INVISIBLE INNOVATORS

MAKING WOMEN FILMMAKERS VISIBLE ACROSS THE UK FILM ARCHIVES

Stephanie Clayton, Keith M. Johnston, and Melanie Williams
WHO ARE THE WOMEN AMATEUR FILMMAKERS AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?
The women amateur filmmakers discussed in this report took on many different creative roles, but most were directors, producers, camerawomen, and/or writers of their own films.

These women were part of a larger group of (mostly unheralded) filmmakers normally described as amateurs, or non-professionals. Those broad terms can include films made by academics, activists, animators, artists, documentarians, enthusiasts, families, hobbyists, or students, all of whom worked outside of the mainstream film industry during the 20th Century.

Although the technology for making amateur films was initially expensive, it soon became more affordable, broadening opportunities for a wider range of people to participate in filmmaking. Amateur films were produced by lone filmmakers, or people working in small partnerships or larger groups such as cine-clubs where filmmakers could gather and plan larger productions. Amateur films are incredibly varied in topic, theme, and length, but their images and ideas represent a significant and unsung part of our national cultural heritage.

Women played a more important role in Britain’s amateur film culture than might be assumed, and were involved in making a wide range of films, but their contribution has hitherto been largely obscured. The amateur realm provided a precious space for women to exercise their talents as filmmakers when the professional film industry was often far from welcoming.

Amateur women filmmakers are doubly invisible, both as women and as non-professionals, but their work can provide unique insights into women’s experiences and their creativity and is therefore deserving of serious attention.
KEY OBSERVATIONS

THE NEXT FEW PAGES REVEAL THE BREAKDOWN OF DATA AND STATISTICS ON THE WOMEN AMATEUR FILMMAKERS WHOSE CREATIVE WORK IS HELD WITHIN THE UK FILM AND MEDIA ARCHIVES.

The work undertaken for this report has highlighted some extremely dedicated and knowledgeable archivists across the UK, whose expertise is clearly responsible for the continued upkeep and preservation of tens of thousands of films, made by women and other filmmakers.

However, the survey and research also makes clear that:
- Women amateur filmmakers still remain hidden and invisible within public-facing resources, and internal metadata and catalogue activities.
  This includes:
  - The lack of mechanisms by which to search for ‘women filmmakers’ as a category or a subject
  - Website-based search or browse functions that require existing knowledge of film title or filmmaker to locate relevant films

Women’s invisibility likely arises from individual and national archive policy that has been directed more at location-based cataloguing and digitisation
- Individual and significant regional archive initiatives (from cataloguing through to public events) have often lacked the national coordination to afford them maximum momentum and publicity
- Under-investment in the regional media archive sector has prevented archive staff from being able to fully explore untapped resources that contain women’s creative work
- Notions of amateur film as ‘home movies’ may restrict broader understandings of its rich and complex cultural heritage.

NUMBER OF COLLECTIONS THAT FEATURE FILMS MADE BY AMATEUR WOMEN FILMMAKERS

PER DECADE (BASED ON DATA FROM PARTICIPATING ARCHIVES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Collections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>1950s</td>
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<td>1980s</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FILM CATEGORIES

PRODUCED BY WOMEN (BASED ON DATA FROM PARTICIPATING ARCHIVES)

- **Fiction**
- **Home Life**
- **Seeing the World**
- **In the Community**

Our key recommendations are to:
- Introduce ‘women filmmakers’ (or associated term) within film archive metadata systems
- Introduce ‘women filmmakers’ as a specific search term – or identified category – on public-facing websites (separate from ‘woman’ or ‘women’, which tends to point to the presence of a woman on screen, rather than as the creative filmmaker)
- Make all catalogue records visible on public-facing websites to show scope of women filmmakers in the collection (e.g. Screen Archive South East website)
- Develop national initiatives (like ‘Women Amateur Filmmakers’, or similar to the BFI Film Audience Network ‘Changing Times: Women’s Histories’ season) that arise from the shared strengths of the regional archives
- Share best practice around key thematic collection strengths across archival holdings

- Develop a significant national funding bid around ‘women amateur filmmakers’ to include:
  - Expanded cataloguing (many untapped collections require further investigation)
  - Further digitisation of key titles
  - Development of a suitable (and centralised) online resource
  - A programme of themed public film packages to raise awareness of the creative work of these women filmmakers
- Develop a strategy to rebrand / reposition the idea of ‘amateur’ or ‘home movie’ for external audiences, emphasising variety and complexity of work undertaken by non-professionals, and rightfully placing women at the centre of that story.
STATISTICS

WOMEN FILMMAKERS...
(BASED ON DATA FROM PARTICIPATING ARCHIVES)

2000+ FILMS MADE

ONLY 26-50% OF THE FILMS MADE HAVE BEEN DIGITISED

250 COLLECTIONS

OVER 83% OF FILMS MADE ARE ON FILM, THE REST ARE ON VIDEO

87% ARE NON FICTION FILMS

OF THE COLLECTIONS SAMPLED ONLY 34% HAVE BEEN FULLY DIGITISED

FILM SUBJECTS PRODUCED BY WOMEN FILMMAKERS
(BASED ON DATA FROM PARTICIPATING ARCHIVES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travelogue</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, home movies</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays, seaside</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentaries, mockumentaries</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals, nature</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropological</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s lives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aeroplanes, military, war</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events, celebrations, fairs, circus</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur, semi-professional, student, shorts</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural life, farming</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping, outdoor activities, leisure</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour, comedy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural organizations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care club</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Wedding, Coronation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scifi</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Compiling this list together demonstrated a vast range of different activities and events being filmed, across local, national and international locations, as well as many fictionalised narratives that took place in real and fantasy worlds.

