Film and the Dartington Experience

by

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Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the Author been registered for any other University award.

Exhibitions of the Author's work:


From the Archive 93, a 50 minute compilation video produced presented and distributed by DHA 1993.

Four Parts for a Modernist House, a collaborative music and video performance produced and presented at DHA 1995.

Tracing Leonard, a 20 minute video biography produced and presented at DHA 1996 – 1997

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Signed

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Film and the Dartington Experience

Abstract

This project is a study of Dartington under the leading question 'What is Dartington?' and comprises a number of interlinked methodological phases of enquiry. The first explores Dartington's use of film as a process of documenting its experimental activities, and as a commercial product in the form of the films made and distributed by the Dartington Hall Film Unit.

The second strategy engages with archive film materials in the production of compilation videos, which were then developed into a series of Photoworks designed to facilitate a personal interpretation of its particular history.

The third approach resulted in the production of three forty minute videos (After the Facts 2003) which articulate an understanding of Dartington's history of engagement with film, a personal experimental engagement with filmmaking, and an interrogation of the possibilities of applying a particular reading of the experimental ethos of Dartington to a filmic practice. A pervading concern has been with the mythic nature of Dartington during the inter-war years and the function of the filmic form in myth generation and perpetuation.

The final part of the project presents an overview of these strategies, assessing their successes and limitations. By the ordering of the visual archive, the creative juxtaposition of historic and contemporary images in the Photoworks, and the interfacing of place and self in After the Facts the intention has been to show the ways in which a creative practice has been able to understand Dartington as a changing and variable experience.
Introduction

Modern Dartington, the Dartington Experiment, began in 1925 when Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst bought the run-down country house estate in Devon, with a view to living out their experimental ideas of rural regeneration incorporating economic and social structures within a vital community built around the needs of individuals. This was how they believed they could achieve what Leonard Elmhirst called 'an abundant life'. The nature of the experiment is complex and has been explored at length by Victor Bonham-Carter, Michael Young and Mark Kidel; these and other authors have been extensively consulted.

The phase when the 'experiment' began to move from personal to institutional practice can be identified as the early thirties and certainly by the outbreak of World War Two it is possible to identify the end of Dartington's truly experimental phase. By then the utopian idealism of the experimental phase was moving into a more pragmatic existence with the idea of the Dartington Experiment becoming a mythic element of Dartington's identity. The idea of Dartington as an experiment was to continue to be incorporated in its post-war activities, but was not enacted in the way it had been at the beginning. It was my work on the film and photographic archive of the early years that began to raise questions on the formations of meanings, and the extent to which these constructions had established the mythic elements of the experiment. It is the inter-war years of the experiment including the family and a home, education and the environment - place, land, landscape, and the integration of art and life that are the substance of this research. Elements of the story of the Dartington Experiment are brought together through the creative intervention with the film, video, photographic and audio recordings in the archive.

In particular I set out to explore questions arising from a study of work with film at Dartington. Understanding the use of film as part of the Dartington Experiment was seen as an essential part of the initial stages of the inquiry. From this base I was able to form my own interventions with this archive film material from 1992 – 1998 before developing the experimental film production work After the Facts in 2003. Taken together these phases/strands of inquiry identify the key ideas emerging from Dartington and the ways in which the interpretive film work provided a new narrative on the experimental years.

An inconclusive, or partial, history of Dartington is presented through these materials while their construction and forms are used as part of a broader experiential visual enquiry into constructions of meaning. Learning by doing has been identified by Mark Kidel as a process central to the educational framework of the Elmhirsts and the Dartington Experiment, and filmmaking is used

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1 Interview with Leonard Elmhirst included in A Job is not Enough, BBC TV, producer Richard Thomas, 1972
5 The word 'film' in this is generally used generically to include all audio-visuals forms, video and audio tape. Specific works are referred to by their title, if any or original format if known.
as a methodology to construct and explore a personal understanding of processes of 'learning by doing'.
Part one: An Overview

Chapter 1 A Profile

The Dartington Experiment

This term, derived from Michael Young's description of *The English Experiment*, I have used to refer to the period from 1925 during which Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst purchased the Dartington Hall Estate and established the combination of place, institution, ideas and enterprises that became synonymous with the name Dartington. The end of the experimental phase of Dartington is harder to define but I take it to begin with the formation of Dartington Hall Ltd and Dartington Hall Trust in the early thirties. The period I would characterise as the *Dartington Experiment* I see as being over by 1939 at the onset of World War Two.

A great deal has been written about this period and I do not intend to go into detailed exposition, except where it is pertinent to this study of film activity at Dartington. It is perhaps useful to note that the *Dartington Experiment* was broadly seen as an enactment of ideas that would yield experimental results. These were seen as having positive or negative value to the overall experiment as opposed to being characterised as success or failure. In this application of experimental methodology, derived from a 'scientific' approach, much of what happened at Dartington in this early period was conceived and enacted as being experimental. A feature of experimental processes is that the results cannot be determined in advance and this contributes to the complexities involved in determining what the Elmhirsts intended with their *English Experiment*.

Michael Young identifies some of the elements within this experimental conception, derived from a consideration of Utopian ideas through the formative experiences of the Elmhirsts, the influence of Rabindranath Tagore and America in his analysis:

*Leonard was more explicit about the ways in which the attainment of goals might be measured than about their nature. But they were there clearly enough, if they had the impress of America upon them, and the characteristic cast given by the Age of Enlightenment. The five which have had the most influence on Dartington can for shorthand be characterised in this way – the educational myth, the cultural myth, the arcadian myth, the humanist myth and the scientific myth. In using the word myth I do not mean exercises of the imagination to account for what has happened in the past but for what might happen in the future, going beyond the realistically attainable.*

*Mankind can be liberated through education.
A new flowering of the arts can transform a society impoverished by industrialisation and secularisation.
A society which combines the best of town and country, combines the best of both worlds.*

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A pervasive concern for the individual human being and his right to self-determination can combine with the efficient operation of agriculture and industry. The scientific spirit can be a continuous spur to progress.\(^8\)

In my use of the term the *Dartington Experiment*, I refer to the period when these ideas, expressed here by Young, in various forms of enactment informed the operations and activities of Dartington.

From one point of view', said Leonard, 'in everything we have attempted at Dartington we have endeavoured to secure that element of universality which would make such discoveries as we made there be applicable, in principle at any rate, to any other part of the globe.\(^9\)

The scope of these ideas can perhaps be defined in terms of the actual ingredients, or active elements of the *Dartington Experiment*. For 'shorthand' these might be characterised as follows - the establishment of a school, the establishment of a community (built around or up from an integrated family), the location in rural Devon, the belief in the wider application of their experimental results, and the experimental conception of the whole enterprise.

In 1982 Mark Kidel quotes the Elmhirst's intentions, retrospectively stated:

>The multifarious experience arising from the Dartington experiment should, wherever possible, have wider application to rural problems as a whole: and that this experiment should, whatever the results, be made available to all those who had the future of the countryside at heart.\(^10\)

The early years of the experiment, the late twenties, was a time of idealism and radical experiment. As Mark Kidel notes during this phase:

>... the fact that learning was central to every project at Dartington was much more evident. The School was the Estate, and the Estate was the school, at least in theory. 'Seniors' and 'Juniors' – as all adults and children on the Estate were respectively called – were supposed to share in a common learning process. Life on the Estate was to be an adventure for all.

The character of this:

>...the intimacy of scale, the force of pioneering enthusiasm, and the charisma of the founders, undoubtedly created a remarkable context in which, for a few years, distinctions between learning and doing, school and life were blurred almost into non-existence.\(^11\)

There is a group portrait in the archive photographed in the Tilt-yard in 1929 of every member of the Estate Seniors and Juniors. This was, as Kidel points out, the last time such an image was produced.

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\(^8\) Ibid. p100
There is a sense in which Dartington was Utopian in its aspirations. Michael Young makes this general point in the first edition of his book *The Elmhirsts of Dartington* published in 1982, which has the subtitle *The Creation of an Utopian Community*. A reprint of the book in 1996 by the then Dartington Hall Trustees is missing the subtitle. In a talk at the *Ways with Words* Festival of 1997 Young reflected on the Elmhirsts’ idealism and in an interview the following day when asked about the change in his book’s title replied:

Michael Young: John Lane, the most active trustees now the Chairman of the Trust, John Pontin had resigned, he wrote to me and said the book was out of print and they would like to reprint it. He said they would like to reprint it but only if I’d agree to drop the word ‘Utopia’ from the title. I thought it was rather ridiculous but that it would be nice to have it in print, and that was the condition really so that it could come back into print, so I agreed to the erasure of this terrible word ‘utopian’. I was also trying to have a little bit of comeback on that last night, by reminding John Lane, if he ever knew, that Utopia was really rather a respectable concept in America for a long time, And part of the Utopianism came from America. But it was not exactly mainstream, but always an important part of the American outlook on the world. So he oughtn’t to have insisted that I take it out but I don’t mind it has gone now it doesn’t matter.

David Hilton: Do you think there was a point when Dartington was an Utopia?

MY: Yes it was unobtainable but it was moving rather smartly towards it in the thirties. A combination of the place, the money and Hitler sent so many brilliant German refugees here, that was a very heady combination against the background of a feudal estate – that was really some cocktail- utopian cocktail but the war put paid to that. There was never the same heady excitement about it.

DH: Were they idealists?

MY: Yes, oh yes certainly.
DH: Was there a difference between the idealism of a grand plan and the idealism of a practice?

MY: It was the idealism of the potentiality of human beings. They didn't have very much of an idea about what sort of structures you needed, but they were committed to bringing out the usually hidden potential in everyone on earth but to bringing it out a bit more here. That's probably I suppose that's probably the basis of all Utopias anyway.

DH: Does it work that way round, do you find frameworks for human development are a constraining path...?

MY: Have you read Thomas More's 'Utopia'?

DH: Yes

MY: Being a lawyer himself [More] he derides the law and laws and rules and regulations and some passages he seems almost to be talking like Leonard was but later and Robert Owen and others.... I don't think utopians who have gone for structures, like some of the American Utopian groups, I don't think they have probably done so well. There has obviously been that sort of strain in utopianism always — let's build a new structured society. Enright (?) communities in America, quite recently have been full of structure. But the other sort of more open ended view, of it all is Leonard and Dorothy's: structures don't matter, too much, what matters is individual people and the way they converse and nourish each other. I suppose in some ways that's less interesting because people are always interested in structures and plans and all that. But if your eyes are really focused on the individual you are (lost for) structures and 'capital O' organisations are secondary. But of course you can fall into a lot of traps then because you don't take organisation seriously enough, as they didn't. Neither of them had much sense of management — as the term is used nowadays. And quite a lot of things failed or faltered because of that. But still by and large it was a record of success.^^

This early 'Utopian' period gave way to rapid expansion as the pattern and structure of departments was developed. The school opened, departments took shape: Forestry, Farms, Poultry, Sawmills, Orchards, Textiles, Works (this became Staverton builders in 1930), Quarries (from which the limestone chipping needed for concrete estate roads and new buildings such as Aller Park — built 1928-’31 — and Foxhole, built 1931), Transport and the Central office. Also the research departments: Laboratory and Agricultural Economics, were established. This was a period when everything revolved around the courtyard of the Hall and Leonard and Dorothy had a very hands-on role in the management of the whole enterprise. Victor Bonham-Carter in his 1958 book Dartington Hall charts the details of this period, and the pressing need to form Dartington Hall Ltd. in 1929, followed in 1931-2 by Dartington Hall Trust. Dartington was expanding its operations and developing its corporate structure.

Allied to the role of the experiment as model to others was the underlying tenet of education as a continuing force in life. The archive contains a much re-printed image of Dorothy seated beneath a tree typing the first prospectus for the school the opening sentence of which proclaims: ‘This school is for adventure’. From the outset it had been the Elmhirsts’ intention to found a school for
Dorothy’s children from her first marriage to Willard Straight. Her second son Michael Straight recalls:

My mother, quite rightly, was concerned about taking three small children to South Devon, in 1926. Her suitor, Leonard Elmhirst, raised the ante by promising that their prospective community would include a progressive co-educational boarding school that would provide her children with the education not then available in Totnes. She had studied with John Dewey in New York, and the idea of starting an ideal school probably tipped the balance; she agreed to marry him and move herself and her children to Dartington.13

Indeed with her first husband Willard, Dorothy had established The New School for Social Research in New York founded ‘as a sort of research body, in both domestic and foreign fields’.14 ‘... which rejoiced in its commitment to a somewhat less rigid spirit of thought’. Leonard in an interview in 1973 recorded by Richard Thomas recalls:

My recently acquired wife had been very interested in experiment[s] in education in America, used to attend lectures by John Dewey and all the leaders there. And she said well if we are going to get married, and we are going to England, which I insist upon, I am bringing my three children over with me. And I don’t want to put them into a single sex school, so we’ll just have to start a school.15

12 Audio interview with Michael Young DH 17/797
13 Dartington Hall School Staff memories of the early years Ed Maria Elena De La Iglesia Folly Island Press 1996
14 W.A Swanberg, Whitney Father, Whitney Ehiress Scribners New York, 1980 pp 246-7 and pp450
15 The School, 16mm Film by Richard Thomas 1974
The role played by film in this experimental framework has not been the subject of detailed consideration: rather the archive film has been used as a way of illustrating the appearances of the Dartington Experiment. It emerges that modern Dartington, from the outset, has had some interest in re-presenting itself to the outside world through film, (amongst other forms).
The phases of activity in film (and audio visual/video) work at Dartington

As a way of mapping the activity the following is a summary that emerges from examination of the Dartington Archive films and related papers.

- 1925 - 1932. The early period, when everything was experimental and mainly amateurs undertook work with film. The skills and understanding of the form by those involved was limited – as indeed were the models they could look to for example. Film was seen primarily as a means of ‘recording’ or fixing what was going on.

- 1932 - 1950. The professional period, when film was seen as both useful and potentially commercial under the two incarnations of the Dartington Hall Film Unit. In this phase the activity became the province of those who sought to use specific functions of the filmic form to inform, under the auspices of education. Within this framework the business of making films took on a commercial dimension. Film was used to illustrate particular curriculum topics and Classroom films were distributed and sold.

- 1950 - 1972. Post war period, when Dartington relied on outside interests – principally the BBC to explain itself. In this period the archive was established by Victor Bonham-Carter and a number of personalities were engaged in recording and telling the story. Singular amongst these was Richard Thomas whose 1971-74 contribution came at the end of Leonard Elmhirst’s life and marks a final summing-up of ideas, which he sees as embedded in the activities depicted in the archive films of the thirties. Here the past is reviewed and re-fixed to conform to Leonard’s memory and hindsight.

- 1973 - 1975. The Community Video period. Shortly after the death of Leonard Elmhirst the whole enterprise felt in need of self-examination and reflection. In this phase, after the death of both the principal founders, Dartington became serious about adding to the archive with numerous video recordings. Again the urge to re-fix the past seems to be the motivation, this time through the memories of those who lived through it.

- 1980 - 1990. The Interpretation Officer period when it became urgent to consolidate the past, but more urgent to look to the future. This was articulated through an attempt to actually locate the present as a form in flux between past and future.

- 1991- 1998. The New Archive period when under the auspices of the Archivist Maggie Giraud, it was felt necessary to re-tell or re-engage with the histories in the archive films.

- 1999 – 2003. The Current position where all the archive film material is being logged and indexed by The South West Film & Television Archive. The Dartington Trustees have embarked on a series of detailed Archive Interviews with surviving principals of Dartington, which will be held inaccessible without manipulation as record in the Archives.
At each phase different people with different agendas were trying to explain the Dartington story. The degree to which the Dartington Institution was concerned with, or driving this activity varies but it is true to say that it rarely took on a role of central importance within the larger concerns of those in a position of power at Dartington.

Questions emerging from a study of the use of film at Dartington will be considered throughout this analysis. These may be summarised:

- How was Film seen at Dartington?
- What was the relationship between practices with film at Dartington and the emerging Documentary Film Movement?
- What manifestations of experimental work with film were there at Dartington?
- What were Dartington's attempts to present itself in film?
Chapter 2  Film at Dartington

Early activity with film at Dartington

The photographic archive part of the Dartington Hall Archive contains family snaps and portraits of Leonard (1893 – 1974) and Dorothy (1887 – 1968) and their families from the early times, through their lives and the work of an increasing number of others involved in the Dartington experiment.

Leonard in his Repton school cap sets up the camera for a group photograph 'before church' 1906.

Leonard’s family was familiar with still photography, in the archive there are snaps and formal family photographs from his childhood, through to the time he met Dorothy at Cornell, New York where he was studying Agriculture. Leonard was the third son of a Yorkshire parson who had nine children. Images of his family include formal group and individual portraits of the family going back to his grandfather. As the brothers grew there emerge an increasing number of informal snaps around the home including an annual line up of the children, usually on a stepladder.

Dorothy’s family is similarly represented in the Archive but the images seem to be taken by non-family photographers. These are photographs of important people designed perhaps for consumption by interested ‘others’, presumably magazines, publications etc. Perhaps it is too much of an assumption to speculate that while Dorothy’s family used photography, Leonard’s family, particularly his sibling group had a more intimate tradition of making photographs.

From a family background familiar with photography, it is no surprise that Leonard was a keen photographer. The Dartington Archive contains his first album of photographs taken whilst at school at Repton dating from 1906. There are also a number of small images taken by him, his brothers and sister – taking photographs of each other at home at Pindar Oaks dating from around this time, one labelled by Leonard: 'Mud Larking' 1911.

During his wartime service with the WMCA Leonard took photographs of India, Iraq and Mesopotamia. His various jobs included education for troops and might well have included educational slide shows although I have no evidence of this.
The archive also contains a roll of 16mm film labelled 'Leonard's visit to Russia' which is a film record of his visit to study pioneering practices of artificial insemination in 1933. These practices were subsequently developed for the first time in England on the Darlington farms. The existence of this film and its clear authorship demonstrates Leonard's awareness of film as a valuable tool in documenting his researches. The film itself is rather more of a tourist record of the trip, with some uncertain camerawork but clear enthusiasm for depiction of the 'other' that are the Russian Caucasuses of the 1930s. Archive sources suggest Leonard's 'home-movies' also included trips to Greece, Bombay, Egypt and possibly Indonesia.¹⁷

*Still from Leonard's 16mm film of Russia 1932 showing an agricultural station.*

His pragmatic approach to research and development was articulated many times by Leonard, illustrated here by a line of commentary from *A Job is Not Enough* the BBC film made in 1973:

> We had a marvellous Head of our Drama Department – the Head of the most lively theatre in Moscow and he was here for three years¹⁸. And he said, you know there is one general tendency in the human race, and I said 'what's that?' and he said 'to go to

¹⁷ Catalogue of Darlington Hall Films, 1979. DHA
¹⁸ Michael Chekov brought over to Darlington in 1935 by Dorothy's daughter Beatrice Straight to set up the Chekov Theatre School in 1935

19
sleep'. Now he was right you see, and therefore unless you have the eye of research penetrating all aspects of life all the time and bringing its new findings back and getting them into action... you do go to sleep.  

It is not a huge leap to suggest that photography was for him a tool of research, a way of fixing or recording. His approach to taking photos seems mainly to document, to show others what he had seen. There is no doubt that he is the reason there was film shot in the first place at Dartington.

Leonard had a pragmatist's approach and as Michael Young states was 'not given to drawing up detailed plans about anything.' He did however rely heavily upon the expert, or otherwise, advice of others. It seems this was true in his use of film in that at the start there was no particular plan. Plans emerged from others with more particular expertise and time to spare. Like a video camera in a contemporary family, many people had a chance to use the camera he brought to Dartington. For example, the restoration of the Hall and other buildings took a long time from 1926 to 1938, and the surviving film was obviously shot at different times during that period and different people could have shot it.

If not Leonard then who else was taking the film? In the beginning there was George Bennett, a shadowy figure in the Archive but whom many people seemed to know and whose images live on. George came to Dartington with Dorothy; he had been her first husband Willard Straight's batman in world war one. At the time of Dorothy's marriage to Leonard he was based at her New York home. He must have been a practical man, competent and a loyal servant. There is a benevolent side of Dorothy seen in her continued employment of Bennett. Not many of her New York staff moved to Dartington, and what use could a batman be to a woman surrounded by staff? He perhaps represented some kind of link to her first husband to whom she was devoted.

Major Willard Straight, Bennett's officer, who died in France of the influenza pandemic, was part of the US peace delegation and a distinguished man in his own right. Perhaps it is assuming a lot to say that Bennett must have had some strong positive characteristics to get the job in the first place, and it could be more than loyalty or sentiment that caused Dorothy to bring him with her to Dartington. Could he also have been competent? Bennett is cited as technician on the WEA New Learning project of 1931 and as technician with responsibility for recording the reconstruction of the buildings in Cine Group papers of 1932-34. These will be discussed later.

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20 Michael Young. The Elmhirsts of Dartington - the Creation of an Utopian Community, Routledge Kegan Paul. 1982 p127)
While the impetus to record the experiment on film came from Leonard, it seems that Bennett was responsible for much that has survived and so is it through his eyes that we can see the early development of Dartington. Examination of the early footage presumably shot by him is illuminating. Examination of the correspondence in the archive relating to him reveals more about the man and his relationship with Dorothy and Leonard.

In August 1921 before Dorothy and Leonard married, George writes to Leonard who has at this time left to go to work with Tagore in India, financed by Dorothy. He includes some pictures he has taken and apologises for the fact that light got into the camera and some of them spoiled.

"Thanks for the written instructions which I've typed, which will be very useful later either for the madam or whoever will use the camera"...
"Anything I can do for you over here... I am always at your service for what you have done for the Major's [family]." 21

The letter comes from 1130 Fifth Avenue, Dorothy's home at the time in New York. From these extracts it seems evident that Leonard has taken the trouble to teach George about photography, a subject that George takes to with a passion. Evident also is George's concern for the Major's surviving family. Further evident is the regard he held for Leonard. This bond, at least of George

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21 Letter: GB to LKE Aug 31st 1921. LKE: Devon I. Bennett. DHA
to Leonard if not of Leonard to George, comes through a letter of 24th August 1923. Here George has the task of sorting out Major Straight’s belongings and is asking Leonard for advice.

... and please pardon me if I err in asking you, but there is no one else that I can really, and it doesn’t seem fair to bother Mrs. Straight when she has so many other things continually going...

He goes on to discuss other members of Dorothy’s staff that need support.

Please excuse me if I bring these worries to you, but there has been so many things happen here the last few years that I suppose it is a relief to tell someone.

Bennett seems to have transferred to an important role in the Dorothy Straight household through his knowledge of the major’s effects. He is in personal contact with Dorothy’s main (but not only) suitor, on to whom he projects his confidences. This escalates a few days later on the 30th of August 1923 when he writes at length to Leonard articulating his concern for Dorothy’s health. Is he smarming his way into their affections or is he genuinely devoted to them and the idea of their relationship? I suspect the latter, a view reinforced by a later letter from George to Leonard dated March 30th, 1925. Dorothy has evidently told George of her forthcoming marriage to Leonard.

... now I may express it I cannot tell you how glad I am that the madam and the children will have protection and the leader. In Mrs. Straight’s letter, she told me that you would need me. I thank you indeed for thinking of me. Of ability that I may have I cannot tell, but I do know that I can give you loyalty and sincerity. Your obedient servant, George Bennett.

While the Elmhirsts might well need George it seems there was some delay in getting him over to Dartington. Roger Morel, whom Victor Bonham-Carter describes as ‘one of the earliest members of the Estate’, writes to George in a letter simply dated 17th July (presumably 1925). Morel offers George a room from September and apologises that ‘up to now there has been no place for you to hang your hat’. He goes on:

I understand from LK that you will probably like to start your operation here with a more or less cut and dried programme of work in the estate darkroom. I would suggest too that you might give a part of your time to getting the office started at S.B. [Shinner’s Bridge] in working with Jack, TA., Bess [? not readable] which are becoming a big family.

