



Sounding the Past: Three Silent Films

**Trevor Bailey, John Holman, Professor Stephen Deutsch,
Professor Sean Street.**

Journal of Media Practice
Vol. 4 No 1, 2003
Intellect Books
www.intellectbooks.com

The Project, and the Films, Their History and Context **Trevor Bailey**

The project was an experiment in linking music and poetry to archive films, not only to provide an enhancing accompaniment but, in some cases, with the aim of making something new which would quite profoundly change the way that these films were perceived by audiences.

It was also an experiment in partnership.

Trilith is a Dorset-based Rural Media Charity, whose main purpose is to integrate the media into rural communities. Since its founding in 1984 it has acted as a developmental organisation, creating a wide range of media-based projects with strong public participation. Currently it works in radio and video/television, using drama and documentary forms and music, and providing training and opportunities for people from many walks of rural life as well as working with a variety of other professionals. Its partners range from farmers, children and an eighty-four year old female thatcher to the established artists involved in this project, Stephen Deutsch and Sean Street.

Archive film of rural life is one of Trilith's main concerns. It has saved and copied a mass of film from Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire, with the aim that its images should be seen by the community and put to use. Outreach shows, penetrating the smallest of village halls as well as major venues, have attracted over 9,000 people. A current project is providing new context for a selection of archive: telling the stories that lay behind the films.

As well as providing entertainment, an important part of Trilith's initiatives is the use of archive to encourage local people to reflect upon change in their own communities. It is very significant that this can for a moment empower long-term country families, now a minority in their own homes, who know more than anyone about the images on the screen.

The project discussed here was devised in collaboration with Stephen Deutsch and Sean Street and funded by the Regional Arts Lottery Programme, North Dorset District Council and private trusts.

Three films were chosen from Trilith's collection. These were the fixed ingredient in the project. Their content and structure were not to be altered in any way. The point was to see how music and verse written now could interact with what was already there; with the inherited work of dead creators and the images of their time.

The films were selected deliberately for their different periods and backgrounds. Whilst one, the Heath Robinson work, would have been given improvised accompaniment when shown in cinemas, the others had almost certainly never been shown with sound of any kind. None of the three were conceived with music in mind.

The Tale of the Amplion c. 1925.

Frank Marshall was a radio pioneer, transmitting from his home on the Isle of Portland to ships, lighthouses and a local public who regarded him and his brother as the first disc jockeys. Frank's father established the earliest wireless business in the area and advertised widely.

Around 1925 cinemas across Dorset showed a brief advertisement for an early but renowned loudspeaker called the Amplion and tailed with the address of the Marshall business. It appears to have been commissioned by the Amplion manufacturers, Alfred Graham & Co., for their main agents.

The Amplion was an elegant, swan-necked, flared horn, amplifying a modified headphone. In the film, which is an animated cartoon, a bird lays eggs which hatch into little Amplions which combine into a real lion, which chases and gobbles up a stout lady, then transforms back into its real self and . . . well, rush out and buy one!

Frank Marshall remembered the film from his childhood and kept it under his bench, amongst reels of gradually decaying nitrate feature films, for decades. When rescued it turned out to have been made by W. Heath Robinson.

Research in a variety of archives has failed to turn up any Alfred Graham correspondence which would explain how Heath Robinson came to take on the commission. Neither the Vintage Wireless Museum nor the William Heath Robinson Trust knew anything of it previously. Robinson's involvement with advertising is, however, well known and extensive. The name and the style are there in the film for all to see. The consensus is that Robinson would have done all

the drawings for the film himself and that it was the only animation that he ever made.

His son, Tom, feels sure that the sheer drudgery of producing so many drawings for one piece of work and for limited return put him off animation for life.

Yet the film, running for mere 2 minutes 27 seconds is a delight to modern audiences. It may be the unique product of a famous man but it calls for music that is a bit of fun. That is why it was included: instant communication across seventy-five years.

Iwerne Minster, 1918

Iwerne Minster is a small north Dorset village. The film simply portrays two days in the life of a community whose sons were still abroad fighting out the last months of the Great War.

