

The Worlds of Powell and Pressburger

Blimp and the Matter of Britain

Ian Christie

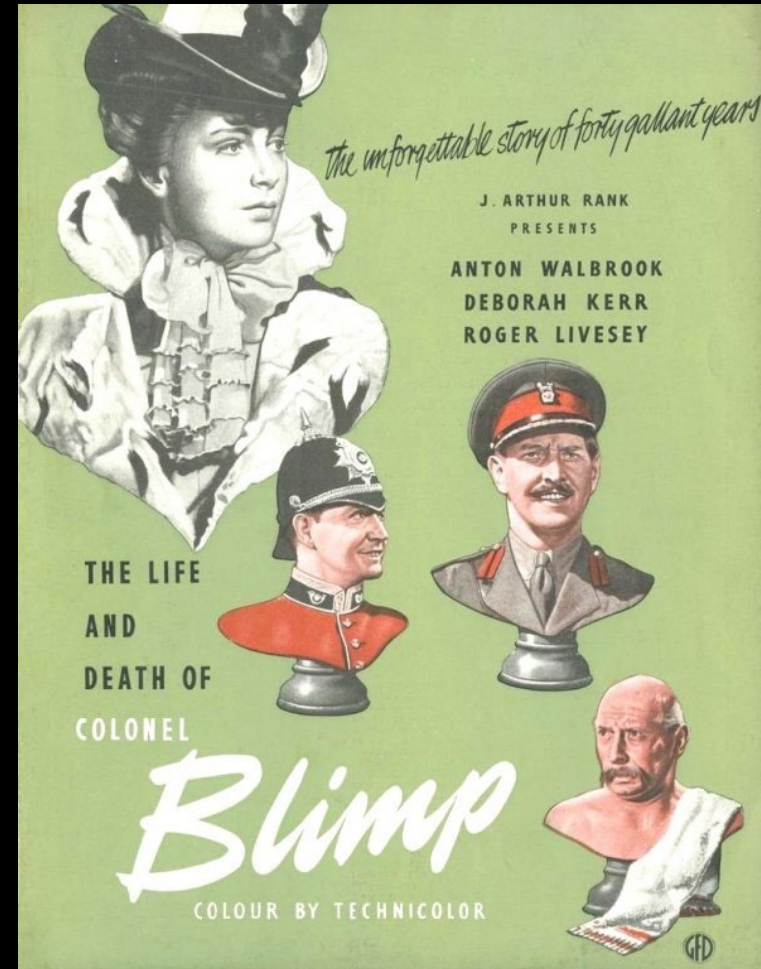
The Worlds of Powell and Pressburger

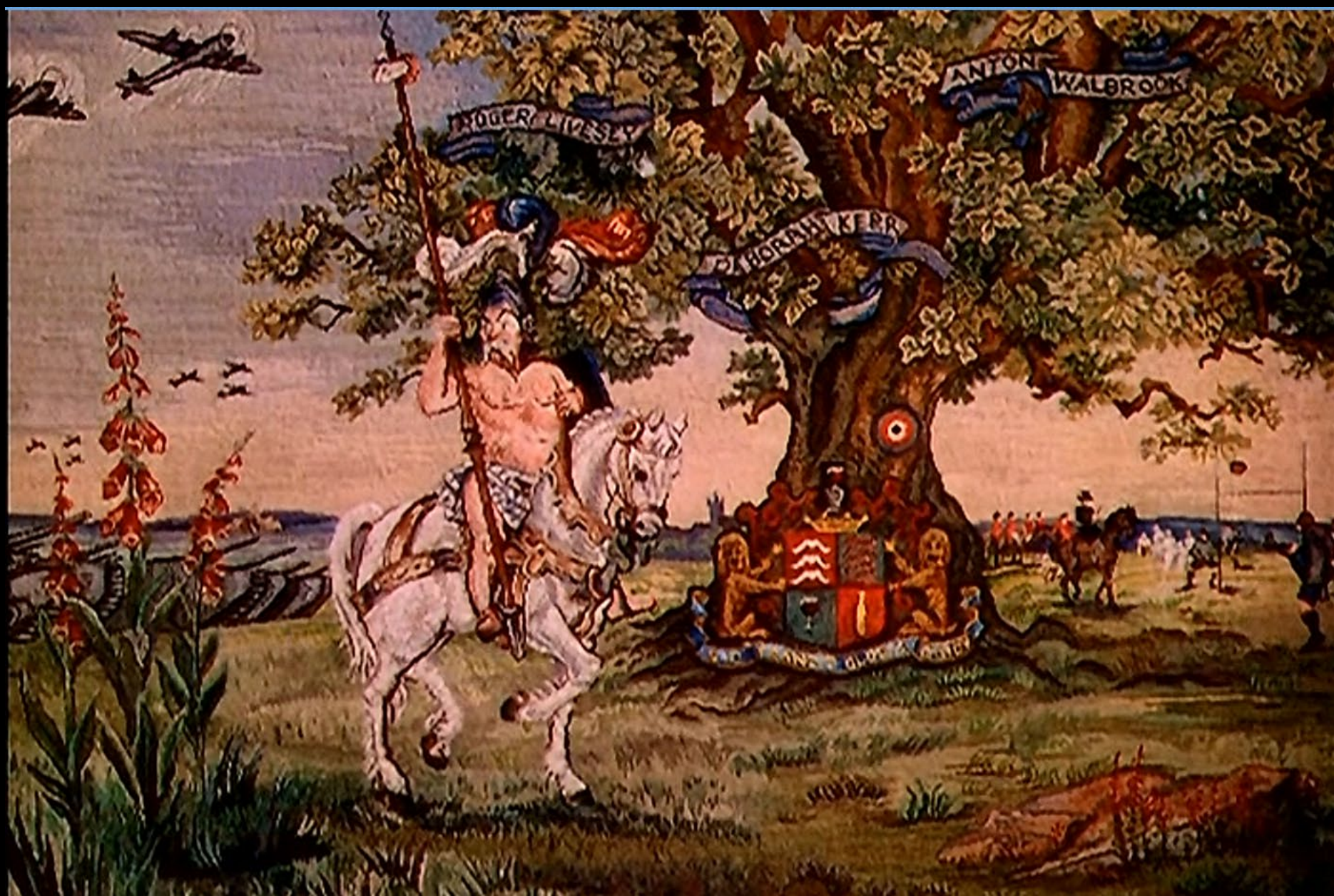
Blimp and the Matter of Britain

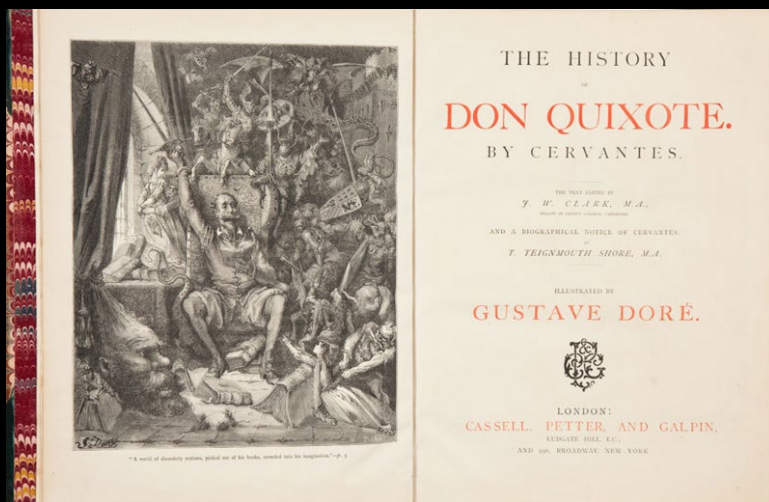
Ian Christie











The imaginary Lieutenant, born from an ink-blot and given a life to justify the Tsar's interest in him. From a novel by Tynyanov; filmed with music by Prokofiev in 1934





COL BLIMP PERSPIRES WISDOM

Gad, sir, Mr. Lansbury is right. The League of Nations should insist on peace — except, of course, in the event of war.



Gad, sir, the Maharajah of Kapodlie is right. There must be no monkeying with the liberty of Indians to do what they're dashed well told.



PUKKA SAHIB BLIMP

COL. BLIMP'S NEW DEAL

Gad, sir, Hitler was right. We should absorb our Unemployed by starting them building concentration camps to lock them-selves in.



Col. BLIMP'S LEAD

Gad, sir, Lord Beatty is right. We must build a bigger navy than the enemy will build when he hears we're building a bigger navy than he's building.



SECURITY by COL. BLIMP

Letters to Wendy Hiller and from David Low, May 1942

don't think it is too ambitious, trust us, we have unlimited confidence in ourselves and in you.

Now for the Colonel himself. The four actors already named are still the 'Possibles'. Olivier and Donat are still the 'Probables'. We have talked to both of them. With both there are obstacles to overcome: with Donat the cooperation of M.G.M.; with Olivier, the Admiralty. Both of