

North Thames Region



The Film & Video Institute

www.theiac.org.uk

NEWSLETTER

May—June 2013

NTR SUCCESSES AT BIAFF 2013

There were 39 NTR entries in BIAFF this year, compared with 50 in 2012.

Special congratulations go to **Michael Slowe FACI**, from Finchley, whose documentary *"Last of the Wolfgang"* won both a Diamond and the Best Documentary Awards.

Congratulations also to:

Ian Woodward, whose *"The Red Rose"* won 5 Stars

Alan Colegrave FACI, whose *"Another Day"* won 4 Stars.

Channel 7 Prods. whose *"Just Friends"* won 4 Stars.

Ian Brown LACI whose *"Mysterious Island"* won 4 Stars

Paul Desmond LACI whose *"Out of My Head"* won 4 Stars

S. Essex win the Staines Silver Salver



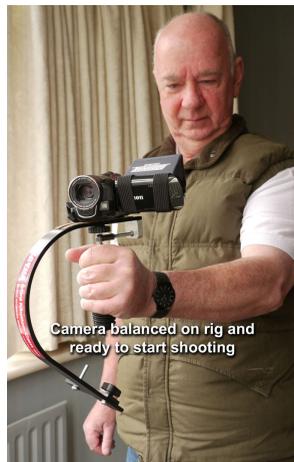
Judges David Moore & Geoff Harmer about to present Staines VM's Silver Salver at the Club's Annual Inter-Club Competition

(Full report on p. 5)

The Mini Motion-Cam Stabiliser

Mike Murphy, from St. Albans MM, tries out his new Hague Mini Motion-Cam Stabiliser.

(Full report on pp. 11—12)



Camera balanced on rig and ready to start shooting

Chairman's Chat

Brenda has been a member of Wanstead & Woodford Movie Makers for 19 years, was its Chairman from 2007 > 2010, and has been Chairman of the North Thames IAC Region since November 2007. She was made an FACI in October 2012.



Brenda Granshaw FACI

During the last month I have realised how little I know about the computer programmes that can make my life easier.

First off, when Eric's son was trying to arrange a family get-together, he decided that finding a convenient date by exchanging emails would be a lengthy process, so he set up a "Doodle". This is a free meeting-scheduling programme, the webpage for which can be accessed easily through Google. We were all able to fill in our availability on line only to discover that the earliest we could all get together would be August! You may find the Doodle useful for finding dates when groups can be available for film making.

After that, Eric was invited to join an internet meeting with three others to get guidance on Avid Effects. This was done using "Team Viewer", which is free and, without registering or installing any software on either computer, you can be connected and viewing another person's screen in less than a minute. The only requirement is that you all have internet connections. Team Viewer is a commercial product but, if you agree to use it for non-commercial purposes, then you can do so without any cost or restriction. With it, not only can you see another person's screen, but you can actually control their PC with your keyboard and mouse so it is useful for demonstrating how to do something. Again the webpage can easily be accessed through Google. If you know someone who can give you advice on one of your programmes, it is worth considering whether such a link up would be advantageous.

Still on the subject of the internet, I must congratulate Staines Video Makers for winning the IAC Best Website competition. The importance of having an interesting and informative website should not be underestimated as more and more people are turning to the internet for information.

Hopefully by the time you read this the weather will have improved and we can all be out with our cameras. I look forward to seeing you at the Triangle Final on Sunday 12 May. It promises to be a great show, so don't miss it.

Brenda

From the Editor:

The North Thames Region of the IAC receives no income from the national body. Its only ways to raise funds are through the 100 Club, or by making a profit on the events it organises, such as BIAFF in 2014.

Apart from administrative expenses, the main drain on the bank balance is the cost of producing and printing the Newsletter. Prudence demands that we do not spend so much on each edition that bankruptcy looms in two or three years time.

The Council has therefore decided to keep the edition to 12 A5 pages for the moment, and to restrict the use of colour to just the back and front covers.

We are wondering whether the climate will ever be right to move to an electronic edition only, either being e-mailed to members as an attachment, or to be read on the IAC website.

In that regard, may I point out that the Newsletter appears on the IAC website two or three weeks before members receive their paper copy in the post, and that all the Newsletters back to Jan./Feb. 2009 are there to be read.