I suspect that Morel as a person in a position of authority within the new Dartington establishment is responding to a concern of ‘what shall we do with George?’ Bennett is being offered a job in, or is it control of, the ‘Estate Darkroom’, but that is perhaps not enough to occupy him since after all he is an amateur in that business. Does this reflect more of a welfare concern than an appropriate and necessary application of Bennett’s talents? Perhaps Morel has been told of

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22 Roger Morel came in 1925 as an important senior member of the initial experiment and had his own problems with accommodation. He lodged with the Parson Martin at the Dartington Vicarage for a time and Leonard suggests that this was the beginning of a rift between the Estate and Church, in the form of Martin, that lasted for many years. Archive audio recording: LKE Biography 14th Aug 1973. DHA

22
Bennett’s experiences with light getting into the camera as well as his enthusiasm for photography.

That George was a bit of a problem for the Elmhirsts comes across in a confidential report on him by Doc. Watson dated 28th April 1927. Doc Watson, an early recruit to the estate, was Secretary to Dartington Hall Ltd. from 1929 to 1930 when he himself was sacked by Slater, but that’s another story. In a confidential report dated 28th April 1928 Doc Watson says of Bennett:

His efforts at keeping his negatives and pictures in order are pathetic – he is so anxious to show that he has done something that no single system is good enough but must needs keep changing, thus causing himself endless troubles, worry and muddle.

Watson goes on:

He has commented to me on several occasions that what he wants to do is “to work with me, to get all others to appreciate the scheme here and to show results”. This last being by far the most important. He lives for results, but they must be quick.

Bennett’s pride in Dartington comes through in the following from the same report:

One more thing in which he feels he shines is “showing people around the estate” and he does his job remarkable well.

Bennett has been attached to Doc Watson and is evidently operating out of a store-room in the proximity of the Estate office at the time. This is causing problems:

... for justice to the rest of the office he should be given a place of his own in which to carry out his photographic work. At present the enquiry office and store are both used by him. I have today got a commission to photograph certain buildings etc. where alterations are planned and supply the drawing office with enlargements which will assist them in drafting. This has pleased him and I feel his interest in this direction can be fostered and if he can be fitted up with a little place of his own he will go a long way towards realising that he has a place of importance to fill.

That this report was written at all suggests Watson was asked, or took it upon himself, to undertake an evaluation of George. This was presumably commissioned or at least seen by Dorothy and Leonard and is perhaps being written with a degree of sensitivity knowing the place George has in their lives. If he was really so much trouble why was he not got rid of? Eventually he was.

In 1933 Bennett seems to be in the United States, at Old Westbury, Dorothy’s home in Long Island (where incidentally she and Leonard married in 1925). He appears to be on a fact-finding mission to look into developments in 16mm sound film and recommends a later purchase of Bell

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and Howell's forthcoming system. He has also been screening Dartington films, not specified, but his enthusiasm is palpable:

The pictures have been shown to various groups and their acceptance has been most friendly everywhere, inasmuch as they tell me, that it conveys a picture of what is being done. The attitudes have been most sympathetic.

He has also been reflecting on ideas to use the pictures in more professional films:

The idea for the foregoing, is that in the building up of films for you, the departments as well as the school, each particular head can then tell their own story of their activities. ²⁵

He takes his work very seriously and is perhaps disappointed that a talked about propaganda film for Dartington has not yet grown beyond his enthusiastic screenings of Dartington 'pictures'.

There is, however, another element to Bennett's trip to United States: to consult with a Dr. Tinley who has referred him to a Mr Richard Peabody who writes confidentially to Dorothy:

He [Dr. Tinley] agrees with me that nothing is to be gained by an analysis of Bennett's motives and the underlying causes of his habit, but rather the end will be reached better by persuasion and moralising. ²⁶

He goes on:

I do not think I shall get anywhere with him through analysis, and just how much good will come from moral suasion and suggestion is entirely problematic.

In a confidential letter to Leonard dated February 15th, 1934 Peabody says:

... he is such a sensitive, peculiar and inconsistent sort of person, I do not feel anybody should be too surprised at any unexpected action on his part. ... he is full of repressed conflicts .... has a morbid sympathy for the underdog ... is a man of very high ideals .... He should be kept busy with photography but not overloaded, too much would cause him to worry, as a result he might seek refuge in a narcotic (alcohol) ... he need not be spoiled but must be protected.

An album of George Bennett's photographic work exists in the archive but is inconclusive in that it contains at least one image in which he appears — so he could not have taken it. For the most part his images date from 1925 to the mid-thirties. There is a splendid portrait of Doc Watson, which like most of the early images are poorly printed from scratched negatives. This seems to confirm Doc's opinion of his handling of the materials. Leonard's view of Doc Watson from a letter to the Secretary of Incorporated Secretaries Association 3 May 1930:

I originally met Mr Watson through his interest in boy scout work in Barnet, and since I was anxious that in all our enterprises here education should have its place, I enquired as to his experience in the City and found that he was fully qualified for the post of Secretary to the estate here. He has, during the two years he has been with us, had the full responsibility for the expenditure of a sum not much less than £100,000. He has also had to take the responsibility of fathering new departments which were being opened by specialists in their

²⁵ Letter; Bennett at Old Westbury to LKE 5th May '33. Archive LKE Devon 1. DHA
²⁶ Letter: Peabody to DWE. Oct 23rd 1933. DWE Staff 1. A – K . DHA,
respective fields, who though fully qualified in their own science, had never worked a business enterprise or been attached to one.\textsuperscript{27}

It is perhaps poetic justice that in 2002 no one consulted (not a scientific survey by any means) had heard of Doc Watson but all knew something of George Bennett.

A frustrating element of this investigation is the difficulty of pin pointing the actual film work he produced. At the time I encountered the material most of it had been edited and indeed a great deal was not available at all, presumably lost.

Whatever problems George Bennett posed for his employers there can be no doubt that he was passionately devoted to Dorothy and Leonard and as he became more remote from them this expressed itself through a passionate belief in the ideals of Dartington. His greatest pleasure was to take and then show films about the work and people there and to espouse his belief in the ideas and ideals of Dartington as models for others to follow. I would further argue that George’s devotion to the founders and to Dartington coupled to his passion for taking film and photographs leaves us with an invaluable impression of the early years of the experiment. His work may be amateur but he did it out of strong belief. While he may not have been the most important contributor to the development of Dartington ideals, his work offers us a unique insight into how they looked at the time. As such he emerges as an important figure in understanding Dartington and has contributed greatly, both at the time and since his death, to contemporary meanings of Dartington. All this assumes of course that it is his film work we watch, and not Leonard’s or others from the early Dartington Cine Group.

Some of the restoration film could have been taken by Leonard’s brother Vic, who had a hand in running the forestry department and was the estate’s first personnel officer but seems at heart to have been a natural teacher. Both Leonard and Vic seem to have had incredible energy, and a strong interest in film.

He was the calmest of all the brothers, at least outwardly, if slowness in movement suggests calm. He had an even more bushy moustache than Leonard’s, presumably first grown when he was a Second Lieutenant in the York and Lancaster Regiment. If a small child spoke to him, he would lean right down to listen gravely to what he or she said. He was more the listener than any of his brothers. In the autumn of 1925 Vic returned from a year’s brush with the magic of Cornell and Leonard’s new money. For the rest of that year and into 1926, whenever Leonard and Dorothy were away, Vic was left in charge. He was in effect estate steward.\textsuperscript{28}

Despite his Chairmanship of the Cine Group and his activity with the Workers Education Association, Newton Abbott Film Group, which we will discuss later, the archive material contains little evidence of Vic actually making film. There seems to be only one Archive paper from 1933 in which Vic writes significantly to Leonard and Dorothy of plans to make a Dartington film. Polly

\textsuperscript{27} Michael Young, p 297
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p 111
Church suggests that he was one of the main cameramen of the home-movie variety in the early days of the school.29

Although it emerges that Bennett took most of the film of building and restoration work, Leonard had a limited respect for him that he expressed to Richard Thomas in audio recordings of 1973-4 (about which more later). His exasperation spills out as he tries to recall events and people while watching poorly shot material, which he attributes to Bennett. He is perhaps mindful of George’s habit of seeking ‘refuge in a narcotic (alcohol)’.

...the photographer doesn’t seem to be able to concentrate on anything does he...
He has no eye for making a film does he? (RT: It’s impossible to recognise who?)
Absolutely. Hopeless, hopeless. All you know is that it’s 1935. There’s LK [himself] making a speech...30

...but this looks like an amateur attempt, doesn’t it? It’ll be a Bennett photo [film] and won’t be very good, never mind....31

I suspect Bennett took most of the film of the restoration of the buildings at Dartington. This seems to have been his job. Polly Church, who came to the school as a young girl in 1928, remembers him as always ‘filming about the place’.32

The activity of filming and certainly the showing of films can be seen, like most other things at Dartington, as gradually finding its niche and this was within the orbit of the education department more particularly the School. After a rather loose, experimental but successful process of development of the Dartington Hall School, in 1928 the Elmhirsts commissioned a report by A.T Bonser and his wife, both disciples of Dewey from the Teachers College in New York. An element of their report criticised the lack of professionalism at the school. Mark Kidel comments that:

The Bonser Report marked the very beginning of a retreat from the amateur and de-institutionalised school towards a more conventional style – although the Bonser’s suggestions did emphasise the project’s unique relationship to the Estate. By stressing the need for professionalism and formality – both of which were almost certainly necessary, given the particular circumstances at Dartington – the report was opening up the possibility for maximising the exploitation of the Estate’s educational resources. However, it was unavoidably laying the ground at the same time for those divisions which would eventually develop, with the growth of School and Estate into rigid compartments.33

1931 saw the appointment of Bill Curry as headmaster. Mark Kidel sees Curry’s appointment (as “Director of Education to the Social and Educational Experiment now being carried out at Dartington Hall”), and his creation of a new school, separate from, as opposed to integrated

29 Polly Church video interview DH 1997
30 Tape 4C p3 RT transcripts LKE interviews with Richard Thomas. DHA
31 Tape 4D p2 RT transcripts LKE interviews with Richard Thomas. DHA
32 Polly Hunter video interview DH 1997
33 Mark Kidel. Beyond the Classroom, 1990 pp 30
within the Estate, as a pivotal point in the move away from an integrated educational experiment on the Estate. He tells us that the setting up of a:

...separate school, with a strong and independently-minded headmaster suggests a partial loss of faith in the vision of integration which had so powerfully inspired the first five years^34

Bill Curry's approach to education can be summarised perhaps by the penultimate paragraph of his contribution The School, to Victor Bonham-Carter's Dartington Hall in 1958 written after Curry retired as Headmaster:

H.G. Wells used to suggest that it ought to be possible to work out the body of fundamental knowledge that a modern citizen needs, and to make this the core of the school curriculum. This notion is deflated by the unfortunate but undeniable fact that most of us, within five years of leaving school, have forgotten most of the facts we learned there. What we retain are attitudes, interests, modes of thought and the knowledge, which we continue to use. What has principally concerned me, as already made clear at the beginning of this chapter, is not so much that people should be better instructed, as that they should be deformed less, and in consequence be more sane. What this means in practice I have already explained. So that if the Dartington I have known proves to have contributed in any significant way to educational thought and practice, it will be, I feel, because for more than twenty-five years it has managed to be a consistent, and I hope not unsuccessful, embodiment of the ideas and outlook I have tried to describe.35

Curry became the iconic head now most usually identified with the School. He was appointed in 1930 and took up the position in 1931 retiring from ill health in 1957.

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^34 Ibid. pp 4-5
^35 Victor Bonham-Carter Dartington Hall includes Bill Curry's contribution: The School, Phoenix House, 1958

27
New Learning.

During Cunt's first year as Headmaster and Director of Education on the estate, a number of initiatives were instigated. In 1931-2 there was an active Workers Educational Association Film Society in Newton Abbot chaired by Victor Elmhirst. This group, driven by its Resident Tutor, Mr. F. G. Thomas developed a programme of educational screenings of films in the area. Screenings were already a regular feature of estate life at Dartington. This project is another example of the outreach work implicit in Leonard and Dorothy's conception of the Experiment.

Leonard Elmhirst's father, and his grandfather, both parsons, had been involved in setting missionary groups up in their earlier life, as had Leonard. This was associated with the missionary work seen at vital to the development and consolidation of their work as parsons.

Leonard is at pains to set this in an historic context by recalling the work of Wesocott and Lightfoot, dons from Cambridge (recalled by the Bishop of Ely: Stanton - a don at Cambridge in Leonard's time) who instigated large scale lectures in industrial towns of the North and Midlands under what became the University Extension movement. Although less well known than the Workers Educational Association the work was picked up by Oxford people who went on to develop the Workers Educational Association. A typical tactic of the work by Leonard's father and grandfather would be to go to a rural village and start a football team or cricket team to focus the men of the village. There would follow meetings and then a move to bible work and so the community gained both a focus and the 'Word'. This strategy was not always successful.

At Dartington the 'word' was not the nineteenth century Word of God but Education, social and practical. In 1932 it was felt that the formation of film groups in rural areas coupled with film discussion groups would be a constructive way of developing educational awareness and more. In this Leonard had discovered an energetic ally in F. G. Thomas.

At the same time a strong alliance was formed with F.G.Thomas, the extramural tutor appointed to Devon in 1927. Thomas was an active imaginative personality, and was soon at variance with official tradition which laid great stress upon university-type classes in history, economics and philosophy. He maintained that these subjects were above the heads of the majority of countrymen who should be approached through the arts. This was the foundation of a long and fruitful association with Dartington, for he discovered in Leonard Elmhirst an influential supporter who shared his views. Their work together not only encouraged good relations between Dartington and the education authorities, but established the arts in the extension programme and led eventually to the appointment of county music and drama organisers after the war.

Leonard was aware and supportive of the work of the WEA and gave much moral and practical support to Thomas's exploratory work in rural adult education. He invited Thomas to contact members of the Dartington Staff personally in his search for tutors, commending to them WEA.

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36 Archive recording audio tape LKE Biography 14 Aug 1973. DHA. Leonard recalls a time when the pretext of meetings led to a more earthy communication between the 'lads' of the village and the 'maids' of the house.
work as activity that 'will assist in the general fulfilment of our ideal and bring us into friendly touch with the neighbourhood'.\textsuperscript{38} Leonard's support included financial help and extended to championing Thomas in the face of criticism from the WEA Regional Secretary Mr Trevena. When Thomas felt he should focus his activity on teaching classes, Leonard responded in a letter dated 14\textsuperscript{th} Feb 1928 that:

you have the additional gifts as a pioneer that are not so easy to find in these days.\textsuperscript{39}

The collaboration of Thomas with Leonard led to a number of pioneering initiatives of work in very rural communities including WEA weekend schools on Dartmoor and the development of drama groups in rural villages such as Liverton, culminating in 1929 in a Mid Devon Drama Festival at Dartington Hall.

On November 7\textsuperscript{th} 1931 the Newton Abbott Film Society, a recognised branch of the South Western District of the Workers Education Association (WEA) held its first meeting. It's aim was to 'explore the value of cinema as medium of education, and to exhibit films of artistic or technical distinction'. In its first two years it carried out three main activities. The first was the private screening of a series of films including: \textit{The Cabinet of Dr Caligari}, \textit{Drifters}, \textit{From Coast to Coast}, \textit{Sous les Toits de Paris}, \textit{A Cottage on Dartmoor}, \textit{Berlin, Turksib}, \textit{H2O} and a private film of Japan, shown in a Hotel in Torquay. As well as fulfilling the group's aims these screenings raised money for other work including its second project. In this the group teamed up with the local branch of the National Union of Teachers and six hundred school children were brought from neighbouring towns and villages to special exhibitions of films at the Newton Abbot cinema. This project included extensive questionnaires about their cinema habits and their ability to gain knowledge from the films they saw. The third project was an experiment in what was termed 'New Learning' The Rural Sub-committee was responsible for this 'New Learning' experiment.

The members of Newton Abbot WEA Film Society illustrates the links with Dartington Hall Estate, including as it did J. Victor Elmhirst (Leonard's brother) as Chairman and Roger Morel (Manager of the Cider Farm on the estate) as Treasurer.\textsuperscript{40}

The Dartington Hall School and Estate committee members of the group included: Kay Starr, the secretary to the trustees of Dartington and George Bennett who had been taking film and photographs around the estate since 1926. Also Jack Collingbourne, who is not listed as a member of the Newton Abbot group, but who was a keen supporter and organiser of WEA events and an electrician on the Dartington estate helped in the projection of films. The broad reach and serious intentions of the experiment are illustrated (in what seems to have been typical of Dartington enterprises) by the inclusion as co-opted members of R. N. Armfelt, Secretary for

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\textsuperscript{31} Victor Bordham Carter, \textit{Dartington Hall}: Phoenix House. 1958

\textsuperscript{38} News of the Day: 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1928. DHA

\textsuperscript{39} Archive papers: Box: LK Education I. Social Services. F. G. Thomas. DHA

\textsuperscript{40} Rogers wife Paula was principal dancer with the Margaret Barr Dance Mime group based at Dartington, from 1931 who engaged in much of the community outreach work undertaken by the estate.
Carnegie UK Trust, from 1927, funded WEA resident tutors, such as F.G. Thomas to carry on the work of the WEA in rural areas. The Association’s Adult Education work evolved in industrial areas focused on the issues and needs of workers in industrial conditions. The WEA president R. H. Tawney writes, in the introduction of the report, that whilst urban area work was well established, rural area work had to address different needs – those of country folk, smaller audiences but made up of a wider spectrum of interests and knowledge. The novelty and broad appeal of cinema itself and the attraction of films projected within small communities were an obvious lure to engage the curious and innocent in the serious work of education. This has obvious similarities to the work in rural areas carried out by Leonard’s Father and Grandfather.

The ‘New Learning’ project was seen as a qualified success on a number of levels in addressing the quite different needs of adult education in rural areas, but which might have wider application. In his introduction to the report on the experiment R. H. Tawney suggests that:

> If the cinema has proven its value as an educational instrument in Devon villages, it is possible that it may be found of equal significance for educational work in towns.

There is no doubt that Thomas had developed, if not pioneered the constituency for this work in his earlier work in rural areas. The use of Cinema as an important new tool was seen as a way forward in developing WEA educational work in rural areas and it is in this context that the Newton Abbot Film Society set out to conduct its experiment. The experiment involved the radical showing of educational films in rural villages within a twelve-mile radius of Newton Abbot, over three weeks before Easter and three weeks after Easter in 1932.

The two halves of the experiment were distinguished by the use of silent films in the first three weeks and sound films in the subsequent three weeks. The project ran six days a week and was by all accounts fairly gruelling for the technicians and tutors. Dartington Hall Estate loaned its Devry portable projection equipment and Western Electric Company loaned sound projection equipment. Fifty percent of the total cost, of one hundred pounds, was provided by the trustees of Dartington (principally Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst). The estate was not just connected but can be seen to have had a central role in the project.

F.G Thomas firmly believed from the outset that pre-conceived popular notions, of educationalists as dry or boring and cinema as frivolous entertainment, could be constructively turned round by

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41 New Learning An Experiment with film in the county of Devon. WEA 1932
42 Ibid. p.8
the use of cinema in education. Mr R.N. Armfelt, in his introduction to the 1932 report explains these ideas:

They may be reconciled, and if it is true that even the best relationships are made finer by the possibilities of mutual service, it is the belief of the writer that Cinema and Education may yet walk hand in hand.

While it is of practical value to recognise that Adult Education, like all forms of Education, is not, never has been, and is never likely to be prized by the mass of the public, it is not necessary in this age of self-expression to refer again to the elements of adventure which are, in fact known, to those who engage in it.43

Obstacles the group encountered included choosing the films to be screened from a limited range of material, which was mainly produced for the commercial cinema. 'Man and his Environment', was chosen as the theme of the screenings and the films were eventually selected from British Instructional films ltd, with the aid of their Educational Manager. The problems of carting
projection equipment around, especially the sound projection equipment loaned by Western Electric Sound Company were solved by loan of vehicles, presumably from Dartington, together with the estate's electrician and Western Electric's own technician. Access to selected villages was difficult and this was compounded by the need for electricity to run the projectors, often tapped from the only supply in the village.

...we selected twelve villages for our experiment; of these Ashburton and Chudleigh are typical of larger centres that have no cinema yet; the rest ranged from the relative isolation of small villages like Ogwell, on the outskirts of Newton Abbot, to the isolation of the moor-land hamlet Holne, whither electricity had come within a few days of our arrival.  

Licensing laws and the customary use of village halls, which excluded any 'entertainment' activity during Lent, made the choice of locations for the experiment difficult. The actual film used was inflammable nitrate stock which necessitated a set up of barriers around the projection equipment enclosing buckets of water or sand and an asbestos sheet – for emergencies, which it seems did not happen. Voltage supply needed to be at least 200 volts and the variable levels achieved by private electrical supply companies caused some tense moments as the group's electricians hooked up the equipment to find only 180 volts coming through. One occasion involved chasing up and down remote country lanes to find contractors from the supply company who subsequently helped out setting up chairs and blacking out the hall, as well as permitting the group's electricians to set up taps and switches necessary. The Inland Revenue contributed to the problems by declaring that the films used were made for commercial cinema and therefore any income – the audience was charged sixpence - was subject to entertainment tax.

F.G. Thomas, the joint author of the actual report gives us a vivid snap-shot of the area within which the experiment took place:

The mid Devon area covered by the experiment is a small coastal plain with Totnes at its most south-westerly point, Torbay at its southern boundary, Chudleigh at the east, and Dartmoor stretching westward. It is an area rich in tradition and antiquities, although the amenities of modern society are more available to the villagers here than in other parts of Devon. The people have characteristics peculiar to themselves. Their parish records are full of "ventures" glory; at Ogwell is the smithy where tackle for the Newfoundland fishermen was made until recent times; in our centre, Newton Abbot, the "capital" of the district, folk-songs were sung regularly until the new police regulations forbade "music" and "dancing" in public houses; and near here is the village inn where we ourselves have seen the dance and folk-song activities of the gipsies. In the centre of Torbay is Torquay, a social island, fed by the surrounding area, but giving little if anything, to the life of the countryside.

In spite of the red 'busses of the Devon General Service there is no good transport to the villages from Newton Abbot. The only villages well served by busses are those along main roads –and there are few such villages. Except on market day, the rest are usually isolated after five or six in the evening. Though more transport facilities than ever before are now available to the people of this area, money is scarce; it is doubtful whether the older generation move more and farther now than before the development of the road services.

"Ibid. p10
"Ibid p19
The younger generation, however, do move about; the new facilities have affected the ambit of their lives. The footballers of Liverton now travel by 'bus to their "away" matches, and, incidentally, no match is complete without a trip to the cinema. Over 150 people travel in the same way from Buckfastleigh to the Totnes picture-house every Saturday. The contrast between the young generation and their parents appears more marked here than in any other area of Devon, except in villages immediately near Exeter and Plymouth. It is an area full of contradictions, of thatched Church Houses and bungalow growths, of local pageantry and cheap finery, of tradition and revolt, of corduroys and "Oxford bags".

Excepting Chudleigh, Buckfastleigh, Totnes and Ashburton, most of the villages have very small "effective" populations. Apart from industries centred mainly in the "towns", village occupations are multifarious, unorganised and spasmodic. It is a typical rural area, a curious mixture of decadent agriculture and small industry, and few of the folk work on the farms.

The 'oxford bags' here might be seen as emanations of Dartington in the neat furrows of functional rural corduroys. This, perhaps romanticised image at least is from the time and gives some sense of the rural context within which New Learning would be a quite radical innovation.

The findings of the New Learning report are detailed and various with much advice to future experimenters but F. G. Thomas' speculation of the use of cinema and different kinds of cinema in education are of particular interest. He divides the educational value of films into those which provide facts - the building blocks of knowledge and those which give the audience the experience of situations - to watch stop frame animations of plants growing, to see the landscape of remote countries, on the ground and from the air. The films seen included some of British Instructional Films 'Secrets of Nature' series shot by Percy Smith, edited by Mary Field and produced by Bruce Woolfe. The questionnaires used focused on factual information gleaned from viewing the films and so produced material that could be used for statistical analysis, although the report contains much qualification of the limited scientific nature of the project. The broad educational value of the events comes through in reports of discussions held before and during the silent films.

Of principal interest to this overview of the use of film in the Dartington Experiment, is the way in which the group, part financed and heavily supported by Dartington is seeing film as a tool for learning. The idea of producing film is remote from the report but tantalisingly it contains still images shot by Stuart Black of Torquay, a local photographer much used by the estate, principally by Margaret Barr to record her group's productions. There are predictable images of locations, audience and village WEA group members but also a number from the Liverton village group's production of Peer Gynt as a play and, as the caption explains, 'an experimental film'. This film regrettably seems to have been lost, but it suggests willingness at the time to try new forms of creative expression. The images, which survive in the report, are of costumed children and actors in the woods around Liverton.