The top fifteen subject categories (i.e. those terms that appeared most often in the survey data) were:

1. Travelogue
2. Family or home movies
3. Local
4. Animation
5. Holidays, seaside
6. Documentaries (and mockumentaries)
7. Animals, nature
8. Drama
9. School
10. Aeroplanes, military, war
11. Events, celebrations, fairs, circuses
12. Amateur, semi-professional, student
13. Work
14. Rural life, farming
15. Camping, outdoor activities, leisure

Some of this list met our prior expectations, partly based on existing understandings of ‘home movie’ genres and topics. There is a clear focus on the local and the domestic, recording community events and daily life in films such as: Aldeburgh Lifeboat (Miss Basham, 1929), School Sports and Farm Vehicles (Gwen Davies, 1958), Good Shepherd Flower Festival (Doreen Coombes, 1969), and Christmas, Caroline, Dylan and New Car (Barbara Lloyd, 1963-70).

The same documentary impulse can be seen in the recording of annual holidays and weekend trips with familiar UK-based destinations featured in films such as Blackpool (Glynis Edwardson, 1963), Broadstairs and Margate Items (Enid Briggs, 1929-38) and London Zoo (Joan Barney, 1963), preserving what these women focused on in such trips, capturing friends, family and exciting new sights.

Depending on their status and income, many filmmakers travelled further afield: wife and husband filmmaking team Lunice and Eustace Alliott produced an epic travelogue of their journey around interwar Germany and Austria in the eight-reel To Oberammergau and the Alps in an Austin Sixteen (1930); Maud Wallis and Ruth Collingridge’s films London to Australia (1930) and Scouting Voyage on the S.S. Calgaric (1933) relied on footage captured on their travels; while African Market, Dakar, Senegal (Madge Thomas, 1958) and Party and Family Scenes; Hong Kong, Tiger Balm Garden (Doreen Tomkinson, 1975) offer a combination of home movie and travelogue.

However, some thematic emphases were more surprising and stood out from the other subjects: the tenth highest subject result was around the military theme, either filming the machinery or sites of conflict, or individual women’s service experiences. War Memorial and Trenches (Leonara Bichard, 1949) and A Day in the Life of a WREN (Joyce Allingham, 1949) provide good examples of both tendencies.

For the purposes of this report, we grouped the full list of 28 subject terms into broader overarching categories that best captured the submitted subject category terms.

Those categories became the four themes this report focuses on:

1. Home life (32.46% of the return)
2. In the Community (35.83%)
3. Seeing the World (34.27%)
4. Fiction (17.44%)

Given the emphasis on ‘home movies’ within assumptions about what constitutes amateur film, it is expedient to note that the smallest percentage of films fall into this theme; less than ‘Fiction’ – which is a much more complex category (as discussed on pages 16-17).

While this doesn’t reduce the importance of the ‘home’ mode of filmmaking, and its focus on family and everyday domestic life, it should point to the much wider interaction these women filmmakers had with the world around them, at local, national and international levels.
This genre is well represented in the work of women filmmakers in the UK film archives, revealing what these women felt was important to record for posterity about their families and everyday lives.

These films include domestic scenes, daily household routines, and express a desire to capture the activities of other family members within the home setting. These women filmmakers recorded the everyday lives of their families, at work and play, within houses, gardens, on surrounding streets, and farms. The UK screen archive holdings make clear that women played a significant role in the creation and production of home movies, often in collaboration with other members of the family.

The range of daily routines that these films creatively capture is diverse. Vera Tidey focused on family life, as suggested by the titles of her films Family Scenes: Children at Play (1961) and Christmas; birthdays; christenings; baby-sitting; village fête (1968). In Milk Lorry – last time (1987) Gwen Davies uses the family camera to record the final day the milk tanker would visit their farm after the Davies family had decided to give up their dairy herd. Filmmaker Joan Irons cuts together different daily activities in Brockley Scenes; Gravesend Scenes (1958), from bird-watching to chatting with friends and sunbathing in the garden. In Butterfly and Christmas Scenes in the Home (1968), Doreen Tompkinson shows a Christmas party for friends and family, with guests drinking, smoking and talking in her home.

In the colour home movie Sparta the Dog (1957), filmmaker Thelma Dowding deftly assembles a montage of different shots of the family playing with the eponymous dog as it grows up: rolling around the back garden of their house, out for walks on the beach, running along a road and leaping over a gate in slow motion; and, finally, Sparta’s birthday party featuring all the family members. Animals also feature in Toddler at the Farm (Kathleen Arrowsmith, 1937), where a red-booted small boy wanders in and out of the sheds on the family farm, playing with kittens and chasing pigeons.

With archive holdings covering over 70 years of domestic life, there is a rich history of quotidian detail provided by these films, with changes in clothing and interior décor counterbalanced by familiar repetition in the range of family activities they recurrently feature (playing with animals, eating, watching children, celebrating occasions, playing games). The principle and the content of such films remains very similar across the decades: creating a record of home and family life. The films and videos also show the shift in technology, from 8mm, 9.5mm or 16mm film in the earlier films to video cameras from the 1980s on. Most of the films available via the archives are silent well into the 1960s, due to the lack of inexpensive sound equipment for small gauge film cameras. Many of these films would have been shot with little idea of wider distribution beyond the family audience, or possibly a home screening for friends. While they may not always have been aware of the significance of the cultural heritage they were creating, these women filmmakers have left a rich and unique record of everyday domestic lives in the 20th century.
These films have some obvious parallels with the filming of family and home life, but demonstrate a desire to go beyond the immediate domestic sphere in an attempt to document their changing local communities. They depict the villages, towns and cities people lived in, and their collective celebrations and festivals.

Aldeburgh and District Scenes (1929) by Miss Basham is typical of the type of films in this category. The film is a compilation, filmed at different times and places, of various happenings in the local community. The film begins with scenes showing the coast and town in winter. Images of the rough waves crashing on the shore are followed by a person skiing in the street. There is a parade of Victorian costumes by Women’s Institute members and shots of guides and scouts lining up. Men and women are shown playing golf and swimming from a raft at sea, and there are sequences showing garden parties, fetes and carnivals and even a parade of Catholic clergy and nuns along the cliffs at Dunwich.

