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Writes...

Chairman's Chat & Editorial

Inspiration

Inspiration comes from many sources for film makers, a different perspective on a story, a passion, a news event or even a holiday.

When it comes to fiction not only do you have to create the story but you have to create the characters, or new stories for existing characters.

Here I take a quick look at real people who were the inspiration for cartoon characters.

Popeye

The Popeye character was created in 1929 by Elzie Segar who based it on Frank "Rocky" Fiegel who he knew from Illinois. Elzie would spend time with Rocky listening to his wild stories of when he sailed the Seven Seas. How true these stories were no one knows.



Popeye the cartoon - Rocky the inspiration

Rocky was toothless and smoked a pipe so spoke out the side of his mouth. He had a damaged eye as a result of the fights he used to get into. Apparently he won most of them.

The similarity between reality and cartoon is remarkable. Perhaps all that Elzie had to do was to find situations to put Popeye in.

Elzie asked permission from Rocky to use his likeness and, being flattered, he agreed. They kept in touch and Elzie gave him a percentage of his Popeye earnings.

Rocky was born in Poland in 1869 and died in 1947. On his tombstone is engraved the Popeye cartoon character.

Elzie also used a grocery store owner named Dora Paskal as the inspiration for Popeye's girlfriend Olive Oil.

Shrek

The character Shrek was created by William Steig and is based on the real life wrestler Maurice Tillet who fought under the name of "The French Angel".

Despite Maurice's unusual tough appearance he was in fact a kind and modest man who knew 14 languages, was a expert chess player and completed a law degree.



Maurice Tillet - Shrek cartoon

In his twenties Maurice was diagnosed with **Acromegaly** resulting in swellings in his body, notably his feet head and hands.



Maurice with his wife Olga - Shrek

Knowing that he was unlikely to become a lawyer he turned to wrestling and was twice World Heavyweight Champion in the American Wrestling Association.

Keep Smiling, Pip

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Gloucester Film Makers

Our first event this year on Zoom was the **Muriel Gray Competition**, the film **Tyneham** by **Clive Blackmore** claimed the Trophy. This competition is for films which were placed second in previous competitions. In total we have six more on our programme in 2024 including Documentary, Open, Animation, Wildlife and a film to music or a poem.

An evening of Archive films about Gloucester city and Gloucestershire is planned for April 8th. This event is open to the public. A film maker from Bristol will be coming to show us a selection of his films on May 13th, also open to the public.

March 16th and we join Bristol, Tewkesbury and Worcester in the Annual Gloucester Inter Club Competition. Worcester are the host club for this the 57th year of the event.

The Video Road Shows are very quiet, with only two bookings to date. Hopefully some more will come along as they were a very helpful financial source.

For more information about us. and see a selection of our winning films, go to our web site:

[Gloucester Film Makers](http://www.gloucesterfilm.com)

John Greene, Secretary.



Run 'n' gun film-making

Tom Hardwick

Auschwitz-Birkenau: How would school-children react to seeing this German concentration camp?

Run 'n' gun film-making with the MiniDV Sony Z1

From Essex to Poland in January 2009

In December 2008 I put in my bid to Thurrock Council and it was accepted. I was to accompany lots of 6th form students from Essex over to Poland for 3 days, as part of their **Stand up to Hatred** education. I was to be a one-man, run 'n' gun film-maker, and at the end of the project they wanted lots of DVDs produced for educational as well as Council archival purposes.

Equipment – what to take?



I shot with my trusty, and much-loved Sony Z1 DVCAM camcorder. I attached shotgun and radio mics and little else.

In 2009 **MiniDV tape** was coming to the end of its 13 year reign as the digital format of choice. It had transformed itself from standard definition 4:3 to hi-def HDV in 16:9, effectively killing off **Hi8** and **Super VHS** analogue camcorders almost overnight in 1996. Come 2009, camcorders that recorded directly to flash memory (**SxS** and **SD card**) were looming large, and this technology (for many good reasons) has survived to this day.

The organisers made it plain that I was going to have to travel light, with very little equipment being allowed as backup. This didn't worry me, as the **Sony Z1** I'd been using for quite a few years had proved totally reliable. Of necessity I added my **Sennheiser** shotgun mic in combination with my **Sony** radio mic, both of them plugging directly into the camera's **XLR** sockets.

I eschewed on-camera lights, monitor screens and so on, preferring to take my trusty, and not too big, Slik tripod. At all times I wore my equipment belt, and I filled its many zip-up pockets with spare NP-F batteries, fold-up headphones, a super wide-angle Bolex Aspheron and many Sony MiniDV tapes. Add a battery charger and I was ready to go.

Preparations

I attended pre-trip meetings with Council staff and school teachers, filming the preparations and organisation. The flight from London Gatwick to Krakow in

Poland went smoothly enough, but from there on things got somewhat more tricky.



We all board the plane at Gatwick, heading for Krakow airport in Poland

I filmed the key points in the airports, darting hither and thither, suitcase in tow. I remember being rather surprised that Jobsworth Security, seeing my bulked-up camera, didn't present me with a cease and desist notice.



A fascinating and knowledgeable historian talked for near-on an hour in the coach to Auschwitz, and I used snippets from her talk in the film's audio

The overland trip from Krakow airport to Auschwitz proved more difficult to film. We all piled onto a coach for the 70 minute journey - which turned out to be on bumpy Polish roads while admiring the landscape through salt-sprayed windows. The children were togged up to the eyebrows against the cold in coats, scarves and hats, but I did manage some interviews as we bounced along.

The Auschwitz concentration camp



We enter Auschwitz under the foreboding ARBEIT MACHT FREI sign

It's a foreboding place is the Auschwitz camp. You enter under an imposing **Arbeit Macht Frei** (Work brings freedom) sign. In some ways I was insulated from the awfulness of the surroundings because, of necessity, I had to be totally immersed in filming mode.



Tom continues...

I had to be constantly aware of my surroundings so that I could be one step ahead of the convoy. Shooting run 'n' gun means having eyes in the back of your head, being in the right place at the right time with the correct camera settings locked down.

Being early January it quickly got dark in the afternoon, and at times I was forced to use slow shutters as well as max gain-up (+18 dB) on the Sony Z1. I chose to shoot in SD rather than HDV (1440 x 1080i) as I was to produce DVDs and I thought I'd get too many dropouts if I filmed in Mini DV's Hi-def mode in those sub-zero temperatures.

The tour guide



Everyone wears radio headsets so all can hear the guide. She speaks softly of the horrors that befell the camp's inmates in WW2

Visitors wear headsets so they can all hear the tour guide, whereas my headset was used to hear what my mics were picking up. Unfortunately our particular guide was very adverse to being filmed, and wouldn't even let me record her as audio only, saying it "stressed her too much". This didn't stop me though as I had a job to do, and I recorded her in subterfuge mode. I used the Z1 as a big digital audio recorder, filming with my camera held unobtrusively at the hip, not caring what images were being captured. I'm glad I did; she had important things to say, so she's worth listening to carefully on the film. I decided against adding subtitles in the edit as it would've detracted from seeing the look on the kids' faces. I lugged a tripod about and didn't use it once. In fact I chose a 6th former and got him (told him) to be my tripod bearer, and kept him out of shot at all times.

Run 'n' gun



Behind glass: Thousands of inmates' personal items are on display. Shoes, spectacles, suitcases, human hair. Their haggard faces line the walls as black and white photos.

As I say, it wasn't too harrowing for me as I was in filming mode most of the time, setting focus, pov, iris and gain, running everywhere to set up for each shot, all the

time checking the audio. The camp itself was not nearly as 'original' as I thought it would be, much more of a museum with everything behind glass, and now with central heating and lights. There were few visitors there on such bleak January days; this silence in such a big camp somehow adding to the horror.

I loved how the experience subdued the normally lively 16 year-olds, and often the only sound was their shoes crunching on the snow as they tried to assimilate the incomprehensible barbarity that surrounded them. I wanted to capture the feel of how the former Polish army camp was transformed into a German death camp.

