Surprisingly, for such a small country, England maintained a surprising number and variety of newreels; during the pre-tv years, always at least five major reals, and a number of supplementary "magazine" reels dealing with more general, non-dating news items. Only two newreels survived until this year however, and one bit the dust just this month, leaving only one. Best of them all, and a relatively early casualty of the tv-eras (British tv newreels coverage being exceptionally good) was the Gaumont-British reel, of which we have here two typical samples. One is an early wartime issue dealing with the Battle of Narvic; superbly jingoistic, splendidly edited and scored, though far more "hard-sell" in its patriotic propaganda than we realised at the time. E.V.H. Emmett's voice as narrator was a major asset, a British parallel to the March of Time voice of Van Vallone. The second issue is a post-war one (1947) which could almost be treated as a reel to be issued at any time: there's a coverage of the Test Match, troops withdrawing from an outpost of Empire, and a Parliamentary representative coming to the u.s. to discuss the current financial crisis. Incidentally note the sub crew coming off wartime active duty loaded down with Lemons and golf clubs etc.

MR PROUDFOOT SHOWS A LIGHT (Ministry of Information, 1941) Produced by 20th Century Fox at the Gainsborough Studios; directed by Herbert Mason; written by Stanley Gilliat; Camera: Arthur Crabtree; editor, Alfred Romeo; 1 reel With Sidney Howard, Murial George, Wylie Watson, Noel Deamoto, Irene Handl, Aubrey Mallalieu, Percy Walsh, Albert Lieven, Manning Whitley, C.E.Malalaster, Michael Wilding, Arthur Denton.

PARTNERS IN CRIME (Ministry of Information, 1942) Written and directed by Frank Lauder and Sidney Gilliat; Camera: Jack Cox; editor, Alfred Romeo; 1 reel With Charles Victor, Frederick Burtwell, Irene Handl, Robert Horley.

For years (in fact, well into the post-war period) the Ministry of Information kept up a steady stream of monthly releases, some of them documentaries, but most of them dramatised stories with good production values and well-known stars. In the past we've shown several of the more serious ones dealing primarily with the dangers of careless talk; tonight's two films were directed to alerting civilians to their responsibilities, and the tone is generally light and comicdo. At the time it was hard to escape these films as they were systematically shown in all British theatres; now few of them seem to have survived. Their propagandist points are no longer valid of course, but they remain entertaining and enjoyable little films, with an amazing wealth of talent in front of and behind the camera.

--- intermission ---

"49th PARALLEL" (Ortus Productions-G.F.D. 1941; U.S. release in 1942 by Columbia under the title "The Invaders"); Directed and produced by Michael Powell; Production Supervisor, John Sutro; Scenario by Emeric Pressburger and Rodney Ackland from an original story & screenplay by Pressburger; Director and Camera: Alexander Korda; cameramen, Skeets Kelly & Henry Ossel; Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams; edited by David Lean; Art Director, David Rawnsley; made at the D & P Studios in Denham, and the Associated Sound News Studios in Montreal; 11 reels. With Laurence Olivier, Leslie Howard, Eric Portman, Anton Walbrook, Raymond Massey, Glamis John, Richard George, Raymond Lovell, Niall Macinnis, Peter Moore, Ley On, John Chandos, Basil Appleby, Finlay Currie, Charles Victor.

Preceding Noel Coward's "In Which We Serve" by almost a year, "49th Parallell" was not only one of the few really big prestige British pictures of the early years of the war, but also (in Britain at least) one of the biggest boxoffice hits. Its propagandist content boomerangs a trifle today: the British/Canadian hero "types" all seem a trifle over-written and decidedly artificial now, while the efficiency of the Nazi villain, so well played by Portman, eventually turned against him of murdering hero. One doesn't so much mind him being defeated at the end as seeing the way he was unsportsmanlike fashion by a dull cld of a Canadian who warrants even less sympathy. (In the same way, one resented Robert Cummings' triumph over Nazi villain Otto Kruger in Hitchcock's "Saboteur"), But apart from the let-down of the ending - a let-down shared by the fate of Walter Slezak's Nazi in Hitchcock's "Lifeboat", and the surprising shortage of genuine Canadians in the film (no Walter Pidgeon, no Walter Huston, not even Ruby Keeler), it does hold up as a well-sustained chase adventure. Surprisingly, most of it was shot on location in Canada, and there's a modicum of studio-shot虐待 inserts. It has less of the self-indulgent film-making of the early Pressburger films, and more of the simplicity of the earlier solo Powell works like "The Spy in Black" and "Edge of the World". ----- Wm. K. Everest ----