

LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH FILM & SOUND A Users' Guide

Based on the Wessex Film & Sound Archive

by David Lee

Most history is written from written and printed (and increasingly digital) sources. However, for periods from about 1850 for photography and 1900 for film and audio, there are substantial resources for informing and enlivening the work of historians.

Unfortunately, these resources tend to be much under-used, and so this Guide has been written to demonstrate their value, especially in the context of Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA) held in Hampshire Record Office (HRO), Winchester, and similar collections, which contain a wealth of information to complement and even enhance existing textual and photographic sources.

Being able to see and hear moving images and sound recordings of local historical interest - many of which are unique to WFSA - covering locations, people and topics previously unseen and unheard by most people provides a rich mine for the historian.

Established by Hampshire County Council and HAT in 1988, WFSA now contains local material from a wide variety of sources, numbering over 38,000 items. As useful as the material itself is the accompanying documentation.

WFSA started as a centre for film and sound archives in central Southern England, and material was collected from Hampshire and surrounding counties until 2000, when it was extended to Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and the Isle of Wight.

The collections span the period from 1897 to the present day and include material from regional broadcasters, amateur and professional cinematographers, corporations, local sound recordists, oral historians, local heritage organisations and many other individuals and groups.

Nearly every film and sound format is represented in the original, but copies with standard analogue and digital formats have been made for research purposes.

MAKING USE OF FILM & SOUND

Some uses of film and sound are straightforward: exhibitions, presentations and the like can obviously be brought to life with appropriate soundbites or clips. But there are many other ways in which such sources can be used, including:

1. Treating AV sources like a document, by taking notes of such things as events, buildings, landscapes, people. Catalogue descriptions, donors' notes and other documentation may obviously be useful in this setting. A good example is Jim Mills' films of Lymington and Wellworthy's factory in the 1930s and 1950s, at **AV1151** and **AV231**.
2. Extracting quotes from sound recordings and footage/stills from film. The Ford Transition project was able to produce an exhibition, community involvement, presentations and a website using such material. See <https://www.fordtransition.org.uk> for inspiration.
3. Where appropriate, analysing film in some detail may be possible. For example: how big was the crowd? What model of car did they arrive in? Where exactly did they visit - does the film help to date the building etc, etc? A good example is the surviving early films of Alfred J West, which include a 1902 Freemasons procession in Southsea, and allowed David Clover to research his great-grandfather's work and produce a wonderful website: <https://dac3uk.org.uk/indexold.htm>.
4. Using the extensive oral history sources in Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA) held in Hampshire Record Office (HRO), Winchester, for family and local history research.

At the end of this Guide are given outline advice on copyright and the use of material outside HRO. These issues must be respected, and apply to community archives' own collections, too, so it may also be worth seeking legal advice before using such material online, in a broadcast, exhibition or publication.

In short, it is hoped that issues of copyright - which in the professional world are necessarily complex - do not deter local historians from using WFSA as another source for research and, indeed, publishing.

FINDING FILM & SOUND ON THE NET

Subject to copyright, a relatively small but growing number of WFSA films can be accessed via the internet (*see* Table 1). Sadly, the only sound recordings available online at present are independent local radio programmes, the result of a joint digitisation project between Bournemouth University and the British

Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC), but even these can only be accessed by academic institutions subscribing to BUFVC services.

Most of the sites in Table 1 also contain film and sound items of Hampshire interest from other sources (*see* Table 2). Such institutional and individual members could well contain film and sound archives on Hampshire places and people, as could museums, libraries and other heritage organisations such as the National Trust.

Some WFSA items are copies of British newsreels which may be viewed freely online, along with lots of other Hampshire material (*see* Table 3).

Table 1
WEBSITES FOR FINDING WFSA FILMS

WFSA YouTube channel https://www.youtube.com/user/WessexFilmArchive/about
Vimeo (Portsmouth on Film, etc.) https://vimeo.com/ondemand/230240/404769450
BFI Britain on Film website https://player.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film/map?q=Hampshire
Flickr (click on the film clips for moving footage) https://www.flickr.com/people/wessexfilm/
Films from the Home Front http://www.movinghistory.ac.uk/homefront/archives/wessex.html
BUFVC site – but only for subscribing academic institutions http://www.bufvc.ac.uk/tvandrado/ilrsouth/
New Forest Gateway http://www.newforestgateway.org/Film-Archive