them *can* be overcome. We are proceeding with our work and our plans. Influence, finance and public opinion are being massed on our side. Publicity is being organised. Then, when it comes to the point, you will see, obstacles will vanish, difficulties will be overcome. I speak from the experience of *49th Parallel* which was a veritable Grand National.

This letter has gone on long enough.

The best of wishes to you both. May we be as much in your thoughts as you are in ours.

LETTER FROM DAVID LOW*

Golders Green NW11
May 12th, 1942

Dear Powell,

Thank you for sending me the scheme of the film. I have thought it over carefully and have nothing but approval at this stage. The whole thing reads to me like the makings of a very good movie. After having chewed over our conversation I conclude that there are no fundamental differences of opinion

Times report on Commons debate, Feb 1942

'The essence of blimpery was a refusal to entertain new ideas, and a determination to keep the bottom dog permanently in his place. (Hear, hear.)

'MR BEVERLY BAXTER (Wood Green, U) – Isn't the essence of blimpery to keep the top dog in his place? (Laughter.)

'MR PETHICK-LAWRENCE said there was the evidence of the Beveridge Report that a great deal of blimpery remained in the Army. He hoped the new Minister for War, whom he knew well as a man of great drive and courage, would prove equal to the task of getting rid of blimpery.'

Sir Stafford Cripps began his reply by saying he 'could assure Mr Pethick-Lawrence that from now on they had said "Good-bye" to blimpery.'