As the 'New Learning' experiment progressed it is interesting to note that the advanced publicity made no mention of the fact that it was an educational experiment and would include discussions
and the questionnaires that seem to F G Thomas to be at its centre. Is it with hindsight that we can see that despite the good intentions of the group, there is an air of the educationalists knowing best and using subterfuge (the lure of free film shows) to provide what people need without asking?

This view is mitigated somewhat by other work being conducted by Dartington at the time, particularly that of the Ellen Van Volkenburg in drama and Margaret Barr in the school of Dance Mime. Van Volkenberg came from America in 1928 to work with Maurice Brown who had been supported by the Elmhirsts in a production of R.C.Sheriff's *Journeys End*, a phenomenal success on the stage in London. The plan was to form a dramatic centre; in the event they formed a drama group which brought together many of the various estate workers, and teachers at the school to produce what might be termed community theatre projects. The first such was *Comus* performed in the Hall Gardens in July 1929 and included performances by the Elmhirsts themselves. Masks for the production were produced by Jane Fox-Strangways who was one of the first appointments at the school, a considerable influence on the development of the Arts at Dartington and a subsequent life long friend of Dorothy Elmhirst. *Comus* seems to have been the Dartington drama group’s contribution to the Mid Devon Drama Festival held at the Hall but organised by the WEA. Much is made of this production in Dartington’s history perhaps because of the notable people involved including Leonard and other members of the Dartington estate. If this is the festival organised by the WEA, it demonstrates the contribution of Thomas’s work to the development of arts at Dartington. Irene Thomas had been leading the Liverton Group independently of Dartington since 1928.

Subsequently Van Volkenberg recommended Louise Soelberg a student of hers at the Cornish School in Seattle. Soelberg joined the Dartington hall school and worked in the area of dance and mime. In 1930 Margaret Barr joined the Dance Drama Group to work under the estate’s new educational director William Curry – headmaster of the Dartington Hall School from 1931 to 1957. Barr brought with her a small troop of dancers whose work extended to performances on the estate and further afield. She organised two large productions in 1931 – ‘Spring Festival’ and ‘A Mystery of the Nativity’, the latter in Staverton Church incorporating a great many people from the village as well as the estate. In the autumn of 1930 a school of Dance-Mime Group was formed under her direction.

The group included such people as Richard Odlin, a producer and puppeteer, and Mark Tobey, artist. Consistent with the then aims of the Dartington Experiment, work at the school had a two way interface with work in other departments on the estate and this resulted in the large scale productions mentioned above. Another particular centre of interest was the group’s work at Liverton.

The New Learning report contains photographs of drama group work at Liverton presumably from 1931 when the Liverton Group were working with Margaret Barr. In the annual report 1928-29 of
the WEA, South Western Regional Group. Irene Thomas reports on her work with the Drama Group from Liverton who have put on The Knight of the Burning Pestle. Drama productions engage the community in a variety of ways, incorporating set construction, management as well as acting. She further explores the value of dramatic work in rural areas as a strategy for engaging the specific issues of rural adult education:

Where verbal self-expression is abnormal, the villager cares little for a lecture and discussion; the first is the expression of another's mind, in the second he rarely expresses his own. He expresses his thinking and his knowledge as adequately, and perhaps with more sincerity, through his craftsmanship, than the townsman does in discussion. It is for us to study his interests and capacity and then to widen and unify the range of his thought and his life, not to apply an old method upon a new problem. 43

The philosophy of 'learning by doing' that Mark Kidel cites as an underlying tenet of the Dartington Experiment is echoed here by Irene Thomas, and perhaps explains the common philosophical ground between the Elmhirsts and the Thomas. It seems clear that while Mr. R. G. Thomas is the regional Tutor organiser, his wife plays an active and constructive role in his radical experimental work. Liverton in particular was a location for further development of drama work by Margaret Barr who came to work there in 1931. She built it seems on solid foundations. Paula Morel interviewed in 1993 recalls her work with the Margaret Barr group at Liverton and Margaret's relationship with the Elmhirsts.

...I think Margaret never got on with Leonard and Dorothy, she was too far out - left...

'Margaret Barr had Liverton and she had the estate, she had two groups which was what the Elmhirsts wanted, outside groups. Liverton: we worked a long time there by going to the pub, and going in bare legs and that sort of thing and wooed them for ages, and then got them as a group, and they came here (Darlington) and did a production here.*48

Mark Tobey had arrived in September of 1931 shortly after Margaret, and is listed as artist-designer in the Dance Mime Group. Tobey was evidently a keen cinematographer and in October 1931 was showing his films of his recent visit to Mexico at the hall.47 He was variously attached to the school, under William Curry, the Dance Mime Group, and held art classes open to any estate member at various times until he left on a visit to New York in 1938, where the impending war prevented his return. The war that is, and perhaps his problematic relationship with the Dartington Arts Department administrator Chris Martin.48

Of interest here is the fact that Tobey also worked with film. Leonard recalls with affection the film work of Tobey from a transcript of interviews conducted by Richard Thomas in 1973 whilst watching old 1930's material:

43 Archive papers: Box: LK Education 1. WEA annual report 1928-29 DHA
46 Paula Morel: DH interview 1. SVHS 1993
47 News of the Day on 28th October 1931 Mark Tobey was preparing to show "his moving pictures of Mexico and the cities of the western coast"October 1931 DHA
And then there was another wonderful set by Mark Tobey, the artist. He took a series on farm crafts in Devon, thatching and .... And so on and so forth. Afraid it's all gone. But you know the war was a terrible time to keep things at all.

Surprisingly, with the wealth of innovative artistic talent on the estate at this time, particularly in the form of Mark Tobey with his evident interest in film, there is no evidence of anyone looking at film as an art, (if indeed that is what they were doing), after the 'experimental film' of Liverton.

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* Archive papers interview transcripts LKE – Richard Thomas. Tape 2A Video 3/4 page 1. DHA
The Cine Group

The early years of the Dartington Experiment were characterised by idealism, optimism and an almost reckless courage to explore new ways of doing things. At the centre of everything at this time were the founders Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst. From 1925 to 1932 mainly family members, Leonard and his brother Vic Elmhirst and a family retainer George Bennett undertook filming casually. This was seen as keeping records of the changes that were taking place as the Elmihirsts got down to the task of revitalising and rebuilding the run-down estate.

Commentators such as Victor Bonham-Carter, Michael Young and Mark Kidel have discussed the changes that took place after the first five years as the Dartington Experiment, initially based around the family, grew and shifted, delegating through a need for a more comprehensive management structure, towards a fragmented agglomeration of interests. Dartington in 1929 was still focused on the ideas of the Elmhirsts, but growing and fraught with the politics that diverse interests carry with them. In 1927 Dartington Hall Limited had been formed and this was shortly followed by the formation of Dartington Hall Trust. This climate also had its effects on work with film.

There was appreciable film work going on and as with much else on the estate in the early thirties, a more professional approach was felt to be needed. Vic Elmhirst as the chairman of the 'Cine Group' sends a memo in 1933. It is evident that there has been a group of interested people on the Estate for some time, since the memo is issued in response to a 'suggestion from the Trustees'. The Cine Group comes into formal being in that year. Notable members of the Cine Group Executive Committee are, George Bennett and Jack Collingbourne (an electrician on the estate, who helped with the New Learning project and was active with Thomas and the WEA). Other members of the Cine Group Executive Committee were Leonard and Dorothy, Bill Curry - the headmaster - Mark Tobey and Dickey Odlin - a puppeteer also working at the school. Kay Starr was secretary and Treasurer of the group.

As Estate management became more corporate so the amateur activities of filmmakers were consolidated into the Cine Group in 1933. In this group's formation Dartington sought to embrace the educational value of film, recording and screening films as part of the broad manifestations of its experimental ideals. The Cine Group's aims clearly demonstrate its broad conception of the use of film within the Dartington Experiment.

- The recording of human experience and material processes, changes and developments on this Estate and elsewhere, which would otherwise never be permanently available.

- The taking of films with a specific object in view - such as artistic, or for direct teaching as explanatory of Dartington, or for deliberate propaganda.

To arrange for the taking and showing of films by request.
To discover the best economic use of the available persons, films and equipment.
To build up and preserve good films from material already collected
To collect, preserve and utilise every interesting picture we can.\(^{50}\)

In its first year of incorporation the group requests a grant from the Dartington Trustees of five hundred pounds. In the event they get four hundred pounds. In a projection of the first quarter's film budget Leonard is allocated seven pounds, Mark Tobey nine pounds, Dickey Odlin nine pounds and George Bennett twenty pounds – which also includes still photography. These figures seem to speak for themselves about who was doing what.

We have Leonard's recollections of Tobey's work, if not the actual footage, as evidence of his activity. Of Odlin's film work the Archive does contain a roll of film depicting puppet making and what seems to be his 'famous' puppet of Josephine Baker. It seems to be a film record of the activity rather than a puppet production and so could be seen as part of the general record keeping as opposed to film making activity of the early cinematographers on the estate.

This phase of the Cine Group was to have a brief incarnation as W.B. Curry continued to bring new blood to the school. The most notable addition was William Hunter. Hunter, a Cambridge graduate whose family ran a photography business, was employed by Curry to teach Geography. In the subsequent report\(^{51}\) filed by the Cine Group for the years 1934-35 with projected plans for 1935-36 the first statement indicates a growth in membership of the Group. A retrospective look at what has been going on in the group divides its activities into four main headings:

1. Film making.
2. Film shows.
3. Indexing the Film Library.
4. Photographic work (stills)

Under the detail of 'film making' the report tells us that Bennett has been busy filming the courtyard paving, the building of new central offices, Marley farm plantations and new houses at Churston and Warren Park. Bennett was acting as camera-man, technician and doing film shows of Dartington film material. Michael Young in a list of the Dartington Hall household includes him as: 'Photographer: George Bennett who took pictures and showed films on his always breaking-down projector. He had been Willard's batman in France.'\(^{52}\) He was also doing most of the photographic work in the estate darkroom mentioned by Roger Morel (see earlier) which had become a fixture on the estate. Other, more important, filmmaking was being done under the auspices of William Hunter.

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\(^{50}\) Archive Papers. Cine Group 1933. DHA
\(^{51}\) Archive Papers Cine Group report 1934-35. DHA
\(^{52}\) Michael Young. p118
Significant to an understanding of how Dartington saw itself and how it wanted to see itself in film is an item in the Cine Group report of 1934/5 entitled: *Programme for 1935 – 36*.

**Estate Film – Dr. Slater** has asked the Cine Group to submit a scenario to him with a view to the production of a comprehensive film for the company’s use. Mr. Patterson (the Laboratory) has also intimated that he hopes to have the opportunity of doing some work in collaboration with the Cine Group in the near future. The Group also hopes to build up useful films from the material collected during the past, in the same way that the Banqueting Hall film has been planned. The chief difficulty here is to obtain scenarios based on knowledge of what film is in existence.

**Use of Existing Films.** Besides the general entertainment performances the Group expect this year to do some work with Mr F. G. Thomas (Rural Extension Scheme) and Mr J. R. Currie, Calf Clubs &c. the "Clean Milk" film made at the Old Parsonage Farm and other agricultural films purchased in America.53

**New Cine Room and Equipment.** The Group has been asked to take up new quarters in a room below the music studio. As so many of the new members are actually working in the studio cutting, editing and titling films, additional equipment for this new studio has to be planned. A general lay-out has been submitted by Noel Florence and Richard Leacock [both aged 14] and this after some amendments by George Bennett and Jack Collingbourne, has been agreed and the suggestion that the cutting tables and chairs might be made in the school workshop has been gladly accepted. Equipment of a more technical kind is to be bought in parts and assembled by the group.

In the first item we have Dr. W.K. Slater, Managing Director of the Estate specifically requesting the production of a film about Dartington. The note also suggests the film for the company's use is to be used for the purposes of propaganda. It seems that this did not happen. Desire to illustrate the work of the Dartington Experiment seems to have been an ongoing idea. In a letter dated March 18th 1936 Hunter writes to Slater about a scenario he has prepared for an 'estate film'. He encloses the scenario and is anxious to have Slater's approval of the idea so he can plan to start work as soon as the summer begins. Bearing in mind his brief (nowhere surviving to my knowledge but implied in his letter and the 1935-6 report) adopting, perhaps, the technique of filmmaking employed by Flaherty of gathering and reviewing material (which will be discussed later), he writes:

In examining the material on which the scenario is based – the Estate – I have learned a great deal about it, and discovered a great deal that could make fascinating film material. But the more I have learnt the more I have become convinced that it is impossible to convey anything like an adequate view of such a complex undertaking as the Dartington Hall experiment in 30 – 40 minutes.54

He goes on to explain that encapsulating the complexity of Dartington in film is not going to be easy and reviewing the material has clarified the scale of the problem:

When I began, you will remember it seemed to me possible. But even as the scenario stands I am thoroughly dissatisfied with the treatment of every department, except, possibly the Textiles. The present material will take an hour to project, which will mean that it must be even more drastically cut down to be presentable. Such a relatively trivial point (in a whole film) as that only by importing raw materials can so many people be

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53 See appendix list of films at TSWFTA
54 Letter Hunter to Slater 18 March 1936 T Arts Film. Cine Group. DHA
employed here will take a good many feet of film to explain, and omission will obviously create a false impression of the economic basis for the experiment. It seems to me that the type of person on whom the film will have the most permanent effect (if it is good) is not the casual enquirer, but the educated and the interested person who will not be impressed by economic half-truths. A film purporting to show economic and social basis of this experiment in half an hour must inevitably be at any rate vague in certain respects.

He proposes a series of films, each illustrating 'certain aspects of the experiment', not dissimilar to Bennett's ideas penned in the letter to Leonard from Old Westbury 5th May 1933

Through the ambitious and focused efforts of William Hunter the Cine Group became increasingly professional in its formation and its objectives. Hunter had ambition, a double first at Cambridge and was a subscriber to *Sight and Sound*. From the very start he seems to have been aware of the potential of this group of enthusiastic amateurs to achieve more. In an undated letter, thought to be some time in 1934 soon after he joined the school he writes to Leonard about the work of the Cine Group:

> I think that we have now reached the point at which any subsequent progress will be unnecessarily difficult with the status of film as it is at present, and within the present limits of the film group.

He goes on:

> It seems to me that the possible future of film here is very great indeed but that it cannot be realised simply by thinking that this is so. The amount of interest in film among adults here is negligible, and I must admit that I know only a handful of intelligent grown up people who are prepared to take the possibilities of film as seriously as I am. Certainly (and perhaps deservedly) it evokes nothing like the same kind of response from people like, say, yourself, Dorothy or Curry as the more established arts, painting, poetry, drama and dance do. I think nevertheless that it is impossible to deny the very great influence for good and evil (mainly the latter) which film has exerted and will exert, especially among the children of today, to whom it is familiar in a way that it never can be to many of us. In this sense alone it is worth taking very seriously.

Hunter's comments do raise the question of how film activity was seen by those at the centre of the *Dartington Experiment*, and it is clearly not as important to them as it is to him. As a less established art he recognises the need to prove its worth to those holding the purse strings. He cites the three areas of film that he feels Dartington can successfully compete in, these being documentary, advertising and classroom films. And he continues:

> I cannot help thinking that films specifically intended to advertise a new, experimental and progressive undertaking such as this must themselves be new, experimental and progressive. Film is such a new and ungainly form of expression that there is no pre-conceived mould in which expression can be cast. The forms have to be discovered.

He feels that his work on experimental classroom films has been particularly successful and sees no reason why in five years the film unit should not be as successful as any other unit. He sees
the only real model for what should be going on at Dartington as the G.P.O. film Unit which itself suffers from the limitations of being a government 'propagandist department.' Not only does Dartington not have that particular hindrance but Hunter feels it is ideally suited with estate and school support services and a ready laboratory of school age audience to test classroom films on while they are being made. Indeed if someone were to set up an ideal situation 'I imagine they would produce something not unlike this'. Hunter believed that a film group reconstituted with recognised status on the estate, support and clear objectives, could produce work that would be a valuable asset.

Every good film does something to raise the level of what is after all, still a very limited form of expression, and is in that sense a social service. With those films referring specifically to Dartington, we shall in more senses than one be putting on permanent record 'what Dartington is'. The film as a medium of education is, I think, even more important. Nothing as far as I can see can prevent the adoption of film very considerably in classroom work, whether we like it or not, and to judge from the large number of films I have seen we are already pioneers in this direction.

Hunter's passion is clear in this, but is he also suggesting that the film unit should more seriously re-visit the production of propaganda, or a way in which propaganda works more subtly through 'good films'? Does he feel the propaganda argument will help sway Leonard to support his other more specific ideas for producing 'classroom films'? And what is his conception of experimental and progressive film? This latter point we will discuss later. The letter was sent to Leonard 'prior to further discussion', which must have been fruitful because from 1935 the Cine Group's emphasis shifted onto a more professional footing. In an undated letter to Kay Starr, the Film Unit Secretary, bidding for production funds Hunter says:

You remember that Mr. Grierson, the director of the Post Office Film Unit, was down here last year, and expressed the opinion that one of the things we could do which would be of value to other people besides ourselves was the making of classroom films for teaching purposes. This is a new form of film-making, in which as yet there is everything to do as far, at least, as geography films are concerned. At the moment, if one uses them at all, one is compelled to use travel pictures or propaganda films intended for other uses, few if any, of which are suitable for real classroom work.36

Could Grierson's visit 'last year' have been as early as 1934 shortly after Hunter joined the staff at the school? Is it Grierson who actually inspired Hunter in developing the idea of classroom film production? Did Grierson's work fit Hunter’s idea of experimental and progressive filmmaking?

In a letter dated 6th March 1936 Hunter writing to Leonard tells him:

Limestone and Sheep Dip are being seen by Grierson on Friday, and are going to Gaumont British on Tuesday morning. They are likely to be for the most part out of Dartington for the rest of the term, and I should very much like to have you see them before I go much further, and to discuss the question of film with you, since it is not much good going ahead with the distribution question until I know what your whole views on film here are.

32 Hunter letter to Leonard Archive Papers Box: T Arts Film. Film Unit. DHA
36 Ibid
Were the films 'Limestone and Sheep Dip' produced in 1934-35 the ones Hunter referred to in his undated letter? There seems to be no other mention of Grierson's early visit to Dartington. Yet Grierson certainly contacted Dorothy later in March 1938 requesting some financial support for his new film magazine 'Film World News'. Alas, Dorothy replies that she cannot help him but takes the opportunity to express her admiration for his film work.
The Film Unit

Hunter's undated (possibly 1934) letter to Leonard demonstrates that he is clearly unhappy about the rather loose arrangements for use and production of film that seem to have existed prior to his appointment.

The next report (1935-36) is not from the Cine Group but the Film Unit. There has been a name change and with it a re-structuring of the organisation. The Executive committee of the Film Unit is revised to include J.V(ic) Elmhirst, Christopher Martin, William Hunter, George Bennett, Jack Collingbourne with Kay Star as secretary. This body is only answerable to the executive committee of the Arts Department (made up of Leonard, Dorothy and Christopher Martin).

Leonard has clearly acted on his 'whole views on film here' solicited by Hunter. The new figure in all of this is Christopher Martin who has been appointed in 1934 as head of the newly constituted Arts Department. This was the beginning of what a number of commentators – principally Victor Bonham-Carter – have called the 'professional phase' at Dartington. The list of members of the Unit is notably missing Mark Tobey and Dicky Odlin. Did the advent of Hunter and the apparent focusing of the Film Unit on Classroom film production alienate these two particular creative personalities or were they simply more interested in other things? Both were engaged with travel in pursuit of their own interests at this time.

Although the Film Unit is firmly associated with the School, and as such comes under the auspices of Bill Curry as Director of Education, the 1935-6 report makes it clear that it is now financed through the Arts Department and therefore clearly under the administration of Christopher Martin who became the first person to hold the title 'Arts Administrator' in 1934.

The Film Unit's activities from 1934 onwards feature in Arts Administration reports compiled by Christopher Martin for the Trustees. In his first report on July 14th 1934 he finds that:

A small cine Group was found to be at work under a committee comprising Mr J.V. Elmhirst, Mrs. Starr, Mr Jack Collingbourne and Mr R. Odlin. The Committee were responsible for the apparatus and cinema room, and encouraged all those interested in cinema work to experiment with films of the various estate activities. With the formation of the Arts Department, the committee, while still functioning, handed over its responsibility for all Trustees property to the Arts Administrator who became a member of the Committee ex officio. During the term there has been a public showing of a film dealing with the Nursery School and a second dealing with the agricultural activities on the Estate. While somewhat slow in narrative due to the fact that the films were designed primarily for lecturing, there were encouraging signs of a certain technical knowledge and photographic skill. A third film dealing with the junior School has been in preparation during the term supervised by Mr Hunter.

The Film Unit's 1935-6 report which was requested by the Trustees (Leonard, Dorothy and Fred Gwatkin the Trust's Accountant) suggests that the functions of the Film Unit be divided into three
departments but only lists two, which are Record and Film. From the activity of the group and the previous year's report it can be assumed that the other department must be Library/distribution. Still photography – previously the responsibility of Bennett in a darkroom set up for use by members of the estate in 1935 – seems to have dropped out of the report.

The writer of the report, who could have been Vic Elmhirst as chairman or more likely William Hunter, goes on to suggest three other new committees within the management of the Unit. These are:

- A Technical film committee, made up of William Hunter, Hiram Hague, Hein Heckroth (a German artist who came in 1935 and took over from Tobey what seems to have been his main duty by this time of providing Art classes for the estate), Richard Leacock and Margaret Reid as secretary.
- A Record Committee made up of George Bennett, Vic Elmhirst and Jack Collingbourne with Kay Starr as secretary.
- An Advisory Education Committee (for classroom film) made up of William Hunter, John Wales, Bridget Edwards, R.O'Malley, C E McNally (who later compiled the Archives photo-albums) and a Miss Peet.

Christopher Martin summarises this Film Unit report in his own report to the Trustees of 15th November 1935. His summary affords some insight into the Arts Department thinking. Although he lists a comprehensive summary of the activities the main point for consideration by the Trustees is 'Alterations to the new Cine room'. This has obvious financial implications. Martin, in what he describes as his 'briefly as possible' summary does, however, more than just list the activities, as the Group's own report does, he attempts to add some rationale.

The activities of the film Group can be divided under four main headings: (1) Film making, (2) film shows, (3) indexing of Film Library, (4) Photographic work.

Records of the activities carried on under the auspices of the Trustees have been made by Mr. George Bennet [sic]. These records are calculated as illustrations of the development of Dartington Hall and its allied ventures; they include films of the building of the new Central Offices, Marley Farm plantations, piggeries at Rattery, houses at Churston and Warren Park. The School Group within the Cine Group have been engaged on three main films: boat making in the school workshop, No work on Sundays and the School Camps. There has been, in addition, a certain amount of work put in on an experimental classroom film. A number of films shows have been organised by the Group totalling in the last year fifty-seven.

In accordance with the request of the Trustees, an index has been made of all films belonging to the Cine Group. All stills taken since 1925 have been filed and indexed and, where necessary, prints have been made up in book form; it will be appreciated that these stills thus form an illustrated record of progress at Dartington. [56]
In the extensive notes on the duties and responsibilities of the Film Unit's own paper, no further mention is made of the Record Committee. Is it assumed they will just get on with it? We have seen George Bennett in the USA in 1933 and 1934 attempting to produce a Dartington film. Are these the 'Cine Group films that have been indexed? There is no trace of this list in the archive. And we have seen Slater's request for an 'estate film'. Could this imply a completely different thinking about filming records? Might it be that Hunter's, in the end negative, response to the challenge to make a Dartington film has effectively diverted this thinking? His description of an 'experimental class room film', seems to indicate Hunter's particular interpretation of 'experimental film'.

Leonard's later (1974) comments on George's work suggest he was a problem and was perhaps being included in the executive by virtue of his experience rather than his role in the more corporate structure of things. Indeed the report goes on to outline duties and responsibilities with respect to use of equipment and production of films most of which revolves around and pertains to the production of classroom film. More professional practices of scripting approval and advisory committees are outlined, which point to a more serious organisation with larger aims than implied by the earlier reports of the Cine Group.

The equipment is kept in what was known as the Cine room. A list of regulations has appended the N.B. that:

...these regulations re equipment leaving the Cine Room apply to all members, including George.56

George is however given the responsibility of examining all equipment and reporting on its condition when necessary.

The report implies the growing interest in film by inexperienced members of the estate and the writer details the Film Unit's responsibility to on the one hand 'strenuously discourage the practice of simply using the camera to take pictures 'but to discover and encourage talent in all of many directions'.

