



Website www.historyproject.org.uk

The British Entertainment History Project Bulletin Number 7

April 2021

Dear all,

The Board of Management - Ken Rowles; Martin Sheffield; Nick Gilbey; Derek Threadgall; Elaine Burrows, Chair - Mike Dick; and Secretary - Sue Malden, with support from David Sharp, continue to meet on a monthly basis via Zoom

UEA Eastmancolor interviews.

Mike recently described the twelve UEA Eastmancolor Project interviews as a wonderful addition to the History Project collection. One of these is with Paul Collard the former MD & Technical Director of Soho Images and Todd-ao UK. Paul began his career at Kodak, then became Technical Manager at Kays/Metrocolor London where he was involved in many award-winning feature and TV films. These include "1984" directed by Michael Radford, Mike Leigh's "Naked" and Terence Davies' "Distant Voices, Still Lives"

Mike felt that a second interview with Paul Collard was a priority in order to cover his wider career. The transcript of the recording is now available on our website. The video will be uploaded in the very near future.

Interviews

Mike reported on a useful conversation with the daughter of Denis Mitchell regarding the transcript of his audio interview recorded in 1989. The interview was withdrawn soon after the recording session. She did not know why it was withdrawn but would try to find out within the family. Mike reported that the transcript reveals an important and unique interview with a major British documentary radio and film maker. We're hopeful that it can be cleared for access.

Collaboration with other Projects

Mike wanted to encourage more collaboration (see below – transcripts) with groups outside of London to secure interviews, when appropriate. Ken cited his cousin, a radio producer in Scotland. Martin agreed to refer this to Tim Aymes our contact with the STV archive.

Mike also feels we need to investigate links with St Andrews and Edinburgh Universities who have contributed to the History Project in the past including the digitising of the Cine Technician magazine.

Mike has agreed with BECTU that it is necessary to update any listings they or we may hold for contacts with Universities and FE colleges offering students courses in film and media.

He is also re-visiting his contacts with the University of West London and the University of Hertfordshire.

We are appreciative of support from the Cinema Veterans magazine for the regular updates from the HP that they commission, as well the publishing of a range of our interviews over the years. The latest one is from 1993 conducted by Norman Swallow with Sir Paul Fox.

Powerhouse

We have supplied interviews to Powerhouse of Peter Scott Graham and Freddie Francis. Their latest Blu-Ray release this month is "The Chalk Garden" from 1964 starring Deborah Kerr, Haley Mills and John Mills. The special features on the disc includes our 1991 interview with Ronald Neame who directed the movie.

Methods of shooting. Camera cards.

Nick Gilbey has given a lot of time to investigating the best way to record interviews so that they are future-proofed when we return to recording

Costs will be in the region of £800

His recommendation is, that for future interviews, a separate recording is made at the same time as the interview is recorded on the camera. There are several reasons for this suggestion, namely

1 The separate recording will be onto an SD card, which can either be kept or directly archived onto a BEHP hard drive.

2 At present, the recording on the camera go through the necessary and diverse processes before being uploaded to the BEHP website. These processes can degrade the original recording

3 All the recordings made on the separate device will have the same specification.

4 There is a master back-up at the time of the recording. The camera operator will have the working copy while the interviewer will be in possession of the separate master recording.

5 This will result in a standardisation in the recording process. This has become increasingly difficult, since the start of video recordings, because of the different cameras used and different media formats.

This could be achieved in a number of ways -

The BEHP buys a Blackmagic Video Assist

Monitor/Recorder. <https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/uk/products/blackmagicvideoassist>

Pro Res LT which would give 3 hours of recording 1080 x 1980 25p on a single SD card. I recommend that the recording is made in progressive (p) rather than interlace. Although interlace is the preferred by a lot of broadcasters. Progressive is being used more commonly and it is relatively easy to convert into an interlace recording without losing quality. The camera would need to record HD 1080p and the output - SDI or HDMI - fed by cable into the Blackmagic Monitor/Recorder. The Blackmagic unit would be operated by the interviewer who can monitor the picture and, visually, the two audio channels which are superimposed onto the picture.

