

The Changing Face of the Amateur Holiday Film as Prescribed by Postwar *Amateur Cine World* (1945-1951)

Abstract

Amateur filmmaking, motoring and holidaymaking were three complementary leisure activities which re-emerged with a greater intensity for middle-class consumers in the immediate postwar period. The end of restrictions on travel, an increasing availability of film stock, and the first real chance to take advantage of the Holidays With Pay Act, (the latter of which had been disrupted by World War II) created new opportunities for cine enthusiasts to produce a holiday film after 1945.

*In this paper I consider how instructional articles on how to make a holiday film may have helped to ideologically construct a sense of British national identity for the middle-class readers of *Amateur Cine World* between 1945 and 1951.*

These articles can be mapped closely with the shifting patterns of holidaymaking in the postwar period, and tend to encourage cine hobbyists to construct a sense of Britishness through their representations of the holiday; initially through images of the British countryside and coastline, and eventually by the framing of cultural difference in their first holidays abroad. A close analysis of this discourse can provide an insight into a construction of class, gender and national identity that is an alternative to the mainstream British feature film, for instance.

Introduction

There has been relatively little research on amateur film until recent times, but the work of Zimmermann, Nicholson, Craven and Shand have brought the historical and cultural value of amateur filmmaking to the forefront.¹ The amateur holiday film has long been dismissed, both by filmmaking instructors and researchers for several reasons including the films' ill-prepared content, their ubiquity in any amateur filmmaker's family collection, and (more recently) due to the sheer scale of material in archives, which has possibly shied people away from undertaking any lengthy research and in-depth analysis of this type of film. As Nicholson argues, 'thousands of poorly made films of holidays and days out survive... and they have contributed to the amateur movement's long denigration.'²

Although the feature film is 'seen as the most representative example of the cultural and ideological values of any national cinema' it may be useful to analyse amateur film as an alternative means of constructing class and nation.³ The way that the British holidaymaker frames their own experiences with a cine camera may reveal something about the construction of twentieth century life and leisure in a similar way to how the feature film does – at least when regarding those people who could afford to be cine hobbyists and holidaymakers in the immediate postwar period.

This paper however, is not so much concerned with an analysis of amateur films, but rather the discourses around the amateur film hobby within the publication *Amateur Cine World* (from now on referred to as *ACW*), and how

these discourses may have helped to shape the filmmakers' representations of leisure and in turn construct national identity.

In this article I have chosen to concentrate on instructional articles and reviews of amateur holiday films in the journal *ACW* between 1945 and 1951, to examine how the amateur filmmaker was given guidance on making this type of film in the immediate postwar period. The journals I have selected to analyse begin with recommendations of how to make a holiday film after the extended break enforced by World War II, and end with the first significant article about filming a foreign holiday in June 1951. My reasons for selecting this time frame are that the period immediately after the Second World War is arguably one of the most significant in the history of the holiday in the twentieth century, signalling an increase in leisure activity amongst the middle and working classes, and also marking the beginnings of the transition from holidays at the British seaside to holidays abroad, which I will come back to later.

Through my analysis of *ACW* I aim to reveal if there is an ideological construction of national identity in the framing of the British holiday in this type of film, and how the discourse of *ACW* might make an unconscious contribution to this construction. I will also consider representations of class, gender, and the framing of the family, which arise from an analysis of these *ACW* articles, although these topics could be analysed in greater depth in future articles of their own.

Firstly, I will present a speculative analysis of the implied readership of *ACW*; and secondly I will offer a definition of the 'holiday film' as outlined by the

journal. Finally, I will analyse the instructional articles and reviews themselves, mapped alongside the changing shifts in holidaymaking in the immediate postwar period in order to determine what they reveal about the ideological construction of the traditional British holiday. Throughout my article I will be referring to the amateur films *Eggs For Breakfast* (Peter Bowen; UK, 1949) and *Paradise Cove* (F. C. Gradwell; UK, 1950) as case studies.

A Speculative Analysis of *Amateur Cine World's* Readership

From analysing the content of *ACW* between 1945 and 1951 it would appear that the general readership was middle-class, white, and male. Amateur filmmaking in the interwar and immediate postwar years was a relatively expensive hobby 'and affordable mainly to people from wealthier backgrounds', although, as with other leisure pursuits (such as the holiday itself), the hobby became increasingly affordable during the later 1950s and 1960s, and therefore more widely accessible to middle- and working class hobbyists.⁴

ACW was published monthly, from 1934 to 1961, and thereafter became a weekly journal until 1967 when it merged with *Amateur Movie Maker* to become *Movie Maker* (1967 – 1985).⁵ Originally printed in an A4 size with approximately 28 pages, an announcement was made in June 1941 that *ACW* would be reduced to a quarterly, A5 'pocket-size' format (with approximately 40 pages) due to wartime paper control.⁶ It reverted back to a monthly publication in 1947, but remained in its convenient and portable, pocket-sized

form until 1961. Costing sixpence before the war, its price rose to 7 pence in 1942, 9 pence in 1949, and 1 shilling (ten pence) in 1951.

