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Our Editor has twisted my arm to put pen to paper and tell you about myself. Sixty-seven years of my life can surely only be of interest to my Mum and Dad and the latter forty four years to my wife, so I will only bore you with a little info on my filming activities.

But firstly - did you know that Father Christmas can't spell!

When I was a rather naïve 10 year old Cornish lad I sent a note up the chimney to Father Christmas asking for a yacht and what did I get? A Football.

My father, a keen football player for Newquay AFC (known as the peppermints because of their red and white shirts) and following Cornish tradition of giving someone a present of something you want yourself I was given this football, a heavy leather thing with a bladder inside and a leather lace capable of cutting your head open if you were foolish enough to try heading the damn thing. Boxing Day was a freezing cold day and I was dragged to the nearest patch of grass with 2 bamboo canes for goal posts which I had to stand between whilst Dad practised taking penalties.

Wearing his hobby stankers (Cornish for hob nail boots) he blasted the ball in my direction - straight for my angelic little face. Frozen to the spot by fear and cold I copped it full on the hooter. Result: Dad 1 goal, lad 1 bloody nose - end of my interest in football!

However, to his credit and Father Christmas having learnt to spell by then, the following year I did get my yacht. It was my pride and joy, the most magnificent model in the whole of Cornwall. I had to stand on tip toe to reach the top of the mast. The hull was carved from a solid lump of wood by Harry Hutchinson who ran the local boating lake. He had lost 2 fingers from each hand helping to build the viaduct which carried the main line railway into Newquay but he could still manage with quite intricate workings.

Whilst cycling to the boating lake one day I caught the mast of the yacht in the wheel of my bicycle and chopped a couple of inches off the top. I went home in tears but my sister's boyfriend repaired it for me by wrapping a piece of tin can around the join and soldering it. He was an apprentice sign writer and painted the name on the bow for me in big bold letters "RED FURY". I still have the yacht today with the original red sails, now moth eaten, and the bit of tin can well rusted. Perhaps one day you may even see it up at the pond at Colney Heath. It is well over 60 years old and like me showing signs of wear and tear.

I first became interested in photography when I borrowed my mother's Kodak box Brownie and took black and white photographs of an antirrhinum. My first job as a farm labourer provided me with the means to buy my own camera, an Ensign Ranger MKII which cost me three weeks wages (nearly £13).

It wasn't until I came up to "Lunnun" that I could afford the luxury of pictures that moved (cine) and sound could be added (albeit separately from the pictures). Black and white film was 2/6 (12 ½ p) for 4 minutes and we seldom used colour because it was five bob (25p).

When I secured employment as a Toll Inspector with the corporation of London (my son informed his teacher that I inspected toilets!) I had to collect the tolls on all the fish entering Billingsgate

Market. This brought me into contact with many people and lorry drivers from all over Europe. Some of these lorries had very dodgy tailboards and things were known to fall off occasionally. It was about this time I was introduced to video. After 16 years service I was made redundant. My redundancy money enabled me to purchase a very good still camera (Canon EDS 650) and an even better camcorder, a Canon EX1 H18 and I have just recently acquired a Panasonic digital video camcorder. The picture quality is almost professional standard and the sound reproduction superb.

Back in the early seventies, having become disillusioned with the dictatorial way Albion Films (an amateur group) was being run, three pals and I decided to form a more friendly and sociable club and Hornsey Cine was born.

Three quarters of the Albion people then joined us and we hired the Moravian Church Hall in Priory Road, Hornsey, hence the name.

After a few happy years the hall was let out during the day as a pre-school nursery for young children (I love children, having with my wife, brought two boys and a girl into this world). However, having to clear away to one side a varied assortment of plastic ride on toys, sand pits and other paraphernalia made things very difficult for holding our meeting and new premises were urgently needed.

Whilst walking my collie dog, Sunny, in Queens Woods one day I bumped into Dave Lawrence, an old Albion Film Club member, who was also involved with the NLSME. He said he would enquire into the possibility of hiring the main room at HQ.

We were then informed that the lease did not permit sub-letting but we could use the room if we all became NLSME members. About 15 of us did just that. We were of course a bit concerned we may lose our identity as we were quite well known by then in the amateur film world through entering competitions against other North Thames clubs under IAC rules (IAC being the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers, our hobby's governing body).

Every year we take part in the Triangle competition. I am often asked what this amounts to. Basically it is a competition open to all clubs affiliated to the IAC. It is divided into regions (ours being the North Thames Region - which is much larger than the name suggests). There are usually between 20-30 entries and these are split into groups of 3 (hence the name Triangle). The winner of each Triangle goes into the next round and the winner from the second round of Triangles go on until there are only three clubs left and then one grand winner emerges. There are also trophies for the best set theme and best open section films. Each club has to enter three films - one documentary, one open section and one set theme. This year's winning club will set the theme for next year's competition and so at least one of the films has to be made in the current year. The three films must not exceed 45 minutes in total.

All this may sound very complicated and will be boring to a lot of readers but is included in response to many enquiries regarding the Triangle. The set theme last year was "The Card" whilst this year it is "Time". I was fortunate enough to win the Triangle with my "Time" this year and the film has gone as an entry into the Lesley Gillam Trophy. We are all very pleased because it is only the third time the Club has qualified for this coveted trophy. Although I wrote the script and produced it I only did some of the actual camera work. Next year's set theme will be "The Big Break" - As you can see the themes offer plenty of creative opportunity and could not in any way be described as restrictive.

If any NLSME member wants to have a go please contact the Video Group Section Leader. If you want your model filmed in action, unfortunately we can't really do it for you but will willingly help you to do it yourself and you can even borrow one of our cameras if you do not own one. As you probably know the equipment to show it on already exists at HQ thanks to the co-ordination of the NLSME Council and the Video Group along with the remarkable achievements of Jim Macdonald in

obtaining the video projectors.

Often we host the Triangle competition. Anything up to fifty people come to HQ and we are often complimented on our projection equipment as provided by the Society as a whole with the Video Group chipping in what we can. We were initially known as the Cine Section. Not liking the word section because it suggests we are separate from the rest and also wishing to update our image from the now old fashioned "cine film" we are now known as the VIDEO GROUP and among our members we possess at least three of the latest digital video cameras.

Any NLSME member is welcome to join in our activities just as some of us have been involved in other sections.

In the early days of the pond at Tyttenhanger we helped with the digging and removal of some very prickly Hawthorn bushes. We were so involved with helping Frank Inman and Terry Hammer who seemed to be doing all the hard work with little and only spasmodic help that we completely forgot to film the event. Another opportunity missed!!

Since the completion of the pond interest in the Marine section has increased dramatically. I myself, my son Malcolm and Andy Lawrence have all got boats nearing completion so not only have our filming activities gained ground our other interest are also widening.

The Video Group's annual BBQ at Tyttenhanger has also got us involved with some of the Loco Section members who kindly let us ride on and sometimes drive their trains. Sadly due to bereavements and people moving away our group is now down to about a dozen regulars and we would welcome support especially from within the NLSME.

If you would like to find out more about amateur filming why not join us one Wednesday evening at HQ about 8.30pm. I am sure our Ken would be pleased to make you a cup of tea although since the fire we can no longer have a drink at the British Legion next door. Still we do manage a drink at the Triumph at the end of Summers Lane!

May your hobby be as enjoyable to you as mine is to me and unless you want a football for Christmas don't write to Santa Claus and ask for a yacht.

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John Old