Many of these films document the changing seasons, showcasing local flora and fauna. In Spring Beauty (1966), Doreen Combes shows Brighton and Hove in bloom, capturing nature’s awakening from winter with blossoming flowers and new born lambs. Lambs also feature in rural films by Kathleen Arrowsmith, alongside other farm animals. Horses also feature extensively throughout the archive holdings. Vera Reynolds’ Red Rum at the Grand National (1979) captures the time the famous racehorse visited the grandstand prior to the 1979 race.

Community is often evoked by filmmakers visiting hospitals or schools in their areas, filming plays and pageants, sporting events, and other activities – often featuring their children, grandchildren, or other relatives. Maureen Holden documents school trips and activities with the Belmont special school, offering a unique perspective of special education and its development in a series of films in the 1970s and 1980s. Talybont Show and Corn Cutting (Gwen Davies, 1964) and Air Ambulance (Valerie Ong, 1980) capture other community-based activities.

Local events such as carnivals, parties, fairs and fetes are also common topics for women amateur filmmakers. Cricket Parties (1937-1950) filmed by Joyce Allingham, who served in the Women’s Royal Naval Service, documents 13 years of cricket parties and offers a prime example of films centred on particular community groups.

Local organisations related to the making of amateur films, often known as cine clubs, offered another type of community group. In the 1920s and 1930s, fuelled by the availability of 16mm film cameras, cine-clubs formed across Britain, and these groups included many women, who often collaborated to make both fiction and non-fiction films.

A significant number of amateur films by women are located in this category, which encompasses depictions of significant events in national and global history as well as films that attempt to record cultures and landscapes across the world.

The genre of travelogue, or travel film, makes up a large proportion of films in this theme. These filmed explorations of a destination in terms of its geography, culture and people go beyond the family holiday films categorised in the first theme around home and family life. While those films often featured trips to the British seaside or countryside, the films featured here were more geographically distant (Australia, Japan, India) and often came to the fore as these (largely) white middle-class women (and their husbands) exoticised foreign cultures and habits.

An interesting example of the travelogue is provided by In Search of Switzerland (1934-1936), an early film from wife-and-husband filmmaking team Laurie and Stuart Day. Its narrative includes the planning of the trip, onward travel to Switzerland, the Days’ exploration of the different sights they encounter, and finally their voyage home. The film showcases beautiful images of the scenic areas they are visiting, with early examples of amateur colour cinematography in shots of the Interlaken swimming pool. The Days were quite prolific travelogue producers: two decades later, their imaginative film Dance Little Lady (1953-1954) covered another significant holiday, this time featuring national dances of Thailand, Bali, Fiji, Hawaii and the West Indies.

An alternative approach but each offer fascinating records of the journeys and voyages of their respective filmmakers. The anthropological documentary impulse that animates many travel films is also evident in films capturing major historical events on camera. Some of these relate to the British monarchy: Pauline Webb’s Royal Wedding (1981), or films recording the coronations, jubilees and memorials of various 20th century monarchs. The operations of heavy industry, the prelude to war, wartime experiences, and post-war events can also be seen in noteworthy films such as Queen Mary on the Clyde (1934) by Grace Williamson, which showed the construction of ships at the prelude to war, wartime experiences, and post-war events can also be seen in noteworthy films such as Queen Mary on the Clyde (1934) by Grace Williamson, which showed the construction of ships at the Clyde (many of which would subsequently be commandeered for wartime service), 1938 – The Last Year of Peace (Laurie and Stuart Day, 1947), Lilian Cochrane’s trilogy of films about the Lincolnshire town of Spilsby in peacetime, early war, and wartime, and The Victory Procession (Eunice and Eustace Alliott, 1946). The desire of these women to capture different aspects of their wartime experience offers an important and currently lesser known parallel to amateur collections held at the Imperial War Museum, such as Rosie Newman’s film England at War (1942).

Sometimes footage captured at home or abroad accrues greater significance in retrospect. For instance, in their 1930 film To Oberammergau and the Alps in an Austin Sixteen, Eunice and Eustace Alliott visit historic monuments and tourist attractions on their trip through Belgium, Luxembourg and the Rhine, northern Italy, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, returning to London via Germany. In the third reel of their film, while filming a man washing his hands in a fountain in Heidelberg, they inadvertently capture the presence and activities of the National Socialist party. Some overseas travel was facilitated by colonial postings. As such, while the films offered fascinating records of different places, they also have to be understood as a product of the times in which they were made, with British imperial attitudes often coming to the fore as these (largely) white middle-class women (and their husbands) exoticised foreign cultures and habits.

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THE RELATIVE LACK OF WOMEN PRODUCING AND DIRECTING AMATEUR FICTIONAL FILMS ACROSS THE ARCHIVE HOLDINGS, PARTICULARLY COMPARED TO HIGHER NUMBERS OF ACTUALITY OR DOCUMENTARY-STYLE FILMS IN OUR SAMPLE, IS TELLING.

From the 1920s on, making fictional films was a strong element of the activities of cine-clubs which amateur film magazines regularly reported on but women's labour appears to have been much less visible among those club or group structures.

Frances Lascot, the 'first amateur woman director' in Britain (according to Amateur Films), wrote and directed Sally Sallies Forth (1928), a comedy about a girl forced to become a maid for a day at an upper-class garden party. With an all-female cast and crew, the film was heralded as having 'the unusual distinction of being the products of ladies from start to finish... idea, story, scenario, shooting, titling, and editing having all been accomplished without even the shadow of a man falling across the set. We can't find that even America has done this before' (Movie). The film's cinematographer was Ivy Low, who also worked on The Polite Burglar (1929), which was written, directed, and edited by Sadie Andrews. This film, produced for a meeting of the London Amateur Cinematographers' Association, was designed as a test for attendees – to see if they could spot the deliberate continuity mistakes in the film. It says something of the confidence of filmmakers like Low and Andrews that they felt able to challenge their fellow cine club members in this way.

