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The Journal of Surrey Border Movie Makers  
www.surreyborder.org.uk

SPECIAL "HO! HO! HO! ISSUE"



Sorry John, blame the Editor!

Message from your Chairman - John Mills:

While the end of the year is certainly rapidly approaching, it seems the older I get the faster time flies. The final club competition of the year will bring 2015 to a close and it looks as if the evening will be a good one with some fine entries and excellent judges.

The AGM is just around the corner and as ever your committee are always looking for members new or old, who would like to join the committee, so if you would like to influence how the club is run please talk to any committee member if you would like to offer your services, you will be most welcome.

Looking back over the year, the club has had some great successes with a big push on our public relations front with Kathy Butcher doing a brilliant job. We also carried out the survey to truly understand the direction in which the club needs to be moving. We have upgraded the website, and Border Post is going from strength to strength. I would also like to thank Rita and Gillian for their very hard work

without which the club would not function. Also, thanks to all the committee who have worked so hard on the many projects we have on the go ready for next year.

We have been privileged to watch some great members films and listen to members critique them. Keep those films coming in as we have some exciting announcements coming soon on this front.

This year has been a good one for new camera equipment that has successfully achieved domestic sign off. I was so impressed with my new Panasonic 4K camera I felt I had to write a review for you to read (see page 2). I have also been experimenting with green screen and sound. Sound is the major issue we all struggle with at one level or another but this year I have certainly learnt a lot and look forward to putting much of this into practice by actually making films next year. This year has been rather slim on the ground for me due to lots of other pressing issues.

I was rummaging around in the garage the other day and came across an old super

eight sound camera I had bought when I was 16. I put some batteries in and it ran perfectly. I then had a look at some old films I had taken and realised how important it is to retain this stock. The film was in excellent order and I was able to listen to and watch events that happened many years ago. Memories came flooding back.

With the new digital age I wonder how easy it would be to access 40-year-old data unless a clear and well-organised strategy is put in place to save films for future generations to watch. With this in mind I have resolved to work out a strategy to save movies in some way shape or form to ensure they are retrievable for as long as possible. This may be just as simple as putting them onto YouTube, but I think I would prefer something that was more in my control.

Any way, I would like to thank you all for your membership of this great club. Sadly this year we have lost some good friends but we have also gained some new ones. The Club remains on course for another fun and enjoyable year to come. I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and brilliant New Year.  
Warmest Regards, John

And on behalf of all club members we can thank you, John, for your enthusiastic energy as Chairman, your excellent video presentations and friendly approach.

Kathy Butcher's November Press Release

CINEMA EFFECT



Photo: Peter Matthews

Surrey Border Movie club member Peter Matthews is an expert on the concept of the 'Cinema Effect'. Having installed his own home cinema there is little he doesn't know about obtaining the best way to format your films to make the optimum viewing experience. Peter gave

an informative talk at the November meeting about the history of the ever changing size of film definitions and the developing technology through the years of ways to present your films.

The evening continued with the showing of club member's films. 'Drive! Drive! Drive!' filmed, produced and edited by Peter Frost it recorded the day that his daughter Saskia used her Driving Experience Christmas present to race several very fast high powered cars around the Top Gear circuit at Dunsfold in Surrey, this required some challenging camera and sound techniques.

Brian O'Connell and Peter Frost showed their film 'A Fishy Tale' in which they played the roles of two fishermen reminiscing of days gone by, an entertaining comedy.

Filmed on the beach amongst the fishing boats in Chichester, the audience also saw some of the humorous out-takes experienced during the making of this film.



Photo: Kathy Butcher

The film club have regular technical and training events and this month's meeting also included an excellent visual demonstration by Brian O'Connell on camera shooting positions from the 'Hollywood Camera Course in which club members could participate.

# Panasonic HC VX870

by John Mills

Before finally making my choice of the Panasonic



VX 870 I looked at many high definition cameras and finally decided to go with the 4K version of this camera on the basis that I will be future proofing my videos, plus the very high quality images I had seen really impressed me. Up to now I have used a DSLR for video work and this is very good but not so good for taking on holiday point and shoot which is really why I wanted a dedicated video camera.