For that reason, and to save space, I am no longer publishing the Club Directory - it can be found in all your previous printed Newsletters, and also on the IAC website.

The route to our Newsletters on the website is: *Go to the IAC website (see front cover)*

Touch IAC. Click on Regions. Click on North Thames Region (words or red area on map) Click on Newsletters.

John Astin AACI

From the Membership Secretary:

I am sure that most of you already know, or forget in all the excitement, that if your President, Chairman or Treasurer changes at your Club's AGM, you need to notify the IAC Head Office (*for address, see p. 6*).

This came to my attention the other day when our Competition Officer at PBFM asked me for the telephone number etc. of another Club.

I gave him the information I had, but the Chairman, unbeknown to me, had changed—this lead to unnecessary phone calls and e-mails and wasted time discovering the identity of the new chairman.

If you are not sure whether your Club information is up to date, just check by sending an e mail to Pam at Head Office.

Penny Love FACI

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Club Matters



We hear in this issue from Finchley Film Makers

First, from Chairman Kevin Devine:

In recent years we have lost three long time stalwarts of the club; Muriel Agius (2011), Kenneth Seeger (2009) and Leo Ugo (2008). All three had played key roles in the success of our club and will be sadly missed. Our membership has remained steady, but most recently, we have seen an influx of several younger members, which can only be great for the club.

We continue to make films, both individual and club efforts. The latter has seen two productions in recent years; *The River God Mask* in 2010, and *The Winning Ticket* in 2012. While the *River God Mask* employed actors, the *Winning Ticket* used club members in acting roles, a real return to the 'good old days' of the club. Both of these films were submitted to BIAFF (in 2012 and 2013 respectively) and received a three star rating. We are currently deciding what our next club film project will be, based on ideas submitted by club members.

Secondly, from FFM & NTR Council Member, Eileen Kenning, who claims "There's no business like *SHOW* Business".

"Why make a film?" you may ask? To enter a competition? No, not really.

Primarily the creative act is for ourselves. We love the moving image. We want to tell the story. We are likely to share with a few trusted friends and re-edit. The next step is to show the film.

Not necessarily to a judge or to be judged.

'Why are we so keen to be judged when we know what's wrong with our films?' asked a friend of mine.

What about going straight out to share with an audience? That's the process. That's Hollywood.

The learning film maker under the cover of darkness stares, not at the screen, but at the audience. Then goes back to the editing suite to practise.

If your club is able to put on public shows frequently, has a number of all rounders or creative people happily working along side the solely technically minded - that is good.

But, a specific film club may well be the last place to expose a new work, if it is not a nurturing atmosphere. Then better we seek out a neighbouring club and work together. Aim to find an audience who can empathise and, dare I say, are enough of a cross section to enjoy new work in a positive and welcoming way.

Let's take St Alban's recent wonderful show made up both of new work, and some drawn from archives. Vitally, NO one film was too long,

Let's throw in a warm audience who are genuinely after a lively night out. Pepper the interval with friendly club members moving around and putting themselves out to be convivial.

Delectable cakes and fresh tea do no harm bringing both young and old together. Then back to the second half of varied films.

It is the way forward—both nurturing new work with care and reaching out to a wider audience.

Let's partner clubs together to put on public entertainment. Mix and match our work new and a bit less new, in a bold and positive way. View it together on a big screen. Keep the variety in the programme and mercifully NO film too long.

Now that's entertainment!

Staines Video Makers Celebrates the 40th Anniversary of its Inter-Club Silver Salver Competition.

Tim Stannard reports:



It was my pleasure to preside over the 40th Staines Video Makers Inter-Club Competition on March 8th. Clubs from London and the Home Counties are invited each year to submit a film to be judged on the night and this year we screened 10 entries—we had to turn away another due to time constraints!

Whilst this is a competition, it's also an opportunity to meet up with old friends and we were delighted to receive such a large number of guests, particularly as the evening clashed with other clubs' scheduled events.

The Chairmen of both SERIAC (Freddy Beard) and our own region (Brenda Granshaw, accompanied by Eric) represented Orpington and Wanstead and Woodford, and we had several members from Reading FVM, Surrey Border MM and Hemel Hempstead MM.