Women's active participation in amateur film clubs and their creative work in fictional forms continued in later decades. This was the context for films such as the spoof documentary The Prendergast File (Beryl Guerolt, 1964), the relationship drama See You in Your Dreams (Marjorie Martin, 1965) produced by the Wycombe Heath Cine Society; One of Our Wives May Be Home (Margaret and Richard Hodkin, 1957); the comedy. Further Outlook Unsettled (Laurie and Stuart Day, 1938).

Lone filmmakers worked less frequently in fiction filmmaking, a likely sign of the difficulties of mounting a significant dramatic production but key exponents such as Mollie Butler, Anne Neely and Ruth Stuart are highlighted over the next few pages.

Animation

Conversely, animation was an area in which lone amateur filmmakers flourished. The ability to control all aspects of the production process, and to work at your own pace, may explain the number of women filmmakers producing amateur animations. Their work as held in UK film archives covers a wealth of different styles and approaches; experimental animations by celebrated filmmaker Margaret Tait in Calypso (1955) and Painted Eightsome (1971); a range of hand-drawn or hand-painted styles in The Case (Beryl Armstrong, 1971), Make-up (Joanna Fryer, 1978) and Michelangelo (Sheila Graber, 1976); stop-motion techniques featured in Love in String (Rose and Stuart Dabbs, 1966) and The Burglar (Tana Fletcher, 1984).

While many women animators adopted a poetic non-narrative approach, as in Sheila Graber's Face to Face (1976), Valerie Ellis' Windmills – My Style (1982), or Karen Hibberd's Abstract #1 (2001), narrative-based animations are even more common, whether that is telling the story of The Runaway Easter Egg (Joyce Bolton, 1963), or an underwater adventure in The Mermaid's Treasure (Barbara and Tony Brindle, 1975), or the comic antics of an invading Viking in Pilgræ Idiot! (Janice and John Watson, 1976).

Animation is also one of the few areas where women's amateur work could cross over into the mainstream industry, with Sheila Graber working on the television series Paddington (1976-79) and Just So Stories (1983), and Joanna Harrison (née Fryer) working as an animator on The Snowman (1982) and When the Wind Blows (1986), and more recently writer/art director on The Snowman and the Snowdog (2012).
INDIVIDUAL WOMEN FILMMAKERS

ALL 158 WOMEN IDENTIFIED BY OUR SURVEY DESERVE TO BE RECOGNISED FOR THEIR CREATIVITY, INGENUITY AND IMAGINATION, HOWEVER, THE AMATEUR FILM WORLD WAS NOT ALWAYS RECEPTIVE TO WOMEN FILMMAKERS.

In November 1961, the magazine *Amateur Cine World* published ‘What Every Woman Should Know About Cine’ – a supposedly ‘tongue-in-cheek’ guide for women who ‘take an interest in what cine-keen husbands (brothers, sons, boyfriends) are doing and talking about, but find it hard to keep up with it all’.

Women filmmakers were not impressed. Kathleen M. Smith wrote that she was ‘absolutely sick of the condescending attitude shown towards women by contemporary journal’, while Dorothy E. Bean reminded the editors that women were ‘technically minded too’. The journal editor’s response – which describes Dorothy as ‘some outraged feminist’ – was lamentably tone deaf in dismissing her concerns and ‘man-stan[ing]’ the original article as ‘a very light-hearted piece of banter’ (*Amateur Cine World*, January 1962).

Ironically, the article refused to acknowledge the fact that women had always been a stalwart presence within amateur film culture in the UK, with productions by women filmmakers frequently receiving acclaim and winning awards (including the magazine’s own). Although we can hear their dissenting voices in print, unfortunately neither Dorothy Bean nor Kathleen Smith’s films appear to have been preserved in any of the UK archive holdings featured here.

Many of the single film entries are particularly tantalising, differing interests, aptitudes, and creative approaches are not necessarily the best-known or most prolific. Invisible Innovators displays great creative variety and versatility in their work. Although their family films were produced only for private viewing, the couple experimented with early colour technologies, such as Dufaycolor, and made some Experiments in Dufaycolor (1939) and Some Experiments in Dufaycolor (1939) to the Kinematograph Annual Exhibition of Kinematography Film 1934.

One of the few women whose work has been both transmitted and received is Eunice Alliott. It is unclear if Eunice had an interest in filmmaking prior to her marriage, although photography was clearly a shared interest with Eustace, given they submitted jointly to the Royal Photographic Society’s Annual Exhibition in 1909. Their interest in filmmaking seems to start in 1930. The Alliotts made travelogues of their excursions to London, Wales, Holland and the Alps. They documented major events in British history such as the death of King George V and the Coronation of King George IV, as well as events relating to war in films like *War Time – Gas Masks* (1935–39) and *The Victory Procession* (1946). Local events and family affairs are captured in films such as *Family 1930–36*, *Dad 1930–36*, *Marina’s Wedding 1934* and *Things Seen Near-Armeholt 1935–36*. Records are not entirely clear as to what roles the Alliotts took in their joint filmmaking. Their early films credit both Eunice and Eustace jointly, and at times, Eunice can be seen on camera organising action and engaging with locals (e.g. *A Picturesque People and Pleasant Places in Holland*, to the Kinematograph Group of the Royal Photographic Society in 1934).

It seems to start in 1930. The Alliotts made travelogues of their excursions to London, Wales, Holland and the Alps. They documented major events in British history such as the death of King George V and the Coronation of King George IV, as well as events relating to war in films like *War Time – Gas Masks* (1935–39) and *The Victory Procession* (1946). Local events and family affairs are captured in films such as *Family 1930–36*, *Dad 1930–36*, *Marina’s Wedding 1934* and *Things Seen Near-Armeholt 1935–36*. Records are not entirely clear as to what roles the Alliotts took in their joint filmmaking. Their early films credit both Eunice and Eustace jointly, and at times, Eunice can be seen on camera organising action and engaging with locals (e.g. *A Picturesque People and Pleasant Places in Holland*, to the Kinematograph Group of the Royal Photographic Society in 1934).