No time for tripods? No worries



There's silence from the visitors as they listen in disbelief to the tour guide's quiet words

A lot of the low angle shots in my film were a run 'n' gun necessity, where I simply didn't have time to run ahead, set up my tripod, level the camera, set framing, focus and exposure etc. What I tended to do was quickly gather a pile of snow (my hands got pretty cold) and scrunch the camera down into it – a bit like like making a new bean-bag for every shot. Suddenly I had rock-steadiness for almost any focal length I cared to use.

I remember the camera getting very cold and pretty wet, but it never missed a beat. I kept the spare batteries warm in my pocket, as we're told to do. Coming indoors into the heated blocks caused me no end of lens misting headaches, and I was fearful of the MiniDV tape drum sticking to the tape. (VHS machines used to have a 'dew warning', remember?) But again, the rock-like Sony never missed a beat.



Light levels quickly drop in January, and menacing barbed wire fencing and security lighting is everywhere



Tom continues...

Birkenau death camp

Back on the coach and we took the 2½ mile journey from **Auschwitz** to the death camp at **Birkenau**, where symbolically, the train tracks come up against their end buffers. I found the sheer scale of Birkenau even more unsettling, as it was here where the multiple ovens and gas chambers were located. Many of these were blown up by the Nazis at the end of the war, in their attempt to destroy proof of their existence.



The end of the line. The rail tracks and thousands of lives came to and end here in Birkenau

We also spent some time at Schindler's factory and the Jewish ghetto surrounding it, but that didn't make the edit as it really was making the film too long. What I did leave in the final edit was the footage where I let the camera run uninterrupted, and the students expressed their horror at what they'd witnessed.

I've put my [Auschwitz-Birkenau](https://youtu.be/f968Opn5U4?si=8UoLhbSkKCW0iLOW) film up on YouTube.
<https://youtu.be/f968Opn5U4?si=8UoLhbSkKCW0iLOW>

15 years later...

In anticipation of filmmaker's questions about talking on such a project, here are some additional thoughts.

In retrospect

If someone came to me today, more than 15 years later, saying they'd been asked to do the same sort of job and did I have further thoughts and advice, the first thing I'd say is **shoot in hi-def**.

Before the trip I spent a lot of time planning and thinking, and I felt my equipment list was excellent (**multi-pocket belt** always around my waist, lots of batteries and tapes. Small headphones, radio mic to clip to people). These days your backup video camera would be your very capable **smartphone**, and you'd be shooting to card and not to tape. I'd also offer this advice to the filmmaker: be kind, caring and considerate to the teachers and kids. You want them, need them, to be on your side.

What I didn't need was the **tripod** as it's bloody hassle. It constantly uses a free hand. You have to remember where you put it, go back for it, carry its bulk and weight, and it takes far too much precious time to set up. What you don't capture you won't have to edit.

Modern equipment would have **much better** autofocus tracking, better image stabilisation and much better low light performance. Modern zooms would mean I wouldn't have the hassle of screwing on a wideangle converter in cramped conditions. The 'living' quarters for those lined up to die, and the gas chambers themselves, were kept dark and cold and echoey bare - rightfully.

Modern cameras would just be able to handle all these things far better.

What would I do differently today?

My answer is, 'very little'. I'd need to be very mentally alert, very fit, always being one step ahead of the party. Run 'n' gun filming is about **predicting the future**, and being in the right place to capture this unfolding present. Sometimes it means politely but determinedly squeezing through a wodge of kids, camera held high for protection, so that I can be the other side of this doorway as they emerge.

All the while, as a filmmaker tasked with a job to do and an expectation as to the final result, I was acutely aware that I should walk slowly and respectfully in this place of horror. I shouldn't draw attention to myself and my craft. I should film as quietly and **unobtrusively** as I could, so as not to disturb the reality of the situation we all find ourselves in.

I can tell you, being a wedding filmmaker for years was of immeasurable help in ensuring that I was in the right place to capture these unfolding moments.

Asking for help when needed.

Go choose me children who will be happy to talk in front of camera. How long till we get to Birkenau? Can I leave this charging here? Will we be coming back this way? Any unwritten laws I should know about? Please, please dear guide, let me pin this tiny **radio mic** to you; you'll forget about it in an instant.

Of course child protection is something else. Maybe today you'd need a signed legal document stored somewhere safe saying you can/can't film my RGBT child. I was CRB checked before joining the group.

Yes, maybe a written prologue would've helped the film, Star Wars like. *Once upon a time, a band of giggling schoolkids set off on a journey - that was to end in a silent, sobering history lesson.*

Length of the finished film

Editing out hard-won shots is always difficult. Lots of 'interviews' failed. How many piles of Jewish belongings do we need to see? Should subtitles disrupt the cold silence? The whole Schindler ghetto sequence was abandoned. I didn't want people to switch off before seeing and hearing the kids' reactions at the end.

I too have wondered. Have any of those on that trip watched the DVD since 2009? They're all twice the age they were back then, many will be married and have children of their own. Do they look down at their kids and silently praise the fact that they live now, here, not there, then? Did that school trip all those years ago alter their perception of warfare and hate crime?

Few will have **DVD** players these days. Few will watch anything that isn't in portrait mode, and modern attention spans mean few will watch anything lasting more than 90 seconds. But secretly I do hope the film is watched by those that took part all those years ago. Every bit of footage we capture is saving the past for another day.

Tom Hardwick FACI



Dave Jones

Shares his thoughts

Scientific Breakthroughs

Years ago, when a battery of video cameras driven by those who were trained in Bristol, had a day out ... and they called it work ... I don't believe that they actually had a mental picture of it being actual work, most people in this profession do it out of their love for creating footage. It is a hard life, in that they are out in all weathers – and temperatures – work ridiculously long hours, and like pathologists, daren't make a mistake.

To this work is quite different, for in the profession today, were are seeing the merging of shooting, directing, writing, and editing all being done by one person, and that is changing the tools to accommodate this. Then after doing it for thirty or forty years, that person retires and takes it up as a hobby ... beggars belief doesn't it? From what I see of this new trend, the reporter uses a mobile phone, sometimes held the wrong way up, cramping its width down to half. It's okay for bipeds, but not trains and panorama establishing shots ... my pet hate.

In actual fact, the whole lot of us are going to be left behind, because technology is going forward at such a rate, much of it is old before we discover it!

When forty fires were started near simultaneously in Chile, outrunning the inhabitants and causing many deaths, they having little if any warning, it is never all that long before some physicist somewhere applies himself to the task of firefighting ... literally. Then you see that the technology is so basically simple, it makes us wonder how long they have had it on the shelf. Drones have been with us since 1907, I kid you not. Loudspeakers have been with us equally as long, if not longer, they being one of the first transducers ever devised.

Shock Waves

When working on the early Hunter fighter aircraft, upon the fitting of the first 20 mm cannons, upon their being fired, the jet engine suffered a flame out. The destructive force of a shock wave comes with compression immediately followed by a near vacuum. Without oxygen the dowsing of a flame is instantaneous. Remember Red Adair and the Iraqi oil fires being put out? Explosives ... shock waves. It follows that they now have a drone that has a very powerful means of causing shockwaves and the forest fire may be put out instantaneously, or long enough for hosing to damp down the seat of the fire, preventing re-ignition.

We live in a world where a thin coating of plastic can prevent a car being damaged if hit with the blade of an axe, where materials can be manufactured that are so light, they will almost float in air, we have superconductivity materials such as graphene, fluid mechanics using magnetic liquid for use in space, things so black they disappear from view and absorb so much light, that even if you illuminate them with a torch, you still can't see them, as so little light is reflected, it absorbing 99.96%.

Artificial Intelligence

Now we have AI, even as far back as 2020, large companies were thinking of ways to use it to advantage ... and the use of video took off.

I well remember seeing my first 3D film, where we all wore glasses and watched a cowboy film and upon being shot with arrows coming out of the screen ... it made me duck!

If you think that the younger generation is going to attend a club to watch 'shadows-on-a-screen', you've got another think coming. No ... they are into what we know as 'Full Emersion' wearing a visor, and as you turn your head or swivel your eyes in their sockets, the picture complies. It can be quite terrifying, as one's brain seemingly cannot escape the reality, so believes what it is seeing, and it causes every reaction and emotion to be triggered. How long will it be, before somebody devises a means of turning a cinema into that visor?