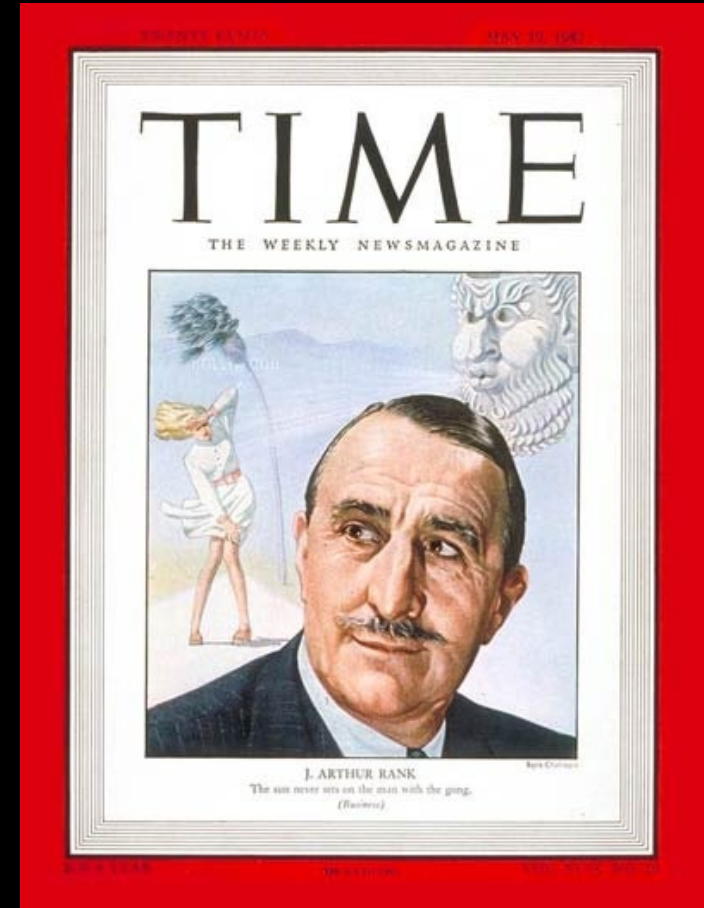
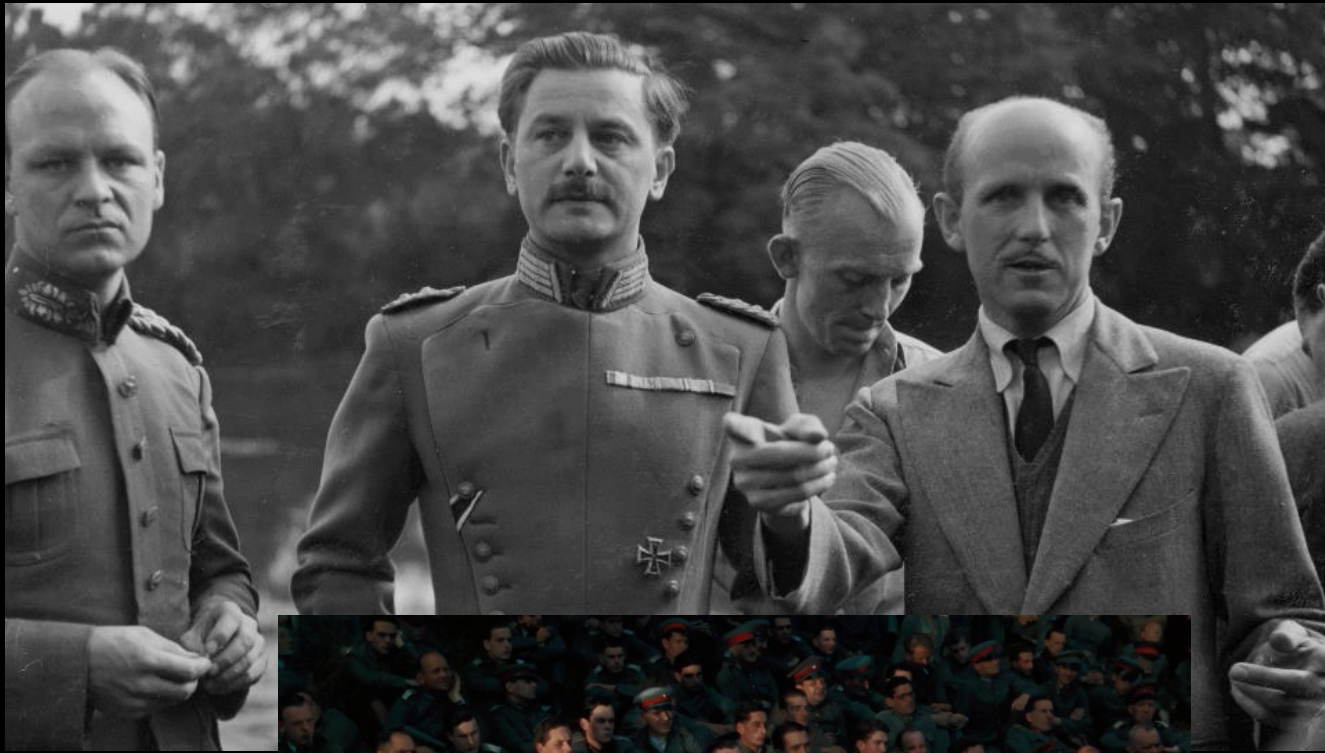
Royal Naval Air Station
Worthy Down, Winchester
May 28th, 1942