Table 2
OTHER WEB SOURCES OF HAMPSHIRE MATERIAL LIKELY TO BE FOUND ON THE SITES IN TABLE 1

<p>Fellow members of Film Archives UK: http://www.filmarchives.org.uk/join/members/,</p> <p>The British and Irish Sound Archives: http://www.bisa-web.org/directory-british-and-irish-sound-archives,</p> <p>The Oral History Society: https://www.ohs.org.uk/regional-network/south-east/,</p> <p>Archives and Records Association: https://www.archives.org.uk/about/nations-and-regions/ara-south-east.html.</p>

Table 3
WEB SOURCES OF FREELY AVAILABLE NEWSREELS LIKELY TO CONTAIN HAMPSHIRE MATERIAL

<p>British Pathe https://www.britishpathe.com</p> <p>British Movietone News http://www.aparchive.com/partner/British%20Movietone</p> <p>ITN Source https://www.4rfv.co.uk/directory/1014x1/news- archive</p>
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HRO CATALOGUE: FINDING ITEMS OF FILM & SOUND

In order to view and listen to material in the Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA) held in Hampshire Record Office (HRO), you will need to provide **Finding numbers**, so we will start with the catalogue, found at: <https://calm.hants.gov.uk>.

Under the Search box you will find **Advanced Search** (see Figure 1), which is necessary for searching WFSA collections on a subject, rather than the entire HRO holdings.

The **Level** required is **Copy** – you cannot view or listen to originals because of the very real danger of accidental damage to these items.

Format has a drop-down menu giving various options – choose **Video Recording** for films or **Sound Recording** for those items – do **not** choose **Cinefilm**, as that option only covers a very small number of film copies which

require specialist equipment to view and were mainly used for film shows by WFSA staff in the past.

Next, in the **Any Text** box insert the search term. Figure 2 shows the results of the search for WFSA films for 'Swanmore'.

Clicking on any of the **Finding numbers** on the left-hand side gives full catalogue descriptions for each item; I have chosen **AV380/2/V1** which is shown in Figure 3. This describes a video copy of an amateur film reel shot at some time in the 1930s and 1940s. As you can see, the content description is quite full and relates to just one item in a collection called Green of Swanmore. WFSA material is largely described item by item in the catalogue so that the researcher has enough details to make an informed choice about what to see or listen to. This is a fairly short entry compared to others, which may also contain timings for each section to help pinpoint areas of interest within the item. Some entries also include a field called **Admin history** which provides contextual information about the collection and its producer/s. A particularly good example can be found in the **AV5** collection of Bealing films.

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▶ Refine Search Criteria

Title

▶ Refine Search Criteria

Date

Finding number

Level

Format

▶ Refine Search Criteria

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Figure 1. The HRO catalogue Advanced Search page

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Home Advanced Search Showcase Image Gallery

Advanced search > Search Results

Click on item for more details

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Finding number	Thumbnail	Title	Date
AV12/S2/S1		WINCHESTER MEMORIES, NO. 52 (Series Winchester Memories) No. 52 of a series of oral history...	17 May 1978
AV74/N1194/S1		BBC Radio Solent: Review of the years 1980-1989: The Decade	1970-2000
AV74/OR543/S1		On Reflection	17 May 1987
AV74/VC10/S1		Village Call, programme 10	1979
AV87/1/S1		Wickham - Group oral history reminiscences of Wickham History Society	1966
AV148/4/V1		Beautiful Bournemouth	1950
AV380/1/V1		GREEN FAMILY FILM: Reel 1 of a series of home movies showing the Green family of Swanmore in...	1930s-1940s
AV380/2/V1		GREEN FAMILY FILM: Reel 2 of a series of home movies showing the Green family of Swanmore	1930s-1940s
AV380/3/V1		GREEN FAMILY FILM: Reel 3 of a series of home movies showing the Green family of Swanmore	1930s-1940s
AV380/4/V1		GREEN FAMILY FILM: Reel 4 of a series of home movies showing the Green family of	1930s-1940s

Figure 2. A list of 10 WFSA items relevant to the village of Swanmore

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Home Advanced Search Showcase Image Gallery

Advanced search > Search Results > Record

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AV380 - Green of Swanmore amateur films and Naval Review film

