

Film company invests in a breath of fresh air

To the people of Cricklewood, a village

What is happening to Cricklewood? It's hardly the place where you would expect to get a breath of fresh country air, but now you can. Right by the railway bridge in Cricklewood Lane.

Suddenly, as if from nowhere, a small Victorian country village has appeared.

There are sparkling, white-painted buildings complete with old tethering rings for horses; tiny

courtyards gay with flowers and greenery, even a village duck pond.

It's surprising. It's refreshing. It's delightful. Above all, it is the most exciting thing that has happened to Cricklewood since Frederick Handley Page built his "Bloody Paralyser" (the 0/100 bomber) in the factory which lies hidden at the back of the site.

For behind the quaint

Report by VAL HARMES

facades is developing one of the most comprehensive film production operations in this country.

Film studio stages, production offices, carpenters' and plasterers' workshops, lighting supplies, wardrobe rooms — everything needed by a company making cinema and television films are available at the snap of a clapperboard.

The production village is the brainchild of the four Samuelson Brothers, a Hendon-born family whose simple beginnings in films turned into a £10m. business success story.

Their headquarters at nearby Cricklewood Broadway houses 14 companies which make up one of the world's largest and most comprehensive suppliers of film industry equipment.

From here came the myriad of technological pieces required to make films such as Star Wars, Superman, Death on the Nile, Abba, Ryans' Daughter, Lawrence of Arabia, A Bridge Too Far.

screened since the 1950s, when one-time freelance cameraman Sydney Samuelson began work with a £300 cine camera, were made with equipment supplied by the company.

The £1½m. production village is the Samuelson's biggest single investment.

"We are getting a bit older now," said Tony, barrister turned joint managing director, "so we decided it was time to get the business based on property rather than equipment."

"It is also an expression of confidence in the prospects for the British film industry and a gesture of affection for the community in which we have made our home since 1963."

What he modestly omits to mention is that by creating the efficient and comfortable village the brothers are filling a gap in the film production industry.

None of the existing units such as Borehamwood, Pinewood or Shepperton comprises such a variety of the smaller studio stages so much needed, particular-

field of making TV commercials.

As well as fulfilling the film world's practical needs the old brick stables, coach houses and grooms' quarters which house most of the facilities help produce a creative mood.

The country pub, called The Magic Hour, recalls for cameramen the golden, late afternoon light which so many of them love; the superb leather tops of the production office desks are framed by scenic scaffolding; hessian appears everywhere. There is a village shop which will sell goods including jelly babies and sherbert dips, groceries, stationery, 400ft. reels of film and film strip necklets made by on-the-spot silver-smiths.

Samuelson's production village, in its unique way, may prove the catalyst for a cultural restoration as important as those of Camden Lock, Covent Garden and the Barley Mow Workspace at Chiswick, and continue the creative tradition once the prerogative of Hampstead, Highgate

Four brothers put £1½m. into vision

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They were born in Hendon but when the family fortunes failed with the crash of the British film industry in

equipment, the company has designed and manufactured many revolutionary camera lenses, filters and other accessories.

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A peaceful outlook for a busy production office.



Taking a break. Chairman Sydney Samuelson (left) enjoys a breath of fresh production village air with his brother, Anthony.

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They were born in Hendon but when the family fortunes failed with the crash of the British film industry in the 1930s, they moved to Shoreham where their mother, Marjorie, supported them by running a wool shop. Now aged 76, a widow, she is still running it.

In the 1950s the eldest brother, Sydney, worked as a freelance cameraman. He bought a cine camera for his own use and for rent.

As hire requests increased, he asked his brothers to invest their small savings in more equipment, starting a process which led to the multi-million pound film equipment supplies empire they run today.

By 1955 Sydney and his wife Doris had opened a business at their home in Crespigny Road, Hendon.

David and Michael who were also camera technicians and Tony, a barrister, has now returned to Hendon and become involved in the operation.

In 1958 the company was incorporated and moved to its first proper premises in The Burroughs, Hendon.

Five years later, Samuelson Film Service Limited, moved to its present headquarters in Cricklewood Lane. The organisation is paying £1½m. for the production village.

Apart from supplying

equipment, the company has designed and manufactured many revolutionary camera lenses, filters and other accessories.

It is becoming increasingly involved with video equipment. The company has offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Paris and Johannesburg and has forged links with the American film industry by becoming European managing associates for the giant Panavision.

Outside business hours, three of the brothers have become involved in other film industry activities.