It was shot by a cameraman supplied by the Ministry of Information and, in its wider context, was intended as a quiet morale-raiser, designed to show the country a quintessential English village carrying on despite the conflict. The real provenance of the film is, however, much more local.

James Ismay was the brother of Bruce Ismay, Chairman of the White Star Line at the time of the Titanic's sinking. A different character from his brother, James left the family shipping business and completed his dynasty's transition from Cumbrian artisans to landed gentry. In 1908 he bought the Iwerne estate and commenced an endeavour which was to occupy the rest of his life and to make Iwerne a model farming enterprise. It was also to produce a well-provided community, resulting from both a programme of developmental work and individual care. A social club, a shop, local enterprises, housing, medical provision: such concrete things as these fulfilled one part of Ismay's thinking. Inspiring feelings of security, creating a new trade for a disabled war victim and keeping Iwerne men facing death in France in touch with home: these were more personal obligations.

Apparently a shy man of whom only two photographs survive, Ismay was a paternalist without much pretension. Duty to his community was something he accepted as an important part of his job and he was not remote. His written words sometimes exhibit blind spots at which others might have laughed, but not so often. He was part of his village and could see what life was like. He wanted to feel at one with people, shepherd or lord, and was rather less concerned with big political principles.

This feeling finds its way into the film. Locally it is suggested that Ismay was instrumental in getting it made. Certainly he and the village schoolmaster, Mr. Spencer, wrote the captions which adorn the version edited specifically for Iwerne and used in this project. Whether or not it was ever seen, as hoped, by Iwerne men at military cinemas abroad is not known.

As the war ground on Ismay started to write letters to Iwerne men serving at the front. These became a quite frequent circular, giving endless snippets of news about characters and families, the fortunes of farming and the state of cottage gardens, the deaths of some and the return of others. He writes and writes till the moment of peace. He beseeches the distant soldiers to write to their families. Amidst the bluff and the factual is an almost fervent longing for when they will return home and things can be as they were.

But they would not be. In that is the pathos and uneasiness that suggested a relationship between the old images and their new music.

Wimborne Market, 1945.

Both of the preceding films were made by professionals. Wimborne Market was simply the result of an amateur's morning at the market with a camera. Along with a wider-ranging collection by the same person it was handed to Trilith in a dark car park one evening, having been found amongst a deceased relative's effects by younger members of the family. If Trilith had not wanted it, it would have gone in the bin.

The cameraman was called Reg Day. He probably lived in Bournemouth but little else is known. By the evident care he lavished on his films, he took his hobby seriously. Crucially, he could handle a camera well and had an eye for detail. Partly because of his approach and partly because of the moment in history, the film is something of a poem in itself: it muses on a place, a time and a traditional way of life which was then intact despite the war.

By spring, 1945, Day was somehow able to get colour film stock. Although he was working in 8mm, the quality of the colour confuses one's perception of time. Everything seems too immediate for the images that you see: horses and carts, a boy with a cockerel under his arm, farmers in gaiters with their heads together, a goat brought in to sell, stallions advertising their worth as sires.

The film simply shows a traditional livestock market continuing as it always had against a background, almost invisible in the images, of great events in Europe. It also shows so many things about agrarian society that now, without war, have almost been wiped from the face of the earth. This is a quiet film capable of several levels of emotional impact. That is why it was the one chosen to be accompanied by poetry.

Iwerne Minster and *The Tale of the Amplion* were both shot on 35mm nitrate stock. The first had been kept in the village and, at the initiative of a descendant of Mr. Spencer the schoolmaster and others, had been copied onto a new 16mm print in the 1960s. Video copies of this print have been used so far, although the original nitrate has been rediscovered and is currently being assessed for possible re-copying. The second was vulnerable when discovered amongst other decaying nitrate and was reprinted and copied to video by the National Film and Television Archive, with good results.

Wimborne Market was on 8mm, exactly as shot and edited by Reg Day. Thanks to the care with which it had been kept, its condition was good and it was copied to video with little difficulty.

In all cases careful attention was paid to correct speed.

There were two concepts behind the addition of music and verse to these films.