2

Finding number	AV380/2/V1
Title	GREEN FAMILY FILM: Reel 2 of a series of home movies showing the Green family of Swanmore
Date	1930s-1940s
Description	Shots of bathers in an outdoor swimming pool; bathing in summer; ice-skating in winter on frozen swimming pool; an Auxiliary Naval Officer; child pushing a toy donkey on wheels; people swimming and diving in outdoor pool; Home Guard drilling in field; weapon training; coastline in Devon or Cornwall?; a wedding; horse riding; a driver in old-fashioned brass diving suit; on the pier; a paddle boat; a hunt meet; a house and family in garden, including baby and swimmers; gardener wearing bowler hat with mower
Physical description	VHS Colour Duration: 00:16:53
Format	Video recording

1 of 1 Return to search results

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Figure 3. The HRO catalogue entry for AV380/2/V1, one of the 10 items listed for Swanmore

Tips

Don't put in general terms when a more specific one is required (a common time-waster), e.g. if looking for 'Swanmore Home Guard' do not just use 'Swanmore'.

There are no links from the catalogue to associated moving image or sound items on the website or internet generally.

Oral history recordings are summarised in the catalogue, but - a number have been fully transcribed and the transcripts have their own catalogue entry.

HRO: VIEWING & LISTENING TO WFSA ITEMS

The Hampshire Record Office search room has dedicated workstations for viewing and listening to copies of Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA) material. Items copied up to the late 1990s are on analogue media: VHS and audio cassette tapes. After that, digital copies were made on DVD-R and CD-R discs.

The workstations contain playback equipment for all of these media and staff will assist if necessary. One or two collections, however, are only available via computer in the search room, such as parts of the Southampton Oral History Unit collection at **AV6/SOHU**, which also includes some transcripts.

It is worth noting that the quality of viewing copies in particular can vary, depending upon equipment available at the time they were copied. In the early years of WFSA film projectors were used to produce small images on a card which were picked up by a Super-VHS camera/recorder. The resulting master tapes were used to make VHS copies. Later improvements in equipment led to digital cameras being used, with masters held on computer hard drives. Whilst most viewing and listening copies are made in-house, a number of WFSA films have been copied by commercial firms with dedicated equipment thanks to grant-funded projects.

STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES OF WFSA COLLECTIONS

Although film and sound archive material was actively sought from the beginning, the collections can only reflect what actually existed, was known about, and which owners were willing to donate, deposit or loan for copying. There are still collections out there which owners prefer to retain, and such collections are usually not available to the general public.

In truth, if WFSA had been established before the 'throw away '60s' and beyond, much would have been rescued for posterity, but there are still many success stories to celebrate in this regard. For example, the P&O Heritage collection of films was transferred from its archive in London, providing a rich source of maritime material for local researchers.

The regional broadcast collections in WFSA would not be available to the public without its existence, and the same could be said for the other collections, particularly corporate material. It is worth noting that the average

documentary in WFSA involved just as much research and distilled content as books and other textual records.

Amateur material in WFSA often records things not covered by the professionals, or provides a different perspective from where they were standing. As with oral history recordings, the lives of ordinary people are documented in such material, providing a breadth of social history from an intimate point of view previously only available in personal letters and diaries. Although the oral history collections may be transcribed, they repay time and patience when listening, revealing not only some fascinating social content, but also accents, attitudes and insights which are not apparent in the text. Official accounts are also often edited, biased and sometimes misleading, so these informal accounts are useful to supplement them!

Some collections represent generic material which could be used by historians in place of actual events, places and people – don't be too tightly focussed! Films of life on the Home Front in World War Two are a good example, as are memories of Scouting and Guiding in the past, wherever they were recorded.

As with all audio-visual archives, there is a backlog of items waiting to be copied, including those already content-described, which will not yet be represented in the public catalogue. Volunteers are able to assist in cataloguing, including transcribing and summarising oral history recordings and moving image footage.

COPYRIGHT: THE BASICS

This is a complex topic, especially regarding film and sound material. No definitive legal advice can be given here, but in general, provided due diligence has been made to attempt to contact copyright owners, the use of small amounts of material for non-profit activities such as local history is very unlikely to meet any problems.

Here is provided information on a few basic topics: it should be borne in mind that the legal provisions vary according to the date of the material and that there are many exceptions to the general principles. Besides, the correct interpretation of legal provisions in many areas has not yet been established.