Sydney has been chairman and is a trustee of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts and for ten years was governor of the British Society of Cinematographers.

David is chairman of the Kinematograph Manufacturers' Association which has, since 1913, administered the British Board of Film Censors.

As well as holding other offices he has been president of the British Kinematograph Sound and Television Society. He has written three books on the use and care of cine cameras.

Michael is Past Chief Barker of the Variety Club of Great Britain and is international president of this showbiz charity.

Tony's personal interests have lain elsewhere. At his home in Totteridge he and his children keep scurry ponies. They race them in major horse shows and one pair, McTavish and Dooby Do, are British champions.

Rural and efficient

THE SITE, which is near Edgware Road, covers just under two acres.

The premises have a floor area of 75,000 sq. ft. and are, in part, arranged round the four sides of a central yard.

They were built between 1898 and 1905 by Peter Salmon Dollar, Job Master — a man who supplied or hired out horses and carriages and other vehicles.

Since he died they have been used for industrial purposes but much of their original character has remained.

The largest building — 10,000 sq. ft. — is of particular historic interest. Frederick Handley Page moved there from Barking in 1912 and designed and built in it the Handley Page O/100 bomber, which was then flown from Hendon Aerodrome.

Its success with the Royal Navy (which nicknamed it The Bloody

Paralyser) and the Royal Flying Corps, led to civil versions.

These were used to start the first-ever scheduled London to Paris passenger service from Cricklewood Airport, shortly after World War One.

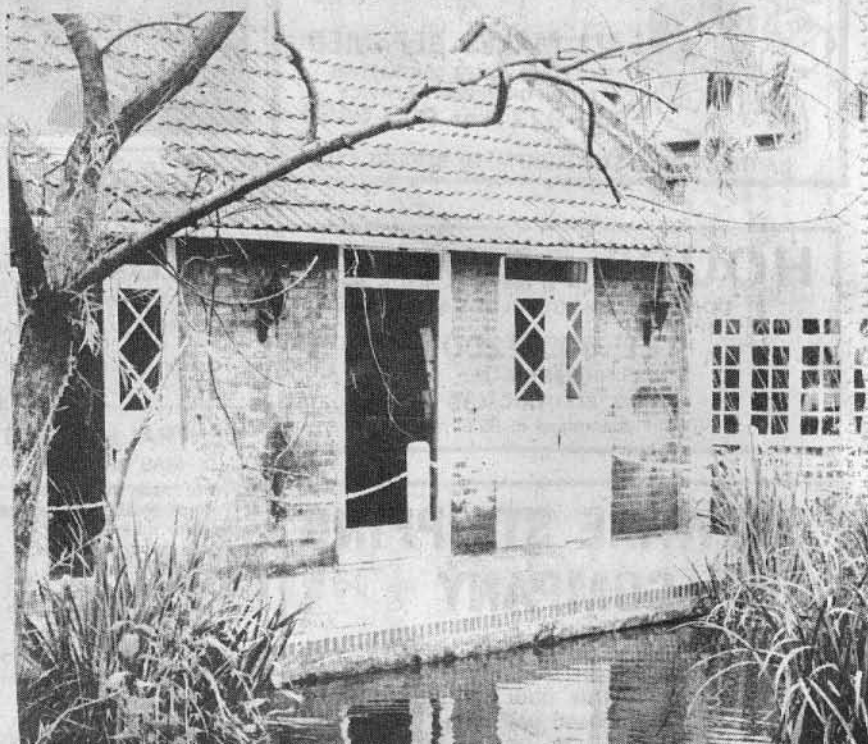
In 1924, Handley Page Transport merged with Imperial Airways, which became BAOC and is now British Airways.

