



MEMBER PICKS

Passport to Pimlico

Passport to Pimlico

Directed by: Henry Cornelius

©: Ealing Studios

Production Company: Ealing Studios

Presented by: The Rank Organisation

Produced by: Michael Balcon

Associate Producer: E.V.H. Emmett

Unit Production Manager: Ralph D. Hogg

Production Supervisor: Hal Mason

Assistant Director: Gordon Scott

Continuity: Jean Graham

Original Screenplay by: T.E.B. Clarke

Director of Photography: Lionel Banes

Camera Operator: Cecil Cooney

Editor: Michael Truman

Art Director: Roy Oxley

Costume Designer: Anthony Mendleson

Make-up: Ernest Taylor

Hair Styles: Barbara Barnard

Music Composed by: Georges Auric

Played by: The Philharmonia Orchestra

Conducted by: Ernest Irving

Sound Supervisor: Stephen Dalby

Recordist: Arthur Bradburn

Sound System Logo: RCA

Made at: Ealing Studios

uncredited

2nd Assistant Directors: Simon Kershaw,
David Peers

3rd Assistant Director: John Assig

Assistant Continuity: Felicia Manheim

2nd Camera Operator: Chic Waterson

Crowd and Small Parts Casting: Muriel Cole

Focus Puller: George Levy

Clapper Loader: Michael Shepherd

Chief Electrician: Jack Ford

Stills: Richard Woodard

Stills Supervisor: Jack Dooley

Assistant Editor: Harry Aldous

Assistant Art Director: Len Wells

Draughtsmen: V. Shaw, Jack Shampain,

G. Bryan-Brown, R. Hopkin, R. Thurgarland

Property Master: Bob Tull

Construction Manager: George Speller

Wardrobe Master: Ron Beck

Wardrobe Mistress: Mrs Minell

Make-up: Harry Frampton

Hairdresser: Eleanor Jackson

Boom Operator: Tom Otter

Dubbing Editor: Gordon Stone

Publicity: John Newnham

Cast:

Stanley Holloway (*Arthur Pemberton*)

Betty Warren (*Connie Pemberton*)

Barbara Murray (*Shirley Pemberton*)

Paul Dupuis (*Duke of Burgundy*)

John Slater (*Frank Huggins*)

Jane Hylton (*Molly Reid*)

Raymond Huntley (*Mr P.J. Wix*)

Philip Stainton (*Police Constable Ted Spiller*)

Roy Carr (*Benny Spiller*)

Sydney Tafler (*Fred Cowan*)

Nancy Gabrielle (*Mrs Cowan*)

Malcolm Knight (*Monty Cowan*)

Hermione Baddeley (*Edie Randall*)

Roy Gladdish (*Charlie Randall*)

Frederick Piper (*Garland*)

Charles Hawtrey (*Bert Fitch*)

Margaret Rutherford (*Professor Hatton-Jones*)

Stuart Lindsay (*coroner*)

Naunton Wayne (*Straker*)

Basil Radford (*Gregg*)

By general consent the best of writer T.E.B. Clarke's six Ealing comedies, *Passport to Pimlico* arguably best exemplifies studio head Michael Balcon's description of Ealing's post-war films as 'our mild revolution'.

But as with most of the studio's output, the accent is on the 'mild', while the 'revolutionary' element is little more than play. Like Clarke's *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), which imagines a mild-mannered bank clerk turned master criminal (in the nicest possible way), *Passport's* story allows its contemporary audience to play out a fantasy of escape – from the unending burden of rationing and postwar 'austerity', from government, from Britain – before delivering them safely back to the status quo. The events of the story are more like a holiday – as suggested by the very un-British heatwave, which comes to an immediate end once the Burgundians rejoin Britain.

The film has been described by some as 'anarchic'. But after the initial starry-eyed celebration of new-found freedoms – which amounts to one long, boozy, after hours knees-up – has passed, the Burgundians quickly install a makeshift government, restore the monarchy (in the form of the returning 'Duke of Burgundy') and implement a programme of civic building (a public lido).

Running through the film is a yearning nostalgia for the social unity of the war years, remembered fondly as Britain's 'finest hour'. This is most explicit in two sequences late in the film: the first a newsreel praising the fortitude of 'plucky little Burgundy' in the face of adversity – exactly the terms in which Britain saw itself in the early part of the war – and the second an extended montage in which the people of London come to the aid of the stricken Burgundians, throwing parcels of food from passing cars and trains – directly evoking the celebrated 'Dunkirk spirit'.

This exploration of the British (or specifically English) character is at the heart of *Passport to Pimlico*. For all their dogged resistance, the Burgundians never lose sight of their true national identity, as the film's most memorable line wittily makes clear: 'We always were English and we always will be English, and it's just because we are English that we're sticking up for our right to be Burgundian!'

Director Henry Cornelius made no further films at Ealing, though he later directed the very Ealing-ish *Genevieve* (1953) for Rank.

Mark Duguid, BFI Screenonline

'Passport to Pimlico': a contemporary review

The accidental explosion of a long-buried bomb in Pimlico reveals a hidden vault in which is found some treasure and a 15th century Royal Charter which decrees that the estate shall be forever recognised as Burgundian territory. The joyful reactions of the inhabitants upon finding themselves thus freed from the irksome restrictions still prevailing in post-war England, and the crazy situations resulting from their attempts to 'go all French', provide some hilarious comedy, until a few snags become apparent and ultimately a way out of the increasing difficulties is found.

Every line, every 'gag', is a little masterpiece of wit; each character, and indeed every individual member of the lengthy cast, provides a gem of comedy acting at its highest and best. Too much cannot be said in praise of this film, since it is genuinely funny and the humour and pace never flag.

Monthly Film Bulletin, June 1949

Gilbert Davis (*Bagshawe*)
Michael Hordern (*Bashford*)
Arthur Howard (*Bassett*)
Bill Shine (*Captain Willow*)
Harry Locke (*sergeant*)
Sam Kydd (*Sapper*)
Joey Carr (*Dave Parsons*)
Lloyd Pearson (*Fawcett*)
Arthur Denton (*customs official*)
Tommy Godfrey (*bus conductor*)
James Hayter (*commissionaire*)
Masoni (*conjurer*)
Fred Griffiths (*Bill, the spiv*)
Grace Arnold (*pompous woman*)
Paul Demel (*Central European on train*)

uncredited
Doris Yorke

UK 1949©
84 mins
Digital

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