It is ideal for point and shoot and the quality of the images is so good that it will do most of the things that DSLRs do, except the very short focal length achieved using a DSLR with a telephoto or zoom lens. The Canon 600 D with a 70 to 200 mm lens is outstanding for this.

The Panasonic has an excellent 20x optical zoom lens in 4K mode; a 40x intelligent zoom and a digital zoom of up to 60x. The i-zoom still produces quite acceptable images which is surprising from such a small sensor. The 4K footage allows you to zoom in even further in post production.



The VX 870 is quite light even with the larger battery. The small battery lasts about 1 hr 20 mins, the larger battery

3 hrs 40 mins. Although an expensive option at £96, it is well worth having.

The camera fits snugly into the hand and the telephoto button which is precise, allows a very smooth zoom, falls exactly



in the right place for your forefinger. Slightly behind this button is the single shot button which

allows you to take a photo while videoing. Like all handheld video cameras it is slightly awkward to hold up and I mostly hold it in my right hand and control it with my left, while looking down at the flip out screen as rather than holding it up at eye level.

When you switch the camera on the lens cap opens. I decided to buy an extra UV filter to further protect the lens from damage unfortunately this means the supplied lens hood does not fit precisely and will need minor modification.

The camera has an HDMI output, a micro-USB, and AV and Mic inputs, all are contained within the flat area of the flip out screen. The headphone socket is at the front of the camera hidden under a small flap.



One fatal design flaw of the camera is that the screen spring is quite strong and if you have a microphone plugged in, it can flip back and hit the microphone plug, breaking the screen. This happened to me just prior to a wedding shoot. It wasn't a warranty claim, so I had pay to have a



new screen fitted by Panasonic's warranty company. They did a good job.

The on-camera microphone is extremely good, better than many others. Wind noise especially is virtually extinguished. I tried it on a ferry to the Isle of Wight on a windy day and was amazed when reviewing the footage that I could clearly hear people speaking on the deck with no wind noise at all. There must be some amazing processing to extract the wind noise from the required sound.

There are numerous sound settings to choose from, however I have so far just left it on automatic and this has proved quite acceptable for general shooting, although I tend to use an external microphone on the accessory shoe for serious videoing.

When you switch the camera on it will inform you whether or not there is a card installed. If there is the camera is ready to shoot. The flip out screen displays the battery life and length of time remaining on the card together with the current settings from the options menu.

Within the menu the options are fully automatic or by simply touching the 'eye' button you can select a range from high dynamic, to slow motion. A range of 'scenes' from fireworks, night-time, candlelit, portrait, babies, scenery are available. I have tried fireworks and it was very successful.

By selecting the menu button you have three options: camera setup, picture mode or record set up. In record setup you can select either AVCHD, 4K or MP4/iframe. I have been using AVCHD and 4K. The results of my 4K footage are stunning and I found it so useful when

zooming in while editing a normal HD video, giving enormous flexibility for framing and positioning after the event.

The downside of all this data is that you need a computer powerful enough to run it. I found my 2009 iMac could not render the output in reasonable time. It was taking days to render a small film. After I acquired a new 5K Retina Mac it rendered 4K footage in minutes which is amazing.

The camera has a number of really useful user features, one of which is the stabilisation which is outstanding for handheld and almost negates the need for a tripod in many circumstances. But remember to switch the stabilisation off when the camera is mounted on a tripod as the lens gyro will tend to hunt and wander if in a static position. Another useful feature is the level gauge which allows you to keep the camera on a level plain, the camera will alter the footage to maintain this level plain automatically with parameters.

The camera can also be operated on a manual basis although I have found this not as successful as I would have liked as the small button for manual control is extremely fiddly and have decided not to use this unless setting up very specific shots.

It has a slow motion feature which allows you to take three slow motion clips within a single clip at a much higher frame rate, this is very effective indeed. I found a great use for this when using a slider, tripod or when shooting high speed moving objects.

There's a charger within the camera but I purchased a very cheap battery charger from eBay for £6.99 which allows me to plug charge from the mains rather than via the camera lead.