Today, they are fooling cameras with a circular screen, which carries 'funny' images. These don't make complete sense to we humans, but they do to the video camera, and when shown in the edit, the talent is now part of the scene ... and it could be anywhere on our planet or on another planet. It is very complex to we ordinary folk ... but somebody out there invented it some time ago.



'Gamers' are very used to wearing visor-type screens already ... and the youngest among them think it is quite normal to put a visor on to see a picture. By the time the smallest of these children are adults, they will also think it normal to watch a screenplay. By then AI will have advanced beyond our present-day imagination, and what they can conjure up now is enough to take your breath away, so what will happen in the future will likely cause a mental disorder! Never mind about the ancient 'A' Certificate, 'X' Certificate and 'U' certificate films of yore, they will likely have a similar classification imposed, banning these 'visor films' being shown to Autistic people or Schizophrenics or they may even have special films to treat mental disorders, because they are so 'real'.

Whilst we are on the subject of mental disorders ... mankind could never get an electronic gadget to be wedded to a human brain, due to its requiring too high a level of energy. Now we have devices using fractions of a micro-watt, and they can use chips to control the human brain.

One of the first mental disorders they have in their sights is Parkinsons, and another is Dementia ... so the future may hold a chipped human with a perfect memory, which, in turn, will catapult science into our all becoming geniuses, overnight! This will snuff out the present day desires of mankind to control the world, as his infinite wisdom will carry him far beyond avarice. The one desire outweighing all others will be the quest for knowledge.

Video cameras are now swallowed and then propelled around the stomach, to establish physical disorders ... here today. Tomorrow will see a Duodenal Ulcer, removed, stitched up and the waste placed in the colon, ready for disposal, all without making an incision. The cure for cancer is here today.



Dave Jones continues

In the future it will be the corporates and large businesses that will drive video forward, and will likely be a mix of metadata, AI and man's ingenuity.

Most of our company education today comes from video, or through tutors who have devised a program of 'Learning on the Fly'. You take on new employees, sit them in front of a computer and tell them to fill in the forms for clients, as part of a company process. As the cursor comes to rest on a field or line, a person appears in the top right of the screen and tells you what to do ... here today, but what of tomorrow? Well ... people won't have jobs per se, they will have little to do but get bored and make visor films, mixing their day out with AI.

Theft will die out, as your movements will be monitored or inhibited. Abhorrent to us today, but so is the thought of visor movies.



When the 'war boys' were devising ever-faster aircraft, the 'know-alls' of yesterday considered that aircraft would never exceed the speed of sound, as the shock-wave would tear the aircraft apart, but that was before we had computers ... that's how it goes. We had no use for lasers when they were first devised.

However, there are some things that we thought would never die, as in, there's nothing like cuddling your girlfriend in the back row of a cinema; rarely seen today, if ever. Future mankind will look back and see us as we see Neanderthals today, yet my generation considers it lived in the Golden Era, despite WWII. Everything is tolerable, simply because ... dread the thought ... we are programmable ... don't argue, that's a fact. It is our saving grace, because, in tomorrow's world we will need to be reprogrammed. The reason being, we now have a generation of messed up children. Nonetheless, children will be re-educated through videos, and your camera may already play a role in that.

Many years ago, I filmed my neighbour's parents giving a helping hand with providing drainage in their garden, which was prone to flooding. It was a full decade later that I was clearing out a lot of old toot, and came across the old recordings in 720.

I popped it in their letter box on a DVD ... remember them? It transpired that their children weren't old enough to remember their grandparents. How this is possible I've no idea, but it never occurred to them to film their parents.

Video tape will outlast many forms of video storage. Fifty-year-old tape will play as if it were new, if you've got the gear. The problem we have today is, if you store a digitised film in the 'Cloud', if an any time in the future they change the CODEC, it won't play. Hopefully, they will retain 'Retrograde Compatibility'. However, WORD 2010, doesn't 'like' WORD 2003, which is enough to make one nervous about entrusting videos to the 'Cloud'.

Dave Jones

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A reel moving story



David Price

a short(ish) history of the Bristol Film & Video Society

2024 is the 90th birthday of the BFVS which is the longest continuously running film club in the South West. Despite its longevity Bristol's club isn't the oldest film society in the country. The 2022 film 'A Bunch of Amateurs' followed the exploits of the Bradford Film Club which started in 1932 and was originally known as the Bradford Cine Circle. However on the west side of the Pennines the Manchester & Salford Film Society had already been running for 2 years, established in 1930.

The title of the country's oldest film club resides in the capital with the London Film Society which was established in Regent Street on 25th October 1925. Its illustrious founders included George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Maynard Keynes, Sidney Bernstein and Augustus John whose objective was to show avant-garde films. Whilst it screened films, arranged lectures and discussions actual film making was absent from its activities.

In the commercial arena Bristol's first cinema 'The Bio' had started showing silent films in 1908. It operated from the now long gone, Counterslip Hall which was demolished to make way for the Courage Brewery; now been replaced by the Finzels Reach office scheme.



The reportedly grotty Bio cinema disappeared before 1918. The first 'talkie' was shown at the Kings cinema in Bond Street in 1929. Featuring the bonus of sound, Al Jolson's 'Singing Fool' was extremely popular as 50,000 Bristolians paid to see it in the first fortnight after release.

Despite the country being in the midst of the Great Recession, 1934 was a notable year. It saw the launch of the Queen Mary on the Clyde, the Empire Games take place in Wembley, the first Glyndebourne opera season, the introduction of Dinky Toys and the road safety feature, 'cats eyes'.

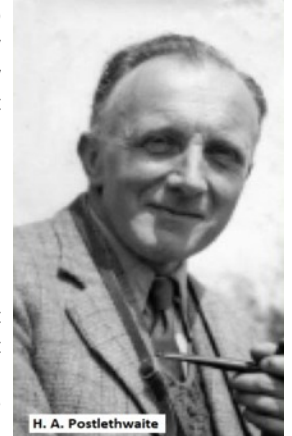


It also saw the inaugural meeting of the snappily titled "Bristol Fellowship of Amateur Cinematographers (Western Area Branch)" at a meeting of Civic dignitaries in January.

The Western Daily Press of 8th January 1934 reported that the meeting at the Royal Hotel had been attended by the Lord and Lady Mayor accompanied by wing collared and pin stripe suited gentlemen brandishing cine

cameras. This event was to show films, presumably made the year before, so a group of Bristol film makers may have already been meeting before the assumed 1934 formation date.

The names of the club founders in 1934 are largely unrecorded but we do know that one was Herbert Almond Postlethwaite, (pictured pipe in hand), a keen stills Bristol photographer.



H. A. Postlethwaite

Another was Reverend Canon Percy Gay, a local vicar. A third was Ernest Burris who was the first President and continued in that role up until his demise in 1954.

Mr Burris brought a competitive element to proceedings offering a silver cup in his name which was awarded for the first time in 1936 to Mr Hubert Chitty. On a roll Hubert won it again the next year. The name and content of either of his films are unrecorded.

The club's formal start also predated the regular broadcast of television programmes by more than 2 years. The BBC had produced 30 line television programmes from its own studios starting in 1932 but a regular, although creatively limited, 240 line public service didn't commence until 2nd November 1936. Access to TV was limited to the affluent as even by September 1939 there were only 20,000 TV sets in a country with a population of 40 million!

By July 1934 there had been 3 meetings of the Bristol Fellowship, believed to be at members' homes and new members were joining. Similarly one of the attractions to affluent members of the Bristol club in the early days was a library of 25 films to borrow for home viewing; provided of course they already owned or had access to a home cinema projector and screen.

By 1947 the group's name had been helpfully changed and shortened to Bristol Amateur Cinematographers (BAC) when activities and club meetings had restarted after the end of the Second World War. Due to the post war cost and availability of cameras, lens, projectors and celluloid it seems that members of the BAC were almost exclusively affluent males belonging to professions like the law, business, medicine and the church.



1954 Paillard-Bolex HB 3 turret lens cine film camera

The name would change again, probably in the 1960's, to the Bristol Cine Society (BCS).



