updated constantly as new material or information becomes available.

### MAIN

Contains separate entries for each film or programme of interest, illustrated wherever stills are available. The main index will list against each title, in addition to year and country of origin, the number of words / A4 sides of material / reference sources quoted / stills available for that entry, also a rough indication of its degree of relevance within the archive's terms of reference. The index itself is a massive undertaking, and hence will be a long time under construction. It incorporates **all** known titles of interest, not merely those which have already been processed into entries.

By the same token, the main archive itself will be a work of many years before it even begins to reflect the scope of its reach – that is to say, **all** films and television programmes concerning children, childhood and adolescence, in every conceivable language, from 1895 to the present day. For every title presently written up, a hundred others are known and the available material is waiting to be processed. For every one of these, a hundred others have yet to be discovered by the archive. Priority is given then, not to the most obvious titles, about which information is plentifully available elsewhere, but to made-for-children films, foreign language titles (especially from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe) which are omitted from conventional English language film guides, the silent cinema (also largely ignored today) and more obscure titles in general.

This is not to say that many of the more obvious titles – “HUCKLEBERRY FINN”, “ALICE IN WONDERLAND”, “TREASURE ISLAND” – have not already been processed as archive entries, but these are not the first priority, so very many will be found missing. Some of these titles may be found in the separate directory “Pending” – they have been converted from an earlier word processor format but have yet to be revised, stills embedded, and so forth. If a user is particularly keen to see a given title added to the archive, he/she can always ask that this be moved to the front of the queue.

# Unpronouncable Title

All entries are filed and indexed under their **original** titles, not their English equivalents, but alternative and anglicised titles will also be listed in the main index, to help users locate the original title. The banner title (above) is colour coded as follows:

- Children's Film
- Children's TV Programme
- Silent Cinema
- Mainstream Film
- Documentary
- Short Film
- TV Programme

Individual entries will vary enormously in size and informational value, from a mere title accompanied by a still, to entries comprising thousands of words and dozens of photos. All text sources are quoted verbatim, and all stills are credited to their source, where known. (But note that all still captions – unless otherwise indicated – are the archive's own, and not from the published source of the still itself.)

Each entry contains a block as shown below, indicating the number of pages, stills, words, etc. As that entry is updated, an alphabetical letter is added to the archive reference number, thus 5034c will already have been revised three times. Entries largely than 5mb are usually split into smaller files to be more managable by computers with RAM limitations.

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
-	-	-	-	-	3	7	-			No	<i>Unseen</i>
					-	7					

Where I have viewed a title recently, or have a copy on video in my private collection, the archive's own review will be the final one in the entry, in a shaded block like this one. However, the archive has a broader socio-political focus than a conventional film guide. These films are of interest, not for what they reveal about childhood and children, but for what they tell us about prevailing adult attitudes to childhood and children, and very often the prejudices of adults toward kids also. Thus I feel at liberty to comment, sometimes at length, even on titles I have not seen, and on the views and assumptions expressed by other critics about those titles. That commentary, or deconstruction of the reviewing process, is at least as important as the usual synopsis/appraisal of the film itself. The archive does not use any star rating system to suggest gradations of quality (too subjective), but recommended titles will be indicated in the main index, as will those too abysmal to endure. Many a bad film will still have value here for the children appearing in them, while other, better films with little relevance to us will draw no comment at all.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL**

Entries on individual boy and girl actors, giving whatever biographical information can be gleaned about them, as well as a complete filmography of their careers up to the age of 21. Titles already processed by the archive will be hyperlinked to this filmography, so that users can open them with a single mouse-click. For the archive's purposes, a child actor is anyone who gave their first screen or TV appearance prior to the age of 16. It should be noted that details about child performers are in general scant, and published interviews with them seldom. Background information is usually confined to a shortlist of their current hobbies. Where a boy or girl's performance is singled out in reviews of their films, those comments are added to their biographical entry, along with any industry awards they received. Sometimes additional studio portraits, even family shots, will be available in the biographical entry, and not used elsewhere in the archive. Ultimately the archive will begin to conduct its own interviews with former child stars, and these will appear verbatim in the biographical entries.

## **SUBJECT INDEX**

Users will often be interested to consult other titles under a related theme, so the subject indexes will be an invaluable aid to those wishing to trace – for example, all East European material on delinquency and reform schools, or silent films about the scouting movement, or films with a junior ballet theme. Each illustrated index will carry an annotated list of all titles known to the archive under that theme. Additionally, chronological indexes have been compiled for each separate decade from 1930 (notionally the start of talking pictures) to the present, allowing users to locate titles they can only place by date, or consult other films from a period of special interest. Categories range from the banal and obvious – HORSES & PONIES, SEAFARING / PIRATES – to the more arcane – THE CHILD AS EVIL IN OUR MIDST, SIBLING HOUSEHOLDS. Some examples – MISLEADING TITLES, NOTABLE FIRSTS, THE 50 MOST EXCRUCIATING TITLES – will simply be for trivia buffs. See the Index of Categories for a full list. Suggestions for additional themes will always be welcome.

## **IMAGES**

The archive currently contains well over 60,000 stills, and more are added at the rate of 300 or so per week, building towards a genuinely comprehensive store of the cinematic treatment of the child. Images are scanned in from a huge variety of published sources, as well as being garnered from a multitude of internet sites in many languages. Accordingly, the picture

quality will vary enormously, but all stills scanned in by the archive itself are processed full size at 300dpi, then reduced to not more than 1mb per image – still considerably larger than the nominal website image size. Such a vast library of stills cannot sensibly be browsed casually from A – Z. Users should refer to the indexes available to find the child actor and or film/TV titles of interest. Certain films, and some of the more popular child stars, will each have well over 100 stills in their own sub-directory. See the Index of Stills for complete cross-indexing of film titles with the named child actors depicted. Sundry items in the image section include stills of directors of special interest, archive source books, film stars with their children, Victorian images of childhood, celebrities as children, etc.

## **YOUR SUPPORT**

If you value the work that the archive is doing, please contribute in whatever way you can. Funds are urgently needed to acquire additional film books, magazines, front of house glossies etc, as well as maintaining the computer and stationery equipment used by the archive. If a suitable website is to be established, that too will entail its own running costs. But those not able to make a financial contribution can still assist by supplying new titles, press cuttings, film memorabilia and other material relevant to the archive, or by volunteering to take part in various aspects of the general maintenance work, which is considerable. Contributors outside the UK will be especially welcome, keeping the archive abreast of material which may never be seen here, and to translate into English relevant texts and reviews in their own language. Do not consume passively. Lend a hand.