Practically, the recorder would be handed to interviewer at the monthly meeting and returned at the next. A robust Peli case should be bought to keep the Blackmagic unit in could be sent by Special Delivery to the next interviewer.

Nick has a Blackmagic video assist, which will be used to record the interview Mike is planning to record with Paul Collard as soon we get the go ahead to start our recording activities again.

Our Database

Our database is to be upgraded There is a necessary transfer from our current system Drupal 7 straight to 9. This gives us plenty of time to get the planning right.

We will be looking at the website especially the Home page, which we want to be more user friendly. It will have more interactive information about the project with drop down menus for various areas such as,

- patrons
- bulletins on the home page which can be downloaded
- bibliography of books & articles & projects that have used/worked with the HP
- endorsements for the archive
- news – latest interviews – recorded, digitised and transcribed
- links with other useful websites/organisations

We need to address

- How to keep a record of where our interviews have been used as part of each interview record
- Uploading the taxonomy of industry craft terms and implications for the existing info in the database
- Uploading accurate hard drive info – probably we will have done this manually by time of transfer to new version. Mike has begun this task

Transcripts

Mike has been using the Otter transcription service and has recently sent an Otter version of the Phillip Donnellan interview to Emma Feather who is doing an excellent job transcribing this lengthy recording. She has reported that Otter is so much better to use and speeding up the process greatly. Emma's diligence and contribution are highly appreciated by the Board.

Vanessa Jackson of the Pebble Mill Project was helping with Sue's appeal for people who had worked at BBC Birmingham Gosta Green. Vanessa had previously interviewed Margaret Peacock – a significant figure as Head of Design – over the telephone. Mike had produced good results on this with Otter. Several more people had come forward as a result of our recent appeal about Gosta Green – Vanessa and Lez Cooke who had worked on a project – Forgotten TV Drama that had featured BBC Birmingham were collaborating with us on this topic.

Ros Cranston from the BFI has worked on three interview transcripts with Otter and given most useful feedback.

All reported that Otter was most suitable for our needs. Mike describes the thesaurus in Otter as being a valuable tool that can be trained to our needs. Likewise, the system also instantly recognises familiar voices such as Roy Fowler, Alan Lawson and Mike.

As a result of our exploratory work, it was agreed to upgrade our subscription to Otter Pro Team membership. This will allow 3 team members to put interviews from their hard drives through Otter (Mike, John Harwood, and Alec Hall Shaw) and upload the results to the website. They will need to be proof-read. A disclaimer has been drawn up to indicate that these transcripts have been produced automatically using Otter.

We are appealing for volunteers to proofread this and other interviews.

Patron

It was agreed by the Board that initially we should invite only one patron who should be UK based. Views from members on this issue are welcomed.

The concept of Honorary Membership of the British Entertainment History Project creating a special category of supporter will be discussed. Suggestions are welcomed

Newsletter

It was agreed that the monthly Bulletin will be our main means of communication with the wider group.

Derek Threadgall is now working on contributions about any interviewees that he knew working at Shepperton.

Martin Sheffield has been encouraged to do something similar based on his deep knowledge of the industry.

ACT Films

Mike is planning to research into ACT Films to see how many of the HP interviewees worked on these films. Any information from members is most welcome

Donations.

Martin Sheffield reported that in relation to Norman J Warren, Darren Perry may be in a position to donate some theatre interviews to the History Project: Also he had found in his private collection some tapes from Tony Lawson (son of Alan) which he needed to listen to, in order to see if they are of value to the Project.

Ken has decided to donate interviews he has with Richard Attenborough and other theatrical personalities recorded for a production of his about Theatre Ghosts.

Mike and Sue April 2021