Laurie continues

In the early days meetings appear to have been held at member's homes but by the early 1950's meetings moved to the Hawthorns Hotel in Woodlands Road in Clifton. In 1954 the meeting place relocated to the much grander Royal Hotel. The meeting location continued to move regularly thereafter to other venues in Bristol such as the Full Moon pub in Bedminster, the Beckett Hall, the Lewins Mead Utilitarian Hall, the Folk House and then to Charlotte Street in 1984; the premises of the Lions Club just off Park Street.



In 1989 the club had another name change to its current moniker, the Bristol Film & Video Society (BFVS) and a further move, this time out to Filton.

Up until March 2020 the club met twice a month at the Filton Leisure Centre until redevelopment plans necessitated another move, this time on line, courtesy of Zoom Inc & Covid

Emerging from the pandemic in 2022 physical club meetings restarted at the new venue of St Andrews Church in Gloucester Road, 200 yards away from its previous haunt. Given the regular moves of meeting venue, it is a longstanding ambition for its members to own their own premises. Hopefully this will be in a location in Bristol, rather than South Gloucestershire.

1950's Keystone cine projector

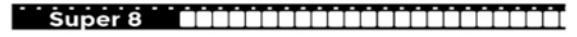


The BAC wasn't the only film club in Bristol. In the 1950's there were other rival cine clubs such as the now long gone such as the Phoenix Cine Club. Maybe it will yet rise again! The local rivalry led to the BAC organising a big event in 1957, a 2 day festival at the Royal Hotel's Grand Ballroom. Around 500 people, including paying guests attended and saw the 10 Best films screened. The event received a mention on Local TV and was attended by civic guests including the Lord Mayor.

One of the talks was given by club member Ralph Egarr. In a personal link back to that 1957 event Ralph's son, Graham is a stalwart of the BFVS acting for many years as Programme Secretary. This gives a family link to the club now stretching back at least 66 years.

1964 saw a special 30th anniversary dinner in honour of the club which was held at the long gone Bristol Grill. Around 45 members, their wives (as it was still a predominantly male club) and friends enjoyed a traditional Christmas meal. The guest of honour was one of the founding members H.A. Postlethwaite.

He was rewarded with an Honorary Life Membership. This year also saw the institution of the Annual Trophy alongside the longstanding Burris Cup now awarded for holiday films.



From its start all club films were shot on celluloid. Back in the day film stock was used in 3 different; gauges; 8mm, 16mm and centre-sprocketed 9.5mm ; each with their fans and critics. In 1959 the club even organised a mock trial at which each gauge was scrutinised. One of the revealing aspects of the trial was one member admitting to owning £1,200 of equipment, reflecting the affluence of members and their willingness to spend very large sums on their hobby. To put this in context the average wage in 1959 was £13/week, or £686 per annum and the average home cost £2,500!

In 1973 a Mini Epic challenge to members was introduced. This was based on the idea of presenting each group of film makers with a roll of Super 8mm film stock and asking them to make a film using just that resource.

By the early 1980's celluloid was losing the battle against new technology and the possibility of using portable video recorders was just about within the range affluent amateurs.



To mark the club's 50th anniversary in 1984 a film was made partly using video footage in addition to the usual celluloid. By 1992 the last club film using Super 8mm film stock, 'Skoda man' was produced.

The earliest recorded subscription is in 1953 when the members had to part with the princely sum of £1 a year to be in the club. This was subject of a massive 50% increase 3 years later and in 1969 it rose to the archaic amount of 2 Guineas; (£2 and 2 shillings) in pre-decimalisation currency; or £2.10 in today's money.

Since its formation the club and its members have made hundreds of films ranging in length, quality and sophistication. The first recorded film is titled, Bristol Celebrations dating from 1935. This was a black and white silent documentary shot on 16mm film stock covering the Silver Jubilee of King George.



Laurie continues

Many of the club's films are available to view on the club's virtual archive; its on line Vimeo channel, accessed via the BFVS [website](#).

Memorable films include 'Albert's Treasure Chest', a silent film made in 1949, and the club's first original drama.



Aside from the drama this film provides a fascinating visual record of the centre of a war damaged City and its docks.

More recent and ambitious projects have included the 1996 film 'Cabot', a dramatized documentary of the voyage by John Cabot on the Bristol ship Matthew to North America.

It involved 121 participants, 63 filming sessions at 50 locations including Bristol Cathedral. The film coincided with the 500th anniversary of Italian navigator Giovanni Caboto's 1497 voyage of exploration to North America.



The discovery scene from Cabot

Then there is 'Clarkson' a 40 minute long historical drama set in 1787 following the pro-abolition slavery story of unsung hero Thomas Clarkson. It started as an idea in 2004 and was premiered in May 2006. It was a grand project involving virtually every member of the club plus 63 cast members.

Possibly the biggest club project was the feature length drama film, 'Uncertain Proof', which received its premiere in Berkeley Castle's Great Hall in 2010.

This was a historical drama set in the 14th Century about a possible end of King Edward II. It was 4 years in the making involving a cast and crew of up to 50 on the most epic day with part filmed on location at Berkeley Castle.



Tony Ford & General A. Alexa in Uncertain Proof

It is a testament to Producer Steve Andrews and Director Graham Egarr who worked patiently with a very limited budget to create an historical film story to rival the scale of Cabot.

'A Smugglers Song' is a recent short film based on Rudyard Kipling's eponymous 1906 poem.

he film was made during Lockdown and won the accolade of 5 Stars at the 2023 Institute of Amateur Cinematographers competition in 2023. It went on to represent the UK at an international film festival



A still from the award winning short film 'A Smugglers Song'

The club endeavours to keep up to date and was one of the first local film organisations to have a website, which was built in 1997 and run for many years by long-time member Mike George. This was only 3 years after the founding of an on-line start-up book sales company in Washington named after the mighty river Amazon.

One of the notable aspects of the current BFVS is the commitment and longevity of some of its members. Renown documentary film maker Gordon Young for example was awarded an Honorary Membership earlier in 2023 having been a member for 30 years.

his was eclipsed by a former club Chairman Bob Bennett who received the same honour for 50 years membership whilst maintaining he joined as a 7 year old!

However both fall short of Malcom Stephens who told the author that he started the job of meeting tea boy in the 1960's so has approaching 6 decades of club membership.

2024 will be the **90th Birthday** and a major milestone of the BFVS, but whatever its future it is a great excuse to recall and celebrate its past history and cinematic achievements.

David Price



UNICA 2024 - 18-23 August,

Dave Watterson
Keeping us up to date on
UNICA 2024 in
Poland

Closer - cheaper - cheerier

This annual world amateur film festival takes place at a cinema, in the throne room of a castle, part of the old town of Poznan, Poland. The town is an eco-friendly and pretty safe place, where many inhabitants speak some English.

At its heart **UNICA** is about watching some of the best non-commercial films from around the world. These can range from superb to, frankly, hum drum. Most movies are well worth watching – and possibly stealing ideas from. Each national programme gives a flavour of the country and culture from which it comes. It is also invaluable as a chance to meet film enthusiasts from many countries.



Poznań, old town

Sunday 18th August 2024

A guided walk round the city centre and opening ceremony.

Monday to Wednesday 19th to 21st August 2024

Film programmes from 27 countries, each up to 45 minutes long. In the evenings those films will be discussed in English by an international jury:

- Thomas Schauer (Austria) as chair
- Jan Watterson (Bath, UK)
- Marta Mielcarek (Poland).

Thursday 22nd August 2024

UNICA's General Assembly (AGM), the Minute Movie Cup (a joyous collection of short-shorts) and the festival awards. Those who are not national delegates often use the AGM time for culture and shopping expeditions.

Friday 23rd August 2024

A day-trip to picturesque Gniezno, Poland's first capital. Nearly all of the historic buildings within its walls can trace their origins to the earliest period of the Polish state.

Money

Poland does not use the Euro. Its currency is the zloty. 5 zloty is about £1. You can exchange in exchange offices virtually free of commission. Exchange offices are located at the main railway station and at the airport, as well as in the city centre and shopping centres. Currency exchange can also be done in banks, though at less favourable rates.

Essential Polish

Please	Pro-she
Good morning	Jeyn dob-ry
Good night	doh-brah-nots
Hello	Tch-esh-ch

Thank you	Jenkoo-yeah
Water	Voda
Beer	Pee-vo
Wine	Vee-no
Cheers	Nah zdroh-vee-eh

UNICA Prices Congress Card (UNICA ticket) € 60. Includes a badge, brochure & a surprise plus a guaranteed cinema seat.