Overall I found this to be an outstanding camera and I am extremely pleased with it. It is very easy to use, very forgiving and produces excellent results especially in 4K which produces staggering detail.

After some investigation I discovered that Panasonic's HC-X 1000E professional video camera has the same works as the x870 but a different case with more options and buttons, etc. While the HDX 1000E is a very desirable camera and has many attributes that I would like to have as a filmmaker (lens control, sound control, viewfinder) the little x870 produces the same high quality image for less than 2/3 of its cost. Quite a consideration!

Would I recommend this camera? Yes without doubt. It is excellent and I have no doubt that it will give me much enjoyment in the future.

(Ed: Amazon, Jessops, John Lewis £549)

# Christmas Catch-Up Corner

A change of circumstances and life itself is taking some of our members to other spheres. They are some of those who have been the most inclined to take part in or even lead our productions over recent years for which 'Thank You', 'Keep in Touch' and have a Happy Christmas!

## Emily (Emz) Gowers:

Emily is having a great time at uni but video is taking a back seat; however on the performing arts front, she is getting involved with Stage Managing a play in December (and she's not on her own, see below). Otherwise, she's rowing and studying Biomedical Science with neuroscience options. In the summer she went travelling and taught English in South Korea for a month, followed by three weeks of onward travel with a friend from uni.



## Jeremy Bayne-Powell:

One of the club's most ambitious film makers, life for Jeremy has crowded out his ability to make films. He had no less than three house moves in 2013/14 from Godalming to Compton to Chiddingfold to Dunsfold, where he has now been for eighteen months.

But with groundworks for drive enlargement, building an annex, new outbuildings, tree felling and remodelling the kitchen together with a 5am to 7pm workday, and at the same time studying for an Association of Project Managers exam in February with loads of coursework to tackle, it sounds like he's got his time accounted for!

Jeremy says: "I have done a couple of time-lapse camera projects, the best of these being the construction of a tree-house in our garden which I took two weeks off work to achieve and used some wood 'planked' by myself from our own trees using a brilliant attachment for our chainsaw. It took 10 days in the end and it still doesn't have a roof!

I've also been doing a little 'spy' filming of the feral cat that moved into our garage to bring three kittens into the world".

Both these projects await time to edit but Jeremy still wants to hear if the club gets going on another film theme as he'd like to try to write a script!



## Jeremy Gooding:

Here's another member who has gone to the boards. Jeremy says: "I live in Guildford now and have become more interested in acting. I'm part of the Pranksters Theatre Group and have done a few plays with them".

Jeremy's performances in various club productions have always been impressive, so it's not that surprising that he has found acting to be his forte.



## Paul Redmond:

Of course we saw Paul in October when, with Jacqueline Escolme, he judged the inter-club competition, but he hasn't been able to make it so frequently, because, as he says: "Life is bonkers at the moment. Charlotte and I recently got engaged and we are also in the process of moving house with a completion hopefully just before Christmas. With house prices going up madly we are heading further a-field with a move down near Arundel likely".



## Ollie McCoy-Page:

Ollie has achieved an A\* in his Film Studies GCSE (the highest grade possible). The short film he had to produce for the GCSE was said to be "a BBC standard production" - as quoted from his film studies tutor.

Ollie says: "I am currently doing the rest of my GCSEs and then moving onto A Level where I hope to study: Film Studies, Media Studies, Drama, Photography and Sociology".

And he's another with theatrical leanings, too. As he says:

"At my school, Salesian College, there is an annual theatre production (this year *Grease*) and instead of acting I am back stage as 'Stage Manager.' This involves co-ordinating props, cast and scenery to make sure that everything is where it needs to be. I also hope to be involved in lighting. So this is an exciting and new experience for me as theatre productions are run very differently to film productions.

I have not had time to create any other short films due to my school work but hopefully I'll be back in action after Easter and my GCSEs".

Let's  facebook It!

Keeping up with the social media tide is important for businesses and to all those who want to spread the word. Surrey Borders is no exception, so we now have a Facebook Page.

For those of our members who already use Facebook, you can link to the SBMM page by searching for Surrey Borders Movie Makers.