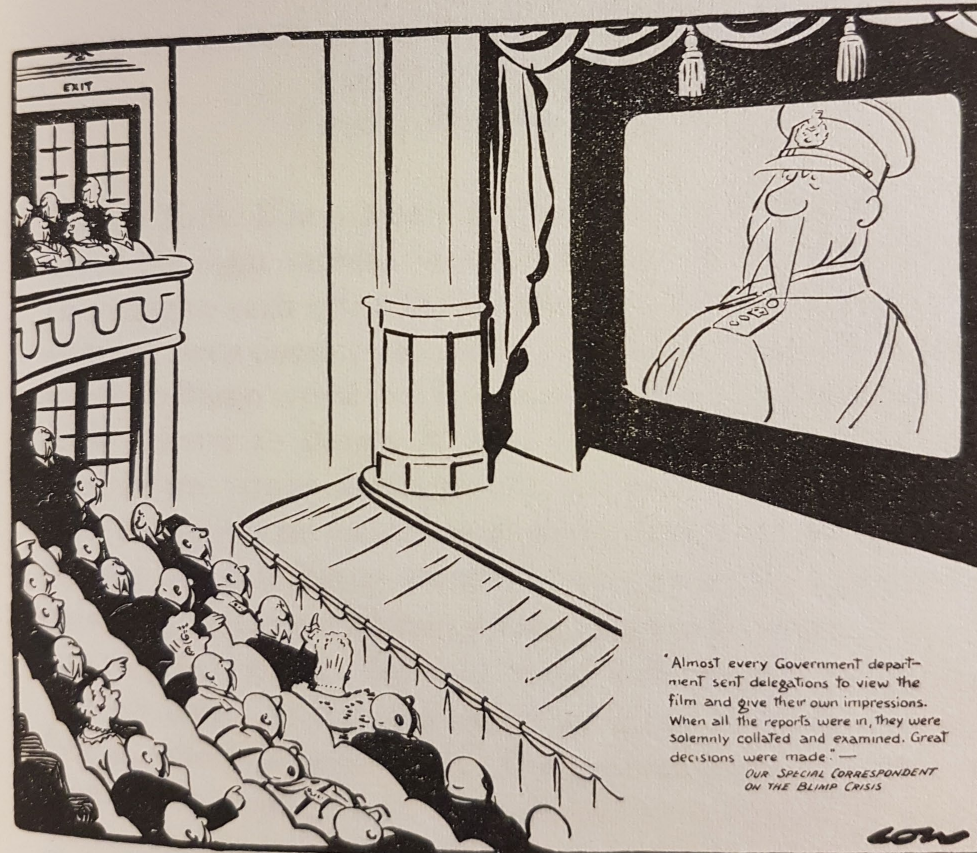
My dear Micky,

I have so little time for writing – so I will cut out all but essentials – I know you will understand.

The *idea* is unquestionably *masterly*. And the way you have written it and explained the intentions in the lay-out is most awfully attractive. But I do feel most strongly that your whole point about Blimps being made – not born is entirely missed unless you show a good bit more *how* this is done.







"Almost every Government department sent delegations to view the film and give their own impressions. When all the reports were in, they were solemnly collated and examined. Great decisions were made." —
OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ON THE BLIND CRISIS

WHITEHALL'S EVENING OUT

(Copyright in All Countries.)

28 Housewife, aged 53 years, Burnley.
Films 1 *Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 2 *Escape to Happiness*, 3 *Random Harvest*, 4 *We Dive at Dawn*, 5 *Tales of Manhattan*, 6 *The Gentle Sex*.

1 *Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* was a grand film, interesting on account of the period of time it covered. Films of the immediate past are always attractive to me probably because they bring back memories. This film also seemed to be well-produced. The story was easy to believe in, though there were many unexpected 'twists' in it.

2 *Escape to Happiness*: I liked the hero and heroine in this picture, the film was realistic and restrained.⁴² Various charming pictures added

In November 1943, Mass-Observation asked its observers: 'what films have you liked best during the past year?

Blimp got the largest number of mentions by women (28), and the second largest among men (21)

55 Timber merchant, aged 44, Leeds.

A question I put to myself with regard to this is: how do you value the different answers without knowing which possibilities the answerer had in the year, and how many films he has seen altogether? (f.i. certain films can't be seen anywhere, or other films the time is unsuitable, etc etc) As far as I remember I recall: *Mr Jordan*¹¹ – *Man Who Came to Dinner* – *Colonel Blimp* – *Citizen Kane* – *Mrs Miniver* – *Tales of Manhattan*.

Mr Jordan was in some ways a perfect film – theme, fantastic but earth-bound enough to be more than a mere trifle; *Man To Dinner* a witty comedy, a type I very much prefer in films; *Colonel Blimp* got me interested and captivated me (and what a fine actor played Blimp); *Citizen Kane* was interesting enough as an experiment; *Mrs Miniver* could have done with a little less sentiment; *Tales of Manhattan*: some excellent short stories, of which I would like to see more.

57 WAAF, LACW, aged 33, Leicester.

1 *Colonel Blimp*. I liked this film because its propaganda was subtle and good, because the Edwardian scenes, in Germany, particularly the duel, were delightful and showed a pleasant touch of humour and because of the splendid character acting of Livesey and Walbrook.

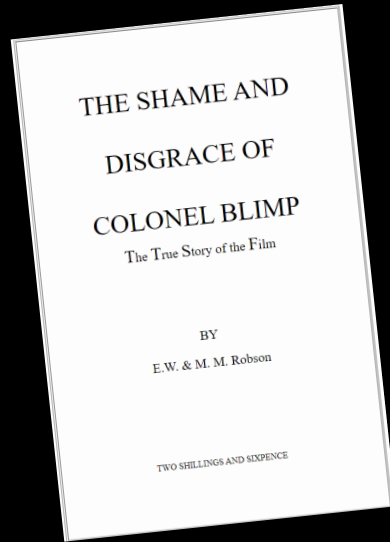
of Greer Garson and the unusual theme of



C. A. Lejeune, the
Observer film critic for
32 years, was puzzled
by *Blimp*:

‘...what is it really
about?’

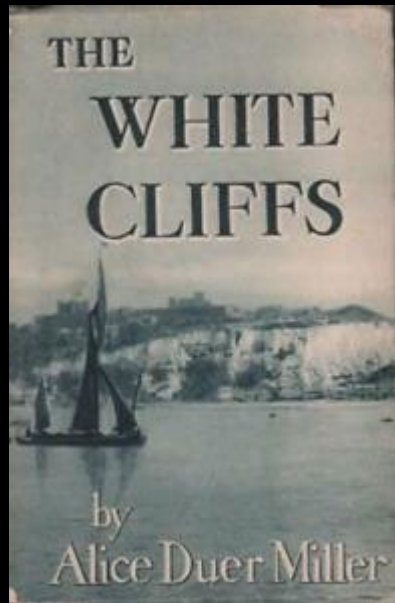
Portrait by Beaton, 1942



This little book concerns itself with two things, a highly elaborate, flashy, flabby and costly film, the most disgraceful production that has ever emanated from a British film studio, and the war.

When one character is called "Sugar" Candy and the other Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorf, it is pretty certain what the eventual relationship between the two will be. The one will be a big, fat lollipop of a walrus-whiskered Englishman and the other, the noble, handsome, awe-inspiring, able and wise German. The scales are weighted against poor old Blimp right away...