Special Event City Centre Walk in Poznań on Sunday 18th August – no charge.

Booking opened on 1st January and closes on 30th June. Payment is required by 10th July. All booking is done online via links on <https://unica.movie/2024>.

Food Polish cuisine alone is a good reason to visit.



Hints for Visitors

Look out for 'bar mleczny' (milk bars) in English. The name comes from cheese cutlets, which were sold in the past when meat was rare. These are cheaper than restaurants, and have healthier offerings than "fast foods". There is plenty of good food in the centre around the main square. If you are on a tight budget, don't buy groceries in Żabka (convenience shops like Tesco Express). Most places accept Visa/MasterCards.

Accommodation

UNICA recommends booking with Poznań travel. Look for somewhere close to the Imperial Castle – now a culture centre which includes UNICA's cinema, the Kino Palacowe. Typical prices are between £50 and £90 per person per night. (Cheaper than BIAFF!)

The hotels closest to the cinema (within 1/2 a mile):

- Andersia Hotel & Spa Poznań, a member of Radisson Individuals
- Hampton By Hilton Poznań Old Town
- Hotel Wloski
- Don Prestige Residence
- Traffic Hotel
- Novotel Poznań Centrum
- Hotel Stare Miasto
- NH Poznań
- Ibis Poznań Centrum
- Hotel DeSilva Premium Poznań

It is check deals which includes flight and hotel from your airline or booking website. Air B'n'B is a possibility but check the distance from the venue, Imperial Castle. Compared with 2022 in Switzerland and 2023 in Italy, the prices in Poland for hotel and meals are more modest.

Keep up to Date The latest details are always on:

<https://unica.movie/2024>



Shooting from the waist

Melvyn Dover

Adapting to a new way of taking shots

When taking photographs or movie, I prefer the tried and tested way of holding the camera to my eye and looking through the viewfinder. Not a too enjoyable experience with digital until a few years ago, as the quality of electronic viewfinders (EVFs) left something to be desired. I'm glad that's changed and now going electronic has advantages over an optical viewfinder. And no, I don't like digital cameras which omit a viewfinder of any sort.

But though I'm still young and handsome (*living room survey, sample of one), a touch of neuropathy has started taking over. Recent balance problems mean that I can no longer hold the camera like that, even if I am leaning on a lamp-post. (cue George Formby song). I found I had to lean against something, let the camera strap take the weight and using the rear screen, take shots by looking down. Remember the days of the Rollei Rolleiflex, Mamiya, or Medium format Hassleblad?

And as an aside, I usually keep the camera in its case too, and often see people walking around with their expensive cameras slung over their shoulders with no protection at all. Something else to juggle to get the photograph.

I thought of the old Western films, where gunslingers would often resort to rapid fire by shooting from the hip and operating the hammer as fast as they could by hand. The viewer often got to see the subject being shot in the background. In professional films, such shots (AKA 'two-shot') are often useful when somebody is seated while the other stands.

Nowhere near as quick, I did manage to take enough shots on my recent holiday in Bury St Edmunds to warrant buying an album. Yes, I do like to print out holiday "souvenirs" and peruse the albums from time to time. I also look at the images on the screen as there will be some that didn't make the printing stage.



Angel Hotel, Bury St Edmunds

Using the rear camera screen did have a downside : I found I took several shots of paving slabs! I am now thus an expert on the paving slabs of Bury 2023. I must have ended up with a sensitive touch screen. And of course on the Panasonic G100, at least the screen is articulated, so it's perfectly possible to use by looking down, albeit with the EVF to one side of the camera and not directly on top.

A quick search on the net didn't enlighten me as to how many people prefer looking down to film, as opposed to looking straight ahead, only outlining the pros and cons of viewfinder versus screen. There do seem to be a lot of people on the net asking which modern cameras have viewfinders on the top, many hankering after the

equivalent 'Rollei TTL' experience which often resulted from using medium format.

Paving slab pictures aside, I liked Bury St Edmunds very much. It's a well laid out town, mostly enclosed in a ring road with access to town centre car parks, with lots of buses about. Catering for the tourist and locals, its large pedestrianised area was thriving - the usual high street stores were present, though outnumbered by the large collection of individual shops. I spotted only two premises which had closed, and one of those was under offer. I captured some of the butter market in action too.

The half board stay at the four star Angel hotel meant I was spoiled for choice when it came to tracking down a mid-day snack, and the egg custard tarts made on the premises meant more than one bakery visit. I found an image of the restaurant on the net, which is just as well as I didn't take any indoor shots apart from my room. That was added to my collection of souvenirs.

Oh, and a visit to the nearest tourist office resulted in me buying a tea towel, just like the year before. When I got home I decided an apron would be more useful. An excuse to go back?



Ickworth House Rotunda

Nearby visits included Ickworth House, formerly residence of the Marquess of Bristol before being sold to the National Trust. Its dominant rotunda houses a fine collection of paintings, silverware, sculptures and more. I was impressed by the silverware, and marvelled at how consistent the silversmiths were in producing say, a complete dinner service; matching plates and bowls of differing sizes long before mass production techniques.

Time to use the restaurant there, then I was off to Lavenham, a picturesque Suffolk village with skew-whiff, colourful, buildings. And a few useful shops. Shown at their best in the sunlight. The stop at Long Melford on the way back was less impressive. I had too much time to admire the church's scaffolding, and those who went into the village itself weren't too enthused. Thankfully the ice cream van saved the day by supplying wonderful ices.

I was easily able to choose three pictures to print A3 size, to replace the ones in the kitchen from last year's holiday. All three are of buildings : the Abbey Gateway, Ickworth House, and the Angel Hotel.

The memories live on, though are fading after a few months back in the real world.

Happy Filming, Melvyn Dover



Film making Projects for 2024

Alan Sinclair

Talks us through his planned projects for 2024

Well the days are lengthening again even way up here in sub arctic Caithness, so my thoughts turn to what film projects I am going to undertake for 2024.

Having treated myself in February to a new semi professional video camera, the Panasonic HC-X1500 , purchased with the optional additional handle fixture to turn it into the HC-X2000 ; the only difference between the two is the handle is included in the HC-X2000 as is a 3G-SDI output for external recording, something I do not really need.



This will replace my trusty Panasonic HC-VXF990 4K camcorder, although I may still use the lighter camera for filming in the mountains.

Having just finished my film "Fly By the Flow Country" at the end of December 2023, I am waiting to see how it fares at BIAFF 24.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXvHASvr6qw>

My main project for this year is to make a film of the North West Highlands UNESCO Geopark. The early doors title I have come up with is "Three Billion Years in the Making". This will be quite an ambitious project, challenging me as I have to learn new techniques in terms of 3D animated effects.



The Geopark covers a huge area (2,000 square Kilometers , 770 square miles) but is a very sparsely populated area (only 2,000 people), stretching from Loch Eriboll on the Far North West coast of Scotland to Knockan Crag just north of Ullapool.

This area is unique geologically as it contains a world class array of rock types starting with the three Billion years old Lewisian Gneiss, by far the oldest rocks found in Europe and only found in the Western Isles and this north west strip of Scotland.



Oldest rocks in Europe

The other rock types found in succession above the Lewisian Gneiss are, Torridonian Sandstone , Cambrian Quartzite, Pipe Rock , Serpulite Grit , Durness Limestone/ Marble and Moine Schist's .



Lava extruded into Gneiss Sandwood Bay

What I want to show in this film is how the current landscape came to be, when 400 million years ago (before the opening of the Atlantic ocean) a continental collision created the Caledonian mountain chain stretching from Northern Norway through Scotland , Greenland , Labrador and the Appalachian mountains in North America.

What happened next is what created what we see today. The Moine rocks which stretch all over Northern Scotland , with the exception of Caithness were "THRUST" over the basement rocks and this stopped at the edge of the MOINE thrust fault which runs the length of the eastern perimeter of the Geopark.