KEY FILMS

- To Oberammergau and the Alps in an Austin Sixteen (8 reels) (1935)
- Holiday Scenes in Kent (1930)
- Family (1930–1936)
- Riding and the Countryside (1933–1935)
- Our Dogs (1934–1946)
- Australians and Canadians Visit the Cenotaph (1936–1939)
- Some Experiments in Dufaycolor (1939)
- The Victory Procession (1946)

EUNICE ALLIOTT

THE FILMS EUNICE ALLIOTT MADE WITH HER HUSBAND EUSTACE, ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC WIFE-AND-HUSBAND PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE REGIONAL COLLECTIONS, SPAN LOCAL, COMMUNITY, DOCUMENTARY AND OVERSEAS TRAVEL, OFFERING COMPELLING VIEWS OF THOSE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THEIR LIVES AND INDIRECTLY OF A WHOLE ECHELON OF INTERWAR BRITISH SOCIETY.

The victory procession (1946). Local events and family affairs are captured in films such as *Family 1930–36*, *Dad 1930–36*, *Marina’s Wedding 1934* and *Things Seen Near-Armeholt 1935–36*. Records are not entirely clear as to what roles the Alliotts took in their joint filmmaking. Their early films credit both Eunice and Eustace jointly, and at times, Eunice can be seen on camera organising action and engaging with locals (e.g. *A Picturesque People and Pleasant Places in Holland*, to the Kinematograph Group of the Royal Photographic Society in 1934).
Beryl Armstrong

BORN IN NEW ZEALAND, BERYL CAME TO THE UK WHEN HER PARENTS RETURNED HOME AFTER THE 1931 NAPIER EARTHQUAKE. HER INSPIRATION TO START MAKING AMATEUR FILMS CAME FROM A TRIP TO INDIA, WHERE HER HUSBAND WAS SENT TO WORK FOR THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION.

Beryl was struck by the Indian culture and began documenting her visit through curating brochures, souvenirs and thousands of feet of cine film that she shot in various locations.

Over her subsequent thirty years of filmmaking she primarily created documentary films on rural subjects such as beekeeping, agriculture, horse shows and local Sussex scenes from the 1960s to the 1980s. She was involved in all aspects of film production from script to final product.

Beryl Armstrong’s films were made using Super 8mm film stock, with many entered into local amateur film festivals and competitions, garnering at least one award of merit for A Taste of Honey (1968) which documents her father’s apiarist activities. Anamaria Motrescu-Mayes and Heather Norris-Nicholson discuss Beryl in their book British Women Amateur Filmmakers, highlighting the skill and visual imagination she brought to her work.

Beryl taught the art of filmmaking to her sons, Anthony and Richard, both of whom ended up making amateur films themselves, some in collaboration with their mother; she also became a published author, writing over 12 novels; as such, there is more information about her than some of her filmmaking contemporaries. In publicity interviews about her novels, Beryl mentions her filmmaking career which, echoing the experiences of other women amateur filmmakers, effectively ended with the coming of video.

AWARDS

KEY FILMS
- A Taste for Honey (1968)
- Away with the Wind (1968)
- Trains at Work (1970)
- The Case (1971)
- One Frame at a Time (1973)
- The Rally of the Giants (1980s)

Perhaps the bigger story these enigmatic films point towards is the loss of work by other women filmmakers who, unlike Leonora, don’t survive in such tantalising glimpses.

KEY FILMS
- Scenes Outside Suburban House (1930s)
- Leonora’s Art Class in Preston (1930s)
- Seafront and Countryside (1930s)
- Trip to York (1930s)
- War Relics (1930s)
- War-Memorial and Trenches (1930s)
- Airfield Scenes (1942)
- Parachutist at Blackpool (1935)
Mollie Butler

MOLLIE BUTLER

Mollie began making short documentaries in the late 1960s, with a focus on nature and science subjects – including bird watching, and the life cycle of locusts. By the 1970s, bolstered by support from friends within different cine-clubs and the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers, Mollie wrote and directed her first live action narrative, adultery drama: A Game for Three featuring professional actors from the Ilkley Playhouse. Despite her success here, Mollie’s next creative leap was into animation – inspired in part by the animated films of her contemporary and IAC compatriot Sheila Graber (whose films are archived within the IAC collection and at the North East Film Archive). Mollie’s approach to animation was unconventional, creating hundreds of individual drawings (made using felt tipped pens and paint) on 10 x 8 paper, held together over a pegged light box.

In her parallel career as a schoolteacher – and inspired by her work on the youth page of the IAC magazine – Mollie began to teach filmmaking to schoolchildren at Benton Park School in Leeds, helping them produce animated films. She documented this work in a documentary, Hand it to the Kids, as well as helping one of her students produce an award-winning short film, Freak (Sharon Gadson, 1988), which won the IAC Junior Gold Seal award.

AWARDS
- Locust in Camera Gold Star, Movie Maker Ten Best Competition 1973
- A Game For Three Amateur Cine World Best 8mm Film, 1976, Gold Star, Movie Maker Ten Best Film Competition 1976
- Magnum Opus Winner, Movie Maker Ten Best Film Competition 1981, IAC International Award 1981
- Bait Poem to Catch Girls Gold Seal, IAC International Film Competition

KEY FILMS AND HOLDINGS
- Locusts in Camera (1977)
- A Game for Three (1977)
- An Ode (1980)
- Magnum Opus (1981)
- Hand it to the Kids (1984)
- Bait Poem to Catch Girls (1986-88)
- Freak (1988 – as producer)

Lilian Beatrice Cochrane

LILIAN BEATRICE COCHRANE

From the information gathered about Lilian by the Lincolnshire Film Archive, it would be safe to say she was a bit of a notorious figure in her community. Born in Guernsey, Lilian, who was a gifted watercolourist, settled in Spilsby, Lincolnshire, teaching art at the local Grammar School. In 1931, she left, apparently to become housekeeper to a wealthy bachelor; an incident that caused some scandal at the time. This was only compounded when he died just two years later, and Lilian inherited the house and his fortune.

