

Beginnings

The *Western Daily Press* of January 8th 1934 reported, under the headline BRISTOL CIVIC HEADS SHOT - BUT ONLY WITH CINE CAMERA, a rather splendid, and for us historic, film show. There was a picture of some well starched, wing-collared and pin-striped gentlemen, brandishing movie cameras, accompanied by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Bristol at the Royal Hotel, College Green. This has often been quoted, as the first meeting of what is now the Bristol Cine Society. Research has shown that it is not quite as easy as that. This in fact was a showing of prize-winning films in the 1933 amateur movie competition of the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers. The probable purpose behind it was to launch an IAC - fellowship in Bristol: these fellowships were similar to earlier Kodak ones and were intended to provide a means by which I.A.C. members could meet and exchange films and information. A number of these were set up in various areas and Mr. Leslie Froude, present President of the Institute, remembers setting one up himself. He also recalls visiting Bristol about this time and attending a public show. He stayed with Mr. Bodenham, the Dental surgeon (whose name appears on the *Burris Cup* twice just before the war). Mr Froude says that he went with his host to visit Cheddar on the following day and this show was probably the one reported.

The Lord Mayor promised to do all he could to help the new movement which was to be called the *Bristol Fellowship of Amateur Cinematographers* (Western Branch). The branch was formally opened the following year. While Leslie Froude says that "as I recall none of the Fellowships developed into actual Cine Societies, though it seems possible that some of the members, having met through the Fellowship, later grouped themselves into societies to make films".

The Bristol Fellowship began meeting in each other's homes and there is a newspaper report in July 1934 of the third meeting at St. George Vicarage - the home then and for many years of Canon Gay. New members were coming along.

Mr Clifford Stephens, a pre-war chairman and 1947 Burris Cup winner, says that the group's title seemed far too big a mouthful and was shortened to *Bristol Amateur Cinematographers*. Its affiliation and connection with the I.A.C. seems to have lapsed after the War. Mr. Stephens produced *Impromptu* and the first major production, *Our Good Neighbours* and took charge of the club's film library until the restart of activities after the War in 1947.

The show reported by the *Western Daily Press* is recalled by Cyril Sage - another dental surgeon - who, though not a member of the group at this time, later became a prominent member of the Cine Society. He went to the show as a schoolboy. The programme, he says consisted of four 16mm and one 9.5 mm - the latter has disappeared from I.A.C. library and records.

The 16mm films were:

Egypt and Back with Imperial Airways
A Village in Austria
Winter in Westminster
Her Second Birthday

The latter film is still in the library of BCS and Mr. Sage reminds us that this was made by a Mr. and Mrs. Thrubron in 1932 (it was 150 ft black and white) and was a "rather corny personal record" but made memorable by the fact that the small subject of the film grew up to be June Thorburn, the actress, who died in tragic circumstances some years ago.

At this show it was announced by W.E.Chadwick, founder, hon. secretary and treasurer of the IAC that Mr. F.G.Warne "who had done so much for amateur films in Bristol" had been awarded a Fellowship of the Institute. It appears that invitations went out to people who appeared on the film lending library list of Messrs Salansons. The early productions were made under the name *Bristol Amateur Cinematographers* but by 1954 the connection with the IAC had gone and the members were now calling themselves the *Bristol Amateur Cine Society*. The word "amateur" was dropped in 1956.

There is some evidence, however, that the club existed before the January 1934 Royal Hotel meeting at which it has been supposed the Society was formed. Leslie Froude thinks that *Bristol Amateur Cinematographers* was in existence before 1934 and both A. Parsons and Canon Gay thought that the group was first formed about 1930, that the IAC Fellowship was set up later containing mostly the same people, but that the BAC, having become affiliated to the IAC later broke the connection and continued as a film making society on its own.

The Bristol Fellowship of the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers (Western Area Branch) was formally opened at a meeting on May 25th 1935 at the Chemistry Lecture Theatre of Bristol University. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and a large audience were present when the articles of Association were handed to the chairman Mr. Ernest Burris, by the Lord Mayor. As a report has it: the Branch being formally opened and the room lights lowered, and after the National Anthem had been played, the Show began. The programme was opened with a local film taken by a number of members of the Bristol IAC Fellowship. This was a very full account of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations in Bristol and although marred in places by over-panning it was of very great interest.

Chairman of the branch: E.H. Burris

Secretary: E. Temple Robins

President of the Western Area Branch: Lord Apsley

The Institute of Amateur Cinematographers precedes our Society, having started in 1931 and being registered as a company in 1932. W. E. Chadwick was the first Hon. secretary. "In 1935, Chadwick had the idea of an Institute catering for both amateurs and professionals" writes Leslie Froude, President of the IAC. It was decided to form the British Institute of Cinematography which would absorb the IAC together with its officers; but the venture was short-lived since the pros were not really interested in the set-up. The IAC was pulled out of the muddle and from then on operated as a separate organisation.

The *Bristol Cine Society* became an affiliated club of the IAC in 1982.

A home for the society

In the early days before the 1939-45 War, members appear to have met in each others' homes: St. George's Vicarage is mentioned on a number of occasions (the home of Canon Gay). In the early fifties a room at the Hawthorns Hotel in Woodland Road was used. In 1954 there came the start of a period in Room 45 at the Royal Hotel, College Green. From 1960 to 1962 we met at the Full Moon, North Street - since disappeared. At the end of the summer of 1962 a move was made to the Becket Hall, St Thomas Street; and a notice appeared in the *Evening Post* prior to the first meeting there that caused all kinds of confusion. The paper got its saints mixed up and members collected in the region of St Stephens Church, the other side of Bristol Bridge.

The Becket Hall was thought to improve club evenings considerably. There was difficulty in blacking out in summertime; but when the winter arrived, the inadequacy of the gas fires set high above our heads was apparent. Drips from the ceiling worried some, with the occasional fall of a tile. These matters sent us scampering to the Lewins Mead Unitarian Meeting Hall. The first meeting there was in April 1966. There we enjoyed a rare visit from our President, the much travelled Sir Arthur Elton; but it was a short lived venue. Frankly we found the room not over-clean; and on May 9th 1967, by a majority decision, another search for the ideal home saw us move to the "well-appointed and comfortable" Music Room of the Folk House off Park Street. There were clear advantages here. A bar with tea and coffee amenities; in theory opportunities for increased membership from the clientele of this Adult Education Centre. Perhaps it was the shape of the Music Room that was not ideal for our purposes; and another move was made. Readers may think that all this proved that the club was hard to please. Be that as it may, this next move in 1969 has lasted until the present (1984) 7, Charlotte Street, off Park Street, the premises of the Bristol Lions Club,

The wish for our *own* premises has been in the back of people's minds and at one time in the forefront of committee discussions. In 1959, before inflation made our dreams a little hazy, the following advert appeared in *Newsletter* of BCS....

WANTED. Loft, barn or cellar for society anxious to find permanent roof over head.
Quiet, peace-loving, not given to rowdiness. Would like tea-brewing facilities. Electricity essential.

An echo of all this is found in the 1974 AGM minutes when amalgamation with the Arts Centre in King Street was discussed. Use of the Centre's Cinema would be free but they would keep entrance monies unless we charged *more than 30 or 40p*. Seating was only 24 more than the Wills Hall Cinema, which was often used at this time. It was decided at the May committee following to have nothing more to do with this matter.

The early film library of the society

The Film Librarian's records from the early days of the club is in the society's archives. 25 films were listed in a book with the dates of borrowers and their names. 22 of these films were sent from the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers' library. They came from Mr. Ralph A. Cathles, honorary librarian of the IAC and were sent to E. Temple Robins of 98, Brynland Avenue, Bishopston. The accompanying letter is dated 4th April 1936 and is written on IAC notepaper. It confirms the view that this society had its beginnings in the IAC. Pencilled figures on the back of the letter suggest that the films comprised some 7670 feet of 16 mm and the writer regretted that he could not spare any 400 ft. reels or cans,

Borrowers include the following names :- E.H.Burris, Canon Gay, Dr.Philips, M.Bodenham, Dr. Courtney. Some borrowed by post, others collected the films by hand. Charges for borrowing for September, October, November and December 1936 and the first three months of 1937 amounted to £2. 8s 6d with outgoings of 4 shillings which was made up of 2s. 6d for the well bound book for recording borrowers etc. (12½p) and 1s 6d for postage of a film to Cornwall.**

A library list dated 1950 shows 14 films in all (10 of the 1936 ones). The new 4 were:-

- *Visit to Wookey* (50 ft) Record of a B.A.C. excursion. (B.A.C. = Bristol Amateur Cinematographers)

- *Albert's Treasure Box* (BAC film of 1949)
- *Jubilee Celebrations* (1935 1½ reels)
- *Long Ashton Research Cider Institute* (Documentary 1936)

Mr Burris went to Cornwall on holiday for **two months in August 1936 and took five library films with him. *Happy Day* and *Easy Come* were the most popular of the IAC films in those early years while Rev. Mr. Gay, Drs Philips and Courtney with Mr. Glasspool, Messrs Bodenham and Owner were avid borrowers.

A little local difficulty

Sometime in 1952 Ken Pople wrote to Mr. Malthouse, then Editor of *Amateur Cine World*, organisers of the *Ten Best* film competition. He said that he was writing on behalf of the BCS committee in connection with a rather difficult situation that had arisen over the showing of the *Ten Best* films in Bristol.

There were, it seems, a number of cine clubs in Bristol, of which BCS was the doyen. Two years previously the newly formed Phoenix Cine Club had decided to present the *Ten Best* independently with professional projection at Shepherd's Hall while ours would take place at the Ballroom of the Grand Hotel. The year before, both clubs had again showed the *Ten Best* but the Phoenix had made a prior booking to ours and had booked our usual venue, the ballroom of the Grand. They had therefore attracted many who attended their show under the impression it was organised by BCS. The projection on this occasion had given cause for some complaint, he wrote. BCS and Phoenix had failed to find agreement. Mr. Pople asked that the seniority of Bristol Cine Society be borne in mind when booking future programmes.

The flames of the Phoenix seem to have subsided soon afterwards for we hear no more of the dispute or of the Phoenix Cine Club.

Two-night film festival

In these days - the mid eighties - it would be the height of folly, economically speaking, to put on a two-day festival and book the ballroom of the Grand Hotel in Bristol for the event.

Not so in 1957 when BCS presented a two night film festival there. One evening was devoted to the Gold Star and other runners-up at the 1956 *Ten Best* competition. In addition three Bristol films were given a public airing.

They were..

- *The Clifton Suspension Bridge*
- *Just the Job*
- *Western Gateway*

On the second night the Ten Best winners were screened.

The Festival was honoured by the presence of the Lord Mayor of Bristol and the Lady Mayoress accompanied by the Sheriff and his lady.

The festival was featured on BBC West of England's Round Up programme. Ralph Egarr also gave a talk about the society.

The previous year had seen the first time showing of an 8 mm film in a large hall when 500 people saw the Ten Best at the Grand Hotel ballroom. All tickets had been sold a week before the night. A newspaper account of the evening observed that 20 of the actual 8 mm film frames could go on a postage stamp; and yet the film had been shown on a 10 ft by 8 ft screen.

What is the best amateur gauge?

The club meeting of 17th November 1959 answered emphatically the above question. The room was transformed into a court room with all the trappings; witness box, jury, exhibits and so on. On trial: the three film gauges. Bristol members, though never having at any time much sympathy for gauge-war enthusiasts, had decided to indulge themselves. Three scenes were set up for "simultaneous projection".

Ken Pierce acted as Judge with Howard Massey opening in defence of 16 mm which he recommended for cheapness. The Judge, at this point, had to quell the ribald remarks emanating from the public present. On cross examination, Howard admitted to owning £1200 worth of equipment but could not recall the name of any film that he had made. Fred Lorenz, in gown and wig, the latter made of 9.5 mm film (unexposed) put the case for the centre-sprocket gauge, pleading on its behalf the three freedoms: "Freedom from price, from splice and from vice". Asked to explain the latter, he referred, in puritan tones, to the 8 mm glamour films now on public sale. He even cited Henry Moore as one who favoured a hole in the middle.