The rocks on the western side were left relatively untouched by the thrust, where the rocks follow the normal time layering (oldest to youngest), but inland we can see the massive movement of folded rocks where three billion year old Lewisian rocks were thrust over much younger rocks. This is very difficult to imagine, but my plan for the film is to animate the thrust fault moving over the North of Scotland.

In addition, I want to demonstrate using different coloured layers of sand being squeezed in a virtual enclosed glass sandbox from one end to form the crumpling of the layers that form the thrust fault. I will be looking for some 3D augmented reality software to try and create this "sandbox" effect.



Alan Sinclair continues ...

So far I have brainstormed the key points I want to deliver and highlighted the best locations to film with my camera and drone. It will take a few trips over to the west coast in May and June to get all the necessary footage. I hope to work on the animation side of the film when I am over in Canada.

I plan to take my drone up to the summit of Stac Polly in the Geopark, to get some nice shots of the southern Geopark area and circling around the Torridonian Sandstone eroded mountain top.

There are various large road cuttings in the area that have a wall of ancient Lewisian rock in pale pink with Black Magma stripes injected into the rock a billion years or so later. These are so unusual and stunning to see.

I have always had an interest in Geology, hill walking and film/video, so this fits well with my plan to make a film that shows this world famous scenic area at its best, but also clearly how it came to be, as we see it now.

I hope to finish the film by the end of this year but it may go into 2025.

Project Two

My second project for 2024 is to make a short film of my partner Ann Ross making a fused glass art piece in her studio near Wick.



Autumn Glory Drape Vase

The film will take us from drawing board, preparation, kiln firing, to the final piece of glasswork. Working with Glass is challenging, hopefully I will get across the attention to detail, artistry, science and fluidity of the medium in the kiln. This will be filmed over a few weeks and for the first time for a film of mine since 2017, no drone shots in it at all.

Alan Sinclair



After an enjoyable Christmas social, which included a quiz, we started the New Year with a Four Minute film competition. There were 11 entries, covering a wide range of genres. Judging was by members' vote. The winner was "Sparkle in your Eyes" by Karen Cripps. Second was "The Typical Dream of a Home Alone Adolescent Who Watches Too Many Movies" by Tom Sandford, and third was "Life in the Slow Lane" by Brian Hibbit.

Oli Seaman thinks that might have been the greatest number of entries in a single competition the club has ever had.

Our January meeting was a "double bill" – two speakers on very different subjects. We started with John Hicks on music for films. Quite apart from a very interesting and useful talk, John is completing a degree course, and was required to compose some film music as part of his course work. For members who were lucky enough to have a film at the right stage of progress, there was the prospect of having music composed for it for free! There was a very tight deadline however.

After Tea/coffee, we had Karen French talking about symbolism in film making. Few of us are, I think, aware of the origin and meaning of many of the shapes and signs we are accustomed to see around us, and Karen's talk gave us some insight.

February 6th was another practical evening. Shooting for 3 films with "green screen" content was done.

Charles Elsdon, [FVM](#)



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Sydney Trip 2023

Gary Peterson

From Australia
Tells of his Sydney
Trip in 2023

On Thursday the 21 December 2023 I commenced a rail journey which could have easily turned into the trip from Hell at the least it was Organised Chaos. At least it was cheaper to travel from Brisbane to Sydney than from Maryborough West to Brisbane because I could use my Opal Card.

I had been pre warned that there was track work being carried out around Brisbane and on the NSW System, so it was a double whammy for the holidays, but better to upset the holiday traveller than the regular commuters. Who in their right mind carries out track work during the busy holiday period ... the Railways of course?

Readers, please note this is not a complaint in any way, but story of a Journey which I will remember for many years to come, over many other railway journeys which have gone without a hitch.

I joined the Rockhampton electric Tilt Train at Maryborough West at 10.58am to travel to Brisbane and arriving at 2.50pm. Business Class was fully booked so I travelled Economy Class which arrived in Brisbane at the same time, but the but the seats were not as comfortable and they tend to squeeze more seats into the carriage.



Tilt Train - Electric



Tilt Train - Economy Class

I spent overnight in Brisbane and looking forward to joining the Sydney XPT the following morning at 4.55am (Queensland Time).

That was not to be, because I receive a Text and an email advising that the XPT had mechanical issues so I would have to join a coach at 5am for a trip to Grafton to join the XPT. I don't know why they didn't travel to Casino because it was closer.

The truth was, there was no mechanical issues with the XPT, it was the Queensland Railways who said because the XPT from Sydney was running an hour late the passengers would have to travel by coach to Grafton.

In reality the travelling passengers would have rather waited an hour in Brisbane for the XPT than have to suffer a three and a quarter hour trip in a crowded bus to Grafton which also added to its late running.



XPT - Brisbane-Sydney



XPT - First Class

By now we were running late and so was the Casino XPT travelling north ex Sydney so they arrived at Taree before us and we got held up on the approach to Taree. Then they told us the other XPT had been terminated at Taree. I said to a lady sitting next to me that the 'Powers That Be' would probably turn our train around at Taree and we'd finish the trip to Sydney by coach as that was the cheaper option and our train would go back to Casino.

About ten minutes later the Passenger Service Attendant (Conductor) told us Sydney wanted him to do the transfer, but he told them he wouldn't upset 382 passengers, and he would give the passengers their number so as everyone could ring them to complain, so the 'Powers' decided to let us continue through to Sydney. He doesn't know if he still has a job!

Because we had lost our running schedule, they then put us aside to keep the north running trains on time and that caused us to arrive in Sydney 90 minutes late so it was a very long day after waking at 2.45am.

It wasn't too bad a trip, a bit of an adventure. I'm just glad we didn't have to tranship at Taree because that is a bummer of a job to move nearly 400 people with their luggage onto coaches.

Homeward Journey

The Adventure begins ... again. We departed Sydney on the Brisbane XPT on time at 2.40pm and arrived in Casino at 1.30am to change into a coach to Brisbane. I slept better on the coach than on the XPT. We arrived in Brisbane at 5am and just about everything was still closed as it was still very early.

The Luggage Room didn't open until 8.45am to check your luggage in for transport North. Also the Waiting Room didn't open until 8.45am where you could sit at a table in the air con and the temperature was already 27 degrees and heading for 34. Heatwave warnings were already out and the seating on the Roma Street (Brisbane) Platform 10, left a lot to be desired because were the metal corrugated type which left indentations where you didn't want them. I think they were designed to move people along



Corrugated Platform Seat.

Across the road from the station I found a small coffee bar to get a cuppa and another one selling bacon & egg rolls for \$3, so I grabbed one of those for Brekky. Then I found a loo on the station to change my clothes into a clean shirt and shorts. Have a shave, clean my teeth and then I began to feel normal. I had a nine hour stopover before I departed for Maryborough West.

At 8.45am I went to book my suitcase in as it weight 18 Kgs and it would save me lugging it onto the coach and train. Generally when it is a train all of the way you can book your case in and leave it there and forget about it, but because we were starting our journey on a coach, after I booked the case in I was given it back because I was required to take it to the coach for loading.



Gary continues....

I thought that was ridiculous as I thought they would load it onto the coach.

So that quickly curtailed any idea of doing the tourist bit and having a bit of a look around Brisbane. I made my way to the Waiting Room to get out of the heat, but a homeless person had beaten me to the room and had set themselves up in a corner to have a sleep. I made sure that I was sitting at a table on the other side of the room. I also had access to a power point so I could charge my mobile.



Tilt Train - Business Class

We boarded the coach at about 3.15pm and I had a front row seat reserved in my name because I had kicked up a bit of a stink about travelling by coach and I had a crook knee. When we boarded we were given a brown paper bag meal of a sandwich and cake, juice and water. It was organised chaos, but things went relatively smoothly and we were looked after.

It was about a three hour trip to Gympie where we'd boarded the Tilt Train to Maryborough West where I'd catch the last coach to my final destination. One coach on the way to Gympie over-heated at Nambour and was delayed whilst they waited for it to cool down.

That made us late departing Gympie. We arrived in Maryborough West about 20 minutes late.

A most memorable trip ... both ways and I'd do it again.

Gaz Peterson

ED: Until recently Gaz was the editor of Australian Mover Maker before it folded. Whilst his article is not about film making, it could be the basis of a plot for a movie!