We were also pleased to welcome Seb Hall who filled in some of the time whilst the judges were deliberating telling us about his project "Red Carpet Screenings", a non-competitive festival that runs two or three times a year in Basingstoke where a film is screened and the makers are invited to talk about it on a sofa on the stage afterwards. Not only do filmmakers learn from each other, but also it's a great way to network.

The judges, David Moore, retired head of sound for Sky TV, and Geoff Harmer, independent film maker, had the usual tough job picking a winner from the 10 films which included such diverse films as a film lobbying TFL for a safer Stirling Corner, a warning against over-indulgence set against a psychedelic backdrop of Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, along with the usual crop of comedies, dramas and documentaries.

Tony Ford, John Ford and Lester Redding's clever film "**Weather Vain**" about - no I won't spoil it for you! - won the coveted Silver Salver this year for South Essex Film Makers.

It was a case of being the bridesmaid for the second year running for Potters Bar Film Makers with John Astin's lively look at "**Olympic London**" scooping second place.

Third place went to Orpington VFM's "**Disastermind**", a "Mastermind" spoof which, it was revealed after the competition, was the result of a number of filming workshops run at the club.

Although we have no further official placings, the judges were adamant that "The Yearning" from Bourne End Video Makers received special mention for its excellent camerawork, lighting and audio.

It is interesting to note that many of these films cast younger people than we are used to seeing. It is encouraging to see that the makers of fiction are beginning to cast their net wider than the usual bunch of grey haired ladies and gentlemen.

This can only help make our films more attractive to a wider audience.



To our new members:
R. K. Lawrence Middlesex
Paul Lund Milton Keynes



To join the IAC , contact:
IAC, The Film and Video Institute,
Dorset House,
Regent Park,
Kingston Road,
LEATHERHEAD, Surrey, KT22 7PL.

Tel.: 01372 824350 E-Mail: admin@theiac.org.uk

NTRIAC TRIANGLE FINAL

Staines VM v St. Albans MM v Walthamstow ACVC

Hosted by S.Essex Film Makers at Wyburns School,
NeVERN Road, RAYLEIGH, Essex, SS6 7PE on Sunday May 13th
at 2 for 2.30 pm start.

Judges: Mike Lloyd, John Luton, Tania Mathias

*By the time the paper copy of this Newsletter appears, the Final will either
be just about to happen, or it will have happened!*

A full report will appear in the July-August Newsletter. Ed.

Wanstead & Woodford have recently changed their name, and are
henceforth to be known as:

Wanstead and Woodford Movie Makers

Deadline for the next issue is Sunday June 2nd

Please send all contributions by e-mail to:

john.astin1@ntlworld.com

NTR 100 CLUB

Contact: JOHN FARRER

Tel.: 01462 434948 EMail:jffarrer@madasafish.com

The Draws for March & April were made at the NTRAC Council Meeting on Tuesday March 26th.

Each of the following wins £12:

March:

105 Michael Slowe
33 Ken Martin
94 Derek Lucas

April:

78 Ron Jones
83 Aivar Kaulins
50 Brenda Granshaw
13 Lorna Gill
76 Andrew Tweed

John Farrer adds:

The NTR 100 Club continues to grow – more members and more prizes!

And it's one of the Region's few sources of income.

But we need your help !

These are the only Clubs that own shares:

Aylesbury Camcorder Enthusiasts (ACE)
Colchester Film Makers Club
Enfield Film Makers
Hemel Hempstead Movie Makers
Potters Bar FilmMakers
Staines Video Makers
Wanstead and Woodford Cine and Video Club

If your club is NOT in this list, please “chivvy” your Chairman, Treasurer and Committee into investing in a share now !

In 2012 three clubs won prizes and already in January/February 2013 one of those clubs has won again! ! !

And of course if you personally don't own a share - now is the time to buy your own!

It Only Takes a Minute!

So the song goes....

The NTR One Minute Competition is in sight again!

Make an entertaining video or one that makes us smile..... It'll only take you a minute!! In fact it mustn't be longer than a minute from top to tail!!*Easy Peasy!*.....