A gentleman known as Double Run (the nom-de-plume of a writer in the magazine *Amateur Cine World* - now known as *Movie Maker*) put the case for 8 mm. Staggering under a great weight of 16 mm equipment, Junior Counsel entered the court room. The heaviest item, the projector case, was found to be empty.

The jury retired and on their return, in answer to the question: "How say you? What is the best amateur film gauge?" said "11.167 mm being an average of all three".

Note for young 'uns: They didn't have a Super 8 mm gauge in those far off days.

Double Run - mentioned above, carried on undercover literary activities for a very long time until the secret leaked out. We found that he was a member of our own BCS, Philip Grosset.

Friese-Green memorial plaque

Among the pioneers who contributed to the invention and development of the cinema, like Muybridge and Marey, Le Prince and Le Roy, Goodwin, Edison and the Lumieres, the Bristol-born William Friese-Green must take an honoured place.

In 1955 a plaque was affixed to the wall of No.12. College Street, College Green, Bristol, his birthplace and unveiled by the Lord Mayor of the City. Ken Pople made a film of the ceremony on behalf of the society (on September 7th 1955) and the film is in the club's library.

The house was demolished in 1958 (we have a habit of doing this sort of thing) to make way for the building of the new Council House on College Green; and the plaque was removed. It passed into the safe keeping of Reece Winstone and through his good efforts it was fixed to the wall at the rear of the Council House, nearest to the site of the birthplace and near the corner of the Rating Hall. The Society is named on the plaque as one of those organisations which originally donated money towards the plaque.

Thank you but no thanks

A letter was received from the Ministry of Transport, London dated 13th October 1961 which said:

Dear Sir,

I refer to your letter of 2/9/61 addressed to the Divisional Road Engineer, Cardiff, in which you asked permission for the Bristol Cine Society to be granted facilities for the making of a film of the construction of the Severn Bridge.

Your Society's offer to co-operate with the department in making a film is appreciated. While we appreciate your interest in the matter, I regret that under the circumstances...

Sequel:

On Thursday, 8th September 1966, H.M. the Queen opened the Severn Bridge, watched by some 10,000; and among the many cameramen, professional and amateur, still and movie, were members of BCS. The Society had not been able to have any special facilities, despite an application to Gloucestershire County Council; but three had tickets admitting them to the open stand. These three members split up to film from somewhat differing viewpoints - and one got into the press box.

The Odeon - Union Street

In June 1961 a large party of members visited the Odeon's projection box. *The Alamo* was being screened on Todd-A.O. 70 mm film and a report of the time says that 400 of the front stall seats had to be taken out to accommodate the 50 by 23 ft. screen. Now, of course, the Odeon, Union Street, has become (1974) a three-screen cinema; the old circle is the auditorium for one cinema while the ground floor, from front of circle to the back, has been divided into two cinemas.

ANNEIV

Among the films entered for the 1962 *Burris Cup* were four of note. H.A.Postlethwaite showed his skill as a cameraman with *November*; Les Perry was runner-up with his *Turkish Delight* (in the club library); Joe Higgins' story of the Bristol Avon, *Way To The Sea*, was declared the winner by the judge, Keith Hopkins of the BBC. The fourth was a 9.5 mm entry with the title ANNEIV. This seemed intriguing but then it was noticed that everyone had their coats buttoned up the wrong way. A strange European custom, we argued. Viennese traffic was keeping to the left as it had before the Anschluss in 1935. The maker: Fred Lorenz. The film was an impression of his birthplace... VIENNA.

The year 1963

As Doug Stevens, the secretary, wrote in *Newsletter* in January 1963, "If a lump of ice drops out of the envelope with this Newsletter, don't be surprised". The New Year party had to be postponed because of the "inclement weather" and, of course, the severe weather of the first months of the year is now a part of national folklore. Early in 1963 a suggestion was made that a newsreel on 8 mm be made covering notable events during the year. Suggestions were: The Castle Street Project, (by which was meant the extensive building in the area to replace the war damage of nearly 20 Years before); the Cumberland Basin Flyover project before work was commenced on it; Steam Locomotives before they disappeared entirely; the New Bedminster Bridge, before and after. In the event none of these was covered; but a film was made which should be of increasing interest as the years go by.

Jack Aston recorded the heavy snow of those bitter first months of the year as well as the violent gale that brought down the trees in Queen Square and twisted the bus shelters. He also covered the last show at the Embassy Cinema, near the Victoria Rooms, one of many Bristol cinemas to close at this period. A small unit shot scenes from the 75th Anniversary match between Bristol Rugby Football Club and an England XV at the Memorial Ground, Horfield, a game in which the players were nearly drowned in mud. The new experimental hovercraft service between Weston and Penarth was shot by Joe Higgins on Weston sands and other sequences included in the film were a Rush Sunday Service at St. Mary Redcliffe and "on location" with the team making *The Beavers Break Through* in the Mendips. In August of the year, after a long and outstanding period as programme secretary, Ken Pierce resigned due to pressure of work and Mr. Aston agreed to act as p.s. until the Annual General Meeting. Ken had not only arranged the programmes but for so long had conducted the meetings with efficiency and enthusiasm. The club owed him a lot for his work.

Thirtieth anniversary dinner

Because it had become a part of Cine Society folklore and accepted truth that 1934 was the year of foundation of the club, the members celebrated in appropriate fashion their 30th birthday. On 1st December 1964, at the Bristol Grill (which stood where Jacob's Wells Road leaves the Triangle) 45 members, with wives and friends, gathered to take a welcoming drink, a magnificent turkey meal with nothing spared as to trimmings and a piece of the birthday cake. The chairman of the time, the present writer, did himself an injury when helping Mrs. Cullimore cut the cake. Succinct and germane speeches delighted the gathering; and a conjuror enlivened still further the proceedings. The Guest of Honour was Mr. H.A. Postlethwaite, a founder member of the club and keen still photographer, who was evidently highly delighted to be offered that rare honour of honorary life membership of Bristol Cine Society. "Although I can no longer get to meetings, I very much appreciate the honour of life-membership of the society", he said.

By common consent the dinner was a happy and successful one and the club extended its thanks to Reg Middle and Ceda Skuse for their organising efforts.

The Bristol Cine Society Annual Trophy was instituted in 1964 as an open competition. At the same time the *Burris Cup* became a competition for holiday films only.

Winners

- 1965. BY THE SEA - Ron Elson
- 1966.
- 1967. SPIEZ - John Heming
- 1968. BREAD - Golden Unicorn Film Unit
- 1969. PRINKNASH POTTERY - Golden Unicorn Film Unit
- 1970. SMALL TIME SAILOR - Bob Howles
- 1971. THE BIG FLAP - Kennel Films
- 1972. DEAD MAN'S LAUGH - Kennel Films
- 1973. EDWARD JENNER - Golden Unicorn Film Unit
- 1974. THE CHAMELEON - Unit 70
- 1975. THE SOLDIER FROM THE SEA - John Rowcliffe
- 1976. EPITAPH FOR A KING - John Rowcliffe
- 1977. RETURN TO CRETE - John Rowcliffe
- 1978. MEETING PLACE - Graham Baines
- 1979
- 1980. GANNETS GALORE - David and Julia Norton
- 1981. REZANOV'S DREAM - John Rowcliffe
- 1982. S.S. GREAT BRITAIN - Don Smith RUBBISH - Brian Anderson
- 1983
- 1984

Films from abroad

Newcastle, the Grasshopper Group and Bristol Cine Society shared a project designed to show our members a number of films from foreign amateur cine societies. There were five programmes, each devoted to the films of a particular country... France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and USSR.

The Italian programme, in January, left members with the fear that the high standard of films displayed could not be kept up by the others: it was a programme worthy of the best of our *Ten Best*. The French films were adult in theme, of high technical competence and of a professional smoothness rarely achieved by amateurs. The German films were on the heavy, Wagnerian side but the Belgians had sent us comedy, drama and cartoons, including one of Herman Whuyts' films in black and white, an evening at a goods shunting yard. The facilities offered by the State to Russian amateurs may be part of the reason for the near pro. standard of their films. (Amateurs are offered discarded professional equipment, by the way). One of the films that was most enjoyed and will always be remembered was their *A Gift for Mother* in which two small boys raid the larder for ingredients to make a Cake as a birthday surprise for their mother with hilarious results.

Let's meet at the border

It was Sunday, June 11th 1965 and 11 members of the Crane Camera Club of West London were hoping to spend a day out in the capital of the West Country. BCS had agreed to act as their hosts for the day and show them something of the town. A car was to meet Crane at the Bristol Boundary on the A4 at 11.00 a.m. precisely. Members of the Bristol club found difficulty in locating the boundary sign and cars were sent into Keynsham to look for it. Enquiries were made at the Keynsham Police Station. It was then revealed that the sign had been removed. A search was then instituted for a marked change in road surface which might indicate a boundary of authorities and a sort of road block was set up. Members sat back and hoped. Norman Stacey, mounted on his inevitable motor bike (some had never seen Norman without his crash helmet), was sent on reconnaissance to Keynsham. Here he located them and escorted them to the old car park in Wine Street. It was then disclosed that Crane had already been into the centre of the city, had there enquired where they might find the boundary and had then headed back into Somerset. In spite of this Fred Karno's meeting, Bristol and Crane members spent a great day, touring on foot before lunch and by car afterwards. Still and cine cameras were much in evidence; and the best shot of the day was probably that of the Statue of King William III in Queen Square. H.M.'s hand was holding a red road-works lamp, evidence of some anonymous late night revels.

Something of the same organisation (less evident, we think, in our film making) was apparent later in the year when, on visiting Taunton C.C. three of the Bristol cars were lost in Taunton. They had been navigating with the aid of a map provided by the Somerset club: they had forgotten that one of the local landmarks, a pub, had changed its name. The police came to the rescue.

The year 1965

The Burris Cup, a competition for members' films, had been in existence from the early days. A new competition came into being this year. It was not meant to be a rival of the Burris Cup (which latter has now been reserved for holiday films) but an additional spur to members' film making activities. The first *Bristol Cine Society Annual Trophy* was fought for in April, 1965 when nine entries competed. A list of winners to date can be found elsewhere in this book. The trophy, a magnificent "Greek Urn" type of cup, was reputedly found by Reg Middle on a refuse dump and restored to more than its original glory. *By the Sea*, an 8 mm colour and sound-on-stripe film shot chiefly at Weston - except for one sequence at Weymouth - was awarded the trophy by judge and former chairman, professional film maker, Ken Pople.

Another new competition was born in 1965. It was conceived by Reg Middle, who has been in charge of it from then until 1979. A sub-committee was formed to draft rules and about 30 societies in South Wales and the West Country were informed. The *Best in the West* competition was to be eligible to clubs and individuals in those regions - except for members of BCS. A list of winners and of the trophies for the different classes will be found elsewhere.

The 1965 Annual dinner was a very special event with a great friend of the club, Keith Hopkins, as Guest of Honour. Keith, then film editor at the BBC, who came to the dinner with his wife, said: "I feel both glad and honoured to be the Society's special guest. It is extremely pleasant to be among such friendly hosts as yourselves and the society generally". Miss Ceda Skuse was responsible for the organisation of the function.

Len Brock, aged 53 who had been an active and enthusiastic member for many years, died in December.

Three films were planned. One called *The Sousaphone* on 8mm was directed by Les Perry and became *Late Hornblower*. *The Man with the Pictures*, a 16mm black and white film to be shot on negative stock was to be produced by Arthur Painter; and a film about Nursery Playgroups, to be a co-production by Philip Grosset and Anne Griffiths. Exactly what happened to this latter film is something of a mystery. It appears that without a firm signature on an agreement to make a film for the society, it became lost to the club. A similar fate overtook *Man with the Pictures*.

The Best in the West

It was Reg Middle who started it in 1966. The *Best in the West* amateur film competition, organised by BCS, has as its object the stimulation and encouragement of film-making in the West Country and South Wales. Films are invited from individuals and groups from a wide area - Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Dyfed, Gloucestershire, Gwent, the Glamorgans, Hampshire, Hereford and Worcester, Powys, Somerset and Wiltshire. Reg Middle has been its organiser from its inception until 1979 and gradually the competition has grown in status and importance within the amateur cinema movement. Films - of all gauges - compete for a number of trophies on a class basis. Members of Bristol Cine Society are excluded from the competition.