Her interest in film seems to have begun in 1937 when she bought a 16mm film camera, and thereafter she was often seen behind it at local events and gatherings. She made little use of editing or post-production but, perhaps unsurprisingly given her artist background, she had an eye for detail. Her pre-war films document rural living and communities going about their daily lives while preparing for potential war, resulting in poignant scenes of the everyday (clothes hung on a clothesline to dry) juxtaposed with the extraordinary (soldiers assembling to depart for active service).

In Grace Swan Memorial Hospital, Hundleby (1940) Lilian documents patients receiving treatment and undergoing x-rays, even persuading the powers-that-be at the hospital to let her film inside the operating theatre. Unfortunately, Lilian’s filmmaking career was short lived. Presumably wartime shortages with respect to photographic materials were responsible for its curtailment and sadly she does not seem to have revived that interest once wartime austerity had abated.

KEY FILMS
- Civil Defence Exercise, Hundleby (1939)
- Spilsby-and District Events (Peace time) (1938-1939)
- Spilsby-and District Events (Early Wartime) (1939-1940)
- Duchess of Gloucester opens Hospital Extension, Skagness (1939)
- Grace Swan Memorial Hospital, Hundleby (1940)
- Spilsby and District Events (Wartime) (1941)

AWARDS
- Locusts in Camera : Gold Star, Movie Maker Ten Best Competition 1973
- A Game For Three : Amateur Cine World Best Film, 1976, Gold Star, Movie Maker Ten Best Film Competition 1976
- Magnum Opus : Winner, Movie Maker Ten Best Film Competition 1981, IAC International Award 1981
- Bait Poem to Catch Girls : Gold Seal, IAC International Film Competition

KEY FILMS AND HOLDINGS
- Locusts in Camera (1977)
- A Game for Three (1977)
- An Ode (1980)
- Magnum Opus (1981)
- Hand it to the Kids (1984)
- Bait Poem to Catch Girls (1986-88)
- Freak (1988 – as producer)
Mary shot numerous school films between Nursery School Activities (1965-66) and May Fair (1975), with the films in the 1970s forming part of her Leeds University thesis studying four year olds in pre-schools. The films allowed Mary to explore different aspects of school life, particularly the importance of play within education. Play is Education (1965-68) shows children climbing on play equipment and playing with toys, Burnley Nursery School Trip (1975) follows a day out to the local countryside.

However, Mary’s filming interests went beyond this one mode of filmmaking. She made travelogue-style films on holidays, including trips to Scotland, New York, and a Mediterranean cruise, as well as documentary-reportage work on activities such as London markets, Liverpool tall ships, a girl guides’ event, and a country fair.

She also experimented with film that had a more drama-documentary approach. Taking a Trip (1966-67), for example, is a drama where a woman dreams about a trip to New York. Working with members of the Burnley Cine Club, Mary also made the documentaries Ryan’s View (1971-74) and When God Made the Country (1969).

Like many of the filmmakers featured here, the local focus of her filmmaking did not prevent her from travelling and screening her films around the world. Her involvement in the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) allowed her to screen her films to international audiences.

The bulk of the archival holdings of Mary Corner’s films cluster around one of her key interests: early years’ education of children. As a teacher and headmistress in Burnley since the late 1950s, it was a topic she was ideally placed to explore.

**KEY FILMS**
- Play is Education (1965-68)
- West to Aurora (And Niagara) (1965-68)
- Taking a Trip (1966-67)
- The Nursery School, Howard Street (1968-71)
- When God Made the Country (1969, with Ferdie Anderson and Tom Hindley)
- Play with Purpose (1974)

Joan and Ted Hammond, another example of the wife-and-husband filmmaking teams featured through this report, were accomplished amateur filmmakers, sharing camera operating duties in their 16mm filmmaking.

With film equipment becoming more portable and affordable in the 1950s, cine clubs flourished and became a place for sharing ideas and expertise. Joan Hammond from Frinton, Essex, was a founder member of one of these clubs, the Clacton Cine Club, alongside her husband Ted Hammond and friend Sidney Manasseh.

Joan and Ted made films both individually and together, on a variety of topics. A film detailing the family holiday to Woolverstone (1956) included shots of a caravan being towed, arriving at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club campsite, and explorations of the coast on foot and by boat. The Great Snowfall (1958) showed Frinton under a blanket of snow and ice, capturing the activity of digging out cars, exploring the town’s deserted roads and shops, and even showing the frozen power cables.

Although most of their films document their local area, the Hammonds would also film their various trips throughout the world: A Date in Tunisia (1972) and Down Under Australia (1977) demonstrating their broader international interests. Joan acted as chair of the Clacton Cine Club several times including in its final years before disbanding in 1998. Some of Joan’s films were later used in the Anglia Television documentary series The Way We Were (2002) where she was interviewed about her films.

**KEY FILMS**
- Ratcliffe Garage (1930s)
- Woolverstone (1956)
- Turkey Time (1961)
- Glass of Wine Stalom (1963)
- Donkey Derby (1969)
- A Date in Tunisia (1972)
- Dach’s Delight (1973)
- Down Under Australia (1977)
- Gold Fever (1986)
ISLA JOHNSTON (HELEN ISABEL ETHEL JOHNSTON)

Isla was the daughter of Helen Kendall and Edmund Johnston, owner of the Liverpool-based Johnston Line Shipping Company. Edmund built a large mansion on the banks of the Menai Strait where Isla kept dairying cows, grew fruits and vegetables, and indulged her passion for fast cars and racing yachts.