You have until June 30th 2013 to write it, shoot it, edit it and enter it!!*Easy Peasy!*.....

Fill in your ENTRY FORM today! (see opposite)

One slight change this year, the entry fee is now £3...one of the cheapest competitions to enter!

NTRIAC ONE-MINUTE COMPETITION RULES:

1. Movies may be entered on Mini DV, DVD or BluRay.
2. Movie must not exceed sixty-seconds inclusive of titles & credits.
3. Subject matter is open but contents should be entertaining/humorous and suitable for showing to audiences of all ages.
4. The NTR Council reserves the right to reject an entry contravening any rules or containing material deemed unsuitable for showing to universal audiences.
5. **Audio & Visuals Copyright Clearance is the sole responsibility of the Entrant.**
6. Send your entry to:
Christine Collins FACI, 5 Walnut Grove, Enfield, EN1 2BL.

The top three videos will be shown at the NTR Movie Festival in November.

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES: JUNE 30th 2013

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FUTURE



SUNDAY MAY 12th

THE NTR TRIANGLE FINAL hosted by
South Essex FilmMakers at Wyburns School,
Nevern Road, Rayleigh, SS6 7PE. *2.30 pm start.*

SATURDAY OCTOBER 5th

POTTERS BAR FM PUBLIC SHOW at 2.30 & 8pm.

Further details from Penny Love (*Contact details on p. 4*)

OCTOBER 25th — 27th

The IAC NATIONAL AGM WEEKEND hosted by NERAC at
the Holiday Inn, Seaton Burn, Newcastle. (*Further
details on the IAC website*)

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 15th

Wanstead & Woodford FM Movie Night (*details to follow*)

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 24th

NTRIAC FESTIVAL & AGM

Pinner Village Hall, Chapel Lane Car Park, Pinner, HA5 1A
10 for 10.30 am. £6 in advance, £8 at the door.

In this spot in the last issue, Tom Hardwick queried Enfield Video Makers' decision to introduce separate competitions for SD & HD videos. Enfield Chairman Eric Jukes replies:

I don't think we would accept an HD and SD version of the same film as some ancient eyes might just think they have seen the same film twice!

It is more about perception—that is the perception of those who have firmly decided to remain with SD and who may have the perception that they are disadvantaged.

I don't see that there is a lot of difference from the old days of standard 8mm film versus 16mm film - and those with 8mm would feel that they were at a disadvantage to their higher definition colleagues.

I well remember the ACW Ten Best Competition, the winners of which (if my fading memory serves me) were over-represented by 16mm.

Possibly that was the reason for the introduction of the Top 8 competition which was only for 8mm films.

Anyway, it doesn't cost to give our Best HD and Best SD film award certificates - in addition to the trophy for Best film of course - as they are certificates, and doubtless, time and the members will be the judge of whether it is a successful innovation..



Ever fancied embellishing your video with lovely, steady gliding shots? Mike Murphy, from St. Albans MM, tries out the very affordable Hague Mini Motion-Cam Stabiliser, designed for use with camcorders weighing between 300 and 800 grams.

The Mini Motion-Cam stabiliser works by balancing the camera on a rig which is supported by a freely-moving handle. In this way the camera is isolated from random hand movements and only responds to linear movement, resulting in a smooth gliding motion.

Well, that's the idea but how well does it work in practice?

Before mounting the camera it must be ready for action. Battery & Card in place, screen out.. Some means of viewing the image other than a viewfinder is essential, so a screen of some sort is a must.

Mounting the Camcorder

The platform has a long slot in it to allow the camera to move fore and aft for balancing. Don't do it up too tightly just yet. Also make sure the camcorder is pointing in the right direction, with the curve of the stabiliser away from you. The instructions suggest it's easier to set up if the stabiliser is bottom heavy so we added two large weight discs from those supplied (*see picture p. 12*) for the purpose to the weight platform.

Balancing the Camcorder

We lifted the stabiliser using the handle. It was immediately obvious that the viewing screen protruding from the side of the camera was causing the stabiliser to be way off balance & tilt. To counter-balance the viewfinder we would need to offset the adjustable weight platform in the opposite direction, which we did. So far so good.