The films were to be used to inspire artistry. It was recognised that they were never structured for this purpose. They were to be accepted with all the awkward juxtapositions and quirks of films that were made for their own, now remote, reasons. It was necessary to show that this could be done. Music and verse were to be a response to them just as they were.

Then there was the question of influencing how they communicated. *The Amplion* was intended to make people laugh and could be helped to do that better. The other two also tended to amuse, not because they were ever meant to do so but because it is easy to smile at the quaint clothes and manners of the past. In most audiences, it was only a few rooted country people who had tears in their eyes and fervent things to say. Music and verse were to affect the way that people watched, holding them, perhaps uneasily, between elegy and the hard edge of rural history.

The Music **Stephen Deutsch**

Models of music with silent film

For the first thirty years of its history, film was projected without synchronous sound. Any music that accompanied the showings was performed live. Although many scores were specially commissioned for silent films¹, the experience of most cinema-goers was to hear music produced by local musicians, playing from commercially published mood music catalogues, popular melodies, or selections from the classical repertoire.

With the exception of the slapstick comedy genre, music for silent films tended to be non-synchronous to action and gesture. The more recent practice of having the music mirror movement or physical gesture (albeit nowadays rather subtly) was not practicable until film and sound became technically synchronous and capable of post-production under dialogue, (1931)² from which point “mickey mousing” quickly became the norm.³

¹ (Eisenstein commissioned two different scores from two different composers for *Battleship Potemkin*, (1925))

² The first sound films, both in Vitaphone and in the De Forest single optical system did not allow for the dubbing of music with previously recorded dialogue. This means that if a director wished to combine music with dialogue, both would have to have been recorded at the same time. In 1933, the first significant sound film appeared using the double optical system (*King Kong*, 1933). This process allowed for post production sound dubbing.

³ as exemplified by Korngold's Score to *Robin Hood* (Curtiz, 1938)

Decisions therefore had to be taken as to whether the music for these three silent films should aspire to what one might call “gestural synchronicity” in the modern sense, or whether the stylistic restrictions current at the time of the films’ production should be replicated. It wasn’t a difficult decision to take. It seemed obvious that since a primary purpose of the project was to introduce these films to modern audiences, a more modern use of music (with due care for stylistic references) should be employed.

Foley and Atmospheres

With the exception of the animated film, *Amplion* (Robinson, 1925), it was decided that neither sound effects (Foley - such as footsteps, car doors) nor atmospheres (distant chatter, wind, weather, etc.) should be added to the films. Unlike the synchronisation of music, the addition of Foley and atmospheres has an unsettling effect on films that were initially intended as silent films. One can see an interesting example of this perceptual dysfunction in *Blackmail*⁴, where the dubbed, non-synchronous dialogue which accompanies the early sequence in the police station (initially shot as silent), marries uncomfortably with the visually stilted first dialogue scene. For post-production Foley and atmospheres to work well, it should work seamlessly, causing the viewer to feel that the sounds emanate from the screen itself, that they are truly diegetic. For these films, modern sound design of this kind would detract from the films’ value as archive material.

Live vs. Dubbed Music

The project’s original brief called for a combination of music dubbed onto the film, with some music to be played live during the showing. With the exception of the Robinson animation, in which all music was dubbed onto the video, this method was adopted for the first performance (see details below),

There are two arguments currently being expressed on this issue. The first is that since silent film was accompanied by live music, such practice in a modern venue helps us better to understand the nature of the genre. For this reason (among others) it has become fashionable for silent films (especially notable ones) to be exhibited with elaborate live orchestral scores (often composed/compiled by Carl Davis), providing the audience with an experience which seems a cross between cinema and concert.

The opposing view is that early moviemakers were so pleased with the opportunities afforded by synchronous sound and music that they all abandoned silent film by 1931 (in the west, at any rate)⁵. Notwithstanding the financial and social implications of the redundancy of cinema orchestras after that date, filmmakers and composers reaped significant artistic benefits from the change, and audiences, once exposed to sound film, found the experience of silent film, with or without live orchestral music, an experience they chose to avoid.