Most of Isla’s films focus on local maritime life, depicting regattas and other local events. In Minona (1930) she captures the Minona steam yacht which was used by the Navy in both World War I and World War II before its acquisition by Richard Burton in 1967 as a gift to Elizabeth Taylor. Other films focussed on family, friends and pets, such as Mingo and Jerry: Thea and Jerry (1931). Her keen sense of humour is seen in Alice’s Wedding (1933) when a boy is caught mocking a bridesmaid while she performs her duties to the bride. She would make over 50 films in her career spanning from the 1920s to the 1950s.

By the 1950s – and after her father’s death in 1934 – looking after the large mansion had become too much of an undertaking for Isla alone, so she offered it to the Church in Wales, an organisation with which she was much involved throughout her life. They used the large house and grounds as a summer retreat while agreeing that Isla could continue to live in it until her death (in 1984, aged 86).

WORKING ACROSS BOTH FICTION AND NON-FICTION MODES, FILMMAKER ANNE NEELY CAPTURES THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF AMATEUR FILMMAKING FOUND IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND MOVING IMAGE ARCHIVE.

Born in Glasgow, Anne worked as a resident housekeeper in Castle Toward Recreational School, on the Cowal peninsula. The school ran outdoor education, music, and art classes for young people and Anne’s films offer an insight to many of those activities.

In a filmmaking career that lasted from the 1950s through to the 1980s, the surprising but seamless combination of documentary-led actuality footage and fictional modes of drama and comedy shows Anne’s breadth and versatility as a filmmaker, and her desire to take on different creative challenges.

Everything is not what it seems / Castle Toward and Dunoon (1975) is a compilation of several different types of film: moving from a comedy skit about a dentist’s waiting room to travelogue-style images of the ships on the seafront at Dunoon, including the paddle steamer Waverley, before cutting to visitors at Castle Toward, south of Dunoon on the Cowal peninsula. In another compilation of mostly documentary-based material, Castle Toward Music Course, Summer Schools, Film of Music Programme (1965), there is a short (untitled) narrative film about a boy being shown around the castle.

Anne’s films move between her home life and her local community, filming music and arts events in and around Castle Toward, as well as school activities such as sports day and a Christmas nativity play. She occasionally ventures out into other areas of Scotland: the documentaries Eating the Miles and Drinking the Petrol (1963) and Road to the Isles (1964) focus on two women who travel around Scotland, the different sights they see, and the modes of transport they take.

KEY FILMS
- Never a Dull Moment at Castle Toward! (1955)
- Twirl and the Chips are Gone (1960)
- Castle Toward Christmas Nativity Play (1963)
- Eating the Miles and Drinking the Petrol (1965)
- Road to the Isles (1964)
- Castle Toward Music Course, Summer Schools, Film of Music Programme (1965)
- Everything is not what it seems / Castle Toward and Dunoon (1975-76)
- Russian Visit to Castle Toward (1978)

Anne’s keen sense of humour is seen in Alice’s Wedding (1933) when a boy is caught mocking a bridesmaid while she performs her duties to the bride. She would make over 30 films in her career spanning from the 1920s to the 1950s.

ANNE NEELY

KEY FILMS
- On the Swillies (1929)
- Minona (1930)
- Mingo and Jerry: Thea and Jerry (1931)
- Race Around Puffin Island (1933)
- Alice’s Wedding (1933)
- Erecting a Flagpole at Bryn Mel (1937)
- H.M.S. Conway: April 1953: A Sad Ending to a Great Career (1957)

A: Erecting a Flagpole at Bryn Mel (1937)
B: Launching of Genetta IV at Dickies Yard, Bangor (1930)
C: Never a Dull Movement at Castle Toward! (1955)
D: Road to Isles (1964)
E: Twirl and the Chips are Gone (1960)
A TEENAGE FILMMAKING PRODIGY: RUTH STUART WAS CLEARLY A TALENTED INNOVATOR BUT, LIKE MANY OF THE FILMMAKERS FEATURED IN THE REPORT, THE FULL EXTENT OF HER CREATIVE WORK REMAINS AN ENIGMA.

Described in 1939 by Movie Maker as ‘the maesta of Manchester’, information about her career and filmmaking is limited largely to the period 1932-1940. Ruth appears to have been a Manchester native: she was part of the Manchester Film Society, and by 1939, had become an Associate of the Royal Photographic Society. A young woman with financial resources, Ruth travelled extensively for filmmaking purposes and for pleasure – whether sailing on the Queen Mary to New York, or even flying to India to film 35mm footage of a Hindu temple.

Her first film, Egypt and Back with Imperial Airways (1931-33), was shot when she was 16: it records her flight from Croydon to Crete, and then on to Cairo, where she tours the city and visits the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx. She may have also – as Ruth Rodgers – directed Royal Air Force Display (1931-32) in the same period. Given the documentary nature of those films, Ruth defied expectations with her next film, Doomsday (1934): a short apocalyptic drama-documentary shot in expressionist style akin to European and Russian avant-garde cinema of the 1920s.

After those award-winning successes, information about her becomes more sparse: she showed a film titled Untitled India film (1939) – currently lost.

AWARDS
- To Egypt and Back: Gold Medal winner (Travel), American Cinematographer Amateur Movie Makers Contest, 1933; Winner, Amateur Cine World 16mm plaque, 1935.
- Doomsday: Grand Prize, Photography prize, and Documentary prize, American Cinematographer Amateur Movie Makers Contest, 1936.

KEY FILMS
- Egypt and Back with Imperial Airways (1931-33).
- Royal Air Force Display (1931-32, as Ruth Rodgers) – currently lost.
- Doomsday (1934).
- N’Gomi (1936-37) – currently lost.
- Untitled India film (1939) – currently lost.