Next we adjusted the camera fore and aft using the slot in the camera platform. This proved straightforward, and soon the camera was balanced and sitting horizontally without tilting forward or backward.

The final adjustment was to check that the system was not too bottom heavy, for if it was, it would swing like a pendulum and provide results that were far from stable. We checked this by holding the handle vertical and then introducing a small tilt to the rig. When correctly balanced the assembly should swing slowly back to the vertical position and not sway repeatedly.

Calamity! Our stabiliser swung like a grandfather clock pendulum – it was clearly way too bottom heavy.

Problem Solving

To stop the rig being bottom heavy we removed the weights from the weight platform. But this un-balanced the viewfinder, even with the weight platform extended outward to its maximum (*see photograph on p. 12*), so the rig wouldn't remain vertical. We were in a catch-22 situation.

A little research revealed that this problem is not unknown to Hague, who manufacture a device for cameras whose mounting screws are not in the optimal position. It's called the 'Mini Motion-Cam Balance Correction Plate' or MMCP for short. It's a square metal plate with a 3-by-3 matrix of threaded holes that will enable you to offset the camera position for perfect balance.

But why, we wondered, is it necessary for the camera axis to align with the axis of the stabiliser? If we rotate the camera, so that the heavy battery-laden back-end hangs out in the opposite direction to the viewing screen, couldn't we get the rig to balance without the extra weights on the bottom or the MMCP? So we tried it - and it worked. Without the extra weights the rig was no longer too bottom heavy and it passed the swing test.



Hague Mini Motion-Cam
What's in the box?

Trying It Out

Once these problems had been overcome, we were surprised at how 'right' the rig felt. It was possible to move the handle swiftly from side-to-side and up and down whilst the camera remained resolutely vertical.

In walking and 'craning' shots (that is to say raising and lowering the height of the camera) it was possible with some practice to obtain impressively smooth motion shots.

The word to stress here is practice, because it did take a little practice before we were producing our best shots. In particular, there is a technique of gently resting the index finger against the camera to adjust the direction in which the camera is pointing so that as it glides around it's facing in the intended direction!



Weight platform extended to help balance viewfinder

Showing camera rotated on platform to balance weight of offset viewfinder

Verdict

We were disappointed with the problems we found in setting it up, in particular the difficulty with balancing the offset weight of the viewfinder.

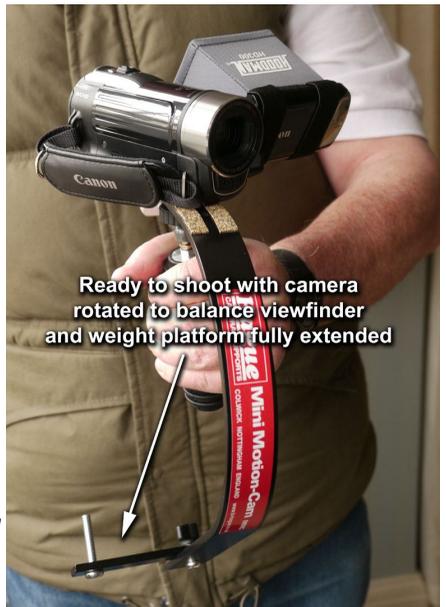
We felt it was unreasonable to expect customers to have to buy extra parts before it could be used in the intended manner, although we did find a work-around for the problem. *(Not everyone would need this extra part, Ed)*

We wondered if the weight distribution of the stabiliser was due for a re-think, particularly now that most cameras do not use tape and therefore lack the balancing effect of both the weight of the cassette and associated mechanism. A quick release would be a useful addition.

On the positive side we liked the results we obtained with the rig and felt that it opened up many possibilities for adding variety and interest to our visuals. It's best used with the camera lens set to its widest angle of view, as this helps with the smoothing and gives a greater impression of movement. The light weight of the unit was a bonus, although you might consider the awkward shape would make it ungainly to take out and about, for example when on holiday.

Cost

At the time of writing, the basic Stabiliser costs around £60 from Hague (www.b-hague.co.uk)



Ready to shoot with camera rotated to balance viewfinder and weight platform fully extended

written by Nigel Longman, St. Albans FM