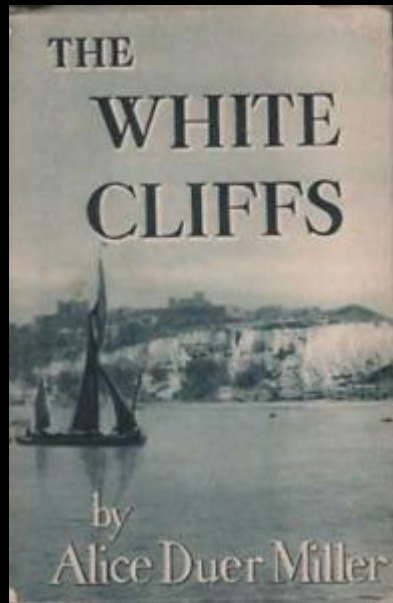




I HAVE loved England, dearly and deeply,
Since that first morning, shining and pure,
The white cliffs of Dover I saw rising steeply
Out of the sea that once made her secure.

I had no thought then of husband or lover,
I was a traveller, the guest of a week;
Yet when they pointed 'the white cliffs of Dover',
Startled I found there were tears on my cheek.

I have loved England, and still as a stranger,
Here is my home and I still am alone.
Now in her hour of trial and danger,
Only the English are really her own.



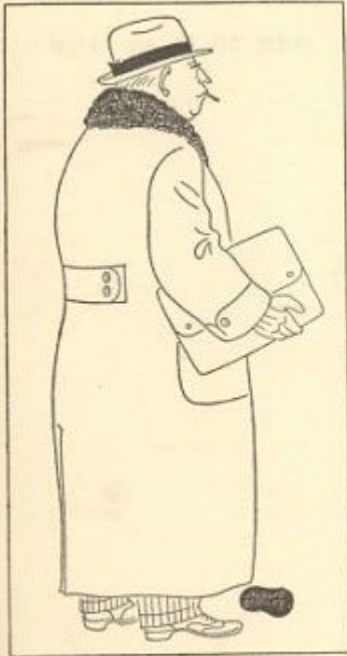
I HAVE loved England, dearly and deeply,
Since that first morning, shining and pure,
The white cliffs of Dover I saw rising steeply
Out of the sea that once made her secure.

I had no thought then of husband or lover,
I was a traveller, the guest of a week;
Yet when they pointed 'the white cliffs of Dover',
Startled I found there were tears on my cheek.

I have loved England, and still as a stranger,
Here is my home and I still am alone.
Now in her hour of trial and danger,
Only the English are really her own.

...I am American bred
I have seen much to hate here
– much to forgive,
But in a world in which
England is finished and dead,
I do not wish to live.

1940



It's easy

HOW TO BE AN ALIEN

*A Handbook for Beginners
and More Advanced Pupils*

BY
GEORGE MIKES

*Nicolas Bentley
drew the pictures*

ANDRE DEUTSCH

'The English have no soul; they have the understatement instead.' But they do have a sense of humour - they provide it by buying over three hundred thousand copies of a book that took them quietly and completely apart [1946]