The document, which seems to be the third report actually produced by the Cine Group, is the only one titled the 'Film Unit'. It does not give a summary of what has happened but rather a set of structural directives for what is suggested should happen. There are no other annual reports as such available from the Film Unit. From here on it mainly appears as an item in Arts Administration Reports.

It is worth considering the practices of filmmaking going on up to this time. The group were taking the responsibility to document activities on the estate and producing film designed to be shown with an accompanying lecture. There was little scope for sound film production, and as was seen in the New Learning experiment of 1932, and Martin's comments on the 'slow narrative', discussion, before, after and during film screenings was common practice. The 1935 report
(above) seems to imply that the production of a Dartington film prior to that time was actually being addressed in a more organic way by producing numbers of films.

The film material of Dartington Hall was moved to The South West Film & Television Archive, Plymouth, in 2001. A shot list of a roll numbered Box 8 No.2. Dart 52, describes three sections of footage of Dartington farming, textiles and laboratory material. The first section lists shots of farming and craft skills, which could well have been taken by Mark Tobey. The second section seems more ordered with helpful titles appearing and importantly the typed end title of a few frames: ‘Editing by J R Currie and C F Nielsen in co-operation with Cine Club Staff.’ J R Currie ran the Agricultural Economics department and C. F. Nielsen was running the Parsonage farm. The third section contains ordered shots of farm activities and milk production. The appearance of incidental titles in the middle section, suggest that this was a finished film attached to the title. Whether the ‘edited by’ title pertains to the middle or end section is uncertain but it suggests that a film was made along the lines suggested by Bennett and requested by Slater, and that this happened before Hunter took over the Cine Group and turned it into a Film Unit. The ‘Cine Club Staff’ mentioned would undoubtedly have been referred to as ‘Film Unit Staff’ if this work had been done after 1934.

![Title Idet from Cine Group Production. Photograph of video copy at TSWFTA in 2003](image)

Turning the record films into presentation films seems to have been a practice, which could be seen, from a perspective of 2002 practices in documentary production, as being quite crude. Material is being continually shot by experienced amateurs and beginning experimenters and compiled into reels for presentation at lectures and talks. We know George Bennett was well known for screening films to anyone who would watch. It is difficult to find evidence of Leonard’s brother Vic’s hand in the process of understanding production and use of films beyond his quite pedestrian suggestion for a Dartington film. But it is safe to assume that he, while himself an

39 Archive Papers Film Unit DHA
amateur, had gained much from his experience with the Newton Abbot Film Society, the WEA New Learning work and in his role as chairman of the Cine Group.

All of this pertains to the practice of using film for the broad recording and educational purposes which underpins the Dartington Experiment, but the move towards producing autonomous films, defined and focused, seems to have come with William Hunter. Richard Leacock's Canary Bananas film is an example of film making as a total conception. Significantly its subject is not Dartington.

All the film makers at that time were of left wing bent and we were hugely influenced by Eisenstein, Pudovkin et al. Most film schools still are if you add Vertov. And you were not supposed to film yourselves... unprofessional.

Leacock was to become an important figure in the International development of documentary films and it is worth considering his position amongst those working with film at Dartington. A regular feature of life at the school were camps where the ethos of learning by doing was translated to the field - literally. Early films in the Archive include a number of -possibly different camps- shot during these outings. Polly Church recalls Leacock as a prolific and keen cinematographer on these occasions. Leonard while watching some of these films comments to Richard Thomas:

Yes each morning the great question was the weather, can believe that. But it's too chumpy isn't it? 'Cloudy'. I think it's one of maybe - one of the kid's own films, you know. Leacock was the name of the man, Ricky Leacock who's now professor of cinematography at MIT Boston and who's been working on a unit for schools.

RT: He was at Dartington?
LK: He was at Dartington. He's the boy, who at 13 years old got a chance to take a film. This may be it. And then went out with the... Anyway it was an early film. [he] Never stopped. Never stopped filming. But this looks like an amateur attempt, doesn't it. It'll be a Bennett photo [film] and won't be very good, never mind.

Leacock was passionate about film and was in the fortunate position of being at one of the very few schools where it was going on. He recalls watching a film that inspired him with the desire to make his own.

For me, it all started when I was 11 years old, at school here in England, we were shown a documentary film, Turksib, directed by Victor Turin. A silent film about building the Trans-Siberian railway. My reaction to this film was ecstatic; I said to myself, 'I can do that! All I need is a cine-camera!' So, two years later I had a 16mm Victor camera with a good tripod and several lenses. We made Canary Bananas, 10 minutes of silent film that tell you all you need to know about growing bananas.

From an 1997 essay he takes up the story:

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60 Ricky Leacock e-mail to DH 19/09/02
61 See the earlier discussion of Christopher Martin's Arts Administration Report for 1935 in The Film Unit
62 Archive Papers Transcript Tape 4D videod/1 Richard Thomas 1974 DHA
63 See Rachel Low, Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930's. George Allen Unwin., London 1979 p. 8
64 Leacock at this time was at school at Bedales, moving to Dartington when his mother died in 1932
Leacock, here in a series of essays, is reviewing his development and the themes of his work. He is passionately concerned with ideas of what film should do. He was the main camera operator on the Galapagos project, the first biology film produced by William Hunter and David Lack for the Film Unit.

In 1938 at the ripe old age of 17, I went as photographer-film-maker to the Galapagos Islands as a member of David Lack’s expedition to learn more about Darwin’s finches. We lived on a "desert island", isolated, not even a radio. I spent most of my time with the Angermeyer brothers who had listened to Hitler and fled; it was a bit like Robinson Crusoe, I loved it. I did what I was supposed to do and filmed the birds and just about everything else that moved but the result gave you no feeling whatever of ‘being there.’

Having shot the film in the Galapagos Islands he went to Harvard to study Physics so the film was put together by David Lack, whose work in ornithology is well known and outside the concerns of this exploration. In his life’s work – to search for a feeling of ‘being there’ Leacock feels a deficiency in the early work, nevertheless it was well received at the time. A review of the film by Professor J. M. Ritchie in *Nature*, December 1940 proclaims:

> The zoologist will see many other good teaching points in this valuable film, the photography (cinematography) of which is of the highest standard. Indeed ‘Galapagos’ should be part of the teaching outfit of every department in university and secondary school which is endeavouring to impart the essential truths of zoology.

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65 [www.richardleacock.com](http://www.richardleacock.com) *A letter from Ricky* 2002

66 *A Search for the Feeling of Being There* Richard Leacock May 20, 1997

67 Ibid

68 Archive Papers T Arts Film DHA
George Bennett was probably not among those Leacock calls ‘film makers’. Certainly Polly Church, a school friend of Leacock interviewed in 1995, was clear that the bright young men from Cambridge, who joined the school in 1932 including William Hunter and David Lack had little regard for Bennett and his film work.

The early record films shot by George Bennett are in their conception perhaps an extension of a ‘Home-movie’ mind set. Leonard does not seem to have had a mind set to produce complete films either; his view of the record films was expressed, second hand, in a comment he is reported to have made about George Bennett’s later wish to edit films from Dartington footage.

It seems Bennett was spending more time in the US. On April 23rd 1938 he writes to his wife Jenny from the Tudor Hotel in New York that he has been screening Dartington films and passing out copies of Leonard’s pamphlet Faith and Works. He wants to have more footage sent over from England so that he might edit it into a documentary. He believed that he could produce a documentary that would show Americans – particularly Roosevelt, ‘who need to find work for 120 million souls [that], Dartington Hall can at least show a line to follow’. Such was his own missionary zeal.

This idea must have been indulged since the Archive holds a document dated 21st June 1938: ‘Invoice of Merchandise’ which lists ‘Particulars of 21,215 feet of 16mm film taken by George Bennett to be documented and cut.’ The ‘Invoice’ stamped by the US Consulate in Plymouth, has a note of explanation from Dorothy:

He hopes to have these films properly documented and cut in New York since he has a film [room?] in the film industry there. Mr Bennett felt that the work could be more easily done there than here in England, it is for this reason only that he has taken the films with him.

The detailed list of footage is broken down into ten categories and includes:

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19 Archive Papers: DWE Staff 1 April 23 1938 George Bennett to DWE
20 Ibid.
This footage seems to list virtually everything that pertained to the work going on at Dartington. It lists what is clearly record film footage and what seem to be home-movies. There is no surviving record of the film he made, if, indeed he made one out of this material, although some of the footage described seems to match surviving images. In an unattributed, hand-written note, undated and unsigned, the writer implies that sending George to America was seen as a solution to the problem of what to do with him, 'he has real ability and enthusiasm, but almost everything he does just seems to miss the mark'. Sending him with his films to America was a solution that:...

...kept ties with Darlington Hall, but as LK said 'they are documentary films and need not be made into any story form, particularly if the cost would be high.'

What would John Grierson make of Leonard’s reported use of the term documentary? He implies that the films are complete as they are, as records. This must indicate an attitude towards the production of a Dartington film. Leonard seems to feel that it is being adequately taken care of by the record filming. The use of pictures, accompanied by a speaker, it is implied, is a satisfactory way of doing things. Slater’s request for an estate film in 1935 demonstrates a more precise idea of using film for propaganda. Leonard was well practised at lecturing and perhaps to him film was considered as part of a practice of lecturing, particularly documentary film. This is a position that can be held despite our knowledge of his interest in actually filming. Record films, actual recording of events could be used more fluidly than fixed or edited sequences. Others needed to bring the concept of complete self-contained work in film. This has bearing on the Trustees’ attitude towards film at Dartington. We have Hunter’s feeling expressed in his letter to Leonard that:

The amount of interest in film among adults here is negligible.

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71 Archive Papers: DWE Staff 1 A-K
72 Archive Papers T. Arts Film Unit

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Was film Art, or was it just useful as document when illustrating a particular educational or propaganda point? Christopher Martin in his first report as Arts Administrator felt that:

The Cine Group will continue to function during the year upon the same lines as in the past. That is to say, they will make films of Estate activities with a view to placing such activities on record and for educational purposes. A further branch of their activities is the hiring of films of special interest from London which will be shown to those interested in film technique.73

The Film Unit, as it became known in that year, had ideas for the use of film, which were quite different to the open-ended recording of the estate activities. With the advent of Hunter, filmmaking activity was firmly focused on the school. The first films that seem to be complete works were built on the practice of filming at school camps by Vic Elmhirst and George Bennett in the late twenties. Hunter continued the practice and produced a compilation of 'Camp Films', shot by himself and pupils at the school, particularly Richard Leacock, recording their annual camping trips. Hunter's next work was 'No work on Sundays'. This was again shot by himself and pupils of the school and was a sort of 'day in the life' of the school and represents the watershed where filming became more focused on the making of specific films, not just keeping a record and making home-movies. The agglomeration of amateur enthusiasms was certainly given sharp focus by Hunter. He had the capacity to conceptualise film as an autonomous art form and to develop a viable area of specialisation in the production of Classroom films. It is of course possible that the 14year old Ricky Leacock's determination to produce his own film about his father's banana business in the Canary Islands, modelled and influenced by his earlier viewing of 'Turksib' had some impression on Hunter.

The work of the Group was beginning to be recognised by the Arts Administrator, Chris Martin. In his 1935 report to the Trustees he feels:

There is one group at Dartington to which the Arts Department would like to call the attention of the Trustees. This is the Cine Section [sic] of the arts Department. Under the Chairmanship of Mr. J. V. Elmhirst and with the whole-hearted co-operation of Mrs. Starr in managing their finances, the Cine section has worked quietly and without trumpet blowing on the making and showing of films to do with the Estate and the Education Department. A very considerable amount of enthusiasm is put into their work, and in the last few months there has been an increase in members of the Group. With so many other calls upon the Arts Department Budget, it has been necessary for the Cine Group to cut their cloth very rigorously; this they have done with the best will in the world and not infrequently, where the Budget has not allowed of expenditure, such expenditure has been met by private contribution among the members of the Group. This, it will be appreciated, is valuable as an earnest of the Group's enthusiasm. The practical work in the making of films is done by various members but primarily by Mr. George Bennet[sic] and Mr. Hunter of the School Staff. There are also a number of children in the School who are keen on the work and who display ability. Members of the Group themselves would be the first to admit that their work is as yet in the early stages and that they have much to learn, but each film as it is shown gives evidence of progress, and Mr. Hunter's new film of the School Camp this summer

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73 Archive Papers Report to the D Trustees July 14th 1934
taken partly by himself, partly by Mr. Bennet[sic] and partly by some of the school children is a distinct advance upon anything yet made at Dartington. The Group’s ambition is to make films either of life at Dartington of general educational nature which will be of interest to audiences outside the Dartington Community. A high standard therefore becomes important, and once this is achieved it will be necessary to do a good deal of work in exploring the possibilities for marketing and distribution: work on these lines is probably the next undertaking which the Group will set themselves. It is felt, for instance, that the films of the School should be of interest to other progressive schools. The object of mentioning the Group and its work in a trustees’ Report is to bring their work to the notice of the Trustees and to elicit from the Trustees some words of appreciation and encouragement. They themselves, of course, have not asked that this should be done, but it is felt by the Arts Department that a few words at this juncture would be of great value. The Cine Group’s budget is a small one, it is never exceeded and when the budget for the next financial year is drawn up in August the Arts Department hopes that the Trustees will sanction some slight increase in the finances of the Group.74

It is not clear if this resulted in an increase in funding but certainly the period from 1935 to 1939 might be described as the zenith of the Dartington Hall Film Unit. During this time the Unit under Hunter’s guidance developed its skills base and professional practices and settled down to a productive period of work. A Brochure of Films available for hire in 1939 has an introduction written by Hunter. It is perhaps worth quoting at length:

The Dartington Hall Film Unit was founded in 1934. It exists to meet a demand for teaching films which are specifically for teaching rather than adopted for teaching purposes, which are made by people in daily contact with children and with teaching problems, but which are at the same time technically and photographically of the highest standard. The Unit is attached to one of the leading progressive schools in the country and is organised as a section of the Arts Department, Dartington Hall, which includes such well known enterprises as the Ballets Jooss, the Leeder School of Dance, Music Theatre Studio etc.

The films produced to date have met with a very wide success, and the number produced increases annually. Films have been purchased by the Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham Education Authorities, the L.C.C., the Scottish film council, the Egyptian Ministry of Education, etc. The Unit has also made films on behalf of Visual Education Ltd., the Timber Development Association of Great Britain, the Forestry Commission, etc.75

This obviously promotional material clearly demonstrates the success of Hunter’s ideas and professionalism in developing this particular branch of filmmaking. The introduction details hire and sales prices then goes on:

The outbreak of war has seriously affected the production plans of the Dartington Hall Film unit. A number of sound films, which were nearing completion have unfortunately had to be abandoned. One production unit was about to leave for France when war was declared, another was already in Rumania but had to return without exposing any film. This has meant that the production of about ten films which were already half completed and would have been ready for distribution to schools by Christmas have had to be temporarily abandoned.

We have decided, therefore, to issue this temporary list of films, which are available now for schools. We shall endeavour to proceed with our production plans as far as possible, and hope to have further films ready shortly, particularly the series of biological films dealing with the vanishing bird and animal life of the Galapagos Islands, the material for

74 Archive Papers T/AA/1/IB/3 Admin report 12 July 1935
75 Archive Papers Box: T Arts Film. Brochure undated but before Christmas 1939

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which series has already been photographed. The films in this list are ready now, except where otherwise stated. A further supplementary list will be issued, if and when further films become available.

William Hunter, Director.

Hunter was having success with production and distribution of the Film Unit's work but the question of what to do with the Film Unit, operating efficiently within a small budget, staffed part time by people working on other jobs, seems to keep on cropping up. We have no record of what Grierson thought of the films he saw earlier but in 1940 Arthur Elton has evidently viewed some of the Dartington Film unit output. He writes

Dear Elmhirst,

I saw three Dartington Hall films on Saturday morning, one of forestry in the Forest of Dean, one on the regional geography of Cornwall and one on agriculture in Cornwall. The remarks that follow are therefore based on these three films only, and I am sending this letter to you direct because I do not want to discourage the enthusiasm or to hurt the feelings of your people.

Broadly speaking, the films show technical competence but broadly lack sense of construction and sense of exposition. This may be due to the fact that your people at Dartington Hall are geographically isolated. Nevertheless, I cannot help feeling that they are rather more out of touch than can be accounted for by the physical distance of Devonshire from London alone. I suggest that they should get to know the people in London and how they work. In any circumstances, they should make a point of spending two evenings a week studying other people's work. It is easy to get films for this purpose on 16mm. These should be chosen from all sources – documentary and fictional – and should be examples of the good, the bad and the indifferent.

Going a little further into detail, the photography of the films is outstandingly good. (The technical level of animation in the maps is very good too.) Though the camera angles are excellent, there are decided tendencies in your film directors to shy away from human beings. This may be due partly to lack of experience and is a defect which besets every young film director. It is difficult to force oneself to force strangers, acquaintances and friends to 'behave' before the camera. In many ways it is a pity there is no one at Dartington Hall with practical experience of film work to oversee and train the youngsters there.

As I see it your films are primarily intended to instruct or to inform. In this respect they break down badly. Briefly the main points are these:

1. A certain 'artiness' has crept between the director and the instructive intention of the films. There is a tendency to use shots for their own pictorial sake without relation to the subject matter. There is a tendency towards putting in "quick cuts" (e.g. a head of a hammer hitting a nail) which are an inheritance from Russia of 1925 and distort the whole intention of the films, making them appear stylised. Lucidity is often sacrificed to pictorial effect and there appears to be a profound objection to sub-titles in large numbers. I see no reason why there should not be one sub-title between every shot if necessary.

2. The films appear to be insufficiently scripted. Though hard-bitten professionals like ourselves may have sufficient experience to make satisfactory films on slim scenarios (and this is open to question), no beginner should be allowed to start work until every shot and every sub-title has been mapped out on paper. This would prevent omission of key shots from the story, a weakness apparent in all three films which I saw.

3. At least one of the films was designed for the classroom. For use by children, every shot was much too short. Better to have one shot lasting a long time than a lot of shots lasting a short time. This brings me to the question of editing in general.
4. The films tend to be edited on the old Russian school by which evenness or contrast of movement from shot to shot was often more important than lucidity. The whole scenario and editing policy of your films requires overhaul.

5. Every film which is made should have a definite audience in mind. Classroom films require the co-operation of your teaching staff as well as your film staff.

6. Please do not regard this letter as purely a set of negatives. From the films I saw it is clear that you have all the talent you want at Darlington Hall, but that you lack experience; the work is clouded by a slightly false attitude to the material.

And finally a few technical details:
Your films are shot at the speed of 16 pictures a second. Today, many silent projectors work at 24 pictures a second. In future, all your films should be shot at 24 not 16. A film shot at 16 pictures looks very bad when projected at 24. On the other hand, a film shot at 24 projected at 16 is usually perfectly good, though it may seem a little drawn out. Your people should avoid mixes, using continuity titles instead, except on very special occasions.

I am not quite satisfied that you are getting the best out of your laboratory. May I suggest Brent, Kays or Humphries.

Yours sincerely
Arthur Elton

Elton’s letter affords as much insight into his conception of film making as it does into the quality of Dartington films. Flaherty is famous for not ever having a script, even and especially on his first film, though this style proved a trial at EMB in 1932 shooting material at Plymouth for Industrial Britain. The film had to be put together without him and he shot far more than other EMB directors were allowed. Perhaps Hunter’s filmmakers were more influenced by Flaherty in the heady 1930s of rich experimental Dartington, where Flaherty’s daughters were also at school, than they were mindful of the British bureaucratic formulation of the documentary form. Elton learnt his trade under Grierson and there seems a certain amount of condescension in his ‘hard bitten professionals’ stance. Perhaps it is true that the Film unit did not have as much professional experience as it would like but the whole rationale of the unit seems to have been predicated on the production of films for teachers, by teachers. Certainly the description Elton implies of the films’ editing technique seems much more interesting than the approach he suggests. Is it that they are actually being experimental in a way that looks forward to later editing techniques assimilating, as Grierson advocated, the Russian lesson and moving on rather than looking back?

Hunter in 1940, mindful of the relative success of the Unit, is requesting more support and more autonomy. The grant of £400 in the first year of the Cine Group has because of its financial success over the years been reduced to much less. Hunter wants to set it up properly and produces a proposal requesting again £400. Christopher Martin is uncertain and Leonard (or Martin) has checked the goods out with Elton.

74 Archive papers Box Arts T. Film
From the birth of the Film Unit in 1934, out of the amateur efforts of the Cine-Group, the main production of film was focused, through Hunter, on Classroom Films. The growth and restructuring of the Dartington Experiment had introduced an Arts Department and the country's first Arts Administrator. Leonard it seems had delegated responsibilities and in so doing had become less involved in actual filming, although his film record of his visit to Russia in 1933 and other material demonstrates his continued use of film. He retained, as Trustee, overall responsibility but others had been left to develop the work.

The desire to explain the Dartington Experiment in film was acted upon but not realised except in so far as particular films—classroom films—used as example of their subject some of the Dartington enterprises. The Film Unit's outlook was to the wider world of education not the reflexive documentation of the Dartington Experiment.
The War

The outbreak of war at the end of the thirties changed everything. Christopher Martin's Arts Administration report of 7th February 1941 begins by painting a very bleak picture.

In the Arts Department we are oppressively conscious that the present period is for us one of indecision and lack of direction, The Department is now an affair of bits and pieces. Some of the bits are doing quite well, others are marking time, which is bad. He cites the loss of foreign nationals, referred to at the time as aliens, the call up of able-bodied Englishmen and the loss of all student revenue to the tune of some £7000 per annum. The Film Unit it seems was amongst the good bits:

In the summer, Mr. Elmhirst proposed setting the film Unit on its feet with a grant sufficient for it to show what it was made of. The film unit, which consists of Mr. Hunter and any students he can get to work with him, has in the past drawn small sums from the Arts Department to make educational and documentary films. Though it had made many mistakes and had produced films of varying quality, it seemed to us that Hunter's tenacity and enthusiasm deserved some recognition. Mr. Elmhirst offered £200 if the Arts Department could produce another £200. Plans are now all made and scripts written for the production of a historical educational film in collaboration with John Wales, a number of shorter educational films and a film for Penguin Books Limited on "Milk Production" in collaboration with Jock Currie. Already since September the Film unit has brought in some £200 from sales and bookings of previous films from schools, institutes, and Local Education Authorities all over the country.

Other changes to the operation of the Film Unit were also positive. In a 1944 memorandum John Wales recalls that by 1940 about twenty films had been produced and a dozen were in general circulation. Hunter's brochure from 1939 lists 28 separate titles, although some of them are parts of series. His list of purchasers of Films is further indication of the success of his work: 'Films have been purchased by the Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham Education Authorities, the L.C.C., the Scottish film council, the Egyptian Ministry of Education, etc.'

The Unit had built up production expertise, a successful distribution base and a reputation. The war meant that materials were harder to get, and with restrictions on movement, production more difficult. The school carried on but with very reduced numbers which had a knock on effect. The next Arts Administration Report of Martin demonstrates his good judgement in support of the Film unit, but there are reservations:

Another war-time child of the Arts Department is the expanded Film unit. A year ago we took on Mr Hunter half time and gave him a budget of £400 with which to produce educational films. We were a little tentative about doing so and our difficulty was with Mr. Hunter himself. Here again, however, the experiment of giving him his head seems to be showing positive results. The function of the Arts Department Film unit is two fold. First it

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79 Arts Administration report of 7th February 1941 DHA
80 T. Arts Film. Confidential Memorandum on the DH Film unit Dec 1944. John Wales came to Dartington in 1936 to sort and catalogue Leonard's books. Upon the advent of Bill Curry Wales took a degree in History and Economics then returned to the school to teach History and Latin. Dartington Hall School Memories of the Early Years. Maria Elena De La Inglesia. 1996

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is to produce educational films for distribution and sale. Since September last year 60
films have been sold outright and 200 loaned. On the production end 6 films are under
way, of which 3 will be completed by the end of the year.

The uncertainty of things in 1941 was also offset by the newly created Film Council of The South
West, formed under the auspices of the British Film Institute and located in Exeter, who asked the
Unit to manage a small educational film library. The Petroleum Films Bureau added their
instructional films to the growing distribution library at Dartington. The Ministry of Information
which was considering the establishment of regional circulation centres for their films also made
use of the developing expertise of the Dartington Hall Film Unit. The Film Library of the South
West started as a side-line of the Film Unit but was to become an important part of its operation.