⁴ Alfred Hitchcock, 1929

⁵ In 1927 Hollywood produced more than 150 silent feature films and over 850 shorts. Only three silent feature films were made in Hollywood in 1931, one of which was *City Lights* by Charlie Chaplin.

The experience of the first performance of these films leads to the conclusion that the music should be dubbed onto the film, but that the poem (see *Wimborne Market, 1945*, below) is best presented live.

The studio and the process of composition

The music was composed and mixed in the Digital Music Studio in the Bournemouth Media School at Bournemouth University. Audio elements (including text) were recorded onto digital audio tape and then imported into the sequencer software, Logic[®] Audio. Most of the musical sounds were generated in MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) using E-Mu Proteus 2[®], Korg O1W[®], and Yamaha TG500[®] sound modules. These were mixed onto DAT and later dubbed onto the digital video versions of the films using Soundscape[®] technology.

MIDI was used for a number of reasons, the most obvious of which was cost. The budget for a programme such as this one is by its nature small, and recording of musicians is relatively expensive. Some of the budget was allocated for this purpose, especially for the guitar in *Wimborne Market, 1945* and the violin in *Iwerne Minster, 1918*, but these instruments were not at the centre of the timbral language. Rather, these “live sounds” were integrated into the general Midi palette, creating the impression of what might be called a hyper-orchestra (as Umberto Eco might understand it).⁶

The second reason for the choice of Midi instruments has to do with the process of synchronisation of music to image. Within the environment of the midi sequencer, imported audio sounds are harder to manipulate temporally than are those produced by midi alone. If, for the purposes of synchronisation, a composer decided to stretch a recorded phrase from 15 seconds to 20, the midi events would bear such change with greater resilience than the live sounds.

The Tale of the Amplion (1925)

The style of the images of *The Amplion* are crude in today's terms (perhaps even in those of pre-sound Disney), but they have an energy, imagination and charm which draws us to them.

The stylistic dilemma for the music centres on synchronicity. The film contains many “events” or actions, which in post-silent era cartoons would have been accompanied by musical “stings” as well as sound effects.⁷ However, the structure of *The Amplion* was such that “mickey-mousing” in this way would have prevented the composition of any music beyond these effects. That is to say: so much happens which would need musical “stings” that no time would be available for the development of other musical material. The film called out for a score which made reference to its period and the nature of the likely audience.

⁶ A subsidiary irony produced by the use of live and Midi instruments in the same sound world is that the live instruments add authenticity to their Midi analogues. If one doubles a real flute with one produced by a synthesiser, the synthesised sound more “real”, even if afterward it is sounded without such doubling.

⁷ One can see this genre in action in any of the hundreds of cartoons scored by Carl Stalling.

Using the film's date as a starting point, and the light-hearted presentation of its subject matter, I decided to compose a piece in rag-time, which, after a short introduction, comprises the main musical material. The decision to use piano sounds as sole instrumentation also pays homage to the era (and that the film contains at its close a caption card for a local retailer of the product). The piano part, however, is impossible to realise by a single pianist on a single piano, a nod towards the technological wizardry available to composers today.

After composition of the score, there remained areas of the film which still demanded close sound synchronicity, absent from the rag. The solution was to add some specially recorded Foley sounds, appropriate to the tone of the film. These sounds were recorded by the sound designer Heather Emmett and integrated by me with the music as part of the compositional process.

Iwerne Minster, 1918

This film is a representation of an England which all but vanished before the First World War. There is no post-war irony here, not any but the most casual references to the horrors of the soldiers' experiences.

The aesthetic choice seemed to be whether to develop a score which supported the original intentions, or one which deconstructed the work in light of our current knowledge of that time. It was decided that the first approach was the more appropriate, both historically and musically.

The style of the music, therefore, needed to refer to the Edwardian world left behind, lush, complex, and secure. The melodic and harmonic material employed in its composition might sound slightly strange to the ears of that time,⁸ but all of the gestures should all be recognisable. The orchestration, while intentionally produced through MIDI, replicated an orchestra of the pre-war period and integrated a solo violin (played live at the first performance) into the texture. Also included was a live alto-flute, but this was later changed to a Midi version of that instrument. The reason for this change (and the similar change made in *Wimborne Market, 1945* was due to the breathy timbre of that instrument not balancing appropriately with the Midi instruments, and that the material it played was not essential thematically (as was that composed for the violin).