The journal was serious but accessible in tone, and included easy to follow instructions on how to compose shots and structure sequences (complete with storyboard examples in some instances). The publication also featured advertisements for equipment, readers' letters, reviews of readers' films, and articles by amateur directors of the annual 'Ten Best' film competition – a contest to encourage excellence in amateur filmmaking – all of which may give us clues to *ACW's* readership.⁷

For example, advertisements in the early years tend to demonstrate that most of the shops that cine enthusiasts used were based in central London, and other cities or towns such as Bromley, Leicester, Liverpool, Shrewsbury and Swansea. Advertising during the war years was mostly for second hand equipment which camera shops offered to buy as well as sell. These adverts largely consist of lists of equipment – it is rare for illustrations of people to appear in adverts until the postwar period where women are used for decorative purposes in adverts for products such as Actina self-erecting screens and Ampro projectors. An advertisement for Celfix projection screens from 1951 also shows a mother and two children in bathing costumes being projected onto a screen – the implication being that father was behind the camera when the film was taken.⁸

The letters pages reveal that male cine hobbyists in the wartime armed forces appreciated receiving copies of *ACW* when stationed in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, to keep them in touch with the latest filmmaking news and

remind them of home. As C.W. Cramp explains, 'It makes me feel more in touch with England than any other printed magazine or paper' – a clue as to how the publication may have constructed a sense of national identity amongst its readers.⁹

Amateur filmmaking often went hand-in-hand with holidays and motoring (the cine camera being an accessory for family excursions in the motor car), and these were both things which only families with a disposable income could afford. As Walton highlights, the emerging postwar affluence can be identified by the ten per cent reduction in holiday train travel (from 47 to 37 per cent) between 1951 and 1955 when 'road transport really came into its own', and this is evident in the references to car use made in some of the *ACW* articles I discuss later.¹⁰ The types of British holiday resorts that are mentioned in *ACW* such as Brixham and Cornwall, and foreign resorts such as the South of France, are relatively upmarket and also tend to point towards a readership with middle-class tastes.¹¹

The implied white-British readership of *ACW* can be found in the journal's framing of foreign cultures in terms of their difference or contrast to British culture. For instance, in the description of a Spanish procession I refer to later, and the imperialist motifs described by Oswald Blakeston of an imagined sand castle being stormed by 'natives', and an Indian rope trick performed by a boy wearing a towel as a turban, producing a length of rope from a picnic basket.¹²

The announcement by Gordon Malthouse that reviews of readers' films would return in 1947 typically addresses the filmmaker and readership as male, with

constant references to 'he', 'his' and learning 'from the next man's mistakes' that appear throughout the article.¹³ Most, if not all of the articles during the period in question are written by men, and the features written by winners of the *ACW* 'Ten Best' film competitions also tend to suggest that most of the winning filmmakers were male too. Although some of the journal's cover illustrations attempt to construct the amateur filmmaking scene as a suitable hobby for women – the covers of the July 1948 and June 1950 editions have paintings of women actively shooting with cine cameras – it could be argued that the women in these pictures have also been used for decorative purposes, especially as the July 1948 filmmaker is wearing a two-piece bathing costume whilst filming the sea. Any attempt at gender balance by *ACW* also appears to be undermined by the item 'Unfair to Women!' which introduces the dubiously named female columnist 'Iris Fayde' in October 1951.¹⁴ It would probably have been difficult for readers to take 'Iris Fayde' seriously as a genuine person, with the name being a suspicious pun on a technical term, which most readers of *ACW* would have recognised.

Although most of the articles in *ACW* infer that the readership and therefore that cine hobbyists were mostly male, in the article regarding the making of *Eggs For Breakfast*, the film's producer, Peter Bowen says that his wife Jean took turns to film the action, which suggests that amateur filmmaking was not an exclusively male hobby.¹⁵ This is also something suggested by Nicholson, and evidenced by the female author of *A Popular Account of the Development of the Amateur Cine Movement in Great Britain*, Marjorie Lovell Burgess, in 1932.¹⁶

All of the above speculative analysis tends to suggest that the *ACW* reader, and subsequently the amateur filmmaking hobbyist, was generally white, middle-class, male, and part of a family, and that this was the type of person who took motoring holidays around the coast of Britain, and who was first able to afford holidays abroad.

Defining the Holiday Film in *ACW*

Nicholson points out that the amateur filmmaking press, like other specialist press was 'essentially for its own devotees, yet its pages disclose that it regularly challenged and goaded its readership with jibes over complacency and visual quality' and this tends to be the case in the articles I analyse here.¹⁷ The most common dilemma regarding holiday films that is often discussed in *ACW* between 1945 and 1951 is the conflict between producing a completely spontaneous film with little regard for continuity, or a holiday film with a more carefully scripted narrative.

The author of several filmmaking manuals, Tony Rose, ponders over the difficulties of producing a holiday film of his own, and admits that the 'real problem holding [him] back is an artistic one: how to do justice to the subject'. Along with other writers of *ACW*, he wonders how to make a film which is not just a series of 'animated snapshots' and refers to the amateur, competition-winning films *Eggs For Breakfast* and *Paradise Cove* in order to interrogate whether the holiday film should or should not follow a narrative, and if so, to what extent.¹⁸

To Rose, the highly narrativized *Eggs For Breakfast* seems to be ‘a not very good portrait of a family on holiday, partly because it succeeds so well in being a highly disciplined movie’, whereas *Paradise Cove* fares better with ‘a theme growing naturally out of [the filmmaker’s] own experience: the memory of holidays now past’. However, as a ‘moderately proud’ parent, it is a humble ‘baby-on-the-beach’ type film that Rose thinks he would most like to produce, but says that a ‘scripted incident’ would have to be constructed in order to capture shots that he would prefer to be filmed candidly, but that would be difficult to capture without wasting ‘thousands of feet’ of film.¹⁹

The main consideration to be made by the amateur filmmaker here is who the intended audience of the holiday film will be. For example, the hobbyist may consider whether the film being made is purely for the family to look back on during the winter months, or whether – like *Eggs For Breakfast* and *Paradise Cove* – it is being made to enter into a competition. This is emphasised in a review of a film called *Greta Bank* (G. H. Hesketh; UK, ca. 1950) where the writer says that ‘nothing much happens, but who is going to cavil at that? Certainly not the people for whom the film was primarily intended’ – thereby identifying the limited, family audience that the holiday film often has.²⁰

What appears to be implied through this discourse is that a holiday film, like the traditional British holiday itself, should be carefree and not rigidly structured. The careful planning of a film like *Eggs For Breakfast* could be thought to diminish the holiday’s real purpose to enable relaxation and escape. A film of spontaneity tends to represent the idea of the holiday with much more sincerity.