If you are not already a user and want to be, then you can connect using the following URL:

<https://www.facebook.com/SurreyBorderMovieMakers/timeline>

You will be prompted to sign up for Facebook.

 **for you too!**

Surrey Borders now has a YouTube Page where we will soon be able to post members films. This will also be linked to the Club's website.

The films to be posted are to be uploaded to a Club "DropBox" account before posting to YouTube, so that they can be vetted for content, to meet a pre-requisite Club standard, and to try and avoid any copyright issues.

In order to have any of your films posted on this page, in the first instance please contact Gillian who is our Archivist using the email address: [treasurer@surreyborder.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@surreyborder.org.uk).

You will then be invited to upload your film to DropBox. Posted films will appear on the following YouTube page:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM-nycwV\\_Jw5t1vTTshdE2w/feed](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM-nycwV_Jw5t1vTTshdE2w/feed)

**REMEMBER!  
Gillian wants your Films!**

**CHRISTMAS  
PREZZY?**

If you know someone who is interested in filmmaking why not buy them a Christmas gift of a year's subscription to our friendly film club. Details are on our website: [www.surreyborder.org.uk](http://www.surreyborder.org.uk) or email: [treasurer@surreyborder.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@surreyborder.org.uk)

# The Art of Canned Laughter

by David Skertchly

It was not a happy project. It started off OK with us blokes rolling around on the floor laughing. A forgetful bloke gets lost on his way home from work and asks directions from his own daughter whom he does not recognise! Hilarious, what an idiot!

Then the ladies got involved! "How must his wife and daughter feel as their father is lost to early onset Alzheimer's, and you are laughing at him." This was a political and family gaff. Making amends with Mrs Skertchly cost me a new handbag, dinner and several bottles of fine Chianti at a classy Italian restaurant, but then I got thinking.

There is a fine line between comedy and pathos, but in a 3 minute video, which is roughly the length of a Monty Python sketch, we do not have the time to develop a clever plot.

This kind of humour is now politically incorrect if not handled well, but it was the staple of 60s comedians such as Benny Hill and Harry Worth. Worth's genteel humour did not appeal to all but I liked it.

The plot of comedies sometimes needs to give the audience a clue that they should laugh not cry and in these short economy



Harry Worth in a typical pose

classics I noticed the extensive use of canned laughter. I took the rough cut of our political disaster, sharpened up the editing, added the Harry Worth Theme and turned it into my Tribute to a 60s comedian.

The canned laughter was an essential. I noticed that there are several different types of laugh each of which needs to be very, and I mean very, carefully timed. For professionals I am sure there are complex rules but here are the ones I developed:

1. **The Guffaw:** Placed about 1/3 second after the gag this is when the audience have all got the joke. Make sure the shot lasts just long enough for the laughter to die away just after the cut to the next scene.
2. **The Titter (remember Frankie Howerd?):** This is a laugh in anticipation, when just a few smart asses in the audience can see the gag coming but are still not quite sure. It has a slightly embarrassed edge. It needs to be placed just after the first clue, which may be several shots before the punch line. If possible the visuals should have some anticipation to hang out the suspense, so much the better. The titter is then followed by a Guffaw of course.

There is a second version of the titter, and that is for a suggestive or rude joke which is not followed by the Guffaw.

3. **Applause:** Placed after a really funny joke or on entry of the Star this needs a pause in the plot to let it run. Often used at the end of the last gag. Can be preceded by a titter, anticipation and guffaw merging to applause.

It is often thought that canned laughter is there to make people laugh at badly written or timed jokes, but may I remind you that some of the best TV comedy has used it to effect. I think that this idea arose from American imports where differences in the national sense of humour often left American gags dead or dying despite the Canned Cues.

I think canned laughter is a good tool to keep up the pace in our time constrained movies, and is certainly to be preferred to the embarrassed silence when a joke doesn't quite come off or the audience are half asleep.

The video I made is called David and is just 2 minutes long. I would be happy to show it if anyone is interested.