Many thanks for your contribution.



Harold Trill

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Harold Trill, many new him as Harry. He was 94, died in early January and his funeral took place in February 2024.

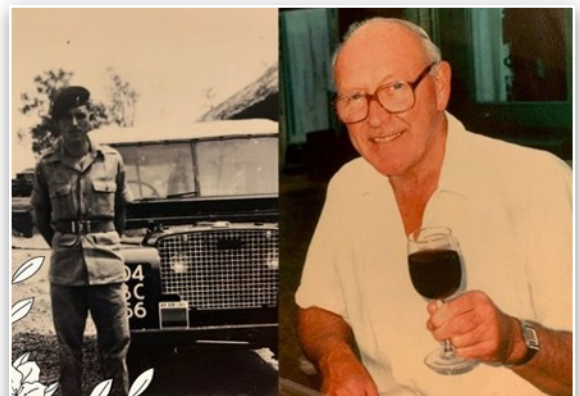
I first met Harold and his charming wife Massie at one of the SoCo Weekends back in 2007. Each year I would look forward to sitting and chatting with them about films, family, this and that. A True gentleman.

Tom Hardwick said, "I exchanged many an email and he was always full of questions and thank yous. He had a mobility scooter so that he could get out and about and continue filming. He'd cared for Maisie for ages, and in August 2022 he confirmed that he'd bought a spanking new laptop for his video editing. I patted him on the back, saying it would last him for years."

Howard Smith commented, "How sad. Filmmaker Harry Trill was a friend on Facebook for some time and even as recently as 1st January he "liked" my post about the Birmingham Film Festival. I didn't know him well but we occasionally met at festivals and he was always very friendly and complimentary. Another good man gone. RIP.

Rest well Harold

Pip Critten





Alan's Ramblings

Alan Wallbank

Shares his thoughts

I would like to begin by apologising for my spelling and missing word mistakes in these articles, as for sometime now I regularly keep pressing the wrong keys. I do read through after each time yet mistakes go unnoticed as they did the last time. I will do my best from now on, but nothing can be guaranteed I'm afraid.

When I made my church film last year, I had no choice but to include scenes from a film I made well over a decade earlier, although I hoped the scenes could be replaced with those from the present day.

The church sits on a mound in the middle of a field about 200 yards from a country lane. Between the lane and the church there is a wooden ground level footbridge that is bypassed nearly all the time, but in times of persistent rainfall aquifers in the south downs overflow, causing the excess water to come out of the ground, literally. The water flows over roads, into man made ditches and through fields as it has done for many centuries. It even bubbles up through roads causing surfaces to break up, as seen in my film 'titled 'Natures Way' from 2008 when I spent hours paddling about in flooded locations recording the effects of this phenomenon.



The water flow is known as the 'Lavants' and are problem for all areas close to the Downs, as it was in Chichester several years ago. You will no doubt realise that the water runs through the field where the wooden bridge is located requiring church goers and walkers to cross it over flow.

When I filmed here on the previous occasion, I was using my Sony Hi 8 camera in the 4x3 format and used those scenes for the present 16.9 film. Since that time I have been waiting for the Lavant's to rise again so it was in mid January that I donned my Wellington boots and headed for the church. Quite often this is not possible as the flooded roads become impassable, but fortunately I managed to get through.

The day was cloudless, very cold with a stiff breeze, yet with camera and tripod in hand I ventured into the flooded field to capture the required scenes. An added

bonus was to see people crossing the bridge. I then took a footpath around the church, through fields and up onto higher ground where I could film the flood water flowing down the valley and out to sea. I knew I had 'crossed the line', but it worked well in the 2008 film so saw no problem doing it again. The new scenes have now been replaced in the church film and what a relief to have it done now as the 'Lavant's' don't rise every year.

A couple of weeks later I was at Wickham in Hampshire doing pieces to camera for my last proper film, this one about West Meon Railway Line that ran between Fareham and Alton. It closed to passenger trains in 1955 and all trains in the south on 30th April 1962, the day I started work on the railway as an engine cleaner at Eastleigh. I have finished the first part which covers the lines history and in the coming months I will be discovering what remains of the line today.

An 8 ½ mile section from Wickham to West Meon is now a footpath and cycle route, too far for me to walk with camera and tripod although I have walked for about 1 ½ miles, but then obviously I had to retrace my steps. There are locations where I can leave the trail so one would think that all I had to do was to take my car to that point and walk another 1 ½ miles, but unfortunately, there is absolutely nowhere to park the car. Ideally, I could ask my cameraman to walk with me and we make a day of it so we can go a bit further, but the people I rely on don't want to walk anywhere! I do have an option and that is to cycle half way with the camera in a rucksack and the tripod across the handlebars and return then do the same back from the trails end at West Meon, but I haven't ridden a bike since my school days! Also, I am not of an age where this can be easily achieved, but I am running out of ideas.

Film Show

If anyone is interested, I am putting on a film show for the West Meon Railway group on the 9th April. The films will be all mine and begin with a requested repeat of my Cuban steam, followed by the replacement of Copnor bridge near Fratton and one on Lavant Railway Station. After the break we have my Meon Valley film. The doors open at 19.00 and the show starts at 19.30. Entry fee is, I believe, £4 as it is at all of their meetings. The address is St. Peters Church Hall, Free Street, Bishops Waltham, SO32 1EE.

Help please

Last time I mentioned the 16mm film that I had acquired and I did receive a voice mail from someone, but they didn't get back to me. Could that person get in touch again as I am desperate for some help. The phone signal is so bad here that my phone does not ring every time, but voicemails get through.

I have run some films through the projector, but due to the way the films have been stored the spools have become compressed, causing the feed spool to grip the film and stops it from leaving the spool. I overcome this by holding the spool apart as it leaves same, but meantime the take up spool is running too slow and I finished up with film everywhere! If anyone can help please use these contact details.

Phone 07889154853

or email alan46exdriver@virginmedua.com



Robert Paget

Tips, advice and
chit chat.

This and That

When I was told that my daughter was being given an analogue still camera and colour filters as part of Christmas presents, I had serious doubts of whether that was a good idea, but said nothing.

I was still working at improving my skills filming with my phone, which I consider to be the most basic of video cameras. I had already found the great advantage of it being always available in my pocket, discreet and never failing to produce better results than expected.

No instructions

When you purchase a phone, there are virtually no instructions, and certainly none for the camera functions. In the last twenty five years, on the rare occasions I upgraded video cameras as image quality moved forward significantly, my first purchase of an accessory was a wide angle lens convertor.

It used to be the marketing ploy to promote massive zoom ranges of video cameras, but some had a poor wide angle. For many it may still be the dream of having a telephoto lens which they can barely support, although we all now expect image stabilization in various forms.

A family member demonstrated the telephoto abilities of the three lens iPhone 15, and it is remarkable in terms of image quality. It proved to me that "telephoto" still sells the camera product to the man in the street. What did amaze me was that a simple video clip of people walking towards the camera could be played back with different choices of who you wanted to be in focus. Video "focus stacking", and viewed simply by touching the phone screen.

But make no mistake, the phone manufacturer is just making certain that you want to buy their very expensive product, and they will not want it to last forever. If they could make more money building washing machines, they would switch to that product immediately.

Converging

I realized that the lens I preferred to use for video on my phone was the standard lens and not the wide angle. Although it could perhaps have added to image stability when handheld, converging verticals of buildings at the edges of the image may not be what I would want in every wide shot, but what I was warming to was the image stabilization.

It does not match the optical stabilisation system of a pro level video camera, but it had encouraged me to attempt shots at 60fps holding it up towards the sky with outstretched arms, whilst twisting my body round to add a rotation effect. Filming clouds and doing the same during a gale force wind produced very useful clips.

Experiments with a filter holder clip, which I can place over the phone lenses, has enabled me to reduce the very high shutter speeds in bright light, which will be one of the telltales that you have been filming on a very basic camera. Those high shutter speeds are still an issue on the iPhone15 in cinema mode.

Thinking about my daughter's foray into using an analogue still camera and coloured filters, I rummaged through a box of Hoya filters of various thread diameters plus Cokin graduated filters I used to use on my 35mm Nikon FG20 with Nikkor lens. It reminded me just how lightweight, unobtrusive and easy to handle that camera was.