The UK is covered by the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* as subsequently amended – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/48/contents..> Leaving the EU will lead to some changes in copyright arrangements, and preliminary advice about this is available at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/changes-to-copyright-law-after-the-transition-period?utm_campaign=transition_p2&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=seg&utm_content=act29&gclid=CPudreqah-0CFQoEGwodfmwGDg

The length of time for which AV copyright subsists depends on the nature of the material:

Film - 70 years from the year in which the death occurs of the last to die of the following: principal director, screenplay author, dialogue author, or composer of music made specially for the film. This term relates to the copyright in the film as such, but there may be additional rights in specific elements such as the soundtrack (especially if this is to be reused separately) or any earlier footage reused within the film. Note that, as films were not specifically mentioned in early copyright legislation, films made before 1957 are generally treated as a series of still photographs and the provisions relating to copyright in photographs applies to these.

Sound - 50 years from the year in which it was made, or 70 years from the year it was published. If not published, but played in public or 'communicated to the public', e.g., via the internet, during that time, 50 years from that point. Again, there may be underlying rights, such as the rights of oral history interviewees in their spoken words, although in many cases at the time of the recording they will have given written consent to certain uses of it.

Crown Copyright - 125 years from the year in which it was made. If, however, a work is commercially published or 'communicated to the public' within the first 75 years of being made, copyright lasts for just 50 years from that time. A surprising number of audio-visual works fall within the latter category.

Copyright can be sold, transferred and passed on in wills, but there is no registration or legal deposit of AV works to note such changes of ownership, making it difficult for archives to provide basic rights information for all of their holdings.

Orphan works are works where the author cannot be identified, or in instances where they can be identified, no contact details can be found to seek permission for use. A solution available for orphan works may be the UK licensing scheme, which is dependent on the completion of a diligent search for rights holders (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/copyright-orphan-works>).

WFSAs deposit and gift forms signed by depositors and donors do not necessarily transfer copyright to WFSAs.

The majority of WFSAs collections are in copyright, so are dependent upon owners' written consent for copies to be made for users. WFSAs has forms for this purpose when items are requested for use, so there may be a processing delay. Any material available on the internet already, however, can be used freely without needing to contact HRO, but please bear in mind the ethical considerations outlined below.

USING WFSA MATERIAL OUTSIDE THE HRO

In 2014 the Government changed the 1988 Act to allow Exceptions* to copyright for both archives and users. These allow limited use of copyright works without the permission of the copyright owner, including for research, criticism and review. If this leads to publication (including on the internet), crucial aspects of this Exception are acknowledging the author/s of a work and **Fair Dealing**. The latter is a legal term which has not really been tested in the courts, so depends upon the user being 'fair-minded and honest'. Nonetheless, factors that have been identified by the courts as relevant in determining whether a particular dealing with a work is fair include:

Does using the work affect the market for the original work? If a use of a work acts as a substitute for it, causing the owner to lose revenue, then it is not likely to be fair

Is the amount of the work taken reasonable and appropriate? Was it necessary to use the amount that was taken? Usually only part of a work may be used

* For more detailed information about Exceptions, see the following:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/exceptions-to-copyright>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/375954/Research.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/375956/Libraries_Archives_and_Museums.pdf)

There are, of course, ethical considerations in the use of material from the Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA) outside Hampshire Record Office (HRO): firstly, the Act requires the **moral rights** of an author, performer and film director (including their heirs) to be taken into account and the right to object to derogatory treatment and false attribution of their works. Performers include oral history interviewees. Furthermore, a person who, for private and domestic purposes, commissions the making of a moving image or sound recording has the right not to have copies issued or shown to the public, broadcast or included in a cable programme. These rights exist even if the people concerned pass on their copyright ownership to others.

Secondly, the user must bear in mind the effect upon WFSA of their actions once a copy of an item has been obtained. 'Unfair' or unethical use might lead to a loss of reputation for WFSA and even the withdrawal of a collection. This is one reason why staff are so careful about gaining permission to allow researchers to have copies of items from WFSA, and requiring them to sign forms concerning their use outside HRO. There is the added complication of Data Protection to take into account, especially with regard to oral history interviewees and anyone they talk about.

THE AUTHOR

DAVID LEE, MLib, qualified as a librarian and started his career in Portsmouth City Libraries. He went on to BBC South as its first Recorded Materials Librarian, before working as Manager of WFSA from 1988-2014. Whilst there, he was Chair of the Film & Sound Group for the Society of Archivists, and regional network representative for the Oral History Society. He also developed and tutored online modules in film and sound archiving for the Society of Archivists and Dundee University.

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