This conflict of interests for the filmmaker in choosing to produce a narrativized film with a holiday setting, or a more natural, spontaneous sequence of loosely connected events, is something which I will refer back to throughout this article. I will now offer a more detailed chronological analysis of the holiday film articles from 1945 to 1951.

Preparations for Filmmaking After World War II

References to the end of the war and a return to the peacetime cine hobby became a frequent part of the discourse of *ACW* in both features and advertising from 1944. For example, an advertisement for Specto cine equipment in March – May 1944 contains no information about any specific cameras or projectors that the company manufactured, but simply reminds the reader to ‘make sure we have *your* name on our List of those ready for full details of the Specto range...which will assuredly command a foremost position in the post-war field.’²¹

The June – August, and September – November 1945 editions of *ACW* both include an advertisement for the Dekko photographic equipment company which shows a photograph of a girl leap-frogging over a man (presumably her father) on a sandy beach. Both are in bathing costumes, and sea and cliffs can be seen in the background. The accompanying text reads ‘When you can film your holiday again... remember the name Dekko’.²² This advertisement acknowledges the ending of the Second World War in September 1945, and looks forward positively to the return of the traditional British seaside holiday during peacetime.

In the September – November 1945 article ‘Getting Your Camera On The Road’ G. H. Sewell highlights the link between amateur filmmaking and motoring for pleasure, by comparing the preparation of the cine camera for use after the war to cleaning a car for road use. He looks optimistically to a time when cine film will be plentiful, whilst at the same time making the analogy with peacetime by referring to ‘trouble-free action’:

One of these days the supply of film will suddenly return. Now is the time to ensure that when that moment arrives our cameras and associated equipment are in good fettle, ready to go into instant trouble-free action.²³

The reference to film becoming plentiful is significant here because, like food, petrol, and clothing, its availability had dwindled during World War II and most amateur filmmakers were only able to use it sparingly.²⁴

Similarly, in ‘The Countryside and the Camera’, Gordon Malthouse discusses the ‘long dreamt-of and impatiently awaited’ position of amateur filmmakers planning to shoot their first postwar film, and says that judging by the *ACW* postbag, ‘many readers have picked on the same subject: the English Countryside’.²⁵ These two articles appear to suggest a tentative return to amateur cine filming that re-establishes and reaffirms a sense of Britishness (or Englishness) for the *ACW* readers by instructing them to capture images of the countryside, whilst at the same time not venturing too far from home or from personal experience – at least for middle-class filmmakers who either lived close to the countryside, or were able to gain easy access to it with the use of a private motor car.

In the Autumn edition of 1946 in an article entitled 'Getting Back to Normal' editor Gordon Malthouse writes that:

As a first step...towards hooking *Amateur Cine World* out of its battledress and restoring it to its pre-war garb, we are glad to announce the return of our "Reviews of Readers' Films" service²⁶

This was a significant move in acknowledging that enough readers would be returning to the amateur film hobby to supply material for *ACW* to review, and eventually to enter into the annual 'Ten Best' contest – some winners of which were holiday films.

Trying Not To Be Different

As time goes on in the postwar period, information and advice about producing holiday films becomes more frequent in *ACW*. The slow return to holidaymaking for most people is indicated by the following article's appearance in June 1947 (18 months after the end of World War II), in which Malthouse says:

You will be making your holiday film soon, after – probably – a lapse of many years. You have thought about it a great deal. This year it will be something special, for it marks your return at long last to active filmmaking.²⁷

Malthouse encourages the filmmaker not to worry about producing something entirely original – hence the title 'Do Not Try To Be 'Different At All Costs' In Making Your Holiday Film' – just as they may have struggled to during the

interwar years when it was a 'tax on [the filmmaker's] ingenuity to produce something different each time'. In order to illustrate his theory, he analyses a film that has been submitted by a reader (Mr L. Gamblin) that was shot in Newquay in 1938. That the film is almost ten years old is not considered a problem, because as Malthouse argues, 'it may be more helpful to know what *has* been done, rather than what could or should be done', and as the most recent holiday film for most readers may well have been shot in 1938 before the onset of World War II, then the choice of Gamblin's film seems apt. As Hassan argues, nostalgia has 'long played a part in the English holiday' and this look back at a cine film from the interwar years could also be read as a nostalgic reflection on the previous decade.²⁸

For his film, Gamblin chose the purposely-intriguing title of *Rough Outline* rather than a name which gives away its content. Malthouse says that the idea of using an obscure title such as this will avert any potential negative feelings or comments from a prospective audience who are about to be shown someone's record of their family holiday. This emphasises the suggestion that holiday films are a maligned style of amateur filmmaking, the personal subject matter of which may not interest those beyond the holidaymakers' immediate family, as I indicated earlier. In this article the filmmaker is commended for using 'nicely composed long shots of sea and coastline' to establish the location, before cutting to shots of a more crowded beach and 'portrait' footage of the family drinking tea. Malthouse continues:

In a holiday film one needs more portraits than in most other types of film, for it is, after all, the movie equivalent ('successor' would perhaps be a more apt description) of the snapshot album.²⁹

