

# Smart Girls: Growing Up with Cinema in the 1930s

Annette Kuhn

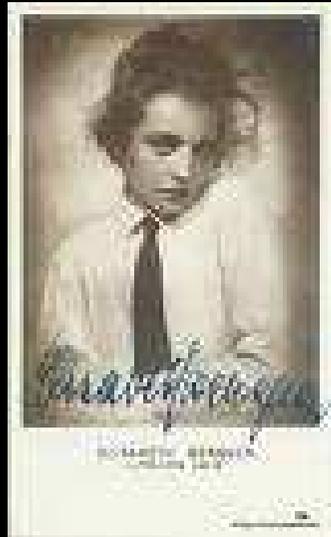
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Gracie Fields  
cigarette card



Fields in *Sing As We Go*



Elisabeth Bergner



Nova Pilbeam



Jessie Matthews advertises Ponds face cream



**Sheila McWhinnie:**

I got a black dress, well, and started wearing it, and got a collar from Woolworths, and we all got the same collar out of Woolworths. And, I would never have thought, from the Gorbals, of wearing a black dress, then I began to think, "Uhuh, it's very smart" Ever afterwards, know? But, eh, it was funny that, they did influence a lot of what you wore and things like that. Both working and watching the screen, you know?

### **Mickie Rivers:**

Because we had so little. I think I had two dresses. Maybe two or three skirts, no more and that was about everything. I know I didn't have very much compared to a lot of people but I was one of five. They couldn't afford it. I had to be taken away from grammar school because my mum couldn't afford a replacement uniform. Which was wrong. [...] But clothing aspect, oh-h-h, you used to drool and think, I wonder if I could do that to my old dress. I could do that. [...] My mum used to go to jumble sales and come home with a dress, outsize dress and fit me out of it. Had to. Hadn't got the money. I used to earn, when I first went to work, I earned seven and sixpence. I had to pay my mother seven shillings a week and buy my stockings out of the sixpence. The cheapest stockings you could buy were ninepence a pair. And they were lisle stockings with an artificial silk covering. And of course you wanted a pair of silk stockings. You went up to one and nine, one and elevenpence.

**Beatrice Cooper:**

Course Deanna Durbin was one that I was keen on. Because em, because [laughs] funny! There she is. Because she was the same age as me and we both sang. And, of course I sang all the songs she sang [laughs]. As her films came out, I got the songs. And em, sang them. Eh, and eh, you know, and I dressed like her. I think a lot of kids of that age, you know, around 15, 16. Eh, because there were no fashions for children of that age. No teenagers. You either dressed as a very small child. Or you dressed as an adult. Sophisticated clothes. You know, there were no teenage clothes at that time. And she brought a new fashion.

## **Helen Smeaton**

You all wanted to be as thin as they were. I never thought of ever looking like them in a facial manner. Eh, and I liked to [?] smart or decent. But we all wanted to be thin. And they were all thin. [...] and you used to read all these magazines, the Filmgoer magazine, what was the other one, oh, there was umpteen. And all my pocket money went on buying and reading all about these film stars. My mum used to say if I knew as much about my school work as I knew about the film stars, I would pass every exam with flying colours. Cos I never forgot it. I'd read it, and read it, and read it. But they were all, nearly all slim. There was a few that weren't. Em, what's her name? Wallace Beery. Marie Dressler, Marie Dressler. She was very plump. So, my mum was plump. And so, to me, plump people always represent somebody that's got a kind and affectionate and nice. [...] But you never wanted to look like them. Although you thought they were great, you didn't really want to look like that at all. So, I think these were the only things that I wanted to imitate. I wanted life to be romantic and I wanted to be thin. [Laughs]