The film is quite long (over 17'), with title cards and long expanses of "views" of the village, its people, and its surroundings. To the uninitiated, there seems little logic informing why any particular scene might precede or follow another, and to modern sensibilities (of those unconnected with the area), the film can seem rambling and formless. It soon became obvious that any structure of the film contained would have to be articulated by the music.

The device by which this was achieved used the title cards as anchors. The violin solo accompanied most of the cards, and each new musical section was introduced in this way. Some of the musical material was derived from the score I produced

⁸ Is it possible to compose in the style of Elgar once one has heard Bartók? The subject of a different paper, perhaps.

for the BBC's tv adaptation of H .G. Wells' *The History of Mr. Polly*⁹. The music for this programme, set in 1910, seemed to be in an appropriate style and register for the *Iwerne* piece. Fragments of melodies, and some harmonic progressions, were re-composed and re-orchestrated for use in *Iwerne Minster 1918*. Much new material was also composed.

Notwithstanding the melodic diversity of the score, the film's length and parochial subject matter continued to be a problem. The remedy was to include recordings of some of the letters Ismay had written to the troops. Several of these were recorded (primarily those relating to subject matter illustrated in the film) by Seán Street, and about half of these were imported into the musical world of the film. No other sounds (neither atmos nor Foley) were included, as the belief that they would compromise the historicity of the film was strongly held by the team.

The first performance, at Bournemouth University on 17 May, 2001, included the live violin and alto flute. For reasons stated above, the alto flute line has been subsequently replaced by a Midi instrument. Two versions of the film exist. The first allows for live performance of the violin material; the second dubbed all of the material onto the film.

Wimborne Market, 1945

Both *Iwerne Minster, 1918* and *Wimborne Market, 1945* were photographed at the end of a world war. In the first film, the mood is of optimism, a belief that things would return to whatever "normal" had been when the lads returned home. In *Wimborne Market, 1945* the overall mood is that of an elegy, to the dead, the pain, and for the ending of a world, a world embodied by the community of the market. The mood of the music had therefore to reflect this elegiac tone, without descending into melancholy; a sense of loss commuted by resignation.

Where the instrumental palette in *Iwerne* was voluptuous, here it is spare; not many instruments fill the space, and there are several moments of musical stillness. Two types of music are used. The opening music is written in an idiom which does not refer specifically to the period of the film. This music is sparsely articulated, and sits most often under the text as mainstream "film music" underscores dialogue. Whenever the text appears, the music slides below, allowing the viewer to concentrate of the words and their relationship to the images. In those places where there is no text, the music serves as referential locus to the period of the film. The guitar material near the beginning and about half way through the film, is composed in the style of a popular songs of the period. This material invokes the "quasi-western" music not that far removed from *Buttons & Bows*.¹⁰

The first performance of the film involved live reader, live alto flute with all the other material dubbed onto the film. It had been intended for the guitar to be played live as well, but availability of the guitarist and, more crucially, the problems of synchronisation resulted in its omission. The difficulty in

⁹ L. Bickford, BBC 1980

¹⁰ in *The Paleface* (Norman McLeod 1948)

synchronisation might have been solved had the venue been equipped with a system which would allow the guitarist to see the time code while keeping those numbers from the audience. However, the experience of the performance convinces me that in this case the most effective performance of this material is for the music to be dubbed onto the film and the poem to be read live. For this reason, two versions exist of the film, one which would accommodate this model, and another where all material, text and music, is dubbed onto the film.

As a postscript to the technical challenges of this project, the following has proved a valuable lesson in mixing and dubbing. The film was dubbed onto Digital video using Soundscape® audio in a post-production facility at the Bournemouth Media School. It was then copied onto VHS for distribution. It became clearly apparent that the balance between music and poem was significantly different in the two formats. What had seemed perfectly mixed (in stereo) for the Digital Format, seemed overbalanced towards the music on the VHS. For this reason a re-mix of the *Wimborne* film, accentuating the text, was required. It was decided that such a remix was not necessary for the *Iwerne* film, as there the text was meant to be more often subsumed into the music-led language of the film.