(Now you've written about it, you should show it - Ed)



Dave as Harry - without the hat

## Wazzis?

by Peter Frost



"Would you like a mini adventure?" asked Brian in a telephone call. Well, I'm always up for an adventure, mini or otherwise so agreed to his tempting offer. When I got into his car, he introduced me to his large ball dressed (rather casually, I thought) in an old rugby shirt. I don't think you could guess what he's up to and am sworn to secrecy, mainly because it's a 'work in progress'. The small photo demonstrates Brian's excellent sewing skills learnt, he says, from sewing up a chicken's bum in readiness for the oven!



## Waverley Abbey for New Members

Photos: Peter Frost



Building the set for Disney's 'Into the Woods' at Waverley Abbey with fake Rapunzel's tower and mobile stone wall ruins.

As part of the recent club research, it was noted that 'Training' came out as a members' preference and Alan Butcher announced a production for new members to gain hands on experience by inviting them to make a club film using Farnham's historic Waverley Abbey as the location. The Abbey has been used for several cinema and television productions. We look forward to showing the new members completed film at a future club meeting.



Training Officer, Alan Butcher



by Peter (fisherman) Frost



Above: Sing-along-a-Brian Above right: Brian holds his dangly thing



At the November club meeting, Brian O'Connell and I showed our latest production, a slightly suggestive discussion between two ancient mariners - we were supposed to be fishermen, actually.

It was one of those improv shoots where the fun of the 'production' lies in the fact that neither of us knows what the other will say, so it goes where the wind blows. With a couple of pub chats as the basis of a plot (oh, please!), I located a suitably watery location in Sussex and on one beautiful day, we set off with hastily gathered kit and props.

We settled on a spot with an old boat high and dry that we could perch on as our location. It was ideal as genuine fishermen were off loading their catches and there was a good nautical atmosphere. Brian had brought his mandolin which meant that we could have a musical interlude.

We had Brian's two Canon DSLR's, my Sony camcorder, two Zoom H1s and Lavelier microphones. So there were four sound sources and three visual sources at edit - enough you'd think!

BUT - we hadn't reckoned on the van quietly parked on the gravel nearby to have a flat battery which, part way into our shoot was started via another vehicle and then left running - a nice throaty diesel.

My lav sound was useless due to a poor connection resulting in crackles, one of Brian's camera mikes had insufficient wind baffling and the breeze came up nicely. I forgot (!) to attach my XLR mike to my camera in the general set up panic, so the sound was from my camera's built in mike. The other camera had no sound facility and Brian's lavelier had a very muffled quality.

Of course, we should not have tried to do everything ourselves, checked the sound periodically and actually rehearsed which would have saved editing out rather a lot of waffle!

Editing the sound was a huge challenge and was far from the desired quality. Removing unwanted waffle made it tricky with the visual continuity, too. However, we had great fun, a day away from home

## Cap'n Bird Eyes

by Peter (fishy fingers) Frost



The background is a still from a video shot on the south coast of Ireland and I have been very pleased with the clean image overlay which has no fringing from the green screen, due to it being well lit. My product packshot held with bandaged fingers - try bandaging your own fingers then operating a camera without it all unravelling!

My attempt at a quickie commercial break by donning an eye patch and completely transforming myself by this means into Cap'n Bird Eyes was no piece of cake - er, fish finger!

Shot on our patio on a sunny afternoon, against a small green screen stuck to the patio doors, it proved yet another challenge. Due to the small size of the green screen, I had to position myself close to it which in the first two takes, cast a shadow, affecting its performance in edit. Apart from that, I am useless at learning lines and had them printed large size and hanging off a tripod to the side of the camera. Then, to deliver a joke, I had to wear the eye patch and at one point wrap both my hands in bandage and then operate the camera. Oh boy!

Eyesight is not 20/20, so reading the large text with both eyes is sort of OK with glasses but with no glasses and one eye, it was really tricky. Then there was the large tree gradually casting a shadow which was moving very close to my performance area. In three more takes, I hadn't got the eye patch completely over my eye, so they were no good. A couple of times I pressed the record button but managed to set it to stand-by instead - another failure. Another time the green screen came unstuck and fell to the ground wrecking another take.