The following trophies are awarded:

- BEST IN THE WEST - Bristol Cine Society shield and Dixon's Challenge Cup
- Runner up - Ivor Wiltshire Memorial Trophy
- Best Travel Film - I.P.Cross Cup
- Best Animation film - Viv Fricker Rose Bowl
- Best Documentary - Emily Stacey Trophy
- Best Family Film - H.A.Postlethwaite Cup
- Best Fiction Film - Golden Unicorn Film Unit Trophy
- Best School or Youth Club film - Yvonne Cullimore Award
- Best Comedy film - Thalia Goblet
- Best Use of Sound - An award presented by Ron Elson

Reg. Middle handed over the organisation of the competition to his friend, Joe Higgins in 1979.

Winners of the *Best in the West* competition

- 1966 *The Queen Annes* - a documentary from Broadstone C.C.
- 1967 *Cafe Twist* - comedy by Cardiff Amateur Cine Soc.
- 1968 *A Visit to Long Island* - documentary by Bournemouth and New Forest C.C.
- 1969 *The Wiltshire Avon* - from Salisbury Cine Club
- 1970 *Chalkstream Country* - a documentary by Messrs East, Leighton and Miller
- 1971 *The Little Railway* - by Cardiff A.C.S
- 1972 *Gold In The Valley* - Geoff Adams and Clifford Smith of Stroud
- 1973 *The Pick Up* - Paul Willey of Taunton
- 1974 *The Adventures of Herman* - R.Abbott and D.Willmott of Morland C.C.
- 1975 *Malabar Masque* - A.D.Bolland
- 1976 *The Sand Wasp* - T.O.Darke
- 1977 *Kit and Helen* - Clifford Smith
- 1978 *Sprint Tide* - T.O.Darke

The 1974 *Best In The West* public show was memorable for the wit and great good humour of founder member, Rev Canon Percy Gay, vicar of St. George, Brandon Hill, who presented the prizes. His after the show remarks captured the large audience and nearly brought the house down at the Clifton College Theatre.

Aberfan Disaster Fund 1966

The whole country was shocked at the disaster which hit the Glamorgan mining village of Aberfan when a coal tip moved and engulfed the school and several houses causing terrible loss of life, particularly among the school-children.

A special programme of medical and educational films was presented by the society at the Museum Lecture Theatre, University Road, in aid of the Aberfan Fund. The films were either Bristol Cine Society productions or those of members.

The films shown were;

- *Marlborough House*
- *In Need of Special Care*
- *Claremont*
- *Back to Claremont*
- *Summer Holiday*
- *The Comfort Bringers*
- *The Helping Hand*

Five of these are discussed elsewhere but a note on the other two may be of interest. *In Need Of Special Care* (1964) was produced by John Heming and was concerned with the education of mentally handicapped children at

St.Christopher's School, Bristol. It won the *Burris Cup* and was awarded 4 stars in the 1964 *Ten Best. Summer Holiday* (1958) was Philip Grosset's story of a holiday camp for the diabetic children. It was a Gold Star winner in the 1958 *Ten Best* and won the Sir A.B.King prize at the Scottish Amateur Film Festival in 1959.

Flops and disappointments

In 1969 a budget of £50 was voted towards the making of what was called "the Art Film". This was to be a 16mm production with the subject of "photography as art". A treatment was prepared and two scenes were shot; but when John Heming, its director, declared that, for personal reasons, he would be unable to continue as director but would give all possible assistance as a member of the unit, the committee agreed to suspend activities temporarily. "Await the Spring" was the first intention; but the project was finally shelved altogether. All that exists of the "Art Film" is some not very inspiring footage that no-one has or possibly could do anything with.

In 1972 a phone call from Mr. F.Morton, retired Mental Health Officer, asked the club if there was any possibility of making a film about the activities of the Home Farm Trust, a registered charity dealing with the mentally handicapped. It was agreed, after many meetings and conferences, to go ahead with the production. With Reg Middle as producer and Joe Higgins as director, these two members with Ron Elson, who was to look after all the sound recording, went to Sheffield to look at Fairthorn, where a lot of filming was to take place. The Trust owned, at that time, three houses used as homes - Fairthorn, outside Sheffield, Frocester Manor, Stonehouse in Gloucestershire and the Old Quarries, Avening near Tetbury in the same county. Their registered offices were at Queen Square, Bristol.

Filming took place, with John Rowcliffe as cameraman, at all three houses and other sequences were shot in the churchyard at Frenchay and in the home of Ken Lee. At the latter location were shot important lip-sync scenes. Mr. Penny, resident manager at Fairthorn, took a prominent part in these shots with Ken Lee taking the part of the vicar. When most of the visuals had been completed and also the sound track prepared for final transfer, the committee of the Home Farm Trust was substantially changed: the new members took exception to the basic story-line (a fictional story was, for cinematic reasons, to lead the audience into visits to the three homes) which had hitherto been agreed upon. The Society was forced to suspend production. The question of what to do with the footage of film in the hands of the club - virtually the whole film - was never settled. It proved impossible to get the Home Farm Trust to come to any decision about this. The lesson to be learnt from the film - whose title was, by the way, *The Fortunate Ones* - was that, since members are amateurs and give their time and skills quite voluntarily and "for free", it is important that "paper work" be done to protect them and the Society from such abortive exercises.

Les Perry

On Friday, 5th February 1971, Les Perry died in Frenchay Hospital. He had been making progress after undergoing an operation on the previous Christmas Eve but had a sudden relapse. The news of his death at the age of 36 was received by members of BCS with shock and a great sense of loss.

He joined the club in 1959, held the offices of Chairman and Publicity Officer, and showed himself to be a talented film maker. He was in charge of the team that made *The Last Bus*, Top 8 winner and a copy of his own *Turkish Delight*, a visit to a Turkish and Sauna Bath, is in the club library. While details of his other films will be found elsewhere in this book, mention should be made of the fun he got from making *Doomed to Live*, a gruesome, horror comedy. His best work was reserved for comedy and he will be remembered for *Late Hornblower*.

His love of films was such that he turned professional and joined the Rolls Royce Film Production Department as a cameraman. It was widely believed that his talent and enthusiasm would mark him out for a bright future in films. He was a most kind and helpful member, always interested in the work of others. If success came to a fellow member, Les was as delighted as if it had come to himself. He holds a special place in the memories of those who knew him and made films with him.

Frederick Lorenz

Within a short time of the death of Les Perry, members were saddened to hear that Fred Lorenz had died too. We knew that he had been very ill, though we had hoped that he was on the road to recovery when he attended Les' funeral. His illness and the considerable duties of headmastership of Gordano School had prevented him from being an active member of the club for some time; but his past contributions to amateur film making and the Society had been considerable. He made or was associated with many of Bristol's most successful films: *To Have and To Hold*, *The Lady Beautiful*, *The Comfort Bringers*, *Venturer '61* etc. He was well known as a cine columnist and in 1967 had been joint presenter with Tony Rose of the BBC-TV series, *Making Home Movies*.

Fred was Austrian by birth: his mother had brought her young son out of the country at the time of the Nazi take-over. He was a very kind and likeable man with a wide cultural and intellectual background. He will be remembered for his humour and wit - many will remember his spoof film that went out on BBC TV one April 1st in which was described a *Spaghetti Farm* where iron filings were mixed with spaghetti seeds to produce harvest of already tinned produce which was harvested with mine detectors.

He was Chairman of the club in the early sixties. He left a wife, Valerie, and four young children.

In April of the following year, Ron Elson presented a *Tribute to Fred Lorenz*, by showing some of the films with which he had been associated and recalling Fred's days in the club.

Little to do with films

Newsletter of January 1971 contained a long and unsigned "article" on a subject generally regarded as remote from film-making. Students of style spread the rumour that the author was Roy Marshall (who later gave up his job in the aircraft industry, became a student at a College of Education and became a teacher).

"The addict could detect it five miles away, gently wafting across the trees, through the damp, night air - the tang of *Zummerzet zoider*". It appears that the alcoholic force which emanates from the factory of Coates at Nailsea attracted a number of BCS members much as vinegar flies are to a bottle of home-made elderberry plonk.

The writer was obviously carried away by his subject. He told the story of the Grand Tour of the factory "where the harmless little apple is changed into a mighty force, second only to nuclear power itself". It seems that they had to paddle across the press room where the apples are mangalized, towards the great Vats, "each one containing enough fire water to keep the whole of BCS in a state of constant inebriation for at least ten years."

The evening ended with what was described as "a delicious buffet, as much cider as they could drink and the viewing of a film about Coates and their jungle-juice".

It is said that they all reached home safely though no one has ever seen any film that they shot at the time. Perhaps it suffered from unsteady camerawork.

This was not the first time that an alcoholic excursion has been made in the history of the club - but you have to go back to 1936 when members were attracted to the Long Ashton Research Station and Cider Institute, They produced, on this occasion, a film, which is still in the club's library, to prove it. It is a rather long and very repetitive silent film with countless shots of blossom and some strangely reddish sequences.

Turkish delight

"I was looking over a *Movie Maker* magazine some time ago reading over and over the parts interested me when I met the fine words Mr. John Wright used for your club at the *Club Commentary* pages. These fine words attracted my interest so that at last I decided to write this letter which for years now I intended to write to an amateur cine club - to the best one of course".

This was the opening paragraph of a letter from Turkey in 1972 from John Steryo, Cihangir, Aslanyatagi sok., Yildiz ap. No: 33/13, Istanbul. "Dear Sir", continued Mr. Steryo, "the main aim of my letter is to ask you if I could have the honour to be one of your members. If yes, please write me as soon as possible what are your membership conditions and be sure that by saying yes you will have carried out what I have desired more in the world".

We offered Mr. Steryo membership and he accepted, sending his-sub, in Turkish lira. We all wished that we could have written back in Turkish. Thank you, Mr. Steryo, for your kind words.

Sir Arthur Elton, Bt. 1906 - 1973 10th baronet.

Sir Arthur Elton, of Clevedon Court, was the Society's second President, succeeding Ernest Burris in November 1955.

Arthur Hallam Rice Elton was educated at Marlborough College and Cambridge. He began his distinguished career in films when he joined the script department of Gainsborough Pictures in 1927. He joined the famous G.P.O. Film Unit from The Empire Marketing Board Film Unit and later held very many appointments and positions of many sorts. He was associated with Grierson and other film makers in work which made the British Documentary world famous. He joined Shell International Petroleum Company in 1957 in charge of films and television. He was later Shell's film adviser. He was also Film Adviser to the Danish Government. Upon his death in 1973, his son, one of whose Christian names was Grierson, succeeded him.

40th Birthday Celebrations

The birthday celebrations of Bristol Cine Society reached a nostalgic "high" on 17th September 1974 at a wine and cheese party at which several of the pioneers of the club from the "thirties" attended as honoured guests. Among them were Canon Gay and Clifford Stephens. The latter wrote afterwards: "Looking back over the years as one could last evening, the advances in filming techniques are obvious; but it still requires the same drive and enthusiasm of the members to 'make' a film as it always did. That endeavour is still very evident and is the life blood of the society". In sending his "Happy Returns" to the club he wrote of the party: "I suspect that they carried on in the manner which has kept them at the top all these years, setting an example to other clubs I feel sure BCS need neither Phylosan nor philosophy to fortify them in their over-forty feeling".

A special showing of *Films From Bristol* as a part of the 40th Anniversary celebrations featured the 1957 *Ten Best* winner *To Have and to Hold*, Ken Pople's *Clifton Suspension Bridge* and *Venturer '61* made for the Scout Association in 1961.

New competitions

Two new competitions that club members would be able to enter - thus encouraging them to make more personal films - were instituted in the seventies.

Les Hughes had arranged annual outings by coach - reviving an earlier tradition - and members were encouraged to shoot a record or an impression or the trip, either individually or in small groups. Ken Lee gave the trophy.

Winners of the *Trippers' Trophy* have been:

- 1975 (London) Bob Bennett
- 1976 (London) Ken Lee
- 1977 (Bournemouth) Harold Mayes
- 1978 (Minehead) Ken Lee

The *Quickie Competition*, an idea by Peter Ayngge, was meant for films of no longer than 5 minutes running time. Up to 1978 this was on a set theme. Joe Higgins gave the trophy for the "top quickie".