He explains that the holidaymakers 'do not appear in every scene' and that this is fine because the film is 'not only about them and what they do, but about what they see as well'. Therefore the views of the scenery, including shots of the sand dunes and ships on the sea, are all integral to constructing an image of this Cornish holiday, as are shots of other people who they meet such as an 'old salt' at the harbour. Malthouse concludes the piece by summarising his thoughts about the benefits of producing a straightforward but competent film as opposed to one that strives to be different but 'succeeds only in being queer.'³⁰ These feelings arise from an article which aims to re-establish the holiday as a viable subject for amateur filmmakers in postwar Britain, and suggests that it is enough to be attempting to film the holiday – capturing landscape and portrait shots – at this stage, without trying to invent unusual and original scenarios, as referred to in the analysis of *Eggs For Breakfast* later on.

Inquest on a Holiday Film

The article 'Inquest on a Holiday Film' is spread over several editions of *ACW* and serves as one of the first in-depth features devoted to producing a holiday film whilst on a motoring holiday in the postwar period. In the article, Malthouse describes several technical and planning details about producing a 16mm Kodachrome colour film called *It Was In June...* which he made with his wife Olivia at a two-mile stretch of coastline at Lizard in Cornwall during the summer of 1949.³¹

In an historical context, the article is interesting because it describes a relatively remote holiday destination which was reached by car, and Malthouse says that it was the first time they were able to use the vehicle after the war having 'saved [their] petrol coupons from the beginning of the year and mortgaged the current supply until almost the end of it'. The significance of this is not lost on Malthouse who wonders whether he should have included shots of the car in the film – especially in the opening scenes – but who says he decided against it as he only had a limited amount of film stock and wanted to save this for the actual holiday itself.³²

As in other *ACW* articles, Malthouse discusses the importance of deciding whether a holiday film should be devoted to shots of the place, or rather to shots of the family who are visiting it. Not surprisingly, perhaps, because this was his first opportunity to produce a holiday film in peacetime, he decided to prioritise shots of the British landscape, over that of his wife, saying that he wanted the film to express 'not what we *did* but what we *saw*.'³³

Although the emphasis of these articles is mainly on the filming techniques rather than the actual film content, the discourse used makes some indirectly revealing comments about the framing of the British coastline. For example, when giving some useful information on why the filmmaker should not use too many panning shots, Malthouse refers to the beautiful scenery of Cornwall using words such 'breath-taking' [*sic*], 'majesty' and 'striking', which helps to construct sublime images of the Cornish coastline in the mind of the reader:

Some of the views were quite breath-taking but only because one saw them as a whole. In panning one splits up the scene and doles it out in a

progressive dribble, as it were, thus robbing it of much of its majesty.

The panoramic view owes its effect to the *general* impression it creates of the observer. Were he to analyse it, in nine cases out of ten he would find that the component parts are not at all striking – it is their cumulative effect which counts.³⁴

However, Malthouse does not give too many lengthy descriptions of the scenery throughout these articles, and therefore it seems as if the assumed middle-class readership will be familiar with this kind of romantic, reflective holiday, as opposed to the more traditionally raucous seaside holiday of the working classes.

Wet-Weather Filming

The September 1948 edition of *ACW* throws an interesting light upon the potential disappointments of the British climate when holidaymaking, and its occasional unsuitability for filming. This may have been inspired by the recent weather, as Morgan reveals that ‘1948 was a particularly wet summer.’³⁵

Malthouse says the filmmaker who is faced with wet weather whilst on holiday needs to identify a different approach to shooting, and that this approach involves a certain amount of stoicism:

Whereas at home you would not dream of venturing out in the rain for pleasure, you will sally forth on holiday. You will, in fact, make the best of it instead of merely accepting it – and that is what you should do in your holiday film. Instead of the place being the ‘star’ of the film, you

have got to accept the weather as the lead, for the simple reason that the place is no longer photogenic.³⁶

Rather than pointing the camera at 'mournful' shots of the sea or 'a blur on the horizon that might be a ship', he says that close-up shots of family members and shots of them seeking indoor entertainment may create a better impression of what actually happened on holiday. He also advises that they not act up for the camera, but that they should be themselves. Over pages 330 – 331 a storyboard is shown to give the holidaymaker an idea of how to create a narrative which makes a feature of the wet weather, rather than try to deny it. For example, the opening sequence shows a close-up of a puddle, followed by water pouring into a drain, a shot of the rough sea, and holidaymakers scurrying under umbrellas. After an intertitle that reads 'The story of a happy holiday July 1948' there are further shots that include close-ups of the family gazing into the distance followed by shots of their points-of-view of the sea, and subsequently a sequence where they contemplate going to the cinema, a dance hall, a café, or a concert. The article implies that weather such as this is an inevitable part of the British holiday, but that although it may be acknowledged in a loose narrative of this kind, the humour involved should not be 'hackneyed' or exaggerated by the family members who appear onscreen.

In the same edition, H. A. V. Bulleid gives technical advice on filming a wet seaside holiday. Although the author prioritises techniques over film content, the implication here, as with Malthouse's article, is that wet weather is a typical occurrence of the British holiday, and that 'when heavy rain comes from a comparatively bright sky, and everything is thoroughly drenched...[t]he

rain simply *must* be capitalized, chiefly by such indications as umbrellas, drips from shelter roofs and gutters, and raindrops striking the surface of the sea, or, better, a pool.¹³⁷ It is perhaps unsurprising that the unpredictable British climate has been acknowledged by *ACW* in this way – downpours at the seaside have also been noticeably represented in feature films such as *Bank Holiday* (Carol Reed, Gainsborough; UK, 1938), *The Punch and Judy Man* (Jeremy Summers, ABPC; UK, 1962) and the opening scenes of *Summer Holiday* (Peter Yates, ABPC; UK, 1963), the latter of which, providing a contrast between the grey British weather and the sunny location filming in Europe in the rest of the film.