Martin relates how taking on the distribution work for Ministry of Information was a tall order. He
gained very favourable terms starting with a grant to the Trustees from the Ministry of £550. He
explains:

...the bait, of course, to which the Ministry were rising, was the chance of making use of
Mr Hunter, for whose work and knowledge they have a considerable respect.

We gain glimpses of the Hunter character, a very intelligent man, devoted to teaching and
education, an inspired amateur with the discipline to develop successful professional practice
whilst working half time at two jobs. He who had gained respect in high places for this work and
was, it seems, grudgingly respected by his employers, who in this illustration see him as a pawn
in their game. Perhaps it was his single-minded determination and dedication to film and
developing this art form in the face of its low-brow profile around Dartington that irritated Martin.

William Hunter, according to Victor Bonham-Carter, also put a lot of effort into supporting young
men who felt themselves to be conscientious objectors. Ironically in 1941 according to John
Wales:

Hunter decided that it was impossible for him to remain in civilian life, and he volunteered
for the R. A. F., hoping to have his specialised abilities used there, as indeed they soon
were, in photographic work.

Christopher Martin also lamented Hunter's joining up and reflected in his 17th April Report of 1942
that:

Last autumn it was the only enterprise left in the country making educational films and its
work, therefore, was rousing the interest not only of Mr. Elton (who has always fathered
it) but also of Mary Field, Basil Wright, Oliver Bell, and other people of eminence in the
documentary world. As soon as they learnt that Hunter was departing they all told me
how much they hoped that the Arts Department could continue making educational film,
and how valuable they regarded our contribution in this respect.

81 Arts Admin 18th July 1941 DHA
82 Ibid.
83 Both Polly Church in 1995, and Victor Bonham-Carter in 1997 in video interviews with the author, mention Hunter's work in
defending Dartington boys who were conscientious objectors.
84 T. Arts Film Memorandum on the Dartington Hall Film Unit. John Wales December 1944 DHA
Martin had presumably been in contact with such people through his new role in developing the Arts Survey about which more later. This contact between Dartington and the documentary film movement establishes a link. Martin comments on Elton's 'fathering' interest in the unit. It seems that Mary Field was working at British Instructional Films adding commentary to the 'Secrets of Nature' series and must have known of Dartington's work with these films in the 'New Learning' project of 1931.\(^\text{65}\) John Wales' memo goes on:

His final departure at the end of the year [1941] created a serious problem. First, there was the pioneering work in educational film production, which was just beginning to bear fruit; if the unit ceased to exist, the groundwork would be lost, and the experience almost entirely wasted. Second; there was the work that we had undertaken for the Ministry, and this was growing rapidly. I myself, during that year, had become increasingly interested in the work, and had been consulted by Hunter in various ways that had given me some idea of it; I had been instrumental in interesting Penguin Books in it with the result that Allen Lane had made a production grant. Looking at the Unit as an outside but sympathetic observer, I had come to the conclusion that it was important for the work to be kept alive: that the 'paper' side of it in the preparation of subject treatments, and the composition of teaching notes to accompany the films — could be improved; and that the distribution end could be considerably extended — an end that Hunter, through his concentration on production and his almost excessive disregard of money matters, had rather left to itself. I accordingly volunteered that if a technical assistant could be found to keep the production side going, and to fulfil the commitments on which we had entered for the care of the M.O.I. Library, I would undertake the general direction of the Unit until Hunter's return.\(^\text{66}\)

Largely due to the efforts of John Wales, Penguin Books commissioned a series of 'Puffin Films' on agriculture. These films are not evident in a 1979 catalogue of films in the Archive holdings; presumably they would have used the Dartington farms and practices as illustration of the topics. (See appendix of Film Unit Productions) Taking over the running of the Unit Wales needed a technical assistant and was joined by Sydney Sharples, described as a 'gifted amateur who was sufficiently enthusiastic about the work to throw up his business in the North and transport his family to a new and speculative environment with no guarantee of permanence'. The Archive holds some dramatic footage, presumably shot by Sharples, of conditions and food relief of the people of Exeter after heavy bombing. The War saw the Unit flourish as a viable commercial concern — if not by making much money — producing work for the Ministry of Information and others and running its extended film library. Much has been made of the growth in importance of the factual film, its use in training, information and education during the war years.\(^\text{67}\) No doubt Dartington's distribution work played a part.

The war also saw the death of William Hunter.

While one may be critical of the practical running of the early Film Unit, it is true that remarkable developments were made and this is more so when one considers that most of the people involved were, at the same time actually doing other jobs. Perhaps this fact is important in


\(^{66}\) T. Arts Film. Confidential Memorandum on the DH Film unit December 1944. DHA

evaluating the Unit in comparison with other activities in the development of factual film in Britain at the time.

At Dartington an enthusiastic group of amateurs had turned themselves into a small but successful production unit making films with a particular relevance to themselves and their educational work, selling and distributing these films to schools, universities and a range of educational institutions. Distribution played a central part in the success of the Unit and the scale of its work with the Film Library of The South West meant that there was a respectable income and developing expertise both of which were clearly visible to the Dartington Trustees. There were many things to consider during the War. It is a testament to the ideas of William Hunter in shaping the Unit, and to the management skills of Wales that the Unit survived at all.
Factual Film

The work of Christopher Martin in providing a viable framework for the development of the Arts is an important feature of work at Dartington in the 1930s. In his first Arts Administration report of July 14th 1934, he found a number of arts activities that had been carrying on 'wholly uncoordinated working without system and without financial organisation'. He spent the next six years putting his particular stamp of management into practice, consolidating the general drift from focus on the inclusive estate and county-wide activities, such as those developed by the WEA and the Margaret Barr Group, towards the professionalism of the Ballet Jooss and Chekov Theatre School. The war however depleted his Department personnel and he turned to look outwards to employ his talents. With the encouragement of the Trustees he became increasingly involved in county-wide arts activity and in finding useful jobs to justify his existence.

...the jobs when found, must be as far as possible, along lines which were not divergent from the aims of the Department, and which might eventually be plaited up together into a general policy of development.²³

He became involved with the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, he became secretary of the County Committee for Music and Drama, a field of work recently undertaken by Mr F. G. Thomas of the WEA who we have met in the New Learning experiment earlier. He joined the Executive of Devon Music competitions Festival and became Treasurer of the Area Film Council of the South West.

His role was also to extend to one of the most important developments in the Arts in Britain up to that time. In 1941 Martin set up the Arts Enquiry to report to the Trustees on the Visual Arts, the Factual Film, Music and the Theatre. In this work we see the expansive scope of Martin's vision, which extends beyond the work of the Dartington Experiment. In the forward to the Report on Factual film we are told:

This is the second of four reports to be presented by the Dartington Hall Trustees on the Visual Arts, the Factual Film, Music and the Theatre. The series is designed to give some account of the place of these arts in our national life, their economic and administrative background, their social importance and their value in general education. Many aspects of English life came under review during the war, and the Trustees felt it to be important that these arts should be considered as having a recognised place in national life.²⁴

Others have commented on the importance of this work and the Dartington Trustees role in commissioning, organising and financing the largest and most comprehensive survey on the Arts in Britain up to that time. The work has been given due credit for the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain amongst other outcomes. To pick up the story from The Factual Film Foreword:

²³ Arts Administration Report 7th February 1941 DHA
The reports are the work of the Arts Enquiry. Established in the autumn of 1941, the
Enquiry has been staffed by the Arts Department at Dartington Hall and financed by the
Trustees, and the work carried on mainly in London at the offices kindly provided by P. E.
P. (Political and Economic Planning), who have also undertaken publication on its behalf.
The Enquiry has been associated with the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey,
except in the case of this report for which the Trustees are alone responsible.
The initiation of the enquiry was commended by the Ministry of Education and by the
Reconstruction Secretariat which agreed to receive the reports. The interest taken by
these two departments has facilitated the work of the Enquiry and the help of individual
members of the departments has been indispensable both during the period of research
and in the compilation of the reports in general. While in no way responsible for the
Enquiry, the Ministry of Information, the Service Departments, the British council, the
Imperial Institute, the Imperial War Museum and the Government Cinematograph Adviser
have been of considerable assistance in readily providing information.

Up to this point we have mainly looked at the specific activity in film at Dartington, those who
used film and the ways in which amateur home-movie making and earnest record keeping played
a part in the shape of the Dartington Experiment. With the Arts Enquiry instigated by Martin we
have sight of how the Dartington Experiment threw up work of international importance. The
enquiry was a vast imaginative and wide reaching contribution to understanding the role of the
arts in national life. It is possibly the most important work to come out of the whole Dartington
Experiment. This is arguably so in relation to arts administration. Does including film in the
enquiry actually demonstrate an attitude towards film that gives the lie to Hunter's feelings from
1934? Or has his work and the subsequent success of the Film Unit impressed Martin and the
Trustees sufficiently to cause a change of attitude? Martin's 1935 report to the Trustees does
demonstrate a genuinely positive attitude and it is perhaps his support for Hunter's efforts that
must also be counted in the success of the Film Unit of his time. Again from the Factual Film
forward:

This report, like the others in the series, is dedicated to the memory of Christopher
Martin. The Enquiry was his idea. He was responsible for its direction and for including
the Factual Film within its terms of reference. His advice, criticism and encouragement,
even during a long period of illness, were invaluable, while his enthusiasm carried others
with him. His sudden death on 6 August 1944, robbed the group of one of its most
valuable members and the Enquiry of its founder and directing mind.

Like the committee assembled for the New Learning experiment, the Arts Survey brought in the
best minds available. Paul Rotha who was a member of the group of experts who produced the
material for the Factual Film report, writing in 1973, tells us:

Since it was published in 1947, the Arts Enquiry Report called The Factual Film has been
a mine of information for students and research workers. Set up in 1943 at the instigation
of the Dartington Hall Trustees, it was one of several enquiries into the arts. The group
which met so frequently and produced the Report has for many years remained
anonymous. I see no good reason why it should remain so and have secured permission
to identify them. Under the Chairmanship of Prof. H. L. Beales of the London School of
Economics, they were: Miss Dilyes Powell (film critic of the Sunday Times), Mr. G. T.
Cummins (Producer of British Paramount Newsreel), Mr. Basil Wright (of film Centre), Mr. Edgar Anstey (producer at the Shell film Unit at that time) and the present writer. Miss Calley Calvert did most of the research at our bidding, while the drafting of the final Report was the work of Mr Sinclair Road. We met many times in those blacked-out nights at PEP’s offices in Westminster. If nothing else the group could claim a big share in the complete reorganisation and re-staffing of the British Film Institute, as well as a revision in the make-up of the British Council Film Committee. In our aim to see a National Film Board established in this country, we were unsuccessful.

The minutes of the Factual Film group dated 21st May 1943, also informs us:

It was originally our intention to study only the visual arts, music and drama, but it soon became clear that the film could not be omitted.

Not only is the film a universal form of entertainment, with the widest social influence, but it overlaps the other arts in innumerable places. It is for instance a competitor of the theatre and the art gallery; it is a factor directly influencing the salaried actors; it offers employment to artist and musician; and it is the surest way of popularising a book, play or piece of music.

A full-scale survey of the film industry in all its fields is clearly an immense task, and far beyond the resources of the Arts Enquiry. There is however, a useful job to be done in studying the growth, present organisation and influence of the factual film including newsreels, instructional and documentary films. But it should be borne in mind that although these uses of the film medium are influential and important, they represent a small percentage of the industry’s total output.

In the ten years preceding the war, the documentary and educational film in Britain was being used more and more by the Government and big national industries as a medium for public information. As is well known, a group of film technicians, writers, and musicians associated themselves with this use of film for social purpose. The work of this British group achieved considerable reputation on the continent and in the United States. In the same period, newsreels improved their technique in many ways.

At the outbreak of the war, the British government was in the unique position of having at its disposal a large group of technicians experienced in the use of the film for national and international propaganda, as well as for training and instructional purposes. As the war got into its stride, wide use has been made of the film medium by Ministry of Information, the British Council and the Services Departments. The M.O.I. took over the G. P. O film unit and re-named it the Crown film Unit. At the same time, it contracted with numerous documentary film units for many of its productions. Some of its films were distributed to the public cinemas by arrangement with the Film Trade, while others reached the public by the M.O.I.’s own channels of distribution in the non-theatrical field. [Notably via Dartington].

During the production of the Factual Film report the future of the Dartington Hall Film Unit was again brought into question. Martin’s death in 1944 had brought about a change of administration in the form of Peter Cox and he was obviously trying to rationalise the Arts Department. Perhaps under pressure from F G Gwatkin the trust’s accountant who suggested bringing in professionals to produce the films and keeping on a committee, librarian and accountant to carry out the distribution work for the MOI and others. A meeting at PEP (through whose offices the Report was published) in early 1945 recommended holding a conference to discuss the matter and this was organised in June of 1945. The conference attendees included many of the notable people involved in producing the Factual Film report: Arthur Elton (Film Centre), Edgar Anstey (Film Centre), Paul Rotha, Sinclair Road (Chair of Arts Enquiry Factual Film Group). Other delegates

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9) Archive Papers minutes of the Factual Film group dated 21st May 1943. DHA
were: Alfred Kazin (American Office of War Information), William Farr (Central Film Library),
Marjorie Wise (Head of Cambell School), Russell Barland (Scottish Film Council), G.P. Meredith
(Visual Aids Department, University College Exeter), James Beveridge (National Film Board of
Canada), Francis Ropleka (Shell Film Unit), WE Phillips (Director of Education —), Dorothy
Greyson (BFI) and from Dartington Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst, John Wales, JBE Patterson
(Laboratory), WE Hinley (Woodlands Dept.), JR Currie (Agricultural Economics Department),
Peter Sutcliffe (Bursar of Dartington Hall Trust), Tom Stobart and Peter Cox.

The conference arrived at the conclusion that Dartington should revise the structure, but should
continue to support a film production unit. With war-time stimulated appetites for instructional and
documentary film and the strong likelihood of Government sponsorship for such material\textsuperscript{4}, it was
seen as potentially economically viable.

\textsuperscript{4} John Wales had secured a commission to produce a film on Artificial Insemination from the Ministry of Agriculture
The Film Unit Post-War

Perhaps against the advice of the Trust's accountants Leonard made a grant of £7000.00 available which made possible the setting up of a new Film Unit as an autonomous department under Tom Stobart. Stobart took office the following year but it seems the whole of the first year was a difficult one. Changes made to the accommodation in the old Dance School, took longer and cost more than expected, and the main commission for the Ministry of Agriculture to make a film on Artificial Insemination ran into trouble. The commission was brought about through John Wales, who himself had at this time along with Sydney Sharples gone to work on secondment for Paul Rothe's 'Realist' production company. It was intended to make the film at the Dartington Al unit, an obvious convenient location. The Ministry it seems insisted on shooting at one of their own units in Reading. The budget was cut down from the original understanding, so that in the end the production did not make any money.

Stobart on starting the Unit had optimistically outlined the aims of the unit's work, summarised as:

- To produce educational films and films for specialised groups
- To use Teachers and teach elements of film production
- Create a body of technicians who can produce educational films
- Study the needs of groups and audiences – research
- Experiment with high standards at a reasonable price
- Continue to edit existing material
- Experiment with new types of film making
- Produce the kind of films that need to be made over a period of years

This was an ambitious plan, perhaps outstripping the finance available and underestimating the post-war climate for production. It is interesting to note aim 6 and its implication that the process of re-constituting existing film material into new forms was established practice in the Film Unit.
This makes sense as a commercial procedure, but also points to the possibility that some of what remains of the Film Unit’s material had a number of incarnations. Certainly the 1935 film *No Work on Sundays* is cited in the Unit’s 1939 brochure but has not been traced. Extant in the archive is a film called *Dartington Hall School*, which seemed to include a lot of the material from the former but which was produced in 1937 (dated by a shot of a newspaper from that time). The Galapogas film from 1938 has two versions in the holdings now at TSWFTA: one, presumably the finished version, concentrating on wildlife with numerous identification titles cut in, the other seeming to be more of a narrative/record or out-takes of the expedition. This practice of reusing material as ‘stock-shots’ was and is common in production companies of most complexions including contemporary TV companies.

The anticipated flow of M.O.I. commissions did not materialise and two years into this incarnation the Film Unit of Stobart was without paid work. In February 1947 the Trustees mooted the idea of commissioning a film about Dartington Hall and the ideas of rural reconstruction. Stobart replies on 10th of February 1947:

> There is already at least a local demand for a film on the subject of Dartington and admitting the probability of an increase in the international demand for British Educational and documentary pictures it seems probable that the film could obtain a wider distribution than has so far been envisaged. Organisations express a wish to hire such films as may be available concerning the Dartington scheme. There are none at the present time.

In 1947 the new Film Unit was finding its feet. Stobart is optimistic. Peter Cox, as the new Arts Administrator is also finding his feet. In a report to the Trustees dated 20th October 1947 he discusses the remnants of the Arts Department which included Music in the form of Imogen Holst, Theatre, the Northerners Theatre Group, and Film ‘with the visual arts and the Dance as subsidiary activities’. In his report on the ‘Post War Programme’ Cox summarises:

> Finally, there is the film which in the non-theatrical field is more a means of communication than an art. Yet we have decided to develop the film unit, building on William Hunter’s work and on the film library of the South-West. These came under the auspices of the Department by accident but, having established themselves without encouragement, it seemed wise to continue with them as long as they could support themselves and not draw upon the Department’s allocation of endowment.

I do not think it is making assumptions to read Cox’s evident disdain for the lesser art, which is after all more a ‘means of communication than an art’. This does echo Hunter’s earlier perception of prevailing attitudes in the Dartington hierarchy. To describe the unit as having come under the Arts Department auspices ‘by accident’ also conveys a sense of resentment. In Cox’s detailed analysis of the elements of his department he gets to the Film Unit on page 8, and while extolling the longevity of Hunter’s actual films, he is careful to qualify by commenting:

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95 TSWFTA Record Nos: 224,529 Dart Box 10 no 9 and 224,524 Box 11 Dart 41
96 Archive papers Box: T Arts Film DHA
97 Box: T/AA/2/A/16 Archive papers DHA

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Hunter's films, of course, lacked technical quality which undoubtedly made them less valuable educationally than they would otherwise have been, but professional production was uneconomic before the war; there were too few projectors in the schools, too few teachers interested in the films and too few good films to make it worth the L.E.A.'s buying projectors or teachers interesting themselves in films. In fairness, his view sets the unit's activity in the context of a very real economic climate, not just a problem for Dartington, but other producers of classroom films. His report goes on to summarise the 1945 conference findings, the setting up of the new unit, Stobart's appointment and the first troubled year. His analysis of the Unit concludes with a ray of hope.

It appears that our overhead expenditure may be far too high. Fortunately, we now have an excellent business manager in Alec Stafford, who came as assistant editor, and I hope that between us we may be able to get things straight. His final overview cautions:

We are pioneering with somewhat inadequate resources in a highly unsuitable location for this particular job. We may fail, and if the Film Unit does, it means a financial loss to the Trustees of £4,000-£6,000. We may succeed temporarily, but can we then keep it up permanently? These are the sort of questions the Advisory Committee has every right to ask.

Perhaps Cox is being justly cautious or perhaps he has his own agenda to be rid of the troublesome Film Unit.

At this time Berte Foot who was once bar-man at the White Hart pub on the estate was acting as Stobart's cameraman and assistant. It seems he intended to leave and Stobart suggests holding off on the production until a new assistant arrives, a Mr Berko. There was more delay and still no real outside commissions. In a report to the Trustees in 1948 by Peter Cox tells them:

Stobart has done a good deal of work on the treatment of the Dartington film which the Trustees commissioned, but he now recommends the Trustees to withdraw the commission since he does not believe it possible to make a really good film on Dartington. A good film needs a simple and compact story and it is almost impossible to make such a story out of the numerous and to some extent unrelated activities at Dartington. Some of the individual activities would make good film stories, but this would mean giving a one-sided view.

Again a Dartington film was asked for and developed but for a variety of reasons no specific film was made. The new Unit attempted to develop the idea of the Classroom film produced by teachers themselves and at Easter 1948 they held a training course for teachers. The result of this course was the production of How to make a School Aquarium produced on 16mm, a copy of which now resides amongst the Dartington Films held by TSWFTA in Plymouth. Despite considerable investment the benchmark turnover of twelve thousand pounds per annum required

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98 Ibid
99 Ibid
100 Ibid
101 Ibid
102 Ibid
103 Bert Foot went on work as a news cameraman BBC
104 Archive Papers Arts Administration Report 1948
by Slater, the Estate Bursar, to represent viability, was not being met. the Unit was in trouble again. Peter Cox's report continues:

The Unit is, therefore, without paid work. We have to consider the future with greatest care and we cannot offer trustees much hope that, if the Unit could exist another six months or so it would turn the corner.\textsuperscript{103}

John Wales, now working mainly with Paul Rotha, attempted to cultivate contacts and commissions but without notable result. Approaches were made to the Ministry of Agriculture and Central Office of Information, Elton at the Film Centre, a Mr Thom at the National Commission for visual aids and to John Grierson on survival strategies for the Unit. As a result of these stirrings a Mr John P Maxton of the Institute of Agrarian Affairs contacted John Grierson and Grierson's response survives:

\begin{quote}
John P Maxton, esq,  
Institute of Agrarian Affairs  
3, Magpie Lane,  
Oxford.

Dear John,  
I am in any case late with thanks for your previous note, but your letter gives me a second chance.  
Of course there is space for independent unit of the Dartington type, if it is guaranteed that there will be brains behind it, organisational good sense and a really specialised outlook on the use of film.  
The Dartington unit has been regarded less as a specialised unit of that kind than a sort of mixture of amateur and professional. I think it has missed a bit by taking too long to make its last picture and by getting into confusion - which may have not been its fault - over the costing of the film involved. (it dealt I think with Al).  
The min of Agriculture will be making their films through us and there is no reason why the D unit, properly constituted, should not be the sort of unit we could use to make their pictures. It depends entirely on the sort of people they have and the outlook of those responsible for the unit's governance.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid
So far as I am concerned, I have no temptation towards a single central unit whatsoever. I have run it both ways: with a total monopoly in Canada and with the divided system which obtains here. Undoubtedly the best way is to have a central single unit with a planned and integrated approach to certain parts of the field, and to have, over and above the central unit, a number of specialised units each of which has its own individual character and quality. No top producer could be expected to foresee all the creative qualities, which this varied system, if properly encouraged, is liable to provide.

All the best to you, yours ever
(signed) John Grierson.

The letter was copied either to Leonard or John Wales at Dartington and seems to be proof of a favourable view of the Film Unit, if with reservations. The correspondence continues with a second letter from Grierson 27th Nov 1948. In this case I believe it is being sent to John Wales, perhaps now more a part of the elite documentary filmmakers movement than part of Dartington.

Wales had evidently invited Grierson to visit Dartington.

ref. FM.5/211

Dear John,

I was very interested in the Dartington Film Unit and this was before you sent me your letter. I liked the Stobart man and I am sure he is competent, but I have an impression of a sort of cotton wool surrounding that doesn't make it easy to make proposals unless the whole film outfit is to be under proper disciplines and plans. In their favour I would say that they got a clumsy contact with the ministry of agriculture and that the maturing of their first film was difficult. But even under other circumstances I would doubt if they have the makings of a cutting edge now.

All this talk of COI's power in the field is beside the point in the sense that although we have maybe two hundred films a year to order, there is in fact a universal lack of really first rate specialised units. If, for example, the Dartington Film Unit, were as good on the scientific agricultural side as the Shell Film unit is on the industrial scientific side, there would be no question about orders. Where the COI must feel diffident is that, as in so many cases, it is really being asked to finance the development of a unit, the choice of personnel of which it cannot control, and the quality of which it is in no position to guarantee. It has been happening time and again. Little independent groups that want to be independent and have a nice time in their own time, find themselves tuppence worth of capital and a big company name and then expect the COI to come through with orders. Dartington may be different, but I have still to be convinced of the seriousness of its intentions as a film unit, and its quality as a technical unit and of the disciplines it is prepared to impose to make it one of the ambitious first-raters in the field. Film business to me is film business. They had a chance in a thousand, and still have, to build up a scientific agricultural unit because there's no such thing in this country today, but it means that they must plan to do so and pick the kind of people who know what this would involve and have the willpower to carry it through. That would be worth Dartington's investment and it would be a great thing for the country, but the amateur approach has to be gotten out of it from the start.