Winners:

- 1973 Ken Lee
- 1974 John Rowcliffe

- 1975 George Rose
- 1976 Steve Freestone
- 1977 George Rose
- 1978 George Rose

The Fortunate Ones ... the Unfortunate Film

You will not find this film in the BCS Film Library though the rough-cut, unfinished and silent footage can still be found in the club's archives.

This was to be a film made for the Home Farm Trust, a Bristol based organisation which aimed at having a Home for the mentally handicapped after school-leaving age, in every county of the kingdom. HFT started in 1962, bought and began a home in Gloucestershire, opened a second in 1969; and then opened Fairthorn near Sheffield in 1971. BCS was asked to make a film for them. It was begun on 16 mm with Reg Middle as producer, Joe Higgins directing, John Rowcliffe as cameraman and Ron Elson in charge of sound. Shooting was carried out at the Gloucestershire homes, at a gymkhana that the residents attended, and also at Fairthorn, Dore. Three visits were made to Fairthorn – the film crew staying overnight at the home. They shot the residents at lunch, in their workshops, walking on the moors, on their way to church and at the local pub. They shot scenes at a Youth Club where the residents had been invited. Lip sync. scenes were shot at Ken Lee's home and at a country churchyard (where Jim Brunton acted as the vicar). The storyline on which the "documentary side of the film" was to hang had been worked out in close conjunction with Mr. Penny, warden of one of the HFT's homes, and with the existing committee of the HFT. Just before the final fine editing, dubbing and preparation of the final copy, the new committee of the HFT objected to the story line. Agreement could not be reached between this committee and representatives of BCS: furthermore BCS could not get satisfaction - in fact no answer to their request that we use the completed film for competition purposes only (and not any wider showing) nor any answer to our request that some agreement should be reached about copyright and the possession of the footage. Sadly *The Fortunate Ones* became *The Unfortunate One*.

Viv Fricker

On Tuesday 7th February 1978 the Chairman, Ken Lee, accepted on the society's behalf a handsome silver rose-bowl, to be known as the *Viv Fricker Memorial Trophy*, to be presented annually to the winner of the animation class in the *Best in the West* competition. Viv and Harold Fricker were for many years regular and enthusiastic members of the club, both acting in *The Chameleon* and, with their daughter, in the Golden Unicorn's film *Edward Jenner*. The unexpected illness of Viv, borne with such courage, lost to us this valued member. Harold's presentation of the trophy will continue to remind us of our friend, Viv Fricker.

Film making course

During the 1978-79 winter season, members of the club ran a short course on 8 mm film making at the Westbury Adult Education Centre under the auspices of Avon Education Authority. Six evening lectures were given. Those taking part as lecturers were:-

Jack Baker, Mike George, John Rowcliffe, Ken Lee, Ron Elson, Peter Heaven, Jim Brunton and Bob Bennett.

Jack Greenland of Salansons

Jack Greenland, manager of H.Salanson and Co. Ltd., Fairfax Street, Bristol, the well known photographic firm, is an old friend of the society; and it is only proper to thank him here for the very many times that he has visited the club to talk about and demonstrate some of the latent developments in the cine field. In October 1979, at the end of a talk in which he showed members a Polaroid instant cine camera, Ken Lee the chairman, presented him with one of the society's ties (with the clapper board badge) in recognition and thanks for his services to the club and to the cine movement. In addition to his talks, he has on numerous occasions over the years, judged BCS competitions.

K.G.Spacie

Few of us knew for sure what the initials K.G. stood for: he was "Bob" to everyone. He was a most loyal and enthusiastic member of the club for which he had a considerable affection. Bob was a competent film maker (Burriss Cap winner 1977 for example) and took a prominent part in many of the club's productions. He enjoyed the social life of the club and looked forward to the annual club outings. Bob was a valuable member of the BCS Committee for some years and was at one time a most successful publicity officer. For some years he audited the accounts of the society in his usual meticulous and highly efficient fashion. His efficiency was nowhere more evident than his research work for the filming of the 1977 Jubilee film and his many arrangements with officialdom and participants, obtaining permission for our cameramen to film during the visit to the City of HM the Queen in favoured places. The club is indebted to him for starting the idea of keeping those archives that can be put into a scrapbook in that form. Scrapbooks 1 to 4 show how well this was done and No. 5 had been started. Geoff Flack is carrying on with the scrapbooks. Future "historians" of the club will find them as valuable as the present writer has found Bob Spacie's books.

In 1981 he suffered a slight stroke and he stood down then from his committee activities and from his post as Publicity Officer. He made a good recovery, returned to the club - helped by John Rowcliffe's offer of transport, and planned to resume filming with a new camera "in collaboration with Joe Higgins". Members were therefore shocked to hear of his death in 1982.

Chairmen of Bristol Cine Society since 1953

- 1953-54 C. H. Stephens
- 1954-55 A.E.Fuller
- 1955-56 A.E.Fuller
- 1956-57 R.Egarr
- 1957-58 R.Egarr
- 1958-59 K.Pople
- 1959-60 R.A.Keeler
- 1960-61 P.Grosset
- 1961-62 F.Lorenz
- 1962-63 F.Lorenz
- 1963-64 R.Rogers
- 1964-65 J.Higgins
- 1965-66 J.Higgins
- 1966-67 L.Perry
- 1967-68 T.Astridge
- 1968-69 Y.Cullimore
- 1969-70 Y.Cullimore
- 1970-71 E.Ball
- 1971-72 E.Ball
- 1972-73 J.Rowcliffe
- 1973-74 J.Rowcliffe
- 1974-75 L.Hughes
- 1975-76 L.Hughes
- 1976-77 J.Brunton
- 1977-78 J.Brunton
- 1978-79 K.Lee
- 1979-80 K.Lee
- 1980-81 J.Baker
- 1981-82 J.Baker
- 1982-83 R.Bennett
- 1983-84 R.Bennett
- 1984-85 G.Flack

Club treasurers

- 1953 - 1955 W.F. Westlake
- 1956 - 1958 H.R.Massey>
- 1959 P.P.Saunders
- 1960 T.C.Preston
- 1961 - 1964 L.Snowdon
- 1965 - 1966 Miss Ceda Skuse
- 1967 Miss L. Veale
- 1969 - 1981 W.B.J.Higgins
- 1982 - L. Hughes

Club secretaries

- 1953 - 1956 E.J. Worsell
- 1957 - 1969 D.E.Stevens
- 1970 - 1975 J.Brunton
- 1976 K.G.Spacie
- 1977 - J.Rowcliffe

There have been three **Presidents**

- E. Burris to 1954
- Sir Arthur Elton 1954 to his death in 1973
- Mr.Jeffery Boswall.

Publicity officers of Bristol Cine Society

The post was begun in 1962

- Les Perry 1962 to 1963
- Yvonne Cullimore 1964
- B. Hill 1965
- Joe Higgins 1966 to 1976
- Peter Heaven 1977 to 1978
- Bob Spacie 1979

Subscriptions

No details are available before 1953.

- 1953 to 1956 - £1
- 1956 increased to £1.50
- 1958 saw a Junior subscription introduced
- 1969 - £2.10 (Why the 10p? In the currency of the day the sub was 2 guineas)
Thus there had been 13 years without an increase.
- 1974 - £2.50
- 1979 - £3.00
- 1980 - £3.50
- 1982 - £5.00
- 1983 - £5.50
- The 1984-5 subscription is:
Adult membership £5.50
O.A.P. £4.50
Junior (under 21) £3.50
-

Meeting places

- Members' Homes 1934 to outbreak of War in 1939
- Society In abeyance during war years
- Hawthorns Hotel 1950 - 1954
- Royal Hotel 1954 - 1960
- Full Moon Hotel 1960 - 1962
- Becket Hall 1962 - 1966
- Lewins Road 1966 - 1967
- Folk House 1967 - 1969
- 7 Charlotte Street 1969 – present (1984)

WINNERS OF THE BRISTOL AMATEUR CINEMATOGRAPHY CHALLENGE CUP

more popularly known as the *Burris Cup* and presented to the society by founder member
E.H.Burris in 1936.

Since 1964 this cup is now restricted to holiday films.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| • 1936 Hubert Chitty | • 1967 J.Heming |
| • 1937 Hubert Chitty | • 1968 J.Heming |
| • 1938 Frank M.Owner | • 1969 J.Coneybear |
| • 1947 C.H.Stephens | • 1970 R.G.Howles |
| • 1948 C.Bodenham | • 1971 J.Rowcliffe |
| • 1949 C.Bodenham | • 1972 J.Rowcliffe |
| • 1950 H.A.Postlethwaite | • 1973 J.Rowcliffe |
| • 1951 H.A.Postlethwaite | • 1974 J.Rowcliffe |
| • 1952 C.R.Sage and K.A.Pople | • 1975 J.Rowcliffe |
| • 1953 P.G.Woodland | • 1976 D.Smith |
| • 1954 G.W.Watts | • 1977 K.G.Spacie |

- 1955 P.Grosset
- 1956 P.Grosset
- 1957 P.Grosset
- 1958 D.E.Kidder
- 1959 P.Grosset
- 1960 R.S.G.Elson
- 1961 E.J.C.Baldwin
- 1962 W.B.J.Higgins
- 1962 F.M.L.Lorenz
- 1963 Anne Griffiths
- 1964 J.Heming
- 1965 J.Heming
- 1966 J.Heming
- 1978 J.Rowcliffe
- 1979 J.Rowcliffe
- 1980 J.Rowcliffe
- 1981 J.Rowcliffe
- 1982 K.Lee
- 1983 W.B.J.Higgins
- 1984

Bristol Celebrations 1935

Reviewed by WBJ Higgins, 1974

This record of scenes in Bristol during the Jubilee celebrations in honour of King George and Queen Mary's 25 years of reign was shot, according to the credits, by cameramen of the *Bristol Amateur Cinematographers*. When the film was shown at the IAC Fellowship meeting in May 1935 it was announced that it had been made by members of the Bristol Branch of the IAC Fellowship. It appears therefore that the Bristol Amateur Cinematographers and the IAC Branch were either one and the same thing or at least that they enjoyed a number of common members. The film, in two parts, is still in the Society film library and has been shown to the public on many occasions over the years. In 1968 the original 1935 film was placed in the archives of the British Film Institute for preservation as historic footage and the BFI helped the society purchase a copy of the film for future use.

The coronation of their Majesties took place on May 6th 1910, and on May 6th 1935 celebrations took place all over the Kingdom. In Bristol, a similar service to the one at Westminster Abbey was held at the Cathedral and was attended by all the civic dignitaries. It was preceded by a civic procession. During the week, events of all sorts were held: a youth rally on the Downs, speedboat racing on the Avon, a military display at which the Duke of Beaufort took the salute. All over the city street parties were held; and all this was filmed. It is now of great interest, particularly because so much of the Bristol shown in the film does not exist any longer. Within a few years changes were wrought under the weight of Nazi bombs and there have been radical changes since the war. In the film the Bridgehead had not yet been filled in at the Centre, Wine Street, now wholly changed, features prominently and we have a glimpse of the now almost legendary Dutch House in Bridge Street. There is an example of early Dufaycolor in a sequence devoted to a now much altered College Green.

The second spool of *Celebrations* has, for some reason, been dismissed as much less interesting than spool one; and so it has been shown far less frequently. It is, however, of great interest to Bristolians. Much of it was shot on the Downs and is worth seeing if only from a fashion point of view. Ken Pople wrote a commentary for the film in 1955.

For a *Films From Bristol* show in 1972, Part I was shown with a slightly amended commentary and a piano background played by Len Mitchelmore, a teacher friend of Joe Higgins, was transferred to the sound track, Ron Elson was responsible for the recording.

A Visit To Wookey

Reviewed by WBJ Higgins - 1975

This early record of a club excursion - together with some screen tests and some footage of the Friese-Green plaque - is in the film library. In it one of the founders of the club is easily recognisable: Canon Gay. A notice saying, "Out of Bounds to ATS" seemed to attract the reverend gentleman who appeared to be attempting to scale the fence. Years later, he attended the 40th Anniversary Wine and Cheese party (1974) and also delighted a large audience at a *Best in the West* screening at the Clifton College Theatre with an uproariously funny speech.