Eggs For Breakfast

Several years into the postwar period there is a change in opinion on how the filmmaker should attempt to frame their holiday. In June 1947 *ACW* was advising its readers to look back at an example of a simple but effective holiday film from 1938 for inspiration, but in the July 1950 edition there is an analysis of ‘A Holiday Film That Is ‘Different’’ – *Eggs For Breakfast* by Peter Bowen, which won a prize in the journal’s 1949 ‘Ten Best’ competition.

In this article the writer argues that *Eggs For Breakfast* is ‘not a *typical* holiday film’, and to define a typical holiday film he uses the description of ‘happy-go-lucky holiday activities’ such as ‘bathing, picnics, car tours and walks.’¹³⁸

These are the types of activities that are mentioned with regards to the holiday film *Rough Outline* of 1938, and would have been familiar to middle-class holidaymakers of the interwar and immediate postwar period. As

filmmaker Bowen himself states, 'I hankered after a colour film which, in addition to being a family record, would also have a wider audience appeal', and indeed, this prize-winning film is actually a fictional film with a carefully planned narrative that was filmed by Mr Bowen whilst on holiday, rather than the aforementioned 'series of snapshots.'³⁹ This idea is not something that ACW whole-heartedly embraces in the context of the holiday film:

We do not suggest that the fictional holiday film is to be commended above all other types of holiday film. It has at least one disadvantage: it is bound to appear unreal to a certain extent. You know that it is all 'made up.' But if it is done well it is very satisfying because it is a coherent whole instead of an assemblage of bits and pieces.⁴⁰

The above paragraph invites a debate about what exactly a 'holiday film' is, and also what a 'home movie' or 'amateur' film is. The preconceived assumption here is that a holiday film is, at worst, a series of disjointed snapshots of holiday activities, and that in contrast to this, a film with a fully formed narrative is difficult to qualify in the same category. However, it could be argued that an amateur film of 'snapshots' is still merely a *representation* of the holiday – constructed by the filmmaker who chooses which activities to frame – rather than a true record of everything that occurred. After all, a home movie might condense a week-long holiday into a film of between 3 and 6 minutes, which suggests that the selection of activities to be captured on film can be very arbitrary.

Eggs For Breakfast tells the story of a family – including father, mother, son and daughter – on a camping holiday near Brixham that begins with comic

incidents when the father smashes the eggs which were meant for breakfast, but turns to high drama when the boy and girl go on an adventure to hunt for gulls' eggs only to become stranded on the cliffs. Part of the scenario described in *ACW* includes shots of the 'children's legs and arms becoming scratched and torn', and a scene in which the three-year-old girl falls from a cliff – indicated by out-of-focus shots of her point-of-view as she becomes dizzy, followed by shots of rocks falling. This problematic filming of children is something that *ACW* recognises when summarising its feelings about *Eggs For Breakfast*:

We feel...that it was a mistake to have allowed it to develop into drama, even though the girl's fall *is* well staged and there is a happy ending.

The audience know that it is all a holiday lark...but the fall, with the crumpled little body lying on a shelf of rock, is not easy to swallow. In our view family holiday films are best left on a light note throughout. In this particular case a lighter touch need not have minimised the element of excitement and suspense, and greater credibility would have been achieved.⁴¹

ACW therefore claim that the amateur holiday film should not be narrativized to the extent that it is detrimental to the true spirit of a holiday, which, as Rose says, can be represented in shots that are largely spontaneous, with 'happy, revealing moments when the camera seems to catch a character off guard – moments which the animated snapshot maker often achieves by pure accident.'⁴²

Paradise Cove

Another 'out of the ordinary' holiday film, *Paradise Cove* is discussed in the May and June 1951 editions of *ACW*.⁴³ The film is reviewed as one of the 'Ten Best' films of the year and revealed to be 'not the familiar holiday record but a near approach to an idyll' and 'a series of delicate fragments which combine to give an impression of holiday joys recollected in the slow-moving realms of sleep'. What is interesting about the above statement is firstly that a 'familiar holiday record' does not have to be explained to the reader from the outset of the article – it is taken for granted that the reader will understand what this means: a film which captures a fragmentary series of shots of holiday activities with little pre-planning, and no attempt to frame this with a narrative, or as the review explains rather negatively, 'a typical holiday melange of the less successful kind, innocent of form and woefully lacking in continuity.'⁴⁴

The reader may also assume – from having seen other holiday films, or from shooting their own – that the types of activities caught on camera will include traditionally British holiday activities such as paddling, making sand castles, riding on donkeys and eating ice-creams, for instance. *Paradise Cove* does include shots of children playing at the beach, as the reader might expect from other holiday films – the review says that 'there is nothing in the incidents to distinguish them from a thousand such' – but it is the abstract framework of the dream sequence, and the use of composition and transitions such as fades and dissolves, that are described as setting this film apart from others of a similar subject matter. Nostalgic sensations that memories of seaside holidays conjure up are brought to the forefront by the review of the film:

The producer has tried to picture not actuality but the spirit of holiday-making seen through the rose-tinted glasses of memory, and has borne in mind that memory stores up the isolated incident, the picture of how such-and-such looked on such-and-such day and the happy trivialities that nourish the imagination long after the bolder outlines of the picture have faded.⁴⁵