The Poem

Seán Street

Structure and Meaning

For many people the concept of a poetic voice-over narrative for film conjures in the mind the famous 1936 film *Night Mail*, by John Grierson of the G.P.O. Film Unit, with music by Benjamin Britten and verse by WH Auden:

This is the night mail crossing the border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
The shop at the corner and the girl next door.¹¹

It is an excellent illustration, created less than ten years after the coming of the sound film of a key structural issue in verse written for electrical dissemination, and one that has remained worthy of consideration for writers working in the media to this day. What is immediately obvious in the narrative is the role of rhythm and rhyme – the simulation in word/sound of the movement of a train. Of this project Auden was later to say:

We were experimenting to see whether poetry could be used in films, and I think we showed it could.¹²

Accepting this to be the case, it is interesting, and somewhat disappointing, to note how seldom verse has been used as film narrative subsequently. It was much later – during the 1990s – that British television viewers were to witness the experiments of the BBC Producer Peter Symes, notably in collaboration with

¹¹ W.H. Auden, [5,3ikp] G.P.O. Film Unit, 1936

¹² Quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, *WH Auden, a Biography*, George Allen & Unwin, 1981

Tony Harris, in a series of powerful documentaries on powerful, important and often difficult subjects. These included Alzheimer's Disease, (*Black Daisies for the Bride*), death (*Loving Memory*) and nuclear conflict (*The Shadow of Hiroshima*). Here too a strong structure was used to carry the meaning through the spoken word.

I heard a sound I thought was birds
but then I swear I heard these words:
Shadow San 'This voice comes from the shadow cast
by Hiroshima's A-bomb blast.
The sound you hear inside this case
is of a man who fans the face
he used to have before the flash
turned face and body into ash.
I am the nameless fanning man
You may address as Shadow San.'¹³

My own involvement with broadcast verse has, up to now, been in radio. BBC Radio 4 commissioned *Radio: Ten Poems About Sound* in October 1998 for the network's contribution to National Poetry Day.¹⁴ These poems too played on the strengths of traditional verse structures to convey meaning, as in "News Flash":

*We interrupt our programmes...says emphatically
stop what you're doing, be prepared.
Here's a punctuation mark in history;
remember where you were when first you heard.*¹⁵

From these illustrations comes the clear point that poetry when written to be spoken as opposed to being read on the page is required to communicate with its audience instantly; there may be no turning back or reflecting on an image or idea. The words may well contain complex thoughts, but these need to be expressed in language and form which is immediately comprehensible, particularly when they accompany visual images which may well be arresting in their own right.

As so often, Shakespeare provides us with a lesson and model in his use of rhythm and rhyme. Iambic Pentameter, the structure of so much of his dramatic verse, contains in its music the rhythm of walking, indeed, the rhythm of the human heart-beat. Likewise he ends many crucial speeches and scenes with a rhyming couplet:

For our approach shall so much dare the field
That England shall couch down in fear, and yield.¹⁶

¹³ Tony Harrison, "The Shadow of Hiroshima" from *The Shadow of Hiroshima and Other Film/Poems*, Faber and Faber, 1995. The poem was first broadcast on Channel 4 on 6 August, 1995. It was directed by Tony Harrison.

¹⁴ Subsequently published in book form as *Radio and Other Poems* (Rockingham Press, 1999)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act IV Scene III

The meaning and the sense of closure is heightened by the use of rhyme and rhythm; one might almost compare the principle to that of a well-told joke – the first line sets up the thought, the second delivers the “punch” and supplies a satisfying conclusion, even if we are not consciously aware of it.

I have tried to adopt this technique in *Wimborne Market, 1945*. There is much in the film’s images to take the viewer’s concentration away from the words, and of course the words must never detract from those images. The solution has been to use iambic metre and couplet-rhyming to comment on what we are seeing, and reflect philosophically on the poignancy of this record of a lost time:

The air is full of wool and Erinmore,
faces of men and beasts seen through a door
that closed before the film was shot, the scent
of past days, caught after their time was spent.