[This article was originally entitled "The First Fiction Film"]

Albert's Treasure Box

Albert's Treasure Box (1949) must hold a special place in the club's history and affections, for it was the first fiction film to be attempted and the first club film after the war. H.A. Postlethwaite, who was to receive honorary life membership of Bristol Cine Society many years later, wrote the amusing little story. An engaging "down and out", on the look out for an easy buck, finds a box floating in the oily waters near Bristol Bridge and is finally rewarded for his dishonesty. Apart from having an unfortunate anti-climax, the film made good use of dockland locations and had quality black and white pictures of commendable steadiness. The Bristol Amateur Cinematographers deserved the commendation from the *Ten Best* judges. The film stock was presented by M.W. Dunscombe Limited. Sound had not yet become a "must" and the film was made as a silent 16mm production.

It was directed by Robert Allen. Albert was played by Jack Farran and other parts by W.L. Hewitt, Betty Tripp, J. Dickens, G. Bolwell, E.J. Worsell and L.V. Withers.

Nearly thirty years later, Bob Allen wrote from his home in Ontario, Canada:

"As a working, class Joe with my first second-hand turret-head Emil 8mm and hardly able to afford the film for it, I was certainly out of place midst the architects, doctors, businessmen etc.,

with their 16mm Paillards and unlimited amounts of film. *Albert's Treasure Box* was a classic example of all kinds of bods making promises to do things and very few coming through. A member by the name of Postlethwaite and myself sat up for many hours and edited it as best we could. The end result shows what happens when working without a prepared script. Anyway we had a lot of fun and that was the main reason for the enterprise."

Spurred on by *Treasure Box* a much more ambitious movie was then attempted. *Impromptu* (1951) was subtitled "a short composition written on the spur of the moment" and had a story of almost unrelieved gloom. A celebrated concert pianist suffers a badly injured hand when she and her husband are mugged - in modern day parlance - in a dark Bristol alley. She cannot play again; but her daughter grows up to be a great pianist too.

While her mother and father are in the audience at one of her wartime concerts, daughter and mother are killed when the theatre is hit by a bomb. Father is left with his memories and recordings of his wife and daughter.

Production and story Clifford H. Stephens

Directed by Robert Allen

Camera George Watts

Props and continuity Ken Pople

Recording T.A.Gane

Other members of the unit were A.E.Thorne, A.E.Lord, A.E.Fuller, E.J.Worsell, R.Hallett and W.F.Sage. The parts were played by Angela Stephens the producer's daughter - Arthur Clements, Jennifer Tanner and Robert Parsons.

The film was considered as something of a failure by members of the society and it would appear that interest then waned. Perhaps the film failed because it took a feature length story and compressed it to a short. Being a silent film while the theme was musical hardly helped but it is difficult to see why the members were so despondent. Perhaps it was thanks to the annual *Ten Best* film competition and the need for putting on a presentation of the winners in Bristol that kept things ticking over. There was also some rivalry: there was an enthusiastic group calling itself the *Bristol Phoenix Cine Club* but in the early fifties *Phoenix* disbanded and another 9.5 mm group folded.

Impromptu

[See "Albert's Treasure Box"] - 1949

[This document originally entitled "First Ten Best Winner"]

You Call Yourself Scouts

Perhaps it is true to say that the publicity that stemmed from the making of *You Call Yourself Scouts* (1954) and the winning of a *Ten Best* Silver Trophy saw the beginnings of the club as we know it today. There was a great deal of publicity in the local press and this was followed by an influx of new members.

You Call Yourself Scouts (1954) 16 mm

script and direction Philip Grosset

titles Cecil Harrison

meter reader Marjorie Marks

cameramen F.H.B.Marks and Ken Pople

acted by the 1st Salford Scout Troop

The story was a simple one: two scouts catch an apple thief and so clear themselves of suspicion. John Earle was the thief (he was to team up with Fred Lorenz in a later film) while Peter Ryall and George Thomas were the scouts. Cecil Harrison played the part of the owner of the orchard and his son was played by Alan Stiling.

The riverside location - the Avon near Philip Grosset's home at Kelston - was to be used later in *Just the Job*. In fact there were many similarities between the two films. Nevertheless this 16mm silent film won a *Ten Best* trophy and was televised the following year.

Inflatory Footnote: The production cost was £13. 2s. 8d. or in modern terms £13.13 approximately.

Silent? Tape recorders were still very much a novelty; and 16 mm mag. stripe projectors were rare.

[This report was originally entitled "Bristol Bombed" (two sheets)]

Our Good Neighbours

The War was still only nine years into history and Civil Defence and the possibilities of atomic warfare were very much in people's minds. How would Bristol Civil Defence cope with the aftermath of an attack? The *Bristol Evening World* of Monday, September 13th 1954, published a picture so reminiscent of wartime "Blitz" days with the caption: "BRISTOL BOMBED" and underneath the words: "Memories of the last War are recalled by this picture of the ruins of Aitken-street, Barton Hill, during a Civil Defence Exercise filmed by the Bristol Cine Club for official records".

The production of this film was undertaken by Clifford Stephens who had suggested it be considered as propaganda in the better sense of the word. This was a sentiment echoed by the Staff Officer of HQ section with whom Mr. Stephens was in correspondence. The officer brought out a synopsis containing the points that the C.D. would like emphasised during the making of the film.

The area of the exercise, as shown on a sketch map in the possession of the club, was bounded on the east side by Marsh Lane and on the west by Great Western Lane. Aitken Street is - or was - at the northern end and Glendarest at the south.

Marked on the sketch were camera positions as follows:-

Camera 1 Near site of Civil Defence Control in Glendarest

Camera 2 Barton Street

Camera 3 Middle of Aitken Street with Camera 5

Camera 4 Bush Street

Film Control ... East end of Aitken Street. Mr. Stephens to be there from 0800 hrs to deal with film problems

Scene of Mrs Ted's rescue ... Bush Street covered by Camera 4

C.D. Enquiry point ... East end of Bush Street

"Shell house" ... in Bush Street

Falling walls, fronts of houses demolished and houses on fire.

In addition, the direction of morning and evening sun were shown by arrows.

Filming was to start at 10.00 when a building was to be fired on Netham Ground. A filming programme was most detailed as to times and actions.

The draft script is titled *Whence Cometh My Help* but the final title was *Our Good Neighbours*.

The 16 mm black and white film ran for 30 minutes with an optical track. The original idea was that it would be a mere record of the exercise; but this was widened and expanded by the inclusion of acted

sequences to link the varied work of the CD branches and by a commentary stressing the need for volunteers.

Planning occupied most of August 1954 while the major part of the filming took place on the one Sunday. Six camera crews were at work: they shot 1800 feet of film, edited in the final film to 1200. Editing was completed by Christmas and the sound track recorded on 3rd January 1955. The final sound print was ready for projection on February 1st.

No credits appear on the film - which, as far as viewers 30 years later are concerned - is a pity. This seemed to be the pattern for several following years. Here we put right the omission.

Our Good Neighbours (1955) 16 mm optical sound

- Production and planning C.H.Stephens and Ken Pople with members of Bristol CD.
- Script Ken Pople
- Direction Ken Pople and Philip Grosset
- Cameramen G.Adams, R.Allan, (who later emigrated to Canada) F.Lorenz, F.Luke, R.Marks, H.Massey, K.Pople, S.Saxton, F.Sage, N.Wadsworth, G.Watts, W.Westlake, E.Worsell
- Stills Cyril Sage
- Editing Ken Pople
- Commentary Ken Pople
- Sound recorded by Brent Labs, Cricklewood. Kodak Reversal Super X and Super XX

Cast :-

- Mrs Ted - Molly Swaish
- Ted - Hugh Smith-Marriott
- Children - Patricia Bailey and Joan Forster
- Bill - W.Ash
- Grandad Brown - E.Pilbrow
- Joe, the Spiv
- Jimmy Morris and personnel of the Civil Defence Corps, the Health Services and W.V.S

The year 1955 saw 3 Bristol films gaining 4 stars in the *Ten Best* - there were no Gold Stars awarded then. They were *The Bird Book*, Grosset's film about diabetics and *Our Good Neighbours*. Said the judges:

"Each reach the final round, a distinction no other club can boast.....very few approached this high standard".

A copy of this film was sold to the NATO library and to a number of local authorities. It was shown at the Civil Defence Staff College and at the Home Office Civil Defence School.

Western Gateway

A film that has been used many times in many Bristol schools over the years is *Western Gateway*. It tells the story of the growth of the city of Bristol from the earliest times.

Script, photography and production Ken Pople

Commentary A.Graves, P.Grosset and K.Pople.

Sound recording Cyril Sage

Titles by N.J.Dance and W.Roberts

Music by the pupils of Wick Road Primary School, Bristol.

It won a *Gold Star* award at the 1956 *Ten Best*. (Gold Star awards are given to films of *Ten Best* standard and go into the final judging for the "Ten").

It won the *Isabel Elder Trophy* in the 1957 Scottish Festival. The adjudicator at the Scottish, Anthony Havelock-Allen described the film as "an extremely interesting and very well made history of Bristol".

16 mm. Sound on full magnetic stripe. Running time 30 minutes

Just the Job

In addition to *The Red Scarf*, a beginners' unit film made on location at Brean Down, Weston-super-Mare and at Staple Hill, Bristol - at that time the only standard 8 mm original in the club's film library - a most successful comedy was produced which has kept its appeal over the years. *Just the Job* cost the society £17. 10s. 0d to make, gained a Gold Star in the 1956 *Ten Best* competition and was awarded the Best Fiction award in the Scottish Festival of that year. This was the Alfred Hitchcock Cup. "A model in story telling" was Charles Frend's description of the film as adjudicator. (Mr. Frend directed such films as *Scott of the Antarctic* and *The Cruel Sea*).

The film was directed by Philip Grosset and the boy was played by 10 year old Paul Hending, a Saltford Wolf Cub. As a wolf cub out on a Bob-a-Job week, he tracks down some burglars and brings them to justice. John Earle and Fred Lorenz played the burglars. Cecil Harrison was the burgled house owner. *Just the Job* was subsequently shown all over the country and a copy even went to Australia.

[This document originally entitled *Silver Trophy Once Again*]

To Have and to Hold

A party from the club went to the National Film Theatre on the South Bank, London, to the premiere of the *Ten Best* on 24th May 1958. *To Have And To Hold*, made the previous year, had been judged to be one of the Ten Best amateur films of the year, Bristol's second silver trophy.

In the foyer was a display which included, disappointingly, just one small frame of the BCS film. Perhaps the film unit lacked a stills man for publicity purposes. There was a lot of talk about the film *French Leave* which had enjoyed such a lot of publicity in the cine magazines; and which, according to Philip Grosset, proved to be neither so colourful nor so imaginative as the producer had led us to believe. However that may be, Bristol's entry, shown last, "impressed by its slickness, pace and smoothness, qualities usually lacking in amateur films".

Director Fred Lorenz was on the platform to receive the trophy on behalf of the club; and the applause was swelled by the small contingent from Bristol, including the former chairman, Ralph Egarr, the programme secretary Jean Barratt, and the leading actor, Alan Hickish, Jean, continuity girl on the film came into the club through Fred Lorenz.

The premiere took place on a Sunday evening; and for one reason or another, it was not possible for the party to leave Bristol until after 3 p.m. One group travelled in Ralph Egarr's car with Mrs Egarr, Fred and his fiancée. They arrived one minute before the lights of the National Film Theatre dimmed. This was before the coming of the M4 and since it had been a beautiful summer Sunday afternoon, the roads had been crowded with a massive traffic jam at Reading.

Marlborough House

A letter dated 30th May 1957 to Philip Grosset from a representative of D.W.Dunscombe Ltd., concerned an enquiry being made by Mrs White of Marlborough House Training School for the Mentally Handicapped, situated on the hill behind the Bristol Royal Infirmary. It seemed that the Marlborough House Parents' Committee wished to have a 16 mm sound film made of the activities of MH which might help them in their fundraising activities on behalf of MH. They had little in the way of funds but were willing to supply the film stock. Could Bristol Cine Society help? Bristol Cine Society could. (Their committee had approached a number of professional units but the costs involved were prohibitive). Producer-director and, for the most part, cameraman was Philip Grosset; while Joe Higgins helped in various ways as carrier of equipment, holder of lights etc.

