

## **A Brief History of Pinewood Studios**

With 29 stages, 3 TV studios and a two-storey tall underwater tank, Pinewood is the largest and best known of the UK studios. With another 21-25 stages under construction, it will soon be the largest studios anywhere. But it didn't start out that way.

The large Victorian estate of Heatherden Hall was built near London in 1865. It went through a variety of owners until 1934 when building tycoon Charles Boot bought it to turn into a retreat for the rich and famous, but his real dream was to turn it into a film studio. The following year, he met the millionaire J Arthur Rank and together they co-funded the studio project. The Rank Organisation went on to produce and distribute many of the films made at Pinewood. You have probably seen older movies that start out with a man banging a huge gong?

Charles Boot renamed Heatherden Hall to Pinewood. In an interview, he explained it was for all the pine trees that grew on the estate, and the "wood" was to evoke a sense of Hollywood to the new studios. The first five stages (A to E) were completed and Pinewood Studios opened on 30 September, 1936.

Business was brisk initially but things slowed quickly when the Depression set in, and stopped with the Second World War. The government requisitioned the studios and the stages were soon full of flour, sugar and other war needed supplies.

After the war, filming resumed and the studio put out a number of classics. It's probably best known for the Carry On films, Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, Richard Donner's *Superman*, Frank Oz's *Little Shop of Horrors*, Tim Burton's *Batman*, Brian De Palma's *Mission: Impossible*, Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element*, Ridley Scott's *Prometheus*, *Jurassic World*, the James Bond 007 films and most recently several of the Star Wars franchise films.

## **Gerry Anderson at Pinewood**

Gerry Anderson's two companies, APF and Century 21, had their own studios. As they were filming their Supermarionation puppet shows, their needs were modest. In 1969, the puppet shows ended and they ventured into live action series starting with UFO. Filming took place at MGM British Studios Borehamwood until the studios closed in 1970. It was the last series filmed at MGM Borehamwood. With nine episodes remaining to be filmed, they needed a new studio and opted for Pinewood.

Stages L and M at Pinewood were built in 1966, so they were fairly new at the time. They are two large studios, side by side, with communal facilities including offices, tech facilities and makeup rooms. Gerry Anderson would use these two stages to complete UFO, then to film *Space 1999* and *Space Precinct*.

-Adina Smart, 2024