Paradise Cove extends this idea of the holiday dream in a scene ‘in a later shot which purports to show the children, now grown up, revisiting the scenes of their childhood.’⁴⁶ Rose admits that it is not easy to produce this type of poetic holiday film and do it justice, saying:

Memory is a useful hold-all for ill-assorted visuals, and it can excuse unorthodox continuity. But to convey the flavour of personal memories...is a most difficult thing to do... In brief, it demands poetry and, like the writing of free verse, it is very easy to do but very hard to do well.⁴⁷

Considering the compromise between the ‘spontaneous’ holiday film, and one that is carefully scripted and planned, the review of *Paradise Cove* says that ‘its main weakness [is] that it is too studied – but it has been made with intelligence and feeling.’⁴⁸ Nevertheless the film appears to have struck a careful balance between representing a holiday in an ‘out of the ordinary’ way, whilst not veering away from the traditionally British holiday subject matter by including high drama.

Holidays Abroad

The balance between shots of people and shots of places, as mentioned previously, is particularly highlighted by *ACW* in discussions about filming overseas. On reflection, it may not seem surprising that the novelty of the foreign holiday encouraged the tourist filmmaker to prioritise scenic views above those of shots of the family, but *ACW* of August 1951 warns that the filmmaker should try not to get too carried away by the exotic scenery:

In a film of a holiday abroad the place is, of course, invariably featured – and too often at the expense of personalities. That is why such films are frequently arid and dull. Places exist for people – not the other way about.⁴⁹

The review entitled 'Two Kinds of Holiday Film' mentions the potential filmmaking subjects that other cultures offer the British holidaymaker. This includes shots of 'men in the fields [and] women beating out washing by the stream', with the reviewer emphasising that scenery 'is the background':

By all means let us have plenty of background, but if on your holiday abroad you met hardly a soul you'd probably soon get bored. And yet the entirely scenic holiday film is the rule rather than the exception.⁵⁰

The reviewer claims that '[s]eventeen films of luxury South of France coastal resorts were submitted for... [*ACW*'s] 1950 Ten Best [competition] but only in two or three was one given a really adequate picture of them' because the majority of films were denied the focal points of the fashions, the cars, and the

'gaily dressed (and undressed) bathers', instead revealing the location to be nothing more than 'a coloured view on a picture postcard'.

The article 'Taking Your Camera on Holiday Abroad' by R. H. Alder of June 1951 is the first in-depth postwar piece on this topic. Firstly, it gives lots of information about the practicalities of taking equipment and film stock abroad, how and where to find extra stock, how best to go about getting it processed, and also some useful facts about import duties.⁵¹ As well as this practical advice, the article considers the different ways in which the filmmaker might try to capture the essence of their foreign holiday. In a similar vein to the August 1951 article about the importance of bringing new locations to life by including plenty of shots of people, Alder argues that a foreign holiday film must be planned carefully in advance:

Are you going to make a record of your family and friends in new surroundings? Or do you want to report on foreign habits which are strange to British eyes?

The last sentence is rather telling; it arguably puts the British holidaymaker in the place of the colonizer, intrigued by the cultures and traditions of the local citizens at foreign holiday resorts. As Nicholson suggests, 'Holiday films offer alternative visual routes into understanding colonial encounters abroad; travelogues form a distinctive strand for locating who watched imagery of foreign and unfamiliar lifestyles, and where.'⁵²

In *ACW* Alder demonstrates the two different approaches to filmmaking in a foreign resort by imagining the filming of a religious procession in Spain – the first example prioritising the reactions of a young family member who

witnesses the procession, and the second focusing purely on the procession itself with the use of telephoto lenses to capture details from some distance away. Although the intention of the two scenic outlines is to assist the filmmaker in thinking about how to construct a narrative, and also to think about what equipment they might need for the two different types of films, the scripts arguably say more about the attitudes of the British filmmaker abroad, rather than the subject which is being filmed.

For example, in Script 1, the cameraperson is filming 'Ann, a young lady of ten sunny summers', so the sequence shifts between a construction of proud parental admiration in the shots of the child, and a construction of the Spanish culture that she is witnessing – on this occasion stereotyped by a solemn Catholic procession, with its description of 'mace-like candlesticks', and an 'upheld crucifix', the shadow of which momentarily falls upon Ann's face as the procession passes by. The cultural difference between Ann and the Spanish locals is emphasised when it says that the local women 'genuflect' whereas 'Ann (the little heathen) frankly stares'.

In Script 2, the Catholic iconography is emphasised more greatly because there are no shots of the child to detract from them, and these include the church carvings, the embroidery of the local women's clothes, the 'picturesque' headdress of one woman, the crucifix (again) and telephoto shots of feet 'climbing the three broad steps to the [church] door'. The shots of the feet demonstrating the solemn pace of the procession, whilst possibly making an ideological reference to the significance of feet in religious rituals such as their washing during the Mass of the Lord's Supper.

For Script 2 there are three uses of the telephoto lens in a sequence of 9 shots, whereas in Script 1 there are none. The telephoto is used here to capture detail without the filmmaker having to intrude on the procession, yet the use of this type of lens implies voyeurism and a certain invasion of privacy in that the cameraperson has caught close-ups of the woman in an ornate headdress, and of someone's feet, without their knowledge of it.