* Mikes would dedicate his *How to be Decadent* to Pressburger in 1977

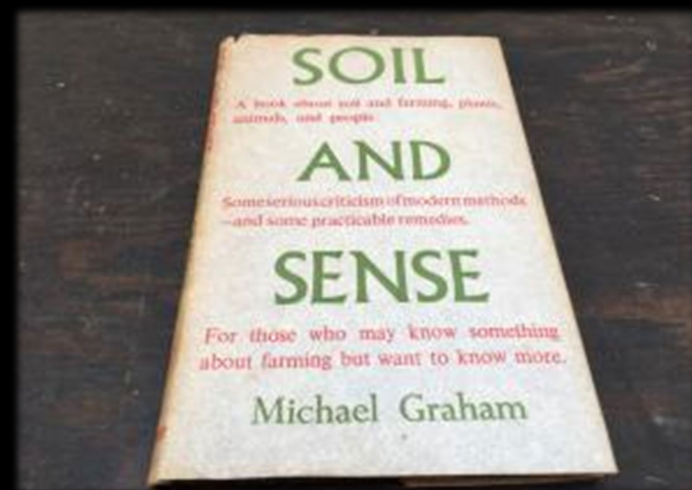








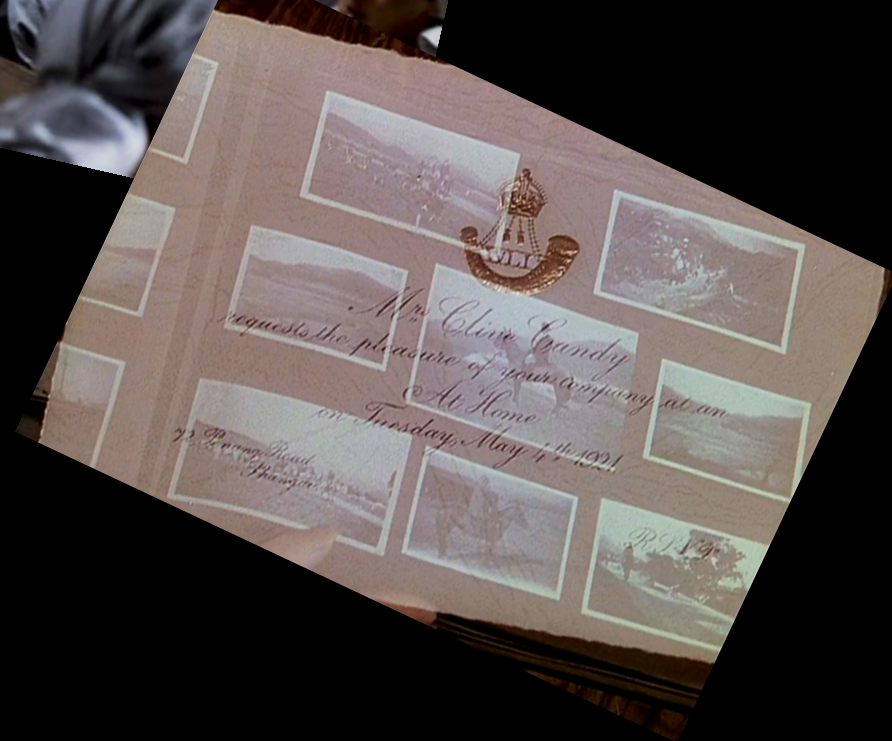


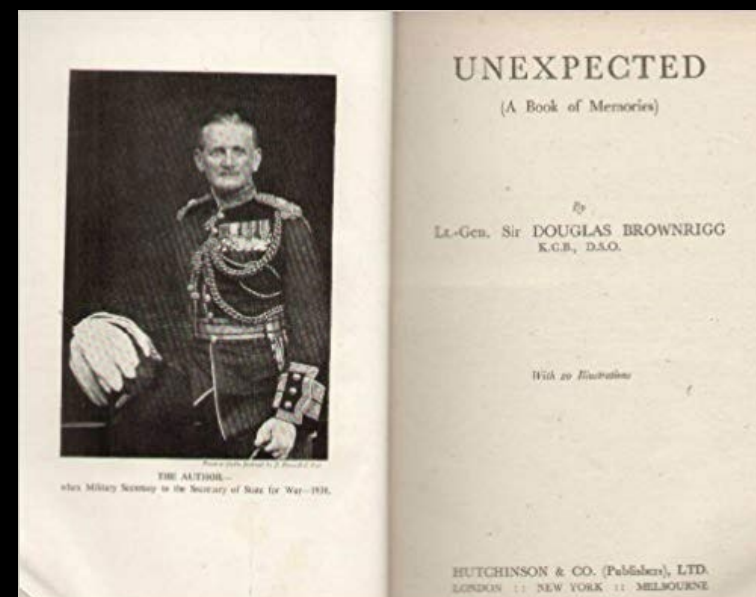
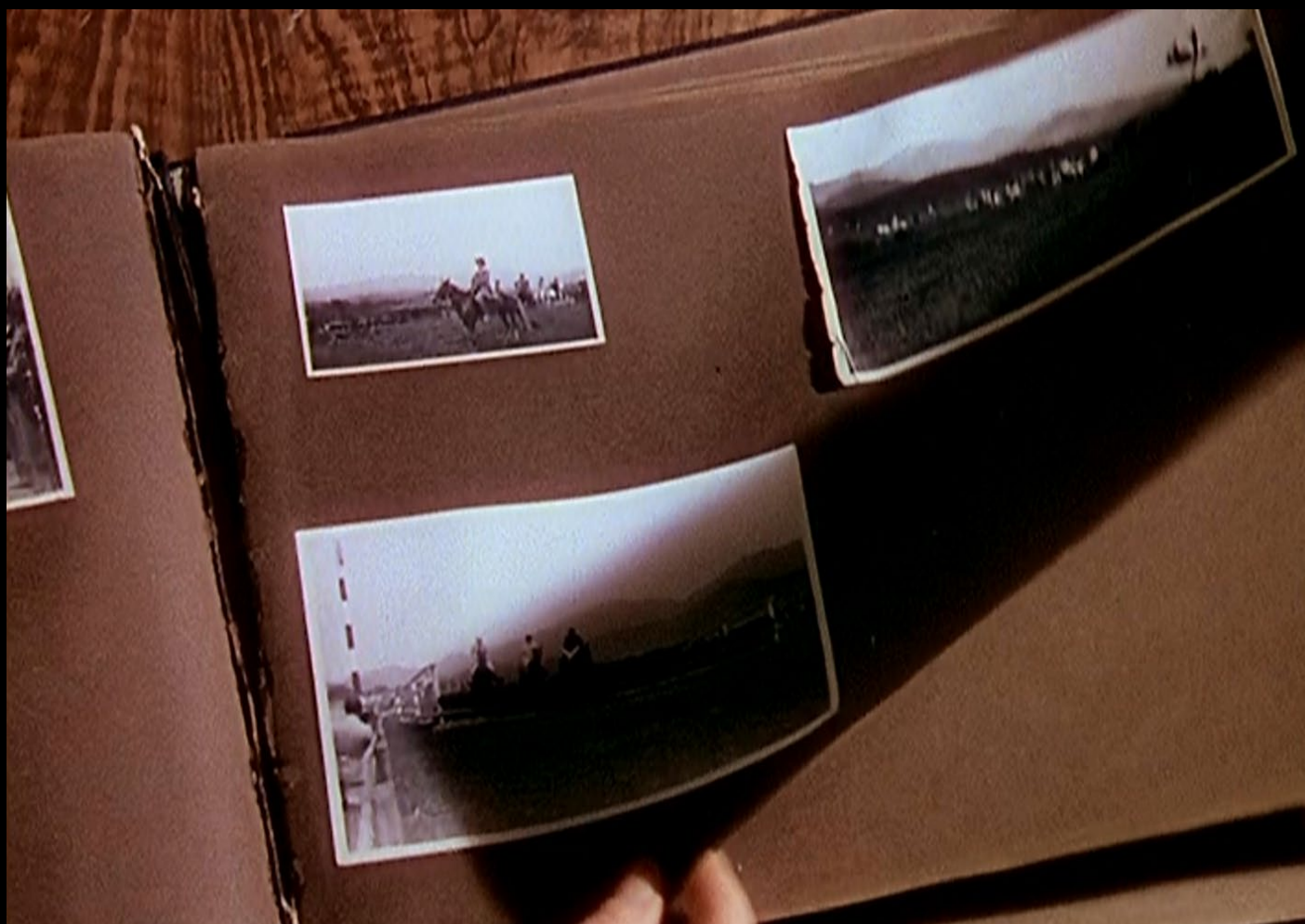


