

BLACK LEGEND

*An Original Screenplay based on the Official Records of
Winchester Assizes.*

Characters

Cyclists in the Prologue CHARLES LEPPER
(Present Day) HILARY SCHLESINGER
... .. CHRISTOPHER HALL
... .. MICHAEL MORGAN
... .. EVE LEAR

1676

The Sheriff of Newbury ROGER SCHLESINGER
George Broomham, a thatcher JOHN MARPLES
Martha, his wife ENA MORGAN
Robert, their son NIGEL FINZI
Sarah Pummis, an old gossip, of Coombe KATE LOVELOCK
Her neighbours JEAN TUBB, ETHEL DRUCE
... .. LAURA FORD, HILDA MOORBY
... .. ELSIE DOPSON, HILDA WHALLEY

The Rector of Coombe DAVID RAEBURN
William Kimber, Farmer LEV BEVAN
Mad Thomas, the village idiot ROBERT HARDY
Dorothy Newman, a widow, of Inkpen ... DELA BRADSHAW
Labourers at Eastwick Farm BILL MAY, ALF BROWN
... .. C. S. DRUMMOND

Farm Girls CHARLOTTE FRAISSE
... .. WENDY SCHLESINGER

Ezra Daniel, an old rogue, of Inkpen ... CHARLES LEPPER
Penelope, his daughter SUSAN SCHLESINGER
Madge, his wife LILLIAN PAINTING
The Prosecutor ALAN COOKE
The Judge JOHN SCHLESINGER
The Hangman PERCY BILLINGTON

A MOUNT PLEASANT PRODUCTION

Written, Produced and Directed

by
ALAN COOKE and JOHN SCHLESINGER

Photography by JOHN SCHLESINGER
Lighting and Titles by HUMFREY WAKEFIELD
Continuity ROGER SCHLESINGER
Wardrobe EVELYN LAMB
Costumes CITIZEN HOUSE, BATH
Wigs GUSTAVE
Swords and Pistols by courtesy of ... NEWBURY MUSEUM

Gibbet and Special Equipment constructed by
JAMES EDWARDS & SONS, INKPEN

"JACK POINT" kindly loaned by LORD MALISE-GRAHAM
Gig Scenes filmed under the supervision of CATHERINE WEST
Village Street scenes filmed with the co-operation of
CHRISTCHURCH SCHOOL, KINTBURY

Commentary spoken by ALAN COOKE

Music selected from works by
ARTHUR BLISS, RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, ARNOLD BAX

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Directors wish to thank all those who put their houses, gardens and farmland unconditionally at the disposal of this production; who lent costumes and properties; and who helped them in many other ways. In particular they would like to express their gratitude to James Edwards and Sons (Inkpen) for their unflinching support throughout the enterprise.

NOTE ON THE FILM

In September Mount Pleasant Productions came to Inkpen. Their arrival was unforgettable. They unloaded a mass of strange apparatus at Inkpen Lower Green; they dumped a horse and a waggon-load of children in somebody's front garden; they dressed up respectable villagers in XVIIth century costumes and stamped and shouted at them, compelling them to desert their families to spend whole days in windy fields, patiently awaiting a single scene. The villagers, already accustomed to the vagaries of professional film units from "Quiet Weekend" to "My Brother Jonathan," might well have sent these amateurs packing. For here was a tiny team of locals foolhardy enough to attempt a full scale reconstruction of the Broomham story — murders, executions and all.

We first hit upon the idea of a film about Inkpen Beacon last Easter, struck by the dramatic possibilities of the Gibbet, which had seen a hanging only once, three centuries ago. We scoured the district for information. The many versions of the story—the hornets' nest, the poisoned ham, the chains in the pond—perplexed us, the more so as each new narrative, we were assured, was the "true" one. At last we came upon some written evidence from the Western Circuit Gaol Book. It appears that George Broomham and Dorothy Newman were convicted at Winchester Assizes in 1676 of the murder, "with a staff," of Broomham's wife and son, and were condemned to be hanged "in chains near the place of the murder." On this slender basis the film was built. Inevitably, many will dispute the accuracy of the version chosen. Our aim was merely to present this story as convincingly as possible within the limitations of a film that had to be silent, and which could be shot for the most part in the open air.

Armed with our script, our camera and absurd faith in the September sunshine, we went ahead. Actors were chosen—partly from the Oxford University Dramatic Society, but mainly from the local district. By the end of the summer most of the innumerable preliminaries were in hand. Time was still our constantly harassing enemy, for over four hundred separate shots had to be taken in a fortnight. We had to work late on bleak locations. Actors huddled together on the Beacon in shivering, but patient, misery, while director and cameraman debated interminably. Then Martha, cowering beneath her shawl, or Mad Thomas, who went barefoot throughout the film—would step into position for the next shot, just as the sun dipped beneath a cloud. It is not the studio fan but the authentic scourge of the west that blows through these evening scenes. The finished film is necessarily less smooth than a studio production. But with all its failings we believe **BLACK LEGEND** to be an achievement that in one respect at least has rarely been equalled. For it shows how much can be achieved by the co-operation of enthusiastic people, even in a project so technical as a film.

Experts demand where the money came from. The answer is that the heavy expenses of film-printing were met by loans from local people, freely and anonymously made. It is to repay their generosity that you are charged an admission fee for this film. **BLACK LEGEND** is dedicated to the villages of Inkpen and Coombe, and to all those for miles around whose unbounded good will was sufficient to bring the Story of the Gibbet to the Screen.

BLACK LEGEND

THE STORY OF
COOMBE GIBBET