I have put this pretty sharply because the argument applies to so many other efforts I see around and I am shocked at the many opportunities in the fields that have been missed. If I pay a visit to Dartington would it be just for some more conversation? On the other hand is there a real will in higher quarters there to do something about films in the specialised agricultural field? If there is I shall be glad to help in setting out a plan. It would involve primarily a system of contacts with all organisations likely to want scientific agricultural films, and a proper sense from the beginning of what work could progressively be expected from them. It is not only the COI that is involved. The vacancy in the field is so apparent that I have been appealed to from the Min of Agriculture and the Scottish Agricultural Office to set up separate units simply to record their agricultural experiments for reporting and teaching purposes.

104 Archive Papers: Letter 4th Nov 1948 from John Grierson to J. P. Maxton at Institute of Agrarian Affairs Magpie Lane. DHA
But enough of that. Fix me an invitation which would involve a proper discussion of possibilities, and with you present, and I shall be glad to go down, but please do not get me involved with any dark eyed young men of the sonnets.

Yours,
(signed) John Grierson

Grierson's 'dark eyed young men of the sonnets', seems an incongruous comment which could just as well be applied to the 'tyros' of the documentary movement as a perceived Dartington 'type'. There may be a history to the remark that we are not privy to, in earlier letters and discussions. Neither am I aware of an actual visit to Dartington by Grierson at this time. But his blunt analysis demonstrates the difficulty being experienced in factual film production by both the lack of specialist producers and the difficulties in obtaining commissions. How frustrating would his information be to Stobart (who may or may not have seen it) that he had been approached by 'the Min of Agriculture and the Scottish Agricultural Office to set up separate units simply to record their agricultural experiments for reporting and teaching purposes'. Knowledge of the actual demand for such work – withheld from Dartington – must have been crushing.

Despite the desire to continue, post war conditions, the lack of commercial commissions and perhaps the prevailing attitude at Dartington (identified by Hunter in 1934) of not taking film too seriously, (despite Leonard's investment) led to the winding down of the Film Unit in 1949 and its final closure in January of 1950. This happened despite the efforts of John Wales and the ministrations of Peter Cox who was central in the discussions surrounding its demise. While the final Film Unit of 1946 to 1949 with Tom Stobart as Director, under its commercial contracts, shot much material, little of it pertains specifically to the Dartington Story.

Tom Stobart who was a film student under William Hunter from 1938-39 and who Ricky Leacock recalls teaching how to use the camera, gained a grant from Dartington to produce a film on Microbiology after the Unit closed down. His pinnacle of achievement was as cameraman on the successful Hillary Everest expedition of June 1953. At least that is as far as he appears in the archive.

The growth and change and final demise of the Film Unit at Dartington is a story of dedicated amateurs, tantalising in its missed opportunities. As Grierson commented 'they did have a chance in a thousand' to build something of importance. My view is that the personalities who actually made films were focused too intently upon their art and lacked the political skills or power to play the emotional ego driven arts administration or commercial /government commission game.

The work of Bennett, while not being particularly remarkable actually demonstrates his passion and survives as important historical record. The shaping of film shots into coherent films was learnt and expertly practised by William Hunter and his development of 'Classroom Films' whose work even Peter Cox concedes was often used in preference to other more 'professional' films.
Indeed the Hunter Film Unit films stand the test of time well and are remarkable documents of educational interest. Perhaps his tragic death was also the death of the Unit’s credibility and true potential. Ricky Leacock with his intuitive sense of cinematography and film construction went on to become an internationally important filmmaker. What might have happened if he and Hunter had had inclination and free rein to develop the work at Dartington? The war ended Hunter's life and saw dramatic changes in the young Leacock’s. Stobart’s subsequent achievements demonstrate the poor hand the post-war economic climate dealt him and hopes for a future of film production at Dartington. Peter Cox had sincere regard for him as a person and laments the advice that led to the Film Unit becoming 'professional' rather than continuing the more flexible and successful one-man band affair it had been previously. With The close of the Film Unit in January 1950, the commercial exploitation of film as part of the Dartington Experiment and serious 'home grown' production at Dartington ends.

In summarising the response to the question 'How was film seen at Dartington?' it emerges that film was regarded in the first instance as a form of record keeping. This form was seen as being a window on the world that was the subject of the image. As a form film was seen broadly as a way of exploring and explaining, of providing information and access to other subjects. The use by the WEA New Learning group and the Cine Club of screening films 'about things' illustrates this position. It is further exploited via the Film Unit’s use of film as a commercially exploitable product offering access to educational aids. Film was not seen as being a primary form of expression through which the material was interrogated or deemed a viable subject for consideration, nor were aesthetic considerations applicable beyond the clarity through which the subject was presented/made accessible.

The final closure of the Film Unit in 1950 represented an end of the use of film as part of the Dartington Experiment, and an end to the conscious in-house use of the Dartington Experiment as subject for film. It did not, however, represent the end of the broad aspiration to represent Dartington in film.

Archive Papers: letter from Grierson 27th Nov 1948 DHA
Dartington and the Documentary Film Movement

It is well documented that the first recorded use of the word ‘Documentary’ by John Grierson was in an off-hand definition of something – a value - he argued was present in Robert Flaherty’s film ‘Moana’.

Of course *Moana*, being a visual account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian youth, has documentary value. But that, I believe, is secondary to its value as a soft breath from a sunlit island, washed by a marvellous sea, as warm as the balmy air. *Moana* is first of all beautiful as nature is beautiful.106

Documentary as a term has become synonymous with the Documentary Film Movement, and subsequent documentary films, photographs, television programmes etc. Through usage of the term to describe work of the filmmakers centred on John Grierson and the Empire Marketing Board film unit of the late 20’s and subsequent offshoots, it has connotations of truth, reality, realism, propaganda and education. It can also simply refer to ‘factual’ material from which we might gain ‘factual’ information, as perhaps was the case in Grierson’s first use of the term.

Through coinage we have a broad understanding of what the term means. One could argue that documents are the elements upon which documentary is built. History is also accessed or constructed through readings of documents, traces of the perpetually vanishing ‘now’. In my consideration (and production) I have focused on film/video/sound/image recordings, ‘documents’, although a great deal of information has been gleaned through textual documents of various sorts.

Film and photography seem to have a special relationship with the events they record, facilitated by the ‘impartial’ technology of the equipment used to record them. It is however true that equipment does not do this unless operated by a person with views, knowledge – a position. In this they require the same contextual analysis as any ‘document’. Perhaps more so since unlike textual documents, recorded materials seduce the observer into believing in their innate ‘reality’. Grierson was well aware of this and argued for a use of documentary that accesses or probes the underlying reality of events, rather than simply presenting a naturalistic representation of them. To this end he advocates employing the drama of images and the use of montage. Although we have seen him in 1948 explaining simply how ‘film business is film business’. For the purposes of this part of the enquiry the term documentary is based on understandings of the work of John Grierson and his followers.

Grierson's Documentary filmmakers in the late twenties and early thirties, through the Empire Marketing Board, the GPO Film Unit, then Crown Films, were finding public finance to support their educational experiments in social change. They developed new forms of industrial sponsorship such as the Shell Oil Company and other industrial sponsors. Strand Films and Realist Films, among others, developed this work as independent companies. Shell Oil set up its own Film Unit. Finance was something in plentiful supply at Dartington, though its use was carefully regulated. In a 1976 video interview his sister recalls Leonard's 'Yorkshire' traits in respect of his gift to her of a 'little Talbot car' for which she had to keep very detailed accounts. The car represented a gift of freedom to her but its running costs had to be justified. 107

At Dartington, not wholly driven by commercial pressures, there was greater independence, an atmosphere of possibility and of course Dorothy's millions to draw upon. Perhaps this was the background awareness in Grierson's 1948 remark: 'film business is film business'. In the late twenties and early thirties this money was pouring out in support of ventures and enterprises all of which had to be both carefully monitored experiments and financially viable. These joint aspirations could be said and were said, to be incompatible. The Incorporation of the Dartington Hall Ltd, the Dartington Trust and the formation of an independent school, the restructuring of early Dartington, also led to organisation of the people working with film at Dartington.

At the same time that Dartington was developing a structure for working with film, firstly its Cine Group and subsequently its Film Unit, the British Documentary movement was developing. There are a number of possible links to be explored between principals such as Robert Flaherty, John Grierson, Paul Rotha, Arthur Elton, Mary Field and others who were looked to at different times for specific advice and as models for the different kind of work going on at Dartington. The pre-war Documentary movement represented an important site of experimental work going on in Britain at the time. Indeed while the scale and outcomes were not the same, the idealism of those involved in the Empire Marketing Board, the Film Centre, and G.P.O. Film Unit, Realist Films, Strand Films and others was available as a model to those involved in film at Dartington.

Awareness of the developing film culture characterised as the Documentary Film movement, by those working at Dartington, an institution concerned with education, could have come in a number of forms. We have already seen Leonard's interest in film and he is after all somewhere in the centre of everything that goes on at this time. We have the growing record films and developing passion of George Bennett. There is the work of the WEA and the Newton Abbot Film society. Mark Tobey and Dicky Odlin, both artists and teachers at the school, shoot film and perhaps shift the focus towards the school. Grierson had reportedly visited Dartington as early as 1932, Also in 1932, prior to William Hunter forming the Dartington Hall Film Unit within the school, the two younger daughters of Robert Flaherty, Frances and Monica were amongst its pupils. Robert Flaherty could have been an influence on how film could be conceived and constructed.

107 Community Video Tape No. 5A, John Lane interview Rachel Baker 1972
In 1931 Robert Flaherty had come over to Europe and was commissioned by John Grierson, at the time working for the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit, to shoot a number of shorts for a series of films on Industrial Britain. Grierson's admiration of Flaherty did not blind him to Flaherty's extravagant use of film. Grierson wanted to acclimatise him to the way things were done in the financially tight industrial set up of EMB Film unit (by comparison to the budgets Flaherty had worked with on his previous films: Nanook of the North and Moana). Grierson assigned him to accompany Basil Wright on location in Devon. Wright was shooting sequences for The country comes to Town on farms in the county. While I do not know if this included Dartington (I suspect not) it could be possible that the experience influenced Flaherty's decision to send his daughters to school at Dartington. Basil Wright recalls the experience:

What, however, I can remember is the soft careful and tactful manner in which, over a number of days' shooting he (as it were) lent his wonderful eyes. He never said "Look how wonderful, you must shoot that!" what he did was, almost as if in passing, to comment on the play of light on the fields and woods and the distant landscape, or on certain movements of horses or cattle, or even on the way a lane twisted between hedges to reveal the half-seen gable of a house. It is almost impossible to explain his way of seeing things in this manner, and how he, often in an undertone, conveyed it to you. I would certainly say that in those few days he enriched my understanding of looking at a thing and people in terms of movie in a way which ten million dollars couldn't buy..... I have never known a man with such an eye.

Flaherty working as a prestigious cameraman subsequently shot sequences on pottery and glass blowing in the Midlands, the Saltash Bridge and Docks in Plymouth. His filming caused Grierson some concern for its seeming lack of direction but mostly for its excessive use of film. Flaherty's footage nevertheless produced some of the most memorable sequences in the final film, which was made: Industrial Britain. The film was not edited by Flaherty and also contains much footage shot by Grierson himself. Paul Rotha believes the resulting film along with Grierson's own film Drifters were the most successful films to have been produced by EMB. Stephen Tallents, Director of the EMB, said:

I always thought the magnificently photographed Industrial Britain, with its vivid shots of steel-workers (shot by Grierson) and potters and glass-blowers and its closing portrayal of a ship outward bound with the exports of Britain, as moving as any that the unit in those days yielded

Perhaps it is not insignificant to note that sequences shot for Industrial Britain were edited into a one reel silent film called The English Potter by Marion Grierson, John's sister, which was subsequently distributed to schools. Educational, films known as classroom films were a new and developing aspect of the general British documentary movement. This became the focus of William Hunter's 1934 Dartington Hall Film Unit.

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Nevertheless Flaherty's daughters were part of the Dartington community and involved with the film making activities centred on the school in 1931. Polly Church a pupil at the Dartington School from 1928, recalls watching a film produced by her school friend Frances Flaherty on the making of her father's next big project *Man of Aran*. This film is not mentioned in any other sources and if it exists may have been her unrelated home-movie. Robert Flaherty's way of making films was singular. He is cited as both an inspiration and an example of how it could no longer be done, by John Grierson.

In the first place one may not — whatever one's difference in theory — be disrespectful of a great artist and a great teacher. Flaherty taught documentary to create a theme out of natural observation. He brought to it for the first time a colossal patience in the assembly of effects. And this was necessary before the discursive travelogue could become a dramatic — or dialectical- analysis of event.

It is of course reasonable for later generation[s] of film-makers to want a documentary tougher, more complex, colder and more classical, than the romantic documentary of Flaherty. It is fitting that it should want a documentary in which both material and theme are found in our own social organisation and not in literary idyll. But there are considerations one much watch carefully. The first one is that Flaherty was born an explorer, and that is where his talent is: to be accepted on its own ground. It would be foolish as Professor Saintsbury once remarked, to complain of a pearl that lacks the virtue of a pomegranate.  

Flaherty's way was to spend extensive amounts of time observing and filming his subject and then to construct the film from material shot.

With Flaherty it became an absolute principle that the story must be taken from the location, and that it should be (what he considers) the essential story of the location. His drama, therefore, is a drama of days and nights, of the round of the year's seasons, of the fundamental fights which give his people sustenance, or make their community life possible, or build up the dignity of the tribe.  

In 1932 Gaumont-British commissioned *Man of Aran*, in an unusual move by British commercial cinema, to produce a big budget documentary on the Aran Islands off Ireland. His film was destined for commercial theatrical release and a major criticism of his work has been his tendency to dramatise or even invent sequences. For example the practice of hunting basking sharks on the isle of Aran had died out many years before he arrived, but he re-introduced it to provide a dramatic sequence in *Man of Aran*. John Grierson was a defender of the final film and Flaherty's way of doing things:

...some of us can make do with a thousand pounds on a production, and we buy our independence accordingly. Flaherty's method involves the larger backing of the commercial cinema. He has of necessity to obey its rules. These rules are not always articulated but they are understood. Whatever Flaherty's *carte blanche* on the Aran Islands, the controlling factor, you may take it, was that he did not want to let his masters down. This factor was undoubtedly responsible for making his film more sensational and more spectacular at the expense of the elements — possibly deeper elements — which

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100 Ibid pp152 - 153
111 Forsyth Hardy. Ed. *Grierson on Documentary*. Faber paperback, London .1979

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might have been included... I am all for congratulating Flaherty on pushing the
commercial film brilliantly to its limit. I am all for commending his fortitude in yet another
sickening encounter with commercialism. 112

The Flaherty family were together on the island during the summer of 1932 when Man of Aran
was in production and if Polly Church is correct it seems that his daughter was keen to exercise
her skills. The Archive papers at Dartington indicate that Flaherty made a gift of a tripod to the
Dartington School around this time. It does not take a great leap of imagination to suggest that
the presence of his daughters Frances and Monica in the school contributed to the general
awareness of what was going on in film culture at the time.

Ricky Leacock went on later to work as cameraman on Louisiana Story for Robert Flaherty in
1944. One cannot but make some connection between Leacock and Flaherty's daughters who
were his classmates at the Dartington School if only to suggest a means of introduction to the
great man.

The first time I ever met Mr. Flaherty was in 1936 just after I had completed the Banana
film. He was visiting his daughters, Franny and Monica at our school and he had a 16mm
camera on a tripod and he was filming blond Brenda McDermott brushing her hair to dry it
in the sunlight. Fine, but he went on and on and on... I decided he must be mad. What on
earth could be so complicated about a young woman brushing her hair? In Louisiana I
began to learn. Only began. 113

So Flaherty is established as having been at Dartington and what is more shooting film there.
The tantalising question of what happened to this film remains unanswered. It certainly does not
appear in the material viewed at Dartington Archive or TSWFTA. Did his observations of Flaherty
filming have any influence on his style or indeed did Leacock have any influence on Hunter? In
an interview in 2002 Leacock recalled first meeting Mr and Mrs Robert Flaherty in William
Hunter's study at Dartington. Leacock recalls important ideas he picked up later from Flaherty on
the use of camera and how to make films:

...it was not until I worked as cameraman on Robert Flaherty's Louisiana Story that I
started to learn from him, the complexity of this process. We were a tiny crew, most
unprofessional. We shot, day after day, for 14 months more often than not, just the three of
us, Mr. & Mrs. Flaherty, she with a Leica, he and I often with two Arriflex 35mm cameras,
recently liberated from Hitler's Wehrmacht, and sometimes an assistant. We shot and shot.
If something appealed to us, never mind that it wasn't in the script, film it. A beautiful cloud,
swallows wheeling through the sky preparing to migrate, a water-lily pad with a drop of
water on it in perfect light, a spider completing the building of its web. Often the camera in
motion or panning and tilting, no rules except look, look through the camera lens, search.

Leacock's work at Dartington ended with the filming he did on the Galapagos Islands. In his clear
picture of his career, reviewed in 2002 in an interview at his home in France, he sees Dartington
as a pleasurable time where he began to do what he was going to do anyway: make films. There
is no doubt that the particular construction of the Film Unit at the time he was at school afforded
opportunities that even the most determined aspiring filmmaker would be hard pressed to find at


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the start of his career. It is perhaps fair to comment that his presence at the school worked constructively for him and the school.

Much has been written on this time and the kind of work and ideas that constituted the development of the documentary form; Paul Rotha for example tells us that:

The authentic origins of the international documentary approach lay of course in Robert J. Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North*, made in the Hudson Bay Territory in 1920-21, financed by Revillon Freres, the New York furriers. It not only recorded Eskimo life, admittedly with some reconstruction, but unconsciously perhaps brought a creative art into its observation. The actual term 'documentary' was not used until 1926, when Grierson found it to describe Flaherty's second film, *Moana*. So much has been written about Flaherty's work that it is pointless to analyse and describe it again here.

In the early 1920s, on the other side of the world, the Soviet film-makers under stimulation of Lenin's recognition of the cinema and the direction of Lunacharsky, Education Commissar, were becoming aware of the powerful social and political value of the actuality cinema. The work of Dziga-Vertov and Esther Schub made use of newsreel and other authentically shot footage in many early films. The next milestones in the documentary story were in France and Germany. They were Alberto Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (1926) and Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a City* (1927). Both these films made a deep impact on the young British documentary people.

The Newton Abbot WEA film screenings of the New Learning experiment demonstrate the kind of films being seen by those interested at Dartington. They include some seminal works often cited as influential on Grierson and his 'tyros' of the Documentary movement. *Drifters*, for example, made by Grierson himself in 1929, is the first and one of the most successful films to come out of the legendary Empire Marketing Board film unit. As well as being influential as films, what of the ways in which they were made? Rotha gives us a vivid picture of the conditions of the EMB cutting rooms:

By all normal reckoning in the film trade, the EMB Film unit had an absurdly small budget on which to function, and ludicrously inadequate equipment and premises. In the early months, the Unit had no editing-machine or film splicer; film was read by eye and cut and joined by hand. Camera equipment consisted of an old hand-turned silent Debrie, and two small hand-held cameras, a DeVry and an Eyemo, both of which scratched negative like...\[115\]

If we compare conditions to those at Dartington in 1931, if only in facilities, Dartington, while having 16mm equipment (at that time 16mm was known as 'substandard') not 35mm equipment like the EMB, compares very favourably. Perhaps it is not just facile to compare Sir Stephen Tallents, as head of EMB to Leonard Elmhirst at the centre of the Dartington Experiment. Would it then be reasonable to compare Tallents' film aficionado John Grierson with Leonard's 'recording machine' George Bennett, or perhaps more appropriately from 1933, to William Hunter, a man keen to exploit opportunities and to develop new forms in the cause of education, to form a view of the differences. Differences are obvious; Grierson's film *Drifters* cost slightly less than

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\[113\] *A Search for the Feeling of Being There*. Richard Leacock, May 20 1997

\[114\] Ibid p.17

£2000, whereas the entire budget for the early Cine Group in 1934 was only £400. The overarching perceptions and visions differ. But around the developing documentary movement as around the *Dartington Experiment* people were stumbling about in what now would be regarded as very primitive conditions. But they both had wider aspirations.

We have seen how Dartington Hall Film Unit films were viewed and critiqued by Arthur Elton and John Grierson. John Wales' move from Dartington to Rothe's Realist Company is no doubt a result and possibly a facilitation of this contact although the Elmhirst's contact with Julian Huxley through the establishment of PEP\(^{116}\) (Political and Economic Planning) could well have been the main connection. We have seen how the Arts Survey Factual Film Report brought closer contact between Dartington and eminent figures such as Paul Rothe. Leonard's connection with Julian Huxley also extended to a small investment by Leonard in a series of films to be produced by Strand in 1937 *Animal Kingdom* based on Regents Park Zoo. In 1950 his investment which was in the form of a loan to the production company was repaid.\(^{117}\)

\(^{116}\) Political and Economic Planning, an independent body formed to collate and provide access to information on industry and social policy formed around 1931. (Deduction from audiotape labelled 'PEP'. DHA.)

\(^{117}\) DHA Box LKE General 27 Strand Films
Documentary Film and Education

Dartington's main objectives were ambitious but not solely focused on film and it is perhaps erroneous to compare them with the underlying objectives of the Documentary Movement. However, the use of film as a socially useful tool derived from philosophical ideas does bear comparison with the overall aims of the Dartington Experiment.

It is worth recalling that the British documentary group began not so much in affection for film *per se* as in affection for national education. If I am to be counted as the founder and leader of the movement, its origins certainly lay in sociological rather than aesthetic aims. Many of us after 1918 (and particularly in the United States) were impressed by the pessimism that had settled on Liberal theory. We noted the conclusion of such men as Walter Lippmann, that because the citizen, under modern conditions, could not know everything about everything all the time, democratic citizenship was therefore impossible. We set to thinking how a dramatic apprehension of the modern scene might solve the problem, and we turned to the new wide-reaching instruments of radio and cinema as necessary instruments in both the practice of government and the enjoyment of citizenship. 

Dorothy Elmhirst was aware, as was Leonard, of the work of Dewey, on education in life. Dorothy attended a series of lectures in 1921 at her New School for Social Research by Dewey who Michael Young identifies as the inspiration behind Lincoln and many other Schools. Mark Kidel reports that Dorothy's three children had attended the Lincoln school in New York prior to Dartington. While the focus at Dartington was on a small-scale community, this was seen as trying to find human and practical solutions to very broad social problems, and education was in the middle of it.

The documentary film was ... an essentially British development. Its characteristic was the idea of social use, and there, I believe, is the only reason why our British documentary persisted when other aesthetic or aesthetically movements in the same direction were either fitful or failed. The key to our persistence is that the documentary film was created to fulfil a need, and it has prospered because that need was not only real but wide. If it came to develop in England there were three good reasons for it: It permitted the national talent for emotional understatement to operate in a medium not given to understatement. It allowed an adventure in the arts to assume the respectability of a public service. The third reason was the Empire Marketing Board and a man called Tallents. 

Ian Aitken has explored the influence of American Scientific Naturalism and the teachings of John Dewey on John Grierson's world-view. While such considerations expand beyond the scope of this enquiry, the common ground implied points to some similarities in philosophical underpinning derived, at least in part, from Dewey. The Documentary movement, through Grierson, had its sights set clearly on social change through broadening the educational franchise. Though the mechanisms through which change might be brought about were posited within the filmic form

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118 Ed. Forsyth Hardy. *Grierson on Documentary* . 1966 p.207
120 Mark Kidel. *Beyond the Classroom.* Green Books 1990. p16
that emerged, it did not start a school, concern itself with practical regeneration of rural industry and farming, as Dartington did; ideas of education to bring about social change were central and developed through a new form of mass-communication.

Yes there was the runaway from the synthetic world of the contemporary cinema, but also, as I remember it, did documentary present a reaction from the art world of the early and middle 1920s – Bloomsbury, Left Bank, T.S.Eliot, Clive Bell and all – by people with every reason to know it well. Likewise if it was a return to ‘reality’, it was a return not unconnected with Clydeside Movements, ILP’s, the Great Depression, not to mention our Lord Keynes, the London School of Economics, Political and Economic Planning and such. Documentary was born and matured on the bandwagon of uprising social documentary everywhere; in Western Europe and the United States, as well as in Britain. That is to say, it had an uprising majority social movement, which is to say a logical sponsorship of public money behind it.123

The Dartington Experiment and the Documentary Film Movement were pioneering new ideas and enacting in different ways and on different scales, social and practical solutions. It is perhaps fair to say they were going through similar things at the same time. A salient point Rotha makes does bring back into focus the value of comparison.