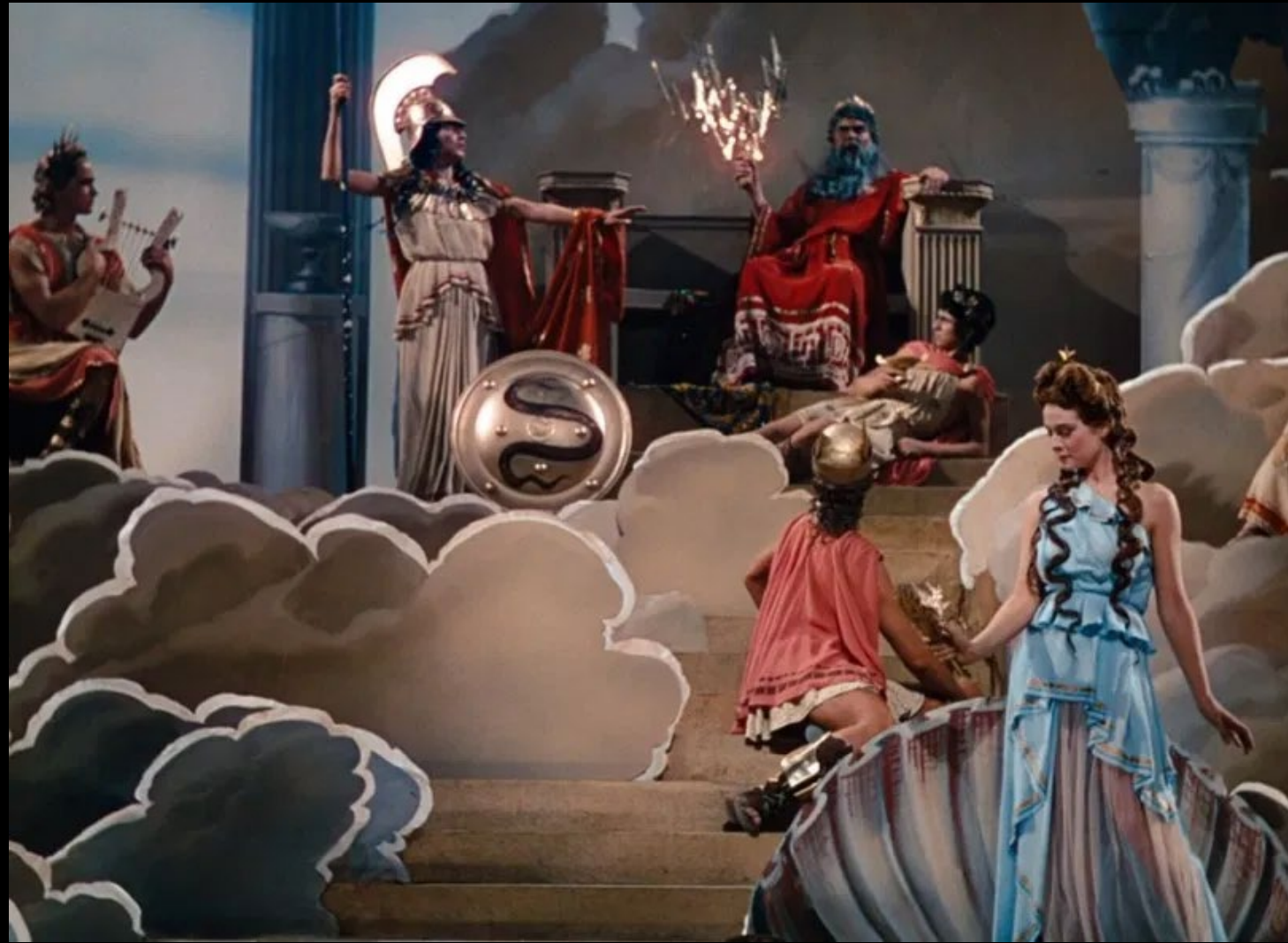


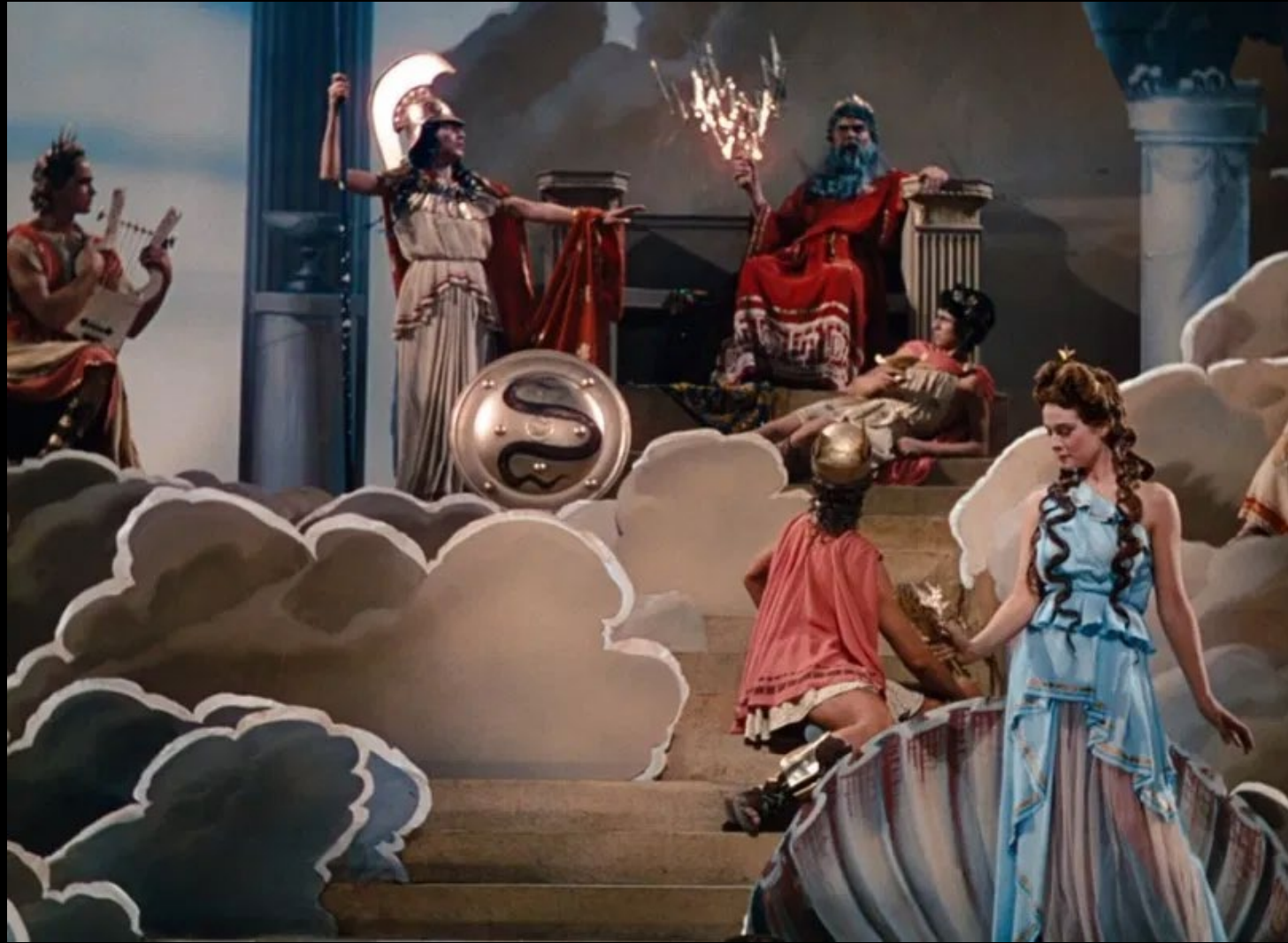