The WAF project demonstrated one route for rewriting these pioneering women back into a broader history of British film culture, and this expertise led directly to Film Archives UK commissioning the project team to conduct this survey exploring ways of building on and extending its success.

Our research has revealed another 2267 films, by a further 110 women filmmakers; a hugely significant element of Britain’s cultural and artistic heritage that currently largely goes unseen – and this is just the tip of the iceberg.

We are mindful that the film and media archives already undertake exceptional work to preserve, maintain, and provide meaningful access to films and videos in their care, and that they remain under-resourced to do that job. Therefore it is important to bear in mind cost-effectiveness, feasibility, and efficiency in recommending any further actions.

But it is also clear that women’s work is currently obscured and under-exposed in UK film archives and further efforts are required to rewrite these 158 women’s stories back into film history, and that this needs to happen before important elements of their stories are lost.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

THE INITIAL WOMEN AMATEUR FILMMAKERS PROJECT CATALOGUED AND DIGITISED 144 FILMS FROM THE INSTITUTE OF AMATEUR CINEMATOGRAPHERS’ COLLECTION, WITH FILM PACKAGES SCREENED ACROSS THE UK, AND KEY FILMS BROADCAST ON TALKING PICTURES TV. THIS INITIAL VENTURE LED TO GREATER KNOWLEDGE AND PUBLIC VISIBILITY OF 48 WOMEN FILMMAKERS WHO HAD BEEN NEGLECTED AND UNSUNG FOR DECADES.

Our recommendations (on page 5) have indicated some key issues and potential solutions to begin to address them. These are some of the future directions that could be embarked upon in order to bring women filmmakers (back) into focus:

- Women filmmakers, whether amateur or professional, need to be more publicly-visible within regional and national archive holdings.
- Women filmmakers need to be identifiable and visible within cataloguing metadata.
- Regional initiatives can benefit from scaling up to national level via collaboration among archives.
- Regional archives can share expertise around key thematic holdings to create nationally-relevant programming around these women filmmakers (as well as other themes).
- Regional archives could work together (via Film Archives UK) to bid for shared funding that would allow further cataloguing and digitisation to take place.
- A central site for data on women filmmakers – and their films – could collate and make more visible this rich cultural resource.
- Public-facing events – be they film screenings, packages available via Talking Pictures TV, or some other activity – take these films out to audiences who (based on WAF experience) are eager to see and enjoy the fascinating work of these pioneering filmmakers.

EVERY FEMALE FILMMAKER NEEDS TO SEE THESE – HOW INSPIRING.

I’M IMPRESSED AT HOW GOOD THEY ARE, WHAT PIONEERS.

IT’S EXCITING TO SEE CREATIVE WORKS FROM THE PAST.

THOUGHT-PROVOKING AND ENTERTAINING.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

The authors would like to thank:

The dedicated archive staff who gave their time and knowledge to provide data for this report, particularly Jane Alvey, Iola Baines, Angela Graham, Frank Gray, Marion Hewitt, Jane King, Mary Moylett, Emily Munro, Liam Paterson, Una Phillips, Peter Ryde, Alison Stevenson, and Charlie Windmill.

All of you who have supported the WAF project via funding, advice, and encouragement.

All of the data was collated into a master set that enabled us to identify the significant themes covered in this report, and to make our broader recommendations.

The Film Archives UK executive committee (Clare Watson, Matthew Lee, Tim Snelson, and Jane Jarvis) for commissioning the WAF project team to undertake this important research, and for their continued support.

Our colleagues at UEA (particularly Paul Frith, Sarah Godfrey, Su Holmes, and Tim Snelson) for their support through the planning, writing and delivery of this report.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

THE WOMEN’S AMATEUR FILMMAKING IN BRITAIN PROJECT WAS COMMISSIONED BY FILM ARCHIVES UK TO EXPLORE THE HOLDINGS OF WOMEN’S AMATEUR FILMMAKING ACROSS THE NATION’S ARCHIVES.

The research outlined in this report was carried out between 2018 and 2020. The authors would like to acknowledge the support of all those who provided information and material for inclusion in this report.

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Archive members of FAUK were sent a survey composed of two parts. The first part asked for information at archive level relating to the number of collections held in the archive that contained work by women filmmakers and what percentage of that work was digitised. The second part asked for information at collection level: names of women filmmakers and titles of their films, the format, genre, subject and time period.

We initially asked for up to 10 collections, although individual archives could supply us with as many or as few as were relevant for the mapping exercise. While not all archives were able to participate, the response included material from across England, Scotland, and Wales, and resulted in information about over 150 collections and details of over 2400 films. We augmented this survey data with desk research on the accessibility of women filmmakers via the public-facing websites of all UK regional and national archives, to balance internal and external availability and awareness.

All of this data was collated into a master set that enabled us to identify the significant themes covered in this report, and to make our broader recommendations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND FURTHER READING

Research and other activities around both amateur film and women amateur filmmakers is continually developing. The authors note the excellent work being undertaken by organisations such as the Amateur Cinema Database, the British Film Institute, Film Hub North, the Independent Cinema Office, the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers, and initiatives emerging from the individual film archives.

We are also excited to see an increased desire to showcase the work of women in film, for example through the work of Bird’s Eye View, London Feminist Film Festival, the Woman with a Movie Camera summit, Invisible Women, and academic and curatorial organisations such as The Women’s Film and Television History Network, UK-Ireland and the Women Film Pioneers Project. There has also been parallel academic work on amateur film, with these key books, articles and websites providing valuable background for this report.

ARTICLES


WEBSITES

- Amateur Cinema Database: www amateurscinema.org/
- Center for Home Movies: www.centerforhomemovies.org/
- Women’s Film and Television History Network: UK/Ireland: https://womenfilmtelevisionhistory.wordpress.com/
- Women Film Pioneers Project: wfpp.columbia.edu/
- Women and Silent British Cinema: womenandsilentbritishcinema.wordpress.com/