The film was shot on a 70E. "This has a Switar lens", wrote Grosset, "that was stolen from a wealthy family, buried in a garden, dug up, cleaned and reassembled. I bought the camera and lens for £45". *Marlborough House* was one of the *Ten Best* amateur films of 1958.

Claremont (1959)

A 16 mm colour, sound film on the care and welfare of spastic children at the Bristol Education Committee's school for cerebral palsied and spastic children, Claremont, was begun in the summer of 1959, directed by Philip Grosset and filmed by Ron Elson. At the London Amateur Film Festival the following year, it was awarded the Daily Mail Trophy as the Film of the Year, winning first place in the Documentary section with *Marlborough House* in second place.

It went on to gain award after award:

- *Ten Best*, 1959
- BMA Silver Medal for best non-commercial film, 1961
- Oliver Bell Trophy at the Scottish, 1960
- First in documentary section at Australian International.
- Broadcast Award for film best suited to TV, presented by Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1964
- Winner at Vancouver Amateur Film Festival, 1960.

At Vancouver, the Russian judge wrote: "It evokes deep respect and gratitude to its authors". In 1964 a postcard was received by *Newsletter* which said: "Congratulations. *Claremont* seen on CBC TV in Canada. We lived in Bristol before we emigrated in 1957. John and Mary Getgood."

The Lady Beautiful (1960)

A party from the club visited the National Film Theatre in March 1961 to see the first public showing of the *Top 8* of 1960 - a competition which ran for some years for 8mm films only. One of the eight was *The Lady Beautiful*, made the previous year. The film was described as a "weirdie" with Vivienne Durand as the witch without a broomstick. It was directed by Fred Lorenz with R.J.Byles and John Bennett as cameramen. Fred collected the award for the best photography from Alex MacIntosh. An 8 mm titling and editing kit was presented to the club. For the first time in this country an 8 mm film was seen on a 17 ft. 6" by 12 ft. 6" screen. This, we were told, is a magnification of 1,500,000 times; and the result was said to be quite acceptable to the audience of a thousand. (Not that a thousand can be packed into the NFT at any one time).

In 1961 a film of the making of *The Lady Beautiful* was shown to the club with the title *Look at the Lady* and this is notable chiefly for the fact that it was the first *club* film to use the tape synchronising sound method.

Venturer '61

In the Issue of *Newsletter* for March 1961 still being edited by Ken Pierce - was an item called *Whitsun*. This invited members to a camp for a "working holiday". The Boys Scouts Association was holding a Venturer camp for senior scouts and Rovers at Torbay during May; and they wanted BCS to film it. Four members spent a week under canvas and shot some 2000 feet on Judo, canoeing, pony-trekking, football, rock-climbing and sub-aqua in and around Torbay. They used four cameras, a Ferrograph, Windsor and Ficord tape-recorders. The completed film was first shown to the society in January of the following year. it won a four star award in the *Ten Best*.

DirectionFred Lorenz

Crew....Julian Baldwin (who shot the sub-aqua)

 Ron Elson (Hay Tor rock-climbing)

 Nigel Tasker

EditorPhilip Lorenz who reduced the 2000 to 600 feet.

This proved to be a production of which Fred Lorenz could feel justly proud. In the same month that *Venturer* was premiered, another Lorenz production saw the light of day.

On January 3rd 1962 Joanne Claire Lorenz arrived, weighing in at 6 lbs 11 ozs. A joint VALERIE and FRED production.

Back to Claremont (1962)

In 1962 BCS returned to Claremont to see and record the progress made by children there since the first film. It was about the same running time as the original and was again in colour with an optical sound track. *Back to Claremont*, with the same director, won another *Ten Best* as well as a Bronze Medal from the BMA; and a medal for the film of social significance at the 1963 Scottish Amateur Film Festival. Dr. R.C.Wolfinden, Medical Officer of Health for Bristol, wrote that *Back to Claremont* was "a really splendid film which will do a great deal to answer the critics about the cost of educating spastics."

At the London Amateur Film Festival (LAFF) - the I.A.C. festival held yearly in London - BCS was well represented. *Claremont* was awarded the top spot, the Daily Mail Challenge Cup as *Film Of The Year* & first in the documentary class. Runner up in the documentary class was our *Marlborough House*, Philip Grosset's *Summer Holiday* was screened and highly commended; and Joe Higgins' *Italian Holiday* and *A Little Spanish Town* were both commended and screened.

Our Darling Daughter

Reviewed by WBJ Higgins - 1976

The main 8mm production of 1963 was written round the young and very photogenic daughter of the Chairman, Reg Rogers. This was essentially an outdoor film and the weather that June was unusually hot and sunny. The indoor shooting took place at Reg's flat at Lawrence Weston; and with 2½ kilowatt of lighting and closed windows (why closed windows?) the crew and cast suffered considerably for the cinematic art. Norman Stevens' van transported the unit to Severn Beach for a picnic lunch. Reg Fiddes, who died the following year, came along to help with certain musical problems although he was by no means well. He found the stairs to the flat most trying and difficult with his considerable breathing problems; but he was a most cheerful member of the team. The story, by Philip Grosset, was a serious one: it was to symbolize the rebellion of a grossly over-protected daughter against the parents. The cash allowed for the production was £15 though a further fiver was later forthcoming.

The unit used Becket Hall club room for one shot, taken on a club night, of young Tina as Florence Nightingale ministering to wounded soldiers at Scutari. A ruined street to represent a French war-damaged scene was needed and an advert appeared: WANTED. Machine gun or mock-up of one as used by French resistance during War. Jack Aston telephoned Bristol Civil Defence to ask if they knew of any war-damaged streets. He went to look at their Netham Depot, sited then on the left hand side of the road as you go north from Netham Lock. Every facility was there - it was like a professional set for a war film. Permission was readily given to film on the site and amid the rubble, twisted metal and "bombed" buildings. With the help of Mr. Harry Croker of Civil Defence, a hair-raising sequence was shot. Mr. Croker and his men wired up some bangs to add realism and the cameraman reported that it was impossible to see anything immediately after the explosion.

Director-producer: LES PERRY

Production assistant: Jack Aston

Camera: Joe Higgins

Lighting and exposure: Ron Elson and Norman Stevens

Cast: Tina, Jan and Reg Rogers, Julie and Philip Grosset

The Beavers Break Through

On a Saturday in November 1962 a band of intrepid explorers climbed up the steep side of Mendip's Burrington Coombe in order to explore two caves - Goatchurch Cavern and East Twin Swallet. They were not regular cavers nor were they foolhardy novices: this party was from Bristol Cine Society. They were accompanied by an expert caver to act as guide, Dave Newman. This was a reconnaissance for a future film. Not one actually got stuck, though two of the larger members of the party were unable to get through a narrow slit in Goatchurch. They were in search of locations for the next Scout film, written by Philip Grosset and which contained a caving sequence.

The year 1962 went out under a thick blanket of snow which began falling on the evening of Boxing Day. The worst blizzards for many years followed and the temperature dropped to something like Siberian figures. The BCS New Year party was, like a lot of other things, postponed and later cancelled because the great freeze brought power cuts, black outs and lowered gas pressures in its train. The unit's report understated the matter when it said that "inclement weather during January and most of February made it impossible to reach the Mendip location". The thaw came, mercifully, in March and operations then began.

A portable generator was hauled to the mouth of Goatchurch Cavern, and lighting cables were sent down some 50 feet, almost vertically. A test film on 8 mm was shot and the caving sequence was filmed in March. Walter Webber arrived early at Burrington Coombe with the equipment - in pouring rain. The first shot was ready to be taken in mid-morning. Then the lighting failed due to carburettor trouble on the generator. Repairs were put in hand but the engine still proved to be faulty; and the rain continued. By 4.30 p.m. the party returned dejectedly to Bristol.

A week later they went back to the scene of their previous troubles and had a successful day's filming. The camp sequence was shot at Compton Dando in mid June; and the famous portable generator was whistled up, hopefully, for the camp fire shots. It worked. The title of the film at this stage was *Breakthrough*.

Filming was finished and an edited version was approved by the sponsors - the Boy Scout Association. The Scouts had provided 3000 feet of 16 mm colour stock and £200 to cover other expenses. They obviously had faith in the skill of BCS. At this stage the title was changed to *The Beavers Break Through*. Votes of thanks were passed with acclamation for Ron Elson and his B & H 70 DL; Fred Lorenz and his Bolex H16; the Salford Scouts, Scoutmasters C.Harrison and David King; the Mendip Cafe for provided sustenance and hot water; and Dick Byles for stills in the cave.

THE BEAVERS BREAK THROUGH

Made for the Boy Scout Association

Written and Directed by Philip Grosset

Camera Ron Elson

Lighting Walter Webber

Titles C.H.Harrison and Peter Harrison

Assistant Director Fred Lorenz (who also directed part of the cave sequence)

Before the year ended *Beavers* was screened to the club. Out of 67 votes, 65 thought *Beavers* was good or very good. Contradictory remarks, as usual appeared on the comment slips. This film was awarded the 21st Trophy at the 1963 Scottish Amateur Film Festival with Ken Annakin (Longest Day) as adjudicator. The film was distributed by the Scouts to no less than 16 countries outside Europe.

Cowboys and Indians

"16 mm shot at 16 fps and screened at 24 fps" is how the programme of a November 1964 show at the Becket Hall, Bristol described this 1964 film. George Sewell and 24 members of Cardiff Cine Society visiting Bristol were in the audience to see the *Premiere Night* of three films *Cowboys and Indians*, *Mrs Grundy* (George suggested it be put away for 6 months and then re-edited) and *The Enemy* (he liked the title).

Over 1000 feet of 16 mm film was exposed on May 16th 1964 - which by a miracle was a sunny day - at Barrow Court, Barrow Gurney. It was later edited down to 250 feet. The story carried a message (from Philip Grosset?) showing how easily those with weapons can, unwittingly perhaps, use them with disastrous results.

The production involved two groups of youngsters dressed as Cowboys and Indians respectively - 17 boys in all. Joe Higgins, then teaching at Mangotsfield School, provided the cast. One of the boys had to fall in a disused swimming pool in the course of the film. It was much to everyone's alarm that this boy disclosed, on the eve of shooting that he could not swim.

There were many problems, not the least that there were five cameramen working independently ... Ron Elson, Howard Massey, Ernie Phillips, Les Perry. Les Perry also directed one sequence as did Joe Higgins (producer). Philip Grosset (director) also acted as cameraman.

Cowboys And Indians was awarded the Hitchcock Cup at the Scottish Amateur Film Festival as the best fiction film.

Some time later Ernie Phillips died. He was an active, talented and loyal member of BCS and a very friendly man. His talents were used in a number of ways, working in units responsible for major film successes; while his home was often used for previewing programmes to be given public showings. The hospitality of Ernie and his wife was matched by the efficiency of his projection arrangements

The Enemy

Reviewed by WBJ Higgins - 1976

Just before the Annual General Meeting, a fairly new member submitted a script for a film which was offered financial backing by the committee: its title was *The Enemy* and the newcomer was Reg Middle. "For making this film I shall want a small crew to help me", wrote Reg and nine members met above the car repair workshop which he owned, at the Triangle, Clifton. At the AGM on 21st January 1964 the newish member found himself on the committee. (Joe Higgins became chairman with Les Perry vice-chairman). Interest seems to have waned when it was discovered by some of the new-member volunteers for the film unit that film making is 90 per cent perspiration. Much of the work was done by Reg Middle and Joe Higgins, an alliance that was to have a sequel. And it was also significant that they asked Ron Elson - the film librarian - to be in charge of adding sound to the film. The actors proved keen but the film had enemies: probably these were gremlins. Permission to film on Corporation property brought a letter from the Town Clerk: they had been put to a lot of trouble at the Council House in the past by the documentary film makers and he regretted... Two films were returned from the labs with regrets and apologies: they were suffering from a disease which films are prone to - reticulation.

A smoke machine was brought on to a location by a road making gang and a session had to be called off. On the 9th May the leading male actor failed to turn up and it was found that he had packed his bags and left home.

No one knew where he was and his wife had notified the Police. Some suggested that he had gone pro. By August all filming was completed and editing took place in the room above the garage. Middle, Higgins and Elson enjoyed their first experience of filming together and decided to form themselves into a permanent unit, the Golden Unicorn Film Unit.