A significant observation may be made on the above brief background to documentary development outside Britain. Neither Flaherty’s Nanook nor the Soviet films were financed in the normal way of commercial film production. The first was intended as prestige publicity; the second served the needs of the State. This idea for finding finance with which to make films other than from commercial sources was to influence the whole of documentary’s future, especially in Britain.124

At Dartington the enactment of ideals was clearly afforded by Dorothy’s fortune, but the need for regulation of expenditure aimed at commercial sustainability was also a consideration that bore down on all the experimental enterprises and the work with film was no exception. The Dartington Hall Film Unit of 1934 – 1939 drew from a small grant from the Trustees, but actually made money through its commercial operations.

Rachel Low has noted that while the documentary movement is seen as ‘Britain’s greatest contribution to the development of the cinema’, ‘it was only part of a seething mass of activity outside the commercial feature studios’.125 She writes:

For everywhere people were making teaching films, advertising, current affairs, and propaganda for everything from the Conservative and Unionist Party to teetotalism, films of exploration, abstract films and many others as well as the documentary as it is commonly understood. But documentaries, advertising films and films of exploration were all used indiscriminately as school films, and natural history films intended for the classroom might well turn up in the cinemas. Even documentary turns out not to be the simple matter it had appeared when the term “the creative treatment of reality” had been coined to describe it.126

125 Rachel Low, Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s, George Allen and Unwin, London 1979. p.1
126 ibid p.4
William Hunter of the Dartington Hall Film Unit contributed an article to *Sight and Sound* (date not traced but thought to be shortly before his death in 1941) *Crisis in Production*. In it he argues for prevention of an otherwise inevitable decline in production by support for independent and small-scale producers, such as Dartington. The article is one of the few published sources of Hunter's work that provides some insight into his thinking with respect to the direction of the Dartington Hall Film Unit. He begins by defining the work teachers have used:

The sources on which teachers have increasingly drawn during the past five or six years for their supply of classroom films may be grouped under five headings:

1. Government propagandist organisations, like the old Empire Marketing Board, the GPO Film Unit, the Empire Film Library.

2. Commercially sponsored film, different from the first category in that they are mainly concerned to demonstrate the excellence of a particular product or to encourage its use. Good examples of this group are the Petroleum Film Bureau, or the British Commercial Gas Association. Both these categories have the great merit of being available free of charge.

3. Large scale professional production of classroom films. Gaumont British Instructional, both in the quantity of its output, is the outstanding member of this category.

4. Smaller scale "semi-professional" production. By this I mean, for example, the Film Unit at Dartington Hall: the films of W.H. George or G.B.D. Salt. Production is on 16mm, instead of 35 mm., and the work is largely unpaid or privately financed.

5. Spasmodic amateur production. This group covers an enormous field, most of which must be generally unknown. I would include in it the casual records of teachers' travels, or films made by teachers in despair for any other source of supply for the material they need. The output is spasmodic, irregular, and uncertain and handicapped by lack of means and technical knowledge. But it may well be the only serious supply of teaching films in the future.\(^{127}\)

The article concerns itself mainly with the classroom films and the kinds of production models operating at the time. The 'crisis' of the title is in the need for more classroom films and the lack of any production infrastructure. He stresses the need for support to be made available to small units and post-war planning to take place since:

Some non-government work not directly connected with the war effort is of course going on, but it is clear that by and large there will be fewer films in the future than there have been in the past. As an important source of supply, the future outlook (after the war as well) is, to say the least, precarious. The future of large scale professional production could also, I think, on present evidence, be described as precarious. G. B. Instructional, for example, have in the past five years produced an admirable collection of specifically teaching films. They are an invaluable beginning. But teachers need hundreds, even thousands, more films in geography, history, biology, science, civics, and so on.\(^{128}\)

In this we can see some of Hunter's concerns and his influence on the direction of filmmaking activity at Dartington towards the production of classroom films. We can also see, through his common sense analysis of the situation, how his conclusions herald the thoughts arrived at by the later *Factual Film* report of the Arts Survey. These debates and discussions were in the thick of the crisis in the wider documentary movement. The 1945 conference findings in turn led to the post-war re-establishment of the Dartington Hall Film Unit as a commercial producer of

\(^{127}\) William Hunter, *Crisis in Production*, *Sight and Sound*, (Copy from Darlington Hall Archive, date not traced but thought to be shortly before William Hunter's death in 1941) pp23-25.

\(^{128}\) Ibid
Rachael Low identifies the tension between teaching or classroom film producers and those at the centre of the documentary film movement. In defining the grouping at the centre, she writes:

"Their work in fact overlapped other fields — instructional, travel, educational, news and entertainment films. But they were a group because they considered themselves to be a group, indeed an elite, membership of which was virtually by invitation only. Marion Grierson's films were really travelogues, but she was a member; Massingham and Len Lye, especially the latter, were making films of a totally different type, yet were taken up by the group almost as honorary members; and Lotte Reiniger films like the early attempts to use the Moholy-Nagy film, must be included as attempts by the Unit to use these talents for their own cause. Many of the G-BI films had more social content than these, yet Bruce Woolfe and Mary Field were excluded from the charmed circle with something like ferocity. Andrew Buchanan, who himself claimed, and was claimed by Oliver Bell and others, to be a documentary film-maker, was simply not acceptable as one of the boys."^129

Paul Rotha, very much 'one of the boys', who includes the following exchange in Documentary Diary illustrates the overlap and confusion between the distinctive forms of film, their various functions and the intentions and positions of the producers in 1931. A Mr Dyer had written an article in the Newcastle Chronicle in praise of Grierson's film Drifters. The article:

"It had been written for Education: Elementary, Secondary and Technical, the official journal of the Association of Education Committees. The Editor accepted the piece but returned a proof to Mr Dyer commenting. 'I showed your article to one of the people who has been foremost in advocating the use of cinema in schools.' This anonymous film educator is then quoted as follows:

"More serious is the question of Grierson and the EMB. What Grierson has done, badly needed doing. The trouble is that in my view he has done it thoroughly badly. I saw Drifters at the London Film Society and everybody I spoke to there afterwards, judging purely from the point of view of technique, thought it was a very childish imitation of the Russian manner that contrived to obscure without being original or vivid. I had looked forward to the showing but thanks to this pseudo-Russian manner, I cannot now do so; and may add that I am a profound admirer of the real Russian film. Grierson calls his film, a film for schools. Whom did he consult in making it with a knowledge of schools? He has behind him the money of the EMB and the publicity of the Imperial Institute showings. It seems to me to be shameful that he should be allowed to produce at his own sweet will without, so far as I am aware, consulting anybody who is interested in the subject from the school end. For these reasons, I personally deplore any praise given to his work at the present time, however imaginative and enterprising it may be, as I think that both administratively and artistically, it is along entirely the wrong lines and is likely to remain there until he and the EMB come down to real life and consult with people with knowledge about schools' (footnote: Quoted from a letter to John Grierson from Basil Wright, 20th February 1931. The former was in Canada at the time. It was found that the letter had been written by a commercial film producer interested to explore the educational film market.)^130

129 Rachel Low, Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s, George Allen and Unwin, London 1979. p.160
130 Paul Rotha, Documentary Diary, Secker & Warburg, London 1973 pp.30-31
An important feature of the thirties was the advent of sound in film. Initially sound film developed using cumbersome and expensive equipment in late twenties through mainstream producers such as Warner Brothers, RCA and Western Electric in the US and the very clumsy Visaton in the UK. Sound changed a whole generation's perception of the function of film. Grierson and the documentary boys were eager to attach its realist qualities to their films. Much experimentation with non-synchronous sound was done in such films as Night Mail (GPO Film Unit, March 1936). Housing Problems by Elton and Anstey 1935 as a film using recorded interviews at its core, is credited as an early pioneer in synchronous sound in documentary, and its use to widen the constituency of social reportage.

The British filmmakers led by Grierson had learned well the Russian editing techniques and applied them to their own brand of storytelling and propaganda. Editing styles with the advent of sound changed from a crafting of visual rhythmic story telling to actual, (or literal) story telling, driven by the voice of interviewees and commentator. Images were cut to illustrate what was being said, rather than for their own inherent visual narrative, building sequences and the meaning. While there was not a wholesale abandonment of visual integrity, the effect of sound certainly introduced new possibilities that were incorporated into documentary styles and forms.

Elton’s comment in his Letter to Leonard from 1940, “The films tend to be edited on the old Russian school by which evenness or contrast of movement from shot to shot was often more important than lucidity. The whole scenario and editing policy of your films requires overhaul,” demonstrates the change in attitudes brought about by the development of film construction caused by sound. The word, the text, the explanation re-emerged in a position of dominance. In the US at this time from 1934 the March of Time newsreels exploited and used sound/narration in this way which influenced much subsequent development of film forms.

The importance of sound was not lost on Dartington filmmakers as is evident in Bennett’s trip to the US in 1933 to investigate the best sound system to purchase. It is possible the trip was a ploy to address his personal problems; he nonetheless undertook research on 16mm sound systems being developed there by Bell and Howell. Although the Unit’s later brochures advertise the availability of sound film production, most of the films made between 1934 and 1949 it seems were silent.

In the end the Dartington Hall Film Unit seems both a significant contribution to the milieu that was the documentary movement and a missed opportunity on a number of levels. Victim of conflicting aspirations, the war, ill health, poor economic advice, it should be recognised for its small contribution to the British Documentary culture at a time when new forms were emerging.
Experimental forms of film

Dartington has a just reputation of a centre for experimentation and patronage of the Arts. Rachel Harrison\(^{134}\) has explored the strong argument that Dorothy Elmhirst should be regarded as an important contributor to the development of state patronage in this country. Indeed the work undertaken on behalf of the Trustees on the *Arts Enquiry* during the early forties (including the report on Factual Film)\(^{130}\) is responsible for, or at least strongly linked to, the birth of the Arts Council of Great Britain in the late forties. Given this climate of far-sighted support and the experimental nature of much that went on at Dartington in social, rural, industrial work as well as in the arts, why was there little successful experimental work done with film as art? How does this question position William Hunter's 1934 aspirations?

I cannot help thinking that films specifically intended to advertise a new, experimental and progressive undertaking such as this must themselves be new, experimental and progressive. Film is such a new and ungainly form of expression that there is no preconceived mould in which expression can be cast. The forms have to be discovered.\(^{136}\)

Perhaps it is useful to consider a separation between the seemingly interchangeable terms *experimental* and *avant-garde* and their operations in the context film as art.

In the fields of painting, dance, theatre, ballet, pottery and music, the artists who came to Dartington brought with them a practice and a reputation. Mark Tobey, Margaret Barr, Michael Chekhov, Kurt Jooss, Bernard Leach and Hans Oppenheim for example were established artists in their own respective fields before they came to Dartington. The field of experimental film however was not so well established, nor were there so many practitioners to draw from. The eminent artists in other fields also brought with them in varying degrees the respect of the Elmhirsts and with this came varying degrees of autonomy and freedom to practise their art. Film, as a practice was, on the other hand almost exclusively home-grown. The people interested in film came to do something else at the beginning, and developed their skills and interests within the Dartington establishment which clearly saw film as a form of record, a source of information and not as a form of creative expression with its own aesthetic framework. In this context no one had the established practice or the power to develop the expensive form of film in this way.

Nevertheless, there was serious support for the arts at Dartington. There was also an active film culture in the form of a Film Society, links with the WEA using film in education, and from 1933, starting with an amateur Cine Group ending in 1949 with a professional Dartington Hall Film Unit, there was organised film production work at Dartington.

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\(^{136}\) William Hunter undated 1934–T. Arts Film. DHA
In considering the question of avant-garde or experimental film at Dartington, an initial response might be that film was seen and used primarily as record and then as extension of specific educational needs in Classroom Films. Film as Art was in the thirties a fairly remote question. Mainstream cinema, its distribution systems and its commercially driven exploitation of commercial potential led the development and drove the public taste for films. The New Learning group of 1932 traded on this taste for film, as well as its relative novelty in rural Devon, to attract its audiences to what turned out to be educational screening. The screenings of films at the Hall ranged across the most up-to-date material including *Battleship Potemkin*, *Man with a Movie Camera*, *Berlin, Turksib* as well as the pioneering work of EMB, the GPO Film Unit and Grierson.

In the first instance the reason why film played a part in the Dartington Experiment at all was Leonard Elmhirst’s enthusiasm for photography. From the beginning he commissioned film records to be kept of the re-construction of the medieval buildings and new modernist buildings of the Dartington Hall Estate. Leonard believed the *Dartington Experiment* should have results that could be examined by others. He attempted and to a limited extent achieved an aesthetic sensibility with his photographic work, seen in his photograph albums particularly his work with a Leica camera purchased through William Hunter in the early thirties. Yet film and photography were valued by him primarily for their informational – documentary – function as records and outcomes of other experiments. The commission or delegation of maintaining this film record fell to a manservant inherited with his new wife and fortune: George Bennett. Bennett was a sensitive man who under Leonard’s guidance developed a passion for photography and film. His sensitivity was perhaps the root of his personal problems, which manifested itself in poor organisational skills, difficult inter-personal relations with his departmental superiors within the brilliant milieu of the early *Dartington Experiment*, and his recourse to alcohol. While Bennett was the most prolific film recorder his sensibilities and servant disposition did not extend to innovative practices in his film making, Ricky Leacock later recalled of Bennett,

> My view is and was, that Elmhirst was building his tombstone with film and George Bennett was a recording machine rather than a film maker. 137

We are nevertheless indebted to Bennett for a great deal of the material that survives from the beginnings of the *Dartington Experiment*. While this material exhibits development of limited cinematographic skills it does not go much beyond pragmatic recording of what was being repaired built or worked on at the time.

Bennett took part as technician, in a New Learning experiment with the WEA, screening films in rural villages in 1931. The report of this experiment contains a small number of still photographs. There are predictable images of locations, audience and village WEA group members but also a number from the Liverton village group’s production of Peer Gynt as a play and, as the caption explains, ‘an experimental film’ (see page 35). This film regrettably seems to have been lost, but it

137 E-mail letter Ricky Leacock to David Hilton 19th Sept 2002
suggests willingness at the time to try new forms of creative expression. The images, which survive in the report, are of costumed children and actors in the woods around Liverton. It is possible that the term 'experimental' used here could simply mean something that was not expected to produce a complete work, in which case one would not expect the film to survive. Perhaps the more so if Bennett was the unsophisticated camera man.


Those who had some form of professional or peripheral contact with the Elmhirsts would include filmmakers: Robert Flaherty, John Grierson, Arthur Elton, Mary Field and Paul Rotha.

Of those eminent artists who worked on the estate it is true in most cases that they came with a practice and left with the same practice, having had the opportunity and support to practice. Notable exceptions include Mark Tobey whose 'white writing' developed during his time at Dartington and took him to new levels of achievement in his own right. It is tempting to speculate on the importance of Dartington to Tobey, but it could also be said that he may well have developed his personal style anyway and Dartington's only role was in providing financial support and a job for a time. Indeed while Tobey was a friend of the Elmhirsts, he was after a brief period in 1931 more an outsider to the Dartington orthodoxy.

Tantalisingly Tobey was a keen film recorder, making travel home-movie records of his visits to Mexico in 1931, for example, and of certain craft activities on the Dartington Estate. He was a member of the first Cine Group in 1933 and his filming skills were much appreciated by Leonard Elmhirst. From a transcript of interviews conducted by Richard Thomas in 1973 whilst watching old 1930s material Leonard recalls with affection the film work of Tobey:

And then there was another wonderful set by Mark Tobey, the artist. He took a series on farm crafts in Devon, thatching and .... And so on and so forth. Afraid it's all gone. But you know the war was a terrible time to keep things at all". 

"Well you see the bit about the school is sufficient to show the wide variety of experiences the kids had, along with the classroom teaching they had. This is very good because it
was the base on which the first prospectus – we were heavily criticised and it starts with the words, the sentence: ‘This school is for adventure’ how people laughed at us, but you can see they were adventuring.

This might be a Tobey film, now we will see what the artist’s eye gives us.\(^{138}\)

The transcript demonstrates Leonard’s concern with what might be seen or demonstrated by the footage he is watching. He is looking through the film to the subject depicted not at the film as an art form. His praise or censure during these recorded sessions was reserved for the skill or otherwise of the cameraman in showing the subject clearly.

...the photographer doesn’t seem to be able to concentrate on anything does he... He has no eye for making a film does he? (RT: It’s impossible to recognise who?) ...Absolutely. Hopeless, hopeless. All you know is that it’s 1935. There’s LK [himself] making a speech...\(^{139}\)

...but this looks like an amateur attempt, doesn’t it? It’ll be a Bennett photo [film] and won’t be very good, never mind...\(^{140}\)

Surprisingly, with the wealth of innovative artistic talent on the estate at this time, particularly in the form of Mark Tobey with his evident interest in film, there is no evidence of anyone looking at film as art if indeed they did at all, after the ‘experimental film’ of Liverton.

Richard (Dicky) Odlin was also a member of the early Cine Group but there is little available information on his film work. One of the films under the title ‘Early Arts’ now held by TSWA film Archive contains a few images of an Odlin ‘Alice in Wonderland’ puppet production and possibly his famous Josephine Baker puppet. There is also a film entitled Puppet Making, which is exactly what it says on the tin: a demonstration of how to build a puppet. Again this footage seems to be record of activity, events and objects rather than expressive or experimental use of film as an art form in its own right.

The list of other artists demonstrates the founders’, principally Dorothy Elmhirst’s, support for the arts, which was considerable.\(^{141}\) Mark Tobey seems a rare example of someone who actually developed new forms of the arts while at Dartington. Alas this seems to not have been in considering film as an art form, or in any interrogation of ideas of Art Film.

A figure more central to my concerns perhaps is Ricky Leacock. Unlike George Bennett, Leacock was a filmmaker who had the opportunity to develop his art while he was a pupil at the Dartington Hall School. Alan Rosenthal, when commenting on Leacock’s filmmaker partner Pennebaker, tells us:

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\(^{138}\) Archive papers RT interviews LK Tape 2A Video 3/4 page 1)

\(^{139}\) Archive papers RT interviews Tape 4D p2 RT transcripts

\(^{140}\) Archive papers RT interviews Tape 4D p2 RT transcripts


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Along with the Maysles, Leacock, Terry Filgate, and a few others, Pennebaker can be considered as one of the founding fathers of American Cinema verite. His first big break is often cited as his job as cameraman on Robert Flaherty's 'Louisiana Story' 1944/5. Leacock takes as his formative experience the watching of *Turksib* by Turin and how this gave him a feeling of 'being there' that he tried to emulate in his work. He achieved this relatively successfully at the age of 14 in his first film *Canary Bananas* made with his classmates Noel Lawrence and Polly Church at Dartington school. The film is clearly derivative of *Turksib* in its use of montage with staccato images growing successively larger and more dramatic, inter-cut with titles to give a drama to events. The earlier Estate Cine Group had attempted to produce films of the work of different of departments on the estate, but Leacock's *Canary Bananas* demonstrates a sense of style and visual progression arguably more sophisticated than earlier films.

The style of filming and editing in the film is concerned with representation of a feeling of 'being there', a concern he sees as being consistently refined throughout his life. This focus on the clear representation of reality and the experiencing of it through film could be argued made a considerable contribution to the filmmaking style adopted by the Dartington Film Unit directed by his teacher William Hunter. The earliest edited films of the Film Unit seem to be the Camp films, produced by Hunter during 1934-5 incorporating earlier footage shot by Bennett. Leacock's *Canary Bananas* was made in 1935 possibly before the completion of *No Work on Sunday* produced it is believed in 1935-6. There is a marked development of style from the Camp film to *No Work on Sunday* which could be attributed to Leacock's work on *Canary Bananas* and its influence on Hunter. This is however speculation.

While there is no doubt that he was part of innovative practices in documentary filmmaking, of primary significance to this enquiry is his early work with the Dartington Hall Film Unit. His earliest work is produced at a time when the Dartington Hall Film Unit and William Hunter were also developing ideas and skills in film production. Leonard Elmhirst in 1973 while watching school film from the 1930's recalls:

> Leacock! was the name of the man Ricky Leacock who's now professor of cinematography at M.I.T. Boston and who's been working on a unit for schools.

> He was at Dartington. He's the boy who at 13 years old got a chance to take a film. This may be it. Never stopped, never stopped filming.143

The case of Ricky Leacock is perhaps one of a pupil emerging into the film world rather than influence coming from it into Dartington. Ricky Leacock subsequently became professor of film at

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142 Rosenthal The New documentary in Action University of California press. London. 1971 pp 190. Upon leaving Dartington at the age of 17 Leacock shot the Galápagos film for David Lack who was also working at the school Film Unit, Galápagos and Darwin's development of ideas of evolution had been an interest of Leacock’s for some time before the actual expedition. On his way back from the Galápagos to study Physics at Cambridge he decided instead to study at Harvard then joined the US Army as a combat cameraman. His subsequent film credits include "Primary" 1960, "Crisis" 1963, "Monterey Pop", 1967, produced by Drew Associates.

143 Archive papers RT interviews Tape 4D page 1 RT transcripts) 1973
MIT and at the time of writing is retired from teaching but still an active filmmaker working with Digital Video format.**

The existence of a Film Unit at Dartington while the longest running of all school units at the time was not unique. In 1926 Ronald Gow of the County High School for Boys at Altrincham produced a film called *People of the Axe* and a three-reel film for the Scout Movement in 1928 called *The Man Who changed His Mind*. W. H. George described as 'film master' produced the *Outer Isles, Clouds and Rain*, *Life in Ponds and Streams* and *The Tides* with pupils at the William Rhodes Modern School of Chesterfield where at his suggestion in May 1932 Stuart Legg produced the documentary film *The New Generation*. Uddingston Grammar School in Lanarkshire produced *Preparatory Class* – an anti-war film and a road-safety film called *Safety Across.*

Under the direction of geography teacher William Hunter the Dartington Hall Film Unit concentrated its energies on the production of classroom films. These films were specifically designed to be used by teachers. They were in the main silent and afforded visual discussion points that could be expanded and explained by the teacher. The alternatives prior to the development of this form were appropriated industrial or cinematic travel films, designed for other general audiences and sometimes were completely inappropriate for teaching. The main producer of teaching/educational film was British Instructional Films based in Harlow. Mary Field, who made the *Secrets of Nature* series for BIF (later G-BI both led by Bruce Woolfe) was known and admired by the Dartington filmmakers.

Classroom films or teaching films constituted a small part of the documentary movement and the general atmosphere of the broadening educational franchise. John Grierson's ideas of social change through access to information – education – through which democratic processes could operate was broadly echoed in the Elmhirst's ideas. Their focus, supported of course by Dorothy's millions, was on reform and regeneration founded upon the development of the individual. Grierson had sights set on an education wrought through the mass media. The Elmhirsts, to begin with at least, had their sights set on education of the individual by participation, their Dartington estate providing a sort of extended classroom. Dartington was certainly a centre of support for the arts – in practice specific artists rather than an inclusive idea of the arts, it was also a social laboratory, where experiment extended to all enterprises, but all enterprises also had to consider their financial survival.

Film activity was no exception and the survival of a Film Unit depended upon its being self-financing. Excepting a period of a few years in the late thirties, the Unit never achieved financial autonomy. In relation to other expenditure in and on the arts at Dartington throughout its period of operation the Film Unit drew comparatively little. Operating first as an activity of the estate, then

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144 In 2003 Ricky Leacock declared his intention to re-edit the film he shot on the Galapagos Islands to illustrate Darwin's description of his first impressions of the Islands. E-mail Ricky Leacock to David Hilton Jan 2003
under the auspices of the School, it was driven by the enthusiasm and dedication of a few individuals, most notably William Hunter. Ironically in 1945 when it was decided that the Unit should become professional and larger sums of money were invested by Leonard himself, the post-war production climate, the ground on which its feasibility had been predicted, shifted and the unit closed forever after Christmas 1949.

These musings are perhaps deficient in considering support for the arts at Dartington in quite narrow terms. Indeed in broader terms the mammoth project devised and run by Dartington’s Arts Administrator, Christopher Martin, the Arts Survey had national import. Financed by the Dartington Hall Trustees and administered through PEP (Political and Economic Planning) the Arts Survey is credited as being the inspiration behind a complete re-structure of the British Film Institute. While the Arts Enquiry Report on Factual Film had impact on the structure of the BFI, its findings came at a time when the development of sound film, the proliferation of informational-educational films during the war had shifted the economic frameworks of production. It was felt that there would have to be intensive commissioning of films by Government departments and a growth in documentary and educational production. This alas did not happen and the report was felt to be out of date as soon as it was published. It does demonstrate the outward looking and grand scale of the vision — at least of enquiry — of the Dartington Trustees, the Elmhirsts.