Then there was my daughter, who stuck her head out of the window and yelled "Arrghh, there, me hearties, 'tis Cap'n Bird Brain making a video" and shut the window with a bang - more gash footage. What really got to me was that she sounded more like the Cap'n than I did!



## LEAVES

by Kathy Butcher

I read recently about a film crew outside on location undertaking a film shoot for a book trailer. They had arrived early, completed their filming, job done. As the crew were packing up, the cameraman disappeared into the nearby woodland. It annoyed the rest of the film crew who were eager to move on to their next film location.

The cameraman was eventually found taking a video of leaves swirling around in a stream. The footage of the leaves, which was never intended to be part of the filming, ended up being the perfect opening shot for the book trailer!

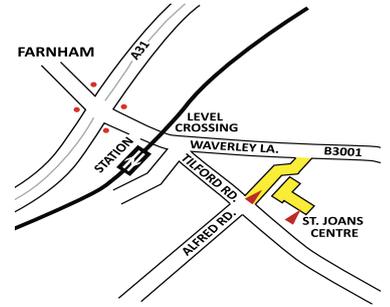
We can all learn from this. Look around you, shoot as many cut aways as possible, such as details like peeling paint on a door or window, and unkempt lawn, litter blowing in the wind, footprints in the mud, a dripping tap or anything which could possibly be used to set the scene or embellish the theme of your film.

These are invaluable elements that can be used to cover editing or continuity issues. You never know when you may need them.

**You are WELCOME! First visit is FREE!**

Meetings are held at St Joan's Centre, 19 Tilford Road, Farnham GU9 8DJ on the 1st Friday of each month at 7.30pm for 7.45pm. Meetings close around 10.15pm. New members are very welcome, please email: [secretary@surreyborder.org.uk](mailto:secretary@surreyborder.org.uk) or turn up at the door!

St Joan's Centre is 200 yards south of Farnham station and is in the grounds of St Joan's Church. The entrance to the church is by a narrow road opposite the junction with Alfred Road, and St Joan's Centre is to the right of the church. There is ample parking.



**Dates for your Diary**



**Friday 4th December 2015:** Club Competition films will be shown and awards awarded.

**Sunday 6th December:** Christmas Lunch

**Friday 8th January 2016: (NOT 1st January!)**  
A selection of Seriac Films and Discussion.

**Friday 6th February 2016:** Annual General Meeting and the second half of Members Films

**Friday 6th March 2016:** Showing of Edit Exercise Films

**Friday 1st April 2016 –** A Tribute to the late Dick Hibberd, one of the club's long time members and an ex-pro cameraman.

**Oh Come All Ye Film Makers!**

**TO CURRENT MEMBERS:**

We would like to remind members that on any Club Night other than those where a full programme has been planned, member's films can be handed to the Projectionist to show on the Big Screen if time permits.

This will also provide the opportunity for feedback from the members, to highlight any possible improvements that could bring it to Competition Standard.

**TO POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS:**



If you are interested in film making we always welcome new members. Whether you have a video camera, DSLR, Phone, no camera, just an interest in any aspect of film making, including acting, script writing, special effects, lighting, sound, directing, producing - it's all here if you want it!

You can find out more about us by visiting our website: [www.surreyborder.org.uk](http://www.surreyborder.org.uk)

**Border Post-Its**

This is your forum for posting your requests for help, so do use it!

No notices posted - obviously no one wants anything!

New members - if you've joined to learn (more) about your equipment - tell us what you need, here!

Messages for the January issue, should be sent in by 22 December to: [editor@surreyborder.org.uk](mailto:editor@surreyborder.org.uk)

**NEXT MEETING 4TH DECEMBER**

The next meeting is the very popular Members Annual Movie Competition. This is a good opportunity to see the best of the clubs filmmaking achievements. Official judges Jan and Dave Watterson will announce the film club winners and present them with their awards and trophies.

**Tail Ender**

As occasional Guest Editor, I'll use this space to thank Al Wheeler for producing our club magazine so regularly.

**Border Post**

Your contributions for inclusion will be appreciated together with photographs if possible. Please send them to the Editor for the January issue at: [editor@surreyborder.org.uk](mailto:editor@surreyborder.org.uk)