This is not unlike the filming method amateur filmmaker Michael Gough says he utilised when filming part of his *Sunshine Honeymoon* film in Tangiers in the late 1960s, by which time the locals had probably become savvier to the increasing use of cine equipment by holidaymakers. He explains that the Moroccans did not want to be filmed because they believed that the 'camera [would] steal their soul' and so they would turn their backs to the camera or hide their eyes. Gough overcame this obstacle by using a long telephoto lens to zoom in on their faces, and says that 'these people hopefully didn't know that I was filming them.'⁵³

In the June 1951 *ACW* article, Alder does not say which approach is best – the emphasis on foreign culture, or the focus on the family – and unlike the series of 'picture postcard' views that are dismissed in *ACW*, August 1951, page 366, the second script regarding the Catholic procession potentially includes enough close-up details here to keep the audience interested.

Also of note in this article are the frame enlargements that are used to illustrate the piece. There are no images of the holiday abroad here; instead, the frame enlargements of the close-up of a fisherman's face and gulls eating on the quayside are from Peter Bowen's film *Age of Innocence* (UK, 1950)

filmed in Cornwall. The writer says that shots *like these* should still be included in the framing of the holiday abroad because ‘they are much more typical of place and custom than tourist-fetching activities’ that might be faked.⁵⁴ The use of the Cornwall frame enlargements underlines the fact that the Spanish film is ‘imagined’ here for the article. The writer has possibly not yet made his own foreign holiday film, which is why this could be read as a generalised, stereotypical view of Spanish culture. The writer, even if he has not yet made a film abroad, is also anticipating that this will be a forthcoming phenomenon, and that this type of holiday will become increasingly accessible to the amateur filmmaker in the coming decade.

Conclusion

By focusing on these instructional articles and reviews in *ACW* between 1945 and 1951 we may come to a number of conclusions regarding the amateur filmmaking hobby and the construction of national identity in postwar Britain. Firstly, the discourse in these articles suggests an implied readership of middle-class hobbyists who had enough disposable income to be able to afford cine equipment, a holiday, and a car, even if like Malthouse, they had to save their petrol coupons in order to drive to their first peacetime holiday on the British coast.⁵⁵

Secondly, many of these articles invite discussion about what exactly a holiday film is. The cultural practices of the holiday – and therefore the content of these amateur films – is largely taken for granted. This suggests an ideological construction of the traditional British holiday, embedded in the

national subconscious that requires no description for the postwar filmmaker even if this may be their first return to holidaymaking since 1938. The majority of the commentators also suggest that a holiday is best represented with a certain amount of spontaneity, and that when the family is required to 'act' or follow careful planning, the true sensation of the holiday is lost.⁵⁶

The pattern of the *ACW* articles appears to map quite closely to the history of the British holiday in the immediate postwar period. Unsurprisingly, holiday films, as with the holiday itself, were largely out of bounds for most hobbyists during wartime, due to restrictions on travel and a shortage of film stock, and even though the first *Dekko* adverts of 1945 welcome the return to holiday filmmaking, the *ACW* instructional articles make very tentative steps towards returning to this subject matter. The first detailed articles on holiday filmmaking appear in June and August 1947, and by June 1951 the filmmaker is already being instructed on filming abroad, perhaps influenced by the unpredictable British climate covered in the articles of 1948. It should be stressed, however, that the foreign holiday that is discussed here was still relatively exclusive for most British people (as might be implied by *ACW*'s middle-class readership), coming long before the package holiday boom of later decades.

Although the majority of the articles I have analysed here largely instruct the reader on filming techniques, they also reveal a great deal about how the construction of the traditional British holiday (at home and abroad) can reinforce a sense of national identity. This can be found in descriptions of the 'breathtaking' and 'striking' British scenery, and also the contrast that is found in filming the spectacle of other cultures.⁵⁷

This investigation into ACW points towards several avenues of further research, for example, in analysing actual holiday films from the period in question in order to find if they represent the traditional British holiday in the same way as the instructions discussed here. It would also be worthwhile to look at journal articles about filming in later decades, to see how the pattern of holidays and the implied readership may change over time as amateur filmmaking and foreign travel becomes more accessible for the working classes. Looking back at the long-neglected amateur holiday film may also offer an alternative, if not totally dissimilar, representation of the holiday in twentieth century Britain to other, perhaps more 'official' representations such as the holiday brochure, the picture postcard, and the mainstream feature film.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express his gratitude to Jane Alvey and Sean Kelly at the East Anglia Film Archive for access to the *Amateur Cine World* collection held there.

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¹ Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families, A Social History of Amateur Film*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995); Ian Craven (ed.), *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema*, (Newcastle, 2009); Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film, Meaning and Practice 1927 – 77*, (Manchester, 2012); Ryan Shand and Ian Craven, *Small-Gauge Storytelling, Discovering the Amateur Fiction Film*, (Edinburgh, 2013).