Since I was still experimenting with getting the best out of my phone as a video camera, my wife bought me a set of four graduated colour filters plus star filters for my birthday, but this time with the larger 58mm phone clip holder. The 58mm diameter also fits two 4K video cameras, a 1080p Canon G30 which now gets little use, and a DSLR. The beauty of the very crude attachment of the clip to the corner of the phone means that you can easily reposition it to position the colour grading to the best effect, just as you would with a Cokin style holder.

My collection of Canon convertor lenses included a 1.4x tele convertor with 58mm thread. I had purchased it ten years ago to fit my G30, and in theory was just what I need to film dredgers and excavators one hundred yards away. I had thought it a bargain price, but found it had a very small exit lens which was partly masking the video camera lens, and I only took one video clip with it. Attached to the phone clip, it works superbly, and with only a tiny amount of vignetting which can easily be cropped from 4K footage. A very solid Eumig Makro lens which I bought years ago at a cine auction, for a few pence, fits the phone clip. It has already enabled a photo of an eye and eyelashes filling the frame with the reflection of a window from the surface of the eye.

Enthusiasm

The enthusiasm of filming with a new camera or accessory can melt away very rapidly if you have little to film. Watching an old "Parkinson" (BBC TV) interview, Sir John Betjeman made a wonderful statement of what he considered to be the secret of life. I paused the hard drive recorder to replay it, and that is one of the opening quotes in a film I made in January.

I had started the day watching a YouTube film about a steam locomotive in France. The closing sequence was of steam and smoke rising dramatically from the 4-8-2 loco, and a poetic narration from "La Bete Humaine". After watching a critique of the controversial "La Haine" with a new short trailer, my second cup of coffee that morning was accompanied by learning more about renowned street photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, and that provided another quote which relates to everything we need to think about if we are trying to improve our camera work.

The previous day I had shot a sequence of reflected light, water and canal boats. It had all been on my phone and shot in less than an hour. My ambition had been to master how I dealt with the internal reflections between phone lens and sensor. My video camera with internal ND filters reduces any such effects dramatically. If you are using say the ND32 filter to reduce focus depth or deal



Robert Paget continues....

with strong light, the unwanted reflection from the sensor has to pass through the ND filter again to hit the lens rear, and a further time for that reflected light making a second journey towards the camera sensor. That gives ten stops less illumination than the rest of the recorded image.



I presume that the phone sensor is being moved by a micro device (MEM), and possibly between individual recorded video frames to achieve stabilization. Unless you have clamped the phone to a tripod, tiny phone movements translate into rapid movement of a blue flare across the image, and I have not found a way of switching off the stabilisation. Since I was filming with "smart HDR" enabled, was internal software combining parts of frames being detected via the second lens?

I was possibly becoming too obsessed with this optical artefact, but concentrating on detail and avoiding errors, at every stage of film making, does make a difference. Beauty often lies within imperfections, so perhaps I should have greater concerns about the lack of "flicker" setting to correct the annoying effect from electronic signs and lighting.

I had watched online amateur films made in Europe filmed in 6K and 8K with upmarket lenses. It was the same style of subject I was currently tackling with strong winter light, and there were noticeable blue-coloured internal reflections. More noticeably, the film maker had not exploited the potential to crop the image or to concentrate on details. I am sure he was pleased with the result from the latest high end mirrorless camera bodies, but the films took you nowhere and lacked story, personality and gloss. By comparison, I felt that the image stabilization on my phone had held its head against such upmarket equipment, and "punched above its weight".

Together with the opening quotes, I had the elements to start planning and editing "Putting MOTION into a Film". It will not be on YouTube or entered into competitions, because it is intended to support a talk or demonstration later in the year. I even managed to film a "star-lapse" sequence of the Orion constellation rising over our back garden, using an Osmo Pocket2 with 3.5 second exposures and 4 second intervals at ISO 1200.

Many of us spent years trying not to move our cameras and to let the subject do the moving. It became the muscle memory of the way we used the camera, but film making has moved on. Modern camera image stabilization, alongside gimbals, sliders and drones has transformed what we can achieve. One of the aspects of this can be holding the interest of an audience, where boredom thresholds may be down to parts of a second.

My experimental film explores the quest for movement within a shot, and that cropping 4K footage may reveal tiny unexpected details which you never spotted in the viewfinder. The edit gives you further

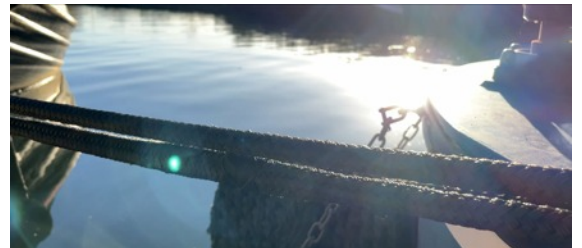


opportunity to add very slow pans and zooms to shots which initially say very little, but become alive and meaningful when you work on them.

Lessons learnt

Producing this film taught me a few things about those unwanted internal lens reflections. I had demonstrated ways to put them off screen, but by the end of editing the opening film three-minute sequence to a music track, I was including them for artistic effect.

I had pressed the phone against the steel piling on the canal bank to film the stern of a boat, but had locked the focus on the sun-bleached wooden edge. When cropped, the shallow depth of focus became prominent.

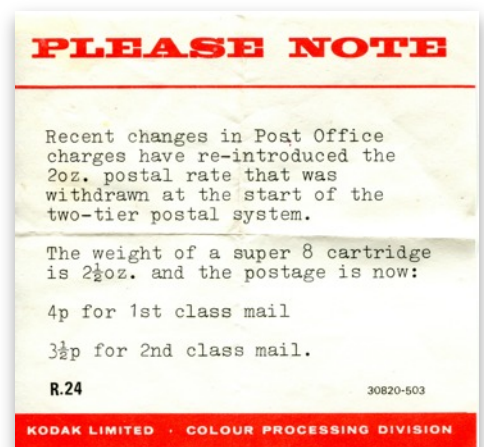


There was little of the frame in focus except for one corner, and I was surprised that my attention to movement was in the out of focus background where strong sunlight was bouncing off gently moving water. It had become an additional visual point of interest, and which I had not seen in the viewfinder. This was a shot which exceeded my expectations, and provided the visual "feel" I was trying to achieve.

It related to the opening quotes I was using, which refer to the important roles in photography of the Eye, Heart and Mind.

Robert

P.s. - Found this note from way back when we used cine cartridges!

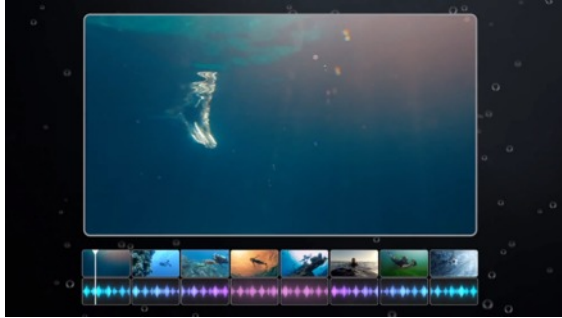




One To Watch

Text-to-film in ONE PROMPT

<https://youtu.be/AvNGr98Kf3k?si=F0y-JVuhrZlfoMRc>



A few from Pip Critten

10 'HERO SHOTS' Using a Gimbal

<https://youtu.be/WiHtMIB8Rgs>



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhLzYT1BpWQ>



Cloning a YouTuber's Voice with AI - Unbelievable Results

<https://youtu.be/RuilXSp5Uk?si=7vfl8VXQGk1X0NnL>



Virtual Production Explained: LED Volumes VS. Greenscreens

https://youtu.be/viWaq1zHCwl?si=ELjOOPakdvH7_ETk



Best Free Assets & Plugins for Filmmakers

<https://youtu.be/Kxs-7ltNbP8?si=G5WEKbuBqKlyD1of>



How to Direct Actors, Advice from the Greats

https://youtu.be/kDzUx6t09tg?si=2s4c7-RVgE_fiUWm



The Witcher's Stunt Coordinator Breaks Down the Vilgefortz Fight Scene

https://youtu.be/N4b_kTNws6s



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