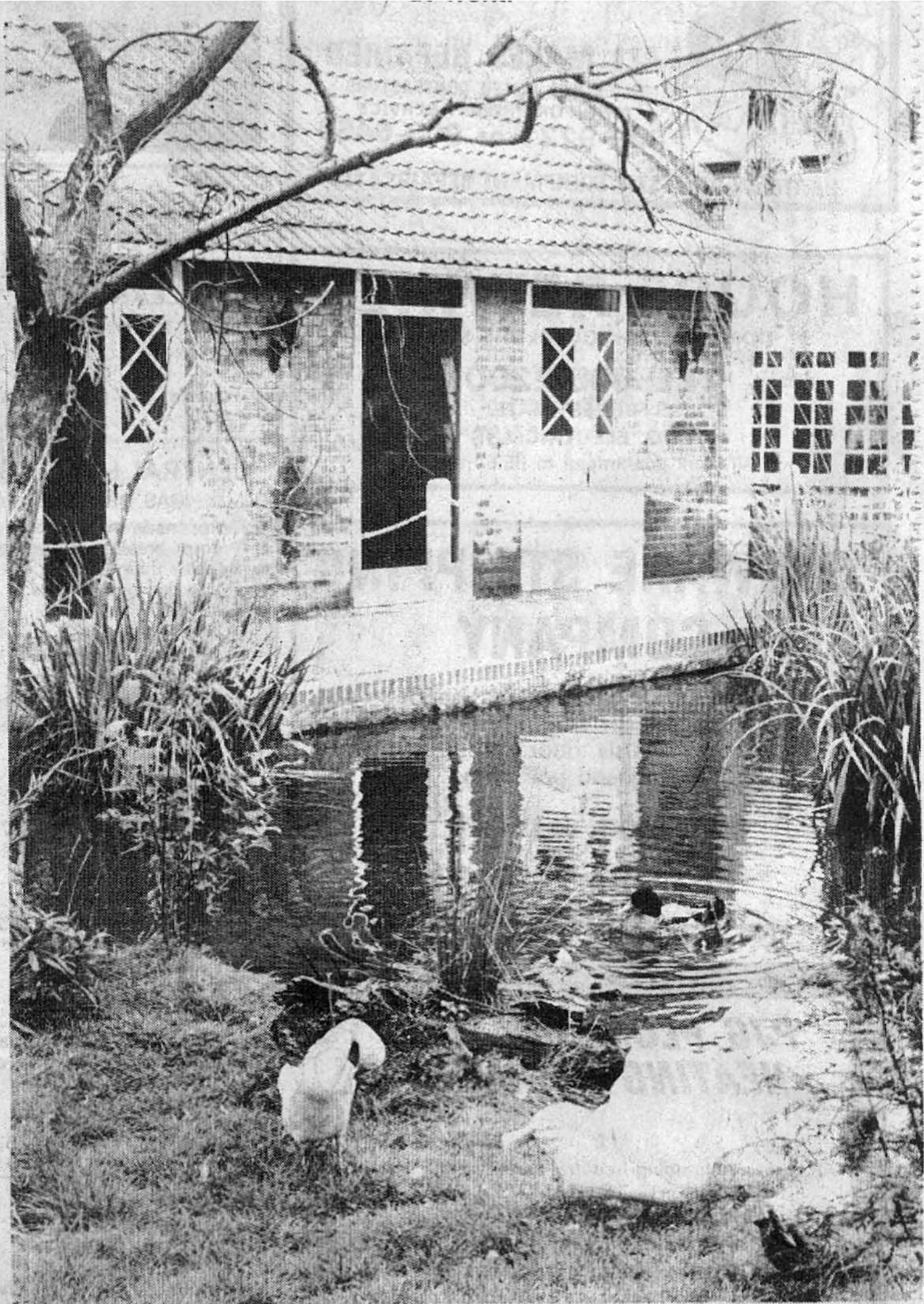
The Samuelson production village comprises ten film studio stages, 26 fully equipped production offices, three executive dining rooms, a pub for use by film and television people and their clients, village shop, staff bar, staff restaurant and kitchen, metal workshop, plasterers' shop, carpenters' shop, wardrobe store, silversmiths' shop and a duckpond.

The village is now partly in operation. Work on it will be complete in about a year.



Artistic skills find a new home at Cricklewood. Silversmith David Charles at work.





Traditional old buildings are given a modern look.

Pictures:
PETER BEAL,
DALE CHERRY

*How to glimpse
the village life*

LOCAL associations wishing to arrange group visits to the Production Village are invited to contact Anthony Samuelson at 100 Cricklewood Lane, NW2 2DS (telephone 01-450 8969).

Disco dancing near the duck pond



IT'S been tough, but fun. That was how these pupils from the Hendon Dance Centre felt as they completed work at the production village on a film which will teach disco dancing techniques, to enthusiasts across the world.

Along with six others they were chosen by Japanese producer Ufo

Okumura to join Canadian dance stars Carl and Sue Tessier in the first-ever film to meet the demand for tuition.

Production consultant Andrew Quicke says this demand is "already fantastic in the United States and rapidly increasing over here."

The film shows the new

"hustle" routine. It is designed for use in dance schools and on home video and the third in a series produced by Ufo Okumura.

It was the first half-hour long film to be made at the production village. The set designed by Alan Hunter Craid included a light floor owned by pop group Pink Floyd.