Mrs Grundy

Prudery was defined by someone as interference with other people's pleasures; and prudery was the subject of a discussion on the possibility of making a 16 mm colour and optical sound film based on Peter Fryer's book, *Mrs Grundy*. The film would investigate local attitudes towards the questions of nudity, temperance and the British Sunday.

The film was directed by Philip Grosset. The producer wanted to hear examples of people objecting to nude statues, nudist activities, the evils of drink and restrictions on freedom brought about by Sunday laws. Advertisements were put into the Press to bring out pro and con reactions; and some difficulty was

experienced in finding a young lady who would appear topless. The film was made but it is accepted that it has never been one of Bristol's favourite productions.

During the same year, a student's film about the City of Bath, *Queen of the West*, was not included in the March public show - now called *Films From Bristol* - because the committee of the club remembered that it included one single shot of a Bath street scene in which, inadvertently and unconsciously on the part of the cameraman, a dread word appeared on an advert - DUREX.

What price Mrs Grundy?

Festival of Flowers

"On Wednesday 26th October 1965", wrote the Newsletter of the Bristol Flower Decoration Society, "we had a most wonderful evening: the showing of the film, taken by the Bristol Cinematograph Club, of the Cathedral Festival of Flowers. The film is wonderful; and everyone who saw it was most impressed. It is dignified, artistic, interesting and has caught in some wonderful way the serene, happy atmosphere of those four days."

The film was not, in spite of the Flower Decoration Society's blurb, an official BCS production although all those involved were members of the club. Ron Elson, Joe Higgins and Reg Middle made it for John Sherborne, The main shooting took place on the "Working Day" - the day when scores of women turned the Cathedral into a garden, prior to the opening of the festival to the public. A couple of sun-guns and a set of photofloods were used though the unit "borrowed" some light from T.W.W. (Television Wales and the West, the local ITV company) and the B.B.C. who were filming at the same time. The shooting was not without incident. While filming, the unit plugged in their lights and promptly blew the Cathedral fuses and plunged the building, working ladies, Cathedral choir getting ready for Evensong, B.B.C. and ITV into darkness.

[This document was originally entitled "In the Tradition"]

The Comfort Bringers

The late fifties and early sixties saw, as we have recorded, the making of some outstanding films of social significance; and they were films that gave to the name of Bristol Cine Society an extra dimension, even outside the amateur film movement. They also brought a host of trophies. A tradition was established for polished documentaries on medical-educational themes, a tradition that has carried on even into the seventies. *Marlborough House*, *Claremont*, *Back to Claremont*, *The Helping Hand* and *Summer Holiday* all added lustre to the society's name.

The last of this first batch of such documentaries was made in 1962. Script writing and preliminary investigation for a film about the Bristol Mobile Physiotherapy service had been undertaken by Fred and Valerie Lorenz; and the film, sponsored by the Bristol Health Department and Bristol United Hospitals, got under-way in mid August. It was provisionally titled *A Friend In Need*. Shooting began at a patient's home at Westbury under 2 kW of floods and spots under the supervision of Julian Baldwin. The shooting of three minutes of film took, on this occasion, some two and a half hours. Eight hours' work in one session saw the filming of all sorts of treatment for a number of disorders. The final shooting took place at the Central Health Clinic, Tower Hill. Alternative titles had included *A Friend at the Door*, but this excellent film (which gained a 4 Star award in the *Ten Best*) was finally called *The Comfort Bringers*. It will always be associated with Fred Lorenz.

Running time: 12 minutes. Optical sound, 16 mm colour

A Future for Amanda

15 minutes, 16mm optical sound, colour

A BCS production made for the Bristol Department of Health and Social Services

Film, Unit: Reg Middle, Joe Higgins, Ron Elson

This documentary shows something of the work of a local training school for the mentally handicapped. The centre, at Hengrove, replaced the old Marlborough House, and the film was needed to replace the now dated *Marlborough House* film.

The centre takes children and young people who, in the opinion of the doctors, would not be able to profit from attendance at ordinary schools and the film's title was named after a happy and charming five year old, Amanda Isaacs who was beginning at Bush Training Centre in September 1967, having become mentally handicapped as a result of cerebral meningitis when a baby. The film was finished in 1969. Reg Middle and Joe Higgins shared the editing, Joe Higgins was responsible for the photography and Ron Elson was in charge of sound.

Amanda was awarded the following:

- 4 stars *Ten Best*
- First at Mayflower Festival, Plymouth
- *Oliver Bell* trophy, Scottish Film Festival
- Dragon Trophy as one of *Welsh Seven*
- First in documentary class at Thurrock and best film at festival

A new Film Festival was organised by the Ballard Centre Cine Group and Ron Elson was at Plymouth on 12th January 1971 representing BCS at the public screening of the winning films and the award of trophies and prizes.

It proved a great day for BCS for our 16 mm. entry *A Future For Amanda* was adjudged the best film in the festival. The Lord Mayor of Plymouth presented the prizes. *Amanda* received the Spears and Edwards Solid Silver Cup to be retained for one year and a Bell and Howell Filmosound 375 Super 8 cine camera. In addition we were awarded the Independent Newspaper Trophy for the best film in the documentary class. The festival attracted 68 entries and the judges were a senior editor and a BBC sound man.

- Midlands Amateur Cine Association:- "A thoroughly competent documentary; tactfully made"
- Sutton Coldfield:- Voted "best film we have seen for a long time...."
"If ever a film rated a *Ten Best* award, this was one...."
"of such a high standard"
"really professional standard".
- East Devon Cine Society:- "An excellent film, A1 all round".
- I.O.W. ACS:- "Really professional standard".

Picnic (1969) Musical Problems

Reviewed by WBJ Higgins - 1976

Jack Aston had wanted to contrast the life-styles of countryfolk and townies on film from the time he joined the club; and an original draft script in 1963 was criticised by Philip Grosset on the Script Committee for not having a clear story line. But early in 1969 he was given the go-ahead to use club funds in an official society production on the basis of a new treatment. The film was eventually premiered on 2nd December 1969,

The unit was criticised for wasting film on screen tests; but Jack Aston remained unconvinced by these arguments.

"I felt that the music had to be original", said Jack. "Originally it was thought possible that the students of Redland College Music Department might produce a handful of tunes. I had hoped that these themes could then be recorded and manipulated into the film. Owing to other college commitments and the long recess this was not possible. I remember sitting at the piano - Jack is by the way, an accomplished musician - with the visual images of this film flitting across my mind's eye, I had already played a rather poignant succession of notes on clarinet for one sequence: now I wanted a rather puckish, jolly theme. These notes, changed in rhythm and given a jazz waltz backing, suddenly presented themselves as being what I wanted. The film needed a main theme. I do not know where the idea came from - it grew out of a lot of strumming away. All I had to do was to commit the ideas to paper and get hold of a guitarist, bassist and drummer who were willing to oblige. For the record these were Roy Sainsbury, guitar; Derek Lovell, bass; Bob Parslow, drums."

Picnic (1971) 10 minutes

Directed by Jack Aston. 8 mm

The Kennet and Avon Canal

Reviewed by W.B.J.Higgins 1972

"It has been a matter of considerable satisfaction to me to complete such an ambitious film at a cost that would have been out of the question for a film maker working alone".

So wrote Mike George when the film *The Kennet and Avon Canal* (1971) which he directed for the Society, was finished.

It was Bob Spacie's original idea that a film could be made about the attempted restoration of this canal, and it was Mike who reported to the Society that he was directing a documentary on this subject with Bob Spacie, Les Hughes and Alan Atkins in the team. Production, it seemed, had already started. Mike presented a rough budget for the committee asking for fifty percent financial help from the Society. Eric Ball, the Chairman, spoke for the rest of the committee when he said that such an arrangement would confuse the matter of ownership. It was therefore agreed that the film become an official BCS production and £50 was voted to the producer.

The film showed the impressive amount of volunteer labour being used for digging out this derelict Canal, "Any weekend you can see people cleaning the lock chambers of evil-smelling sludge and the rubbish of years of public dumping", The making and the hanging of new lock gates was included in the film as well as an impressive sequence at the Crofton Pumping Station.

Camerawork was shared between Alan Atkins, John Rowcliffe, Bob Spacie and the director. The gauge was Fuji Single 8 mm and the cameras used were Fujica P1 and a Konica 3TL - the latter for the dissolves. Alan Atkins helped Mike script the story and Les Hughes is said to have "introduced sanity, remembered details and coped with problems". It was a real team effort.

The K and A film, with a sound stripe track, was awarded 4 stars in the 1972 *Ten Best* and was shown to the public in a *Films From Bristol* programme in 1972.

Theme in Movement

A letter was received by the club secretary in April 1972 from Mrs Geraldine Daughton saying that she had recently produced a "demonstration item" performed by the South Bristol Technical College Leaders Keep Fit Class. It was seen by Miss Dickins, senior representative of the Central Council of Physical Education and by Miss Sebestyen, HMI and these two ladies felt that it should be recorded on film for teaching purposes. The letter asked BCS if she could be put in touch with someone who could undertake the task.

BCS agreed to make the film. A representative of the film unit attended a rehearsal at St. Luke's Church Hall, Brislington; and subsequently there were other rehearsals and meetings with Mrs Daughton.

Shooting of the demonstration - of exercises and movements to music - took place at St. Bernadette's School Hall, on 30th September 1972. One camera with a 200 ft. magazine provided by Peter Ayngé, shot the entire action from a balcony high above the floor, without interruption - one shot. The action was repeated twice more when filming of parts of the demonstration took place at ground level. Ron Elson was in charge of sound recording of the piano music.

Details of the production can be read in an article, a cutting of which appears in Scrapbook No.1 (June 1974). This article appeared with several photographs in the June issue of the magazine *Film Making* and written by the present writer. It is of interest to note - and perhaps adds a note of warning to other freelance writers - that shortly after the article was published, the magazine was wound up and placed in the hands of the receivers; and the writer did not receive a fee for article and pictures.

The following breakdown of costs of production may be of interest in the light of current costs at the time of reading:

Processing 700 ft. 16 mm Ektachrome EF film .. £18.05

Postage and packing .. £0.99

Cost of 7 films 16 mm Ektachrome EF @ £4.68 .. £32.76

To Ron Elson: 2 16 mm plastic spools and can .. £1.06

Sheets of Letraset .. £1.20

1 reel mag.stripe film .. £5.50

1 roll splicing tape .. £0.40

2 copies from master plus optical .. £90.04

Total £150

WATER FESTIVAL '72

The society was informed by the Chairman of the South West branch of the Inland Waterways Association that the Bristol Water Festival - now an annual event in the City harbour - would be held on July 1st and 2nd in 1972; and that the society would be given all the help that they could so that the club could make a film of the event, Unofficially he added that the IWA might buy a copy.

Ken Lee was appointed producer of the film that would be on standard 8 mm. The producer undertook some of the camerawork and he also had cameramen Harold Fricker, Ray Davies, Nicholas Gates and Joe Higgins. Ron Elson undertook the sound recording side of the production and Ken Lee also took charge of editing.

Each cameraman had different filming tasks and locations. Ken followed the Civic Party from HMS Flying Fox, travelling in a converted lifeboat; Ray Davies had a position on the Civic Party's balcony. Harold Fricker was at Bridgehead Steps, at the Centre end of the Floating harbour and here he filmed the arrival of the Lord Mayor in the Admiral's Barge, He later joined Nicholas Gates on the frigate, HMS Palliser, where Joe Higgins had been shooting. The latter stayed until the "Crossing the Line" ceremony on the ship. Ken had meanwhile been shooting from a boat opposite Palliser.

Altogether some 60 minutes of film was shot and on the final editing this was reduced to 22 minutes. The co-operation of Downend Boy's Brigade was of great assistance in securing a satisfactory rendering of "Sunset" for the final ceremony at the close of the day's activities,

It is generally agreed that the finished record gives a more lively impression than visitors would have received in reality, due possibly to the concentrating of events and the telescoping of time.

Mothers' Day

The script of the film *Mothers' Day* (1974) is in the Society's archives. The screenplay was by Ken Lee. The production team was Ken Lee, Laurie Booth, Les Hughes, Neil Macdonald and Bob Spacie.