There will be times when the words are ignored, when the audience attention is fixed on the visual image. This is inevitable; the film exists independently of its voice-over narrative; that said the intention should sometimes be to supply a new layer of meaning through the words, to add value to the pictures and sometimes to use them as a springboard to an allied idea.

The Role of the Poetic Narrative

Whatever the nature of a voice-over narrative, it is sadly true that many such commentaries are over-written; the cliché, “A picture is worth a thousand words” has considerable truth in it when applied to television features and documentaries. Thus the writer when approaching the task of providing speech to pictures must ask what information – either factual or emotional – the images are *not* giving the audience. We must seek not to duplicate but to complement.

In the present case the viewer can *see* that Wimborne Market in 1945 dealt in cattle and poultry; it is therefore superfluous to state this in the poem unless for a specific purpose. On the other hand what makes this film significant in an historical sense might indeed need pointing up. For example, today’s visitor to the market will find no cattle at all. A tradition which had survived for generations, survived even to the end of the Second World War, did not survive the peace which came thereafter:

Another century: how could they know?
Wimborne has its market still – how different though.

Likewise many viewings of the silent film in the early stages of the project revealed other ironies: it is *Spring 1945*. The war therefore is still on; the people we see in the film would have been aware of the current situation in as far as the media of the day – radio and newspapers – were in a position to reveal it. During those months the allies were moving on Berlin; what was yet to be revealed to the people of Wimborne – as elsewhere – was the hideousness of the Concentration Camps:

We live in Time as much as Place, and when
today they heard of allies marching on Berlin,
they must have felt that spring held metaphors
to help them towards tomorrow's open doors,
an end to war, a better life ahead,
an end – but things don't end, instead,
we just exchange their lost today for this –
and hindsight – Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz,
people as cattle dying far away
somewhere, on Wimborne's weekly market day.

These words occur over shots of horses feeding, and traps transporting farmers and their wives in and out of the market. The intention is ironic: to create a comparison in the viewer's mind between the mundane everyday life witnessed here in Wimborne, (and by implication similar country market towns around Britain) and the "people as cattle" transported to the death camps. There is little to say by way of direct commentary on what we are seeing; there is perhaps something more to imply by placing the apparent normality of the scene in the context of its time.

The work opens and closes with the same rhyming couplet; these words frame the piece, as visually the whole thing starts and ends in darkness. The intention of this device is to give a sense of an island of time: Reg Day's wonderful little film *is* a time-capsule, and it was my wish to heighten the sense of this by suggesting that our experience of it as an audience gives us a sense that it comes to us out of a strangely distant – although historically recent - cultural time. The shadows of the past out of which it emerges, at the end reclaim it, just as human memory fades. Today it exists on two levels. Firstly it is a document, a record, which for residents of the Dorset town of Wimborne has its own fascination independent of any music or verse narrative added to it. Secondly, and relevant to the Trilith project, it is a poetic meditation on time and change, a continual process for us today, as much as for them, then. This moves the whole project from the local to the universal. We all grow older, the days continue to move into the past tense. As the poetic narrative begins and ends:

Strange how today recedes, the sepia grows,
When it becomes the past who sees? Who knows?

Conclusion, the audience, dissemination

The audience for the first performance was an extraordinary mix, including retired farmers, townspeople, academics, students, artists and a nephew of Heath Robinson. After the performance people stood up both to comment on issues of instrumentation or poetic imagery and to remember people in the films and the life they led.

In fully recorded form the films and their new soundtracks are featuring in Trilith's ongoing series of shows, alongside other archive films and modern material. These take film into the smallest village halls all over Dorset and Wiltshire, as well as to larger venues.

The three films in their new form are being integrated into a series of archive-based video releases, produced by Trilith, which will be publicly available. They will also be accessible at a number of public viewing points in libraries, museums and elsewhere alongside other local archive film.

Stephen Deutsch, Sean Street and Trilith will use the three films and their new soundtracks as teaching material, in both academic and community contexts.

in Adams, J (ed) *The Journal of Media Practice*, Vol 4 No 1, Intellect Press, 2003