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- ² Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film, Meaning and Practice 1927 – 77*, (Manchester, 2012), p. 175.
- ³ James Chapman, *The British at War, Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939 – 1945*, (London: 1998), p. 58.
- ⁴ Nicholson discusses the conflicting views regarding the affordability of the cine hobby further, citing Sewell's 1934 article 'Home movie-making is NOT expensive' in which he claims that he started his hobby buying a 9.5mm camera on an income of £4 a week and had met a keen female hobbyist who earned 35s a week (£1.75). Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film, Meaning and Practice 1927 – 77*, (Manchester, 2012), pp. 3; 11 and 69.
- ⁵ Ian Craven (ed.), *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema*, (Newcastle, 2009); pp. 329-333.
- ⁶ Amateur Cine World to become pocket-size, *Amateur Cine World*, (June 1941), p. 51.
- ⁷ ACW organised its first 'Ten Best' competition in 1936 and re-designated it as the 'National Amateur Film Awards' in 1950. Ian Craven (ed.), *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema*, (Newcastle, 2009), pp. 330-331.
- ⁸ Advertisements: Actina: *Amateur Cine World*, (December 1945 – February 1946), p. 324; Ampro: *Amateur Cine World*, (September 1951), inside front cover; Celfix: *Amateur Cine World*, (September 1951), p. 413.
- ⁹ Letter File, *Amateur Cine World*, (December 1942 – February 1943), p. 322.
- ¹⁰ John Walton, *The British Seaside, Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century*, (Manchester, 2000), p. 87.
- ¹¹ Peter Bowen, Why Not Try a 'Different' Holiday Film This Year?, *Amateur Cine World* (February 1951), p. 973; R. H. Alder, Taking Your Camera On Holiday Abroad, *Amateur Cine World*, (June 1951), p. 139; *Amateur Cine World*, (August 1951), p. 366.
- ¹² Oswell Blakeston, Holiday Film Experiments, *Amateur Cine World*, (August 1950), pp. 316-317.
- ¹³ Gordon Malthouse, Getting Back to Normal, *Amateur Cine World*, (September – November 1946), p.421
- ¹⁴ Iris Fayde, Unfair to Women!, *Amateur Cine World*, (October 1951), pp. 541-542.
- ¹⁵ Peter Bowen, Why Not Try a 'Different' Holiday Film This Year?, *Amateur Cine World* (February 1951), p. 975.
- ¹⁶ Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film, Meaning and Practice 1927 – 77*, (Manchester, 2012), p. 199; Marjorie A. Lovell Burgess, *A Popular Account of the Development of the Amateur Cine Movement in Great Britain*, (London, 1932).
- ¹⁷ Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film, Meaning and Practice 1927 – 77*, (Manchester, 2012), p. 85.

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- ¹⁸ Tony Rose, If I Did Make a Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (September 1951), p. 457.
- ¹⁹ Tony Rose, If I Did Make a Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (September 1951), pp. 457-458.
- ²⁰ Two Kinds of Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (August 1951), p. 365-6.
- ²¹ Specto advertisement, *Amateur Cine World*, (March – May 1944), p. 67
- ²² Dekko advertisement, *Amateur Cine World*, (September – November 1945), p. 283.
- ²³ G. H. Sewell, Getting Your Camera On The Road, *Amateur Cine World*, (September – November 1945), pp. 258.
- ²⁴ Heather Norris Nicholson, *Amateur Film, Meaning and Practice 1927 – 77*, (Manchester, 2012), p. 9.
- ²⁵ Gordon Malthouse, The Countryside and the Camera, *Amateur Cine World*, (September – November 1945), p. 264.
- ²⁶ Gordon Malthouse, Getting Back to Normal, *Amateur Cine World*, (September – November 1946), p. 421
- ²⁷ Gordon Malthouse, Do Not Try To Be 'Different At All Costs' in Making Your Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (June 1947), p. 236.
- ²⁸ John Hassan, *The Seaside, Health and the Environment in England and Wales Since 1800*, (Hampshire, 2003), p. 9.
- ²⁹ Gordon Malthouse, Do Not Try To Be 'Different At All Costs' in Making Your Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (June 1947), pp. 237-8.
- ³⁰ Gordon Malthouse, Do Not Try To Be 'Different At All Costs' in Making Your Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (June 1947), p. 238.
- ³¹ Gordon Malthouse, Inquest on a Holiday Film: The Enquiry Opens, *Amateur Cine World*, (September 1949), pp. 370-72; and 404; Gordon Malthouse, Inquest on a Holiday Film: 2 Two's Company, (October 1949), pp. 454-456; Gordon Malthouse, Inquest on a Holiday Film: 3 Colour Continuity, *Amateur Cine World*, (December 1949) pp. 681-684.
- ³² Gordon Malthouse, Inquest on a Holiday Film: The Enquiry Opens, *Amateur Cine World*, (September 1949), p. 372.
- ³³ Gordon Malthouse, Inquest on a Holiday Film: 2 Two's Company, (October 1949), p. 454.
- ³⁴ Gordon Malthouse, Inquest on a Holiday Film: 3 Colour Continuity, *Amateur Cine World*, (December 1949), p. 681.
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- ³⁸ A Holiday Film That Is Different, *Amateur Cine World*, (July 1950), p. 221.

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- ³⁹ Peter Bowen, Why Not Try a 'Different' Holiday Film This Year?, *Amateur Cine World* (February 1951), p. 973.
- ⁴⁰ A Holiday Film That Is Different, *Amateur Cine World*, (July 1950), p. 221.
- ⁴¹ A Holiday Film That Is Different, *Amateur Cine World*, (July 1950), p. 222.
- ⁴² Tony Rose, If I Did Make a Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (September 1951), p. 457.
- ⁴³ F. C. Gradwell, An Out of the Ordinary Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (June 1951), p. 129.
- ⁴⁴ Ten Best Films of the Year, *Amateur Cine World*, (May 1951), pp. 34-35.
- ⁴⁵ Ten Best Films of the Year, *Amateur Cine World*, (May 1951), p. 35.
- ⁴⁶ F. C. Gradwell, An Out of the Ordinary Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (June 1951), p. 130.
- ⁴⁷ Tony Rose, If I Did Make a Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (September 1951), p. 457.
- ⁴⁸ Ten Best Films of the Year, *Amateur Cine World*, (May 1951), p. 35.
- ⁴⁹ Two Kinds of Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (August 1951), p. 366.
- ⁵⁰ Two Kinds of Holiday Film, *Amateur Cine World*, (August 1951), p. 366.
- ⁵¹ R. H. Alder, Taking Your Camera On Holiday Abroad, *Amateur Cine World*, (June 1951), pp. 138-140.
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