This is the story of a drunken down-and-out who, while sitting with two cronies around a fire in a derelict area, drinking, sees a reference to Mothers' Day in a scrap of newspaper. In spite of his befuddled state he determines to go and see his Mum and take her something, some flowers. He has no money but eventually finds some flowers in a refuse bin. He reaches his old home to find that a funeral is in progress. He has arrived too late.

The tramps were played by Peter Aynge, Gus Williams and John Rowcliffe. Other parts were played by Teresa Booth, Ian Yeoman, Pat Gerrish and Philip, Jim Brunton, Neil Macdonald, Val Macdonald and Marjorie Spacie. Geoff Hill played the Vicar.

Filming took place during the latter part of April and the beginning of May 1974 at Horfield Church. Tortworth Road, in a derelict house in Lodge Street, Bristol 1, in Trenchard Street, Chapel Street, Boot Lane and, so we are told, at Neil Macdonald's dustbin at 2 Stoke Cottages.

Bristol Celebrations (1977)

Celebration of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II in 1952.

Reviewed by WBJ Higgins - 1978

[This document was originally entitled *Royal Silver Jubilee, 1977*]

In an issue of the BCS magazine dated January 1977, the editor, Mike George, included this item:

"42 years ago, members of this society produced a film called *Bristol Celebrations*. It was a record of the events in Bristol during the Jubilee celebrations of King George V in 1935. This film is now being sought by the National Film Archive and is of great value. The committee feel that we have an obligation to do the same for future members of this society by recording this year's Jubilee celebrations."

A tremendous amount of preliminary work, research and correspondence was put in hand by Bob Spacie at the start of the year with a view to checking on all the events which would take place in Bristol during Jubilee year. He carried on much correspondence with Mrs S.C.Sweet concerning celebrations at King's Walk, Uplands, Highridge on Jubilee Day, June 7th and arranged for filming to take place there. He also worked to obtain passes and permits for filming from more favoured positions during the visit of the Queen to Bristol.

On Tuesday 7th June, two filming crews were at work. Ken Lee and John Rowcliffe were shooting at Redland Green where a Jubilee Fair, organised by the Redland and Cotham Amenities Society, was held. Children's roundabout, a fancy dress competition and parade were included in their subjects. They also filmed a street party at Hotwells. Bob Spacie, Jack Baker and Joe Higgins covered the fancy dress

procession and judging and a children's tea party at King's Walk, They also shot festivities in three other areas of the City. About 300 street parties were held in Bristol alone,

On Saturday, 11th June a great procession, headed by the Lord Mayor and with over a hundred floats from firms and organisations, made its way, despite early heavy rain, from the assembly area on the Sea Walls, via Whiteladies Road, the University, the BRI, Broadmead, Union Street, the Centre to Canon's Marsh. A number of BCS cameramen covered the route - two travelling with the procession and the others at vantage points along the way. Bob Spacie was on an open-deck bus with a jazz band while Malcolm Stevens travelled on his company's float. Along the route were Harold Mayes, Ken Lee, John Rowcliffe, Jack Baker and Joe Higgins.

On 8th August, the filming continued on the occasion of the Royal visit to Avon. HMY Britannia had arrived in the entrance lock of the Royal Portbury Dock at 0900. The Royal Party, the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Andrew accompanying the Queen, arrived at the Centre at 11.40 a.m. Joe Higgins filmed from the crowd at the War Memorial end of the Centre and endeavoured to follow the Royal Party on the tour of inspection of Reserve Forces Display stands on the central island. Don Smith had a permit from the Central Office of Information to film from a reserved area in the roadway at the Neptune Statue end: here he obtained shots of the Royal Party's departure in carriages and cars, escorted by Mounted Police for Temple Meads Station.

Bob Spacie was stationed in Queen Square to continue the coverage of the procession and finally Jim Brunton was waiting at Temple Meads, with the second of the MOI permits, to film their arrival at the station and the departure for Bath. Inside the station, Paul Stuckey found the lack of light made further filming unsatisfactory.

The film was shot on Super 8 mm Kodachrome 40 and with the assistance and hospitality of Clarice and Doug. Martin, the editing was done by Joe Higgins. Ron Elson was responsible for the titles and George Rose put on the sound stripe.

- Producer Joe Higgins
- Photography Ken Lee, Jim Brunton, John Rowcliffe, Harold Mayes, Jack Baker, Don Smith, Malcolm Stevens, Bob Spacie, Paul Stuckey, Joe Higgins.
- Research Bob Spacie
- Commentary written by and spoken by John Rowcliffe
- Sound track John Rowcliffe
- Titles Ron Elson
- Editing Joe Higgins

The Odd Job 25 minutes Super 8 mm

Early summer 1978 saw the commencement of shooting on a new comedy by the club called *The Odd Job*. A copy of the shooting script can be seen in Scrapbook No.2 together with several production stills.

- Directed by Bob Bennett
- Cameraman Mike George
- Other members of the unit were Jack Baker, Graham Egarr, Peter Heaven and Neil Macdonald.

The story concerns two odd-job men, played quite brilliantly (in the opinion of the writer) by Les Hughes and Peter Heaven, and their efforts to take a couple of tailor's dummies from one place to another. "Les and Pete", wrote the director, "were both particularly good at the inventive expression or action". The two risked life and limb by falling off ladders and crashing through pavement obstacles. "Young ladies", continued the Director, "were asked to wear very tight shorts and take baths in the film, and they did." The film had its premiere at the club's Christmas party in December 1978. In 1982 it was one of the winning films in Plymouth A.C.S Westward 8 Festival. After the original production, a little further editing took place in which some scenes were shortened.

Believing that the editor's decision should be final; that the ref's ruling should be accepted with "no whingeing", I nevertheless find it hard to accept the *Ten Best* judges' comments on the film, *The Odd Job*:
Photography fair

Editing much too slow

sound rather unenterprising

acting lacks style

"couldn't raise a titter" "heavy-handed"

"jokes are so stale" "the whole thing has become a bore"

Reflected Glory (The Dong)

In the 1970 Ten Best Films programme was *The Dong*, not an official club film but made by three members of B.C.S., Reg Middle, Ron Elson and Joe Higgins. This was a comedy-fantasy based on Edward Lear's nonsense poem, *The Dong With The Luminous Nose*. The Ten Best judges wrote:

"A most unusual and enjoyable film. Fantasy of this somewhat grotesque kind is usually confined to animated cartoons and it was daring to attempt it in live action. The director has managed to make it stylish by formalising the action rather like a ballet and by imaginative use of location. Top marks too for the actor who plays the Dong and for the excellent reading of the poem. Photography, Editing, Acting and Sound all good."

366 ft. Ektachrome EF 7241 16 mm

Stripe sound: Camera H16 Bolex Reflex,

Actors:

- Colin Williams (the Dong)
- Edwina Norman, Wendy Rex, Sue Ware,
- Hazel Beare, Susan Britton,
- Anne Caple and Carol Brittain (as the Jumblies)
- Audrey Higgins (the school girl)
- Gus Williams read the poem extracts

The Dong, which also won a Dragon trophy as one of the Welsh Seven of 1970, was included in Bristol's 1972 programme of *Films From Bristol*. Also shown were the *1935 Bristol Celebrations*; John Rowcliffe's *Gypsy Gathering*, made in the Camargue and which established John as our expert on holiday filming; *Welcome Home S.S. Great Britain* (1970) was also shown. It was made by Peter Aynge, recording the arrival back in Bristol of Brunel's ship after its long exile in the Falkland Islands.

Summer Changes

In April 1978, club members saw the latest *Kennel Films* production; and they were unanimous in their appreciation of a fine film. *Summer Changes* is a period piece set in the 'twenties and tells of the changes in relationship between a young man and the two people closest to him, his father and his girl friend. It was, according to the director, more difficult to film than anything the talented group had done before. "The weather was largely to blame. Even when the sun shone, the wind spoilt the sound recordings. However, because we were surrounded by patient, industrious people, we have what we consider to be the prettiest little film we've made to date". In 1979 it received a *Four Star* award in the *Ten Best* - surely *Summer Changes* deserved a far higher award. It took a year to make.

Summer Changes (1978) Super 8mm 25 minutes

filmed on Kodachrome 40 Sound by Carol Cinesound pulse sync. system.

- Directed by Mike George
- Camera Bob Bennett
- Asst Camera... Bill Woodward
- SoundGeoff Hill, Peter Heaven, Les Hughes
- ScriptMoirra McKinnon
- CostumeOlive Andow
- Continuity.. Gillian Winn
- StillsJohn Stephens

It is interesting to note that a film of some of the production was shot by Alan Moore on video and this was shown to the members.

The Kennel group was formed in 1963 (so called because, so one member said, they were always in the doghouse. spending more time filming than at home).

The Nautical Novice

- Producer Ken Lee
- Director Bob Bennett
- Camera John Rowcliffe
- Sound Ron Elson with John Tarrant
- Continuity Margery Curry
- Asst. cameraman Jack Baker
- Graham Egarr and Peter Aynge were also in the film unit.
- Backcloth Mike George
- The Novice played by Joe Higgins.
- The Picnickers played by Ken Webber and Gwen Hardesty (now Mrs Webber).
- Some members of the film crew took other parts including Bob Spacie.

The comedy depicting the misadventures of an inept weekend sailor was, in the words of the *Ten Best* judges, "a nicely contrived production with some genuinely amusing sequenceswith a well-sustained and effectively controlled comic performance by the central character of the novice who emerges as something of a cross between Harry Worth and W.C. Fields."

As a result of suggestions, additional and substitute scenes were shot in the summer of 1981 which, it was agreed, improved this popular film,

Later in the year this film won the Randall Cox Comedy award at the 1981 Welsh International Film Festival at Cardiff where it was very well received.

Motor Cycle Club Exeter Trial

On the night of 9th/10th January 1981, a team consisting of Jack Baker, Ron Elson, Geoff Flack, Les Hughes, John Rowcliffe and John Tarrant was engaged in filming, on behalf of the organisers, the MCC Exeter Trial 1981 at Cirencester and ending at Sidmouth.

Les Hughes was our contact with the trial organisers and as well as being the guest, with his wife Frances, at a weekend in Cornwall, received on behalf of the club a cheque for £40 from the MCC.

Bristol Cine Society Films 1935-81

- Bristol Celebrations - 1935
 - Long Ashton Research and Cider Institute - 1936
 - A Visit to Wookey - 1946
 - Albert's Treasure Box - 1949
 - Impromptu - 1951
 - You Call Yourself Scouts - 1954
 - Our Good Neighbours - 1954
 - The Bird Book - 1955
 - The Red Scarf - 1956
 - Western Gateway - 1956
 - Clifton Suspension Bridge - 1956
 - Just the Job - 1956
 - * **To Have and To Hold** - 1957
 - Early One Morning - 1958
 - * **Marlborough House** - 1958
 - * **Claremont** - 1959
 - Six Days Shalt thou Labour - 1959
 - The Lady Beautiful - 1960
 - The Helping Hand - 1960
 - The Guy - 1961
 - Look at the Lady - 1961
 - The Last Bus - 1961
 - Venturer '61 - 1961
 - Joanna - 1962
 - Twelve Noon - 1962
 - Endsville - 1962
 - * **Back to Claremont** - 1962
 - Scrapbook 1963 - 1963
 - Our Darling Daughter - 1963
 - The Beavers Break Through - 1963
 - Cowboys and Indians - 1964
 - The Enemy - 1964
 - Mrs Grundy - 1964
 - Festival of Flowers - 1965
 - Late Hornblower - 1965
 - El Driver - 1966
 - The Comfort Bringers - 1966
 - Feet First - 1967
 - Making Tracks - 1967
 - A Future for Amanda - 1969
 - Picnic - 1969
 - The Kennet and Avon Canal - 1971
 - Theme in Movement - 1972
 - Water Festival - 1972
 - Bristol 24416 - 1973
 - The Chameleon - 1974
 - Yoga with Joy - 1976
 - Mothers Day - 1976
 - Bristol Celebrations (77) - 1977
 - Bishopston Street Fair - 1977
 - The Odd Job - 1978
 - The Nautical Novice - 1980
 - MCC Exeter Trial - 1981
- * **Ten Best winners of Silver Trophy**