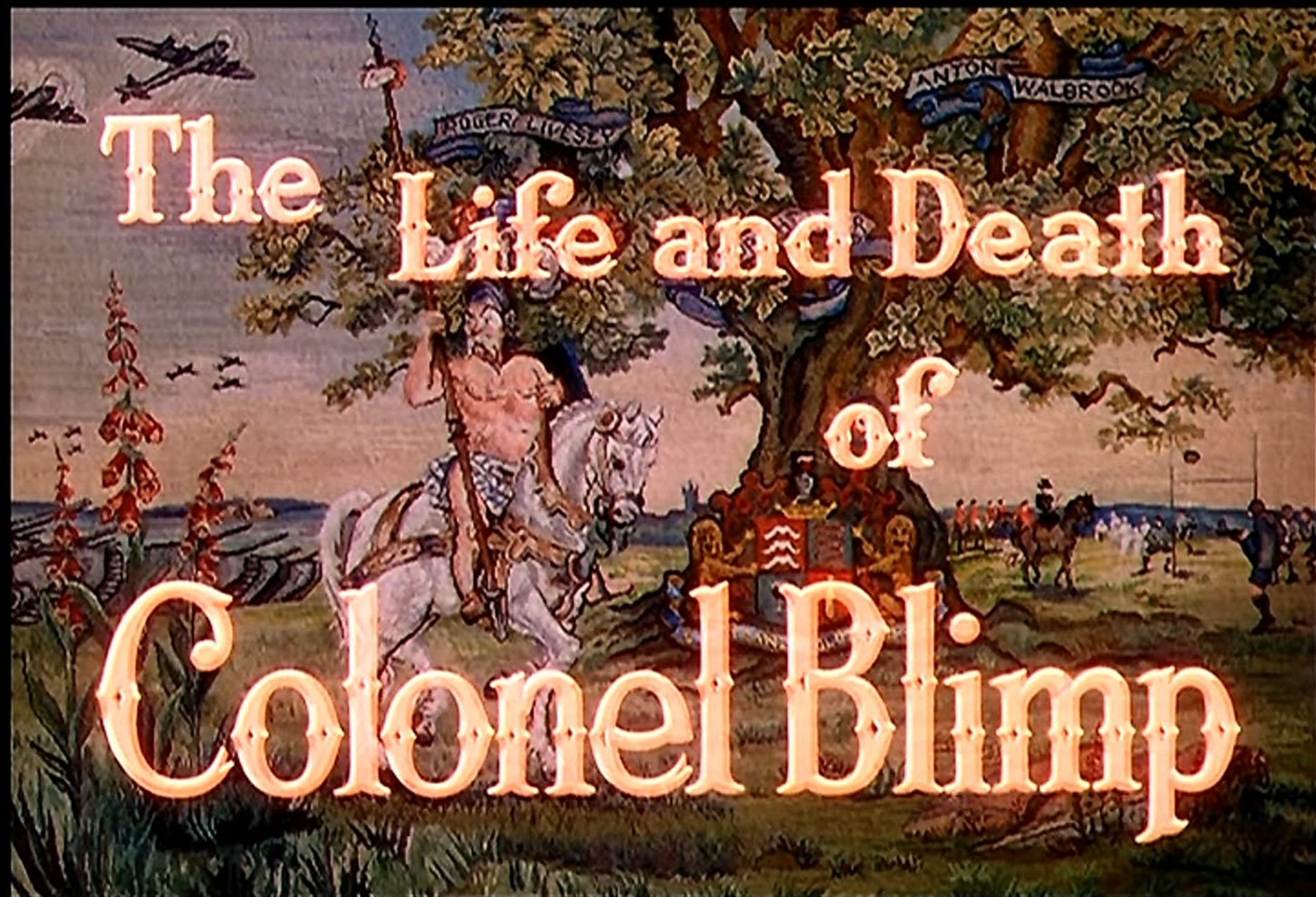












A PRODUCTION
of

THE

Archers