The main reason why there was a film unit at all at Dartington was that certain specific people were interested in film. Their interest was not in art film but linked to ideas of film as record of other important social and educational experiments and documentary film making with particular concern for teaching and classroom film. The Factual Film Report for example, sponsored by Dartington Trustees, reflecting perhaps Christopher Martin and Peter Cox’s thoughts on the various forms of film, contains no mention of experimental or avant-garde film except for the following:

A number of specialised film periodicals have been published at various times, including *Close Up* (1927-33), *Cinema Quarterly* (1932-35), and *World Film News* (1936-38). All have had small but effective circulations of under 5,000; but have had little influence on the general public.\(^{146}\)

*Close Up* has been considered an important organ of the avant-garde, and will be discussed below. While the Film Unit at Dartington Hall School was certainly part of the English experimental culture with film in the thirties, fuelled by the documentary movement, it was not a place where ideas of experimental practices in film extended to the more avant-garde idea of ‘art for art’s sake’. Indeed the experimental atmosphere of the British documentary film movement was very much more in line with Dartington’s overarching ethos of education and social usefulness expressed in the Elmhirsts’ ideas of rural regeneration. There was also no one at Dartington with sufficient inclination, power or opportunity to pursue what might have been seen as a less pragmatic and socially useful interrogation of the form as an art in its own terms.

\(^{146}\) PEP. *Factual Film*, Oxford University Press, 1947 p.166
Experimental v/s avant-garde?

While a comprehensive exposition of these ideas is beyond the scope of this enquiry, it is perhaps useful to attempt some understanding of these terms and forms through an outline of activity from the 1930s.

Mike O'Prey has provided a constructive survey of activity in his anthology *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926 to 1995*. In his introduction he points to the ideas of Virginia Woolf who identified the potential of cinema within modernism to find new forms. Writing in 1926 with prophetic insight, she asks:

> How all this is to be attempted, much less achieved, no one at the moment can tell us. We get intimations only in the chaos of the streets, perhaps when some momentary assembly of colour, sound, movement suggests that here is a scene waiting a new art to be transfixed. And sometimes at the cinema, in the midst of its immense dexterity and enormous technical proficiency, the curtain parts and we behold, far off, some unknown and unexpected beauty. But it is for a moment only. For a strange thing has happened – while all the other arts were born naked, this, the youngest, has been born fully clothed. It can say everything before it has anything to say. It is as if the savage tribe, instead of finding two bars of iron to play with, had found, scattering the seashore, fiddles, flutes, saxaphones, trumpets, grand pianos by Erard and Bechstein, and had begun with incredible energy, but without knowing a note of music, to hammer and thump upon them all at the same time.

O'Prey acknowledges the impact of Soviet experiments with film and cites some seminal works that might be identified as the practice of the time. Of the 1930s he writes:

> the film-makers and films comprising an avant-garde practice were dispersed among many different types of film practices, a point registered by [Deke] Dunisberre who chose to describe avant-garde ‘attitude’ as operating in this period, rather than a fully fleshed practice as such. For example, the animator, Len Lye's work was primarily in the form of advertisements for the GPO. Norman McLaren's animation work embraced agit-prop, associated with the Scottish Communist Party, and also advertising work. On the other hand, the films involving H.D, Macpherson and others were privately funded and occupied an art-based avant-garde context. Humphrey Jennings worked for government agencies within the documentary framework until his early death on the Greek island of Poros in 1950.

Roland Cosandey contributes an illuminating exposition of the work of Kenneth Macpherson who is seen as a seminal, if forgotten, figure in what might constitute the avant-garde ‘attitude’ of the time.

> ‘...the hope of the cinema lies with the amateur’
> K. Macpherson, *Close-Up* magazine vol1 1927 p.14

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149 Ibid. p7
The activity of Kenneth Macpherson and the more or less fixed group under the Pool banner—Winifred Bryher, Robert Heming, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), Dorothy Richardson, Oswell Blakeston—is exemplary in all respects. For no other group managed to create this unique and concentrated combination of all (or almost all) the various forms which constituted the international network of European avant-garde cinema between 1925 and 1933. Founded by Macpherson and his wife Bryher, Pool was initially a publishing house which followed the model established by Robert MacAlmon, who was one of the most important publishers of American writers in France and the first husband of Winifred Bryher (the couple separated in 1926). Pool published several volumes of prose by Bryher and Macpherson, an essay by Hanns Sachs against the death penalty, three monographs on the cinema, and a film review Close Up, which joined the still young tradition of literary 'little magazines'. In addition Pool undertook the production of films, as activity equally dependent on private financing. In all probability, the publishing and film production activities were subsidised—as was the construction in 1930 of a modern house in the international style—by Bryher's family fortune. Her father, Sir John Reeves Ellerman, an English ship owner of German origin, was one of the richest men in England (he died in 1933).

Close Up published between July 1927 and December 1933, represented the critical and promotional pole of Pool's activities.¹⁵⁰

Macpherson, editor in chief of Close Up, contributes articles 'defining the role of the director, discussing the intellectual and material conditions of independent film production, and defending the integrity of cinema and its right to be considered an art.' The magazine is edited from the Macpherson's Swiss home of Monteux-Territet until 1931. Cosandey informs us:

Compared to its rare European counterparts, Close Up was characterised by a close and permanent relationship with Great Britain, by its early support of filmmakers like Abram Room, GW Pabst and Eisenstein (one of his earliest essays was published in May 1929), by its stress on the importance of the educational sphere, by its staunch position against the censor, and by its links to psychoanalysis as developed by Hanns Sach (1881–1947), a disciple of Freud who established himself in Berlin as a teaching analyst and co-editor of the review Imago.¹⁵¹

The magazine was centrifugal and cosmopolitan (outward looking) unlike others such as Experimental Cinema USA (1930-34)¹⁵² but seems to have ceased publication by the end of 1933. Deke Dunisberre's contribution to O'Prey's book The Avant-Garde Attitude takes a broader survey of work that might define this 'attitude'. Picking up from 1933 at the end of Close Up's publication life he informs us:

Its role as 'voice of the avant-garde' had already been usurped earlier in that year when, in the spring of 1933, Vivian Braun published Film. With the next issue, the quarterly became Film Art and continued publication, somewhat irregularly untill1937. While under Braun's direction, Film Art's masthead proclaimed itself as the 'international review of advanced-guard cinema'. The magazine's tenure is perhaps most notable for its efforts to co-ordinate production and exhibition with the criticism it offered. Braun, like Macpherson, understood that critical intervention was only part of his role in the avant-garde and he completed several films, one of which Beyond This Open Road, was screened by the Film society in November 1934. Made with Irene Nicholson, then an assistant editor of Film Art it was 'symphonic treatment of Open air'.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰Ibid. Roland Cosandey, On Borderline p.48
¹⁵¹Ibid, p.49
¹⁵²Ibid. p.52.
¹⁵³Ibid. Deke Dunisberre's contribution to O'Prey's book: The Avant-Garde Attitude p72

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Dunisberre suggests the defining characteristic of the avant-garde at the time is an "attitude" — as distinct from a specific aesthetic style or a specific production situation — which in turn leads to a certain ambiguity as to which films adhere to that avant-garde attitude'. At the start of his investigation he cautions that:

...the work of Len Lye has long been acknowledged, as has the magazine *Close Up*; but these two incidents were never recognised as corresponding to a 'movement' or an identifiable corpus of work — they remained peripheral to the over-determining influence of the documentary movement fostered by John Grierson.

The term 'avant-garde' is intended toward those films (and that film criticism) which seeks an alliance with modernism in the other arts, which demand a consistent interrogation of the medium; they challenge the industry not only on the levels of content and of production/distribution/exhibition, but also on the level of the aesthetic/representational postulates on which the industry's commerce is based.\(^{134}\)

In consideration of the need for an economic basis for pioneering work in avant-garde film production he observes that this 'actually led pioneers, who had previously relied on private patronage, in three directions: the fringe of the industry, the advertising film, and state funding'.\(^{155}\)

In his conclusion he outlines the problems implicit in defining a history of the avant-garde:

...the very a-historicism of the avant-garde attitude. That attitude stressed the newness, the newness, of the work being done (cf. the crisis provoked by the technological suppression of sound). It stressed action. This is evident not only in *Film Art*'s manifesto but also in Bleakeston's recollection of the period; it was not the films but their immediate impact which was crucial.\(^{156}\)

With this loosely sketched outline in mind, one could perhaps argue that a reading of the *Dartington Experiment* as a whole echoes some concerns of an avant-garde in terms of an 'attitude'. But that its inability to perceive film as a viable form in its own terms — rather than as part of a broader, more functional experiment — excluded any engagement with an interrogation of the film form for its own sake. Dartington's use of film is contingent on it being seen as a means to an end, and this excludes what might be expected from avant-garde film-making activity. Ricky Leacock has reported:

> Dartington was not interested in film as an art. [Leonard] Elmhirst just saw it as a way of recording events and not very well at that. Bill Hunter was interested in teaching Geography and Anthropology with film. I was just a nutty kid that wanted to make films "that gave you the feeling of being there..." but did not succeed till the fifties.\(^{157}\)

While it is possible that the Hall-centric Cine Group, led by Vic Elmhirst, was unaware of the work going on in the European Avant-garde, focused around the Macpersons' Pool group publication *Close Up*, it is unlikely that such work was unknown to Hunter and the educated intellectuals of the Film Unit. There seems to be no evidence either way in the Archive papers. And certainly the critical framework of Dartington's filmmakers was not located in the literary field within which the Pool group seems to operate. It seems that stronger and more influential links are directed

\(^{134}\) *Ibid. p.66*  
\(^{135}\) *Ibid. p.76*  
\(^{136}\) *Ibid. p.78*
towards the British Documentary and educational filmmakers. The WEA New Learning project's use of Gaumont-British Instructional Films including the work of Mary Field, 'Secrets of Nature' in 1932 might mark a beginning of such links, or at least represent an awareness of such work. Anecdotally Ricky Leacock was an admirer of Mary Field and this may have emerged through a general admiration of her work by those at Dartington. Of passing interest is the fact that Leacock's brother Philip made a film with Harold Lowenstein, who had worked with Braun. Rachael Low tells us:

...Harold Lowenstein, who made further films under the name of Short Film Productions. Of these perhaps the most notable was Out to Play, which he directed with Philip Leacock. The latter had entered films in 1935 from school at Bedales and was later to become a director and associate producer in the feature industry. 158

Philip Leacock also worked with Braun, who acted as his cameraman on a 1937 film Kew Gardens. Ricky Leacock would have been in contact with his brother, who was a little older and had himself engaged with experimental work going on at the time. This also presents a conduit for ideas, information and knowledge of the wider scene by those at Dartington. It seems the fruition of these contacts for Ricky Leacock came later:

Harold Lowenstein was married to my sister Elizabeth (6 years older than me) and came out to the Canary Islands (where my father had his banana plantation) with me on a banana boat (the Olson line). They had been filming with Phil in London and I watched but the influence on my work was Turk Sib, directed by Turin, who Jay Leyda told me, thirty years later, had been a student at MIT before the Russian Revolution. His influence was huge, Harold's was modest and Phil's was zero! But he, Phil, was a very good brother and got me my first job as assistant camera to Paul Burnford working on Ruby Grierson's Zoo films with a Dedbie hand-crank camera like the one you see in Man With A Movie Camera 159

In those days most of us considered Eisenstein and Pudovkin to be leaders and yes, Vertov but if you look back at their work it is just sign language used for crude propaganda ... awful in my opinion. And yes, Night Mail led us in the direction of studio shooting. My brother Phil worked as editor with Realist and the Grierson gang, then, with Grierson's help, directed The Brave Don't Cry which was a big success and the slowly drifted to Hollywood and making hundreds of Gun-Shot and Hawai-5-O 160

To turn to the term experimental, perhaps a feature of an experiment is that while avant-garde is seen as 'leading the way', and this of necessity must be a new, an a-historical way, experimental might be seen as 'finding a way', that might yield results of value to others. The results of an experiment might be predicted but are not determined from the inception, in this respect there is common ground between experiment and a notion of avant-garde. I am certain there is value in semantic exploration of these words. Dunisberre's notion of an avant-garde 'attitude' is perhaps the most useful understanding of something that has both a general usage and particular of-a-time uses. The above will serve as a working definition for the purposes of this enquiry.

157 e-mail from Ricky Leacock to the author 3rd May 2003
158 Rachael Low Films of Comment and Persuasion of the 1930's. BFI. p.110.
160 Op.Cit
The words 'experimental film', used to describe still images of a play of Peer Gynt, at Liverton in 1932 (as part of the New Learning project, see page 35) is rather loose, and I suspect implies the desire to try to make a film of the play at all, as opposed to a more considered exploration of film form. In respect of 'experimental' film activity I would argue that the limited and institutionally framed work with film at Dartington was 'experimental' in the same way that emerging more mainstream documentary forms were experimental. At Dartington this experimentation was primarily concerned with film's ability to inform, and the way this information could be articulated by images and structures, shots and editing. Embedded in this is a concern with representing things and re-presenting things. The things could be defined as 'reality' and the film-maker's skill was in representing the 'reality' and the underlying sense of that reality. Experimenting with ways this could be achieved for the purposes of exposition of the subject was at the heart of the 'experimental' work of the Dartington Hall Film Unit.

Paul Rotha offers an insight into experimental activity at the heart of John Grierson's Documentary activity.

Grierson's concern with experimental film-making was not only found in the documentary work under his supervision. The Poster films in 1931 have been mentioned earlier and Grierson liked to think that they were the forerunners of the trick colour films made later by Len Lye and Norman McLaren. He recalled that he bought the rights of a short film of a remarkable abstract light machine constructed by Moholy-Nagy, the Hungarian photographer, of Bauhaus fame. Bits of this film were interpolated in some of the EMB Poster films. Grierson believed that this experimental work began when I joined his Unit in 1931 but I disclaim the responsibility. Basil Wright and I, as has been recorded, each made several of these little Poster films to meet a real need: they were very cheap to make and they met the request of the EMB exhibition department.

Later Grierson found money for and encouraged Len Lye to make short abstract colour films which created a considerable sensation. He had invented a technique of painting patterns on transparent film stock which became animated when the film was projected. Colour Box and Rainbow Dance, with syncopated sound tracks, entranced audiences of every kind. To justify this engaging experimental work, the films embraced an end-tag linking them to a Post Office slogan of the time. Len Lye's work was taken up and developed widely by Norman McLaren, first at the GPO Film Unit and later at the National Film Board in Canada. McLaren's short films have earned him a world wide reputation for his personal artistry and ingenuity. He would be the first to say, however, that his work has nothing to do with the documentary story except that its sponsors gave him the opportunity to explore his ideas.

Despite Rotha's disclaimer there is no doubt that the economic support structure Grierson built up for his documentary film production provided the climate within which Lye's more aesthetic or avant-garde work could emerge. It is not hard to imagine such exploration of aesthetic issues being undertaken at Dartington within the deliberate support for the arts that existed there. But it seems it did not.

181 WEA, The New Learning London 1933. p.48. the full caption for the image reads: "A still from an experimental film made by the Newton Abbot and District (WEA) Film society, and acted by the people of the village of Liverton, Devon. Liverton is a hamlet on the edge of Dartmoor. A branch of the WEA has flourished there for five years. During the summer the branch forms its own band of community players who present their play in a copse near the village within sight of the moor. Their production this year was based upon Ibsen's Peer Gynt. The cut version dealt with the early village life of Peer, his adventures amongst the Trolls, his encounters with the Button Moulder and his final return to Solveig."
Musing on the difference between avant-garde and experimental, it might be said that Dartington, in its broad approach to things in the beginning, was in tune with a notion of the avant-garde. I would argue, however, that the term experimental is more appropriate. The avant-garde 'attitude' as defined by O'Prey, Dunisterre et al, ('That attitude stressed the newness, the nowness, of the work being done,'), is forever consuming and pushing beyond the established frameworks of operation, without the necessity of respect for existing cultural frameworks. Indeed with the objective of disenfranchising the orthodoxy or destabilising established frameworks. Experimental on the other hand, deriving broadly from a Cartesian notion of scientific method, sets out to find new forms or new ways of doing things in a frame that tests ideas and throws up results (positive or negative) that can be applied. Experimental work is work that in the end is functional, has purpose and builds from within the culture to find new forms. Avant-garde might be said, on the other hand, to adopt a stance whereby the existing forms are redundant and the only way forward is into new forms that do not take stock of their starting position as being embedded within an existing culture. As such the term avant-garde carries within it a notion of its own redundancy in that ideas manifest as forms are no longer a pointer to new, they simply 'are'.

John Grierson writing on the First Principles of Documentary cautions against the seduction of films which privilege form over intent. Following a critique of Ruttmann's Berlin (A Symphony for a City) on the basis that:

For all its ado of workmen and factories and swirl and swing of a great city, Berlin created nothing. Or rather if it created something, it was a shower of rain in the afternoon. The people of the city got up splendidly, they tumbled through their five million hoops impressively, they turned in; and no other issue of God or man emerged than the sudden besmattering spilling of wet on people and pavements.183

He continues:

One must pile up beyond doing or process to creation itself, before one hits the higher reaches of art. In this distinction, creation indicates not the making of things but the making of virtues.

And there's the rub for the tyros. Critical appreciation of movement they can build easily from their powers to observe, and the power to observe they can build from their own good taste, but the real job only begins as they apply their ends to their observation and their movements. The artist need not posit the ends — for that is the work of the critic - but the ends must be there, informing his description and giving finality (beyond space and time) to the slice of life he has chosen. For that larger effect there must be power of poetry or of prophesy. Failing either or both in the highest degree, there must be at least the sociological sense implicit in poetry and prophecy. The best tyros know this. They believe that beauty will come in good time to inhabit the statement which is honest and lucid and deeply felt and which fulfils the best ends of citizenship. They are sensible enough to conceive of art as the by-product of a job well done. The opposite effort to capture the by-product first (the self-conscious pursuit of beauty, the pursuit of art for art's sake to the exclusion of a jobs of work and other

Dartington from the outset has defined itself as experimental and in this there is a notion in a functionality that pervades Leonard's conception. 'From one point of view', said Leonard, 'in everything we have attempted at Dartington we have endeavoured to secure that element of universality which would make such discoveries as we made there be applicable, in principal at any rate, to any other part of the globe.'

We might consider a notion of avant-garde in the twenties and thirties as implicating the new forms, Virginia Woolf identified, the potential of film as an abstract form of expression, pre-dating and perhaps framing, a notion of film as a modernist form. In this idea of film sits a notion of art for art's sake embracing aesthetic concerns whose function is not to look back but to look forward. Experimental Dartington on the other hand was more specifically tuned into the pragmatic solutions that applied experiments throw up and in this respect the film form that suits is one which has both aesthetic consideration and a clear function. In this respect the Dartington work, in evolving the documentary form, experimenting with Classroom film, is arguably a more predictable activity with film than would be the art for art's sake forms called for by Woolf in 1926 and exemplified perhaps by Len Lye's or Moholy-Nagy's work of the thirties.

In any event the institutional focus provided by the Film Unit at Dartington ended in 1950 with such issues unresolved.

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104 Ibid. pp.40-41
Chapter 4 The Archive

Outside Interests

The demise of the Dartington Hall Film Unit is not, however, the end of the story of film at Dartington. From the thirties concerts at Dartington had been recorded and broadcast on Radio by the BBC. Leonard had been moving in important circles during the war and no doubt his contacts had grown as had knowledge of the *Dartington Experiment* by the outside world. The Arts Survey as a whole had brought contact with many influential figures in the Arts. Outside these knowledgeable circles rumour and distorted stories had circulated about the strange goings on down in Devon. Brandon Acton-Bond for BBC Radio explored this mixture of intrigue and speculation in January 1948, as the basis of a programme. The programme set up such ideas as guests being greeted by a naked butler and unrestrained nude bathing and then in a rather jocular light-hearted way tried to de-bunk them. It was not well received up at the Hall.

The Film Unit up at the Hall had experienced the change in climate of post-war Britain and like much else in the country Dartington was experiencing change. The mass-media attention in the form of the BBC did perhaps demonstrate the need for a deeper understanding and a more informed use of broadcasting. The changes brought about by the war perhaps led the powers that be at Dartington to reflect on what Dartington had been up till now. This combination of a changing climate with the sense of past achievements required both the customary adaptation and a process of consolidation and is what happened next more by accident than design.\(^{166}\)

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\(^{166}\) Audio recording of a speech on Founders Day 1967: Dorothy Elmhirst cites the continual need and ability of Dartington to adapt to change.

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Victor Bonham-Carter: The birth of the Archive

In early 1950 Victor Bonham-Carter, working as a freelance radio journalist, approached the Estate and persuaded Leonard and W Slater, the Trust's Bursar, to let him produce a documentary for radio. The resulting programme was a big success at the Hall. Bonham-Carter's sensitive and comprehensive approach impressed the Dartington establishment to the extent that W Slater invited him to write a History of Dartington. The result of his work was what became known as the Main Report which was first drafted in 1958 followed by his book Dartington Hall written from his research and which contained a section on the School by WB Curry who had left his job of headmaster by then. The Main Report was not published but was updated in 1965 and is a useful – if very dry - account of what went on at Dartington.

Bonham-Carter's work did not end there for he remained at the Hall for a number of years building up the archive into what at that time was called the Records Office. The Dartington Hall Archive owes much to his meticulous efforts in salvage and sorting of letters, papers, plans and photographs. Mr. McNally produced and bound the albums of early photographs.

The films were perhaps less well served by his work and seem to have been the joint responsibility of the School and the Record's Office. Their location at any particular time coupled with the perfectly reasonable practice of re-using material within the Film Unit's various productions, or those who came after in search of the Dartington Story, meant that archive film began a less certain existence. This is not to say the films were not looked after but there followed a necessary if erratic process of deciding what films were worth keeping and what were worth showing. The School tended to keep educational material, from the Film Unit and remnants of the Film Library of the South West. Films that were ostensibly about Dartington, the estate and family, were lodged in the Records Office. The next rationalisation of the films occurred in 1979 when Horace Davis and Josephine Wightwick between the 22nd and 26th of November 1979. This seems to have resulted in the most recent catalogue of film material up until 2002.

Archive film material did not feature in the 1959/60 film made by Hue Weldon for the BBC: Dartington Christmas Festival. This filmed programme was another success and it demonstrated how a sensitive handling could produce positive propaganda for Dartington. The film he made is held in the Archive.

One such who did not have access to the early material was a Michael Harman Production Assistant at BBC South West who contacted Leonard in early January 1966. Harman was touting on behalf of BBC Bristol to produce a film on the 40th (actually 41st) anniversary of the Foundation of Dartington. Leonard's response was quite unequivocal:
The best thing would be for you to come over to talk to one or two of us about the project you have mentioned. The earliest attempt of the BBC to cover Dartington was a disaster, and led to quite a little misunderstanding. The next one was satisfactory to both parties, BBC and Dartington. When the BBC detailed a most understanding man and team to cover the Christmas Festival for the children, the outcome was (a) good entertainment over the air, (b) useful because of its understanding statement about what we were trying to do in one specific field, towards teacher-training and the liberation of the kids, and lastly, (c) the camera men were not allowed to run wild.

The proposal from your Bristol office sounds to me as though the camera men were going to run wild unless they are held specifically to a detailed script. The script too, would have to be worked out with the greatest care so as not to disappoint the public on the one hand, and to offend by misstatement those who are trying to do an honest and difficult job at Dartington. He goes on to say he does not wish to discourage or 'deprive our people here of what could be a useful job in improving public relations', demonstrating his appreciation of the possibilities the media holds. He is also aware of the pitfalls, and concludes: 'I have no illusions as to the serious damage that could be done if the enterprise got into unskilled hands'. There seems no record of the result of this approach in the Archive.

The next approach by the BBC was again from the South West office in Plymouth from a Miss Peggy Archer. She recorded an audio interview with Leonard, which was used in the BBC's Overseas Service in 1967. She had recorded other people including Peter Sutcliff, but was unable to include their contribution in the 15 minutes her programme allowed. Leonard by default as well as by being the only one who could adopt the complex position of apologist was also the voice of Dartington. Archer's attitude and integrity impressed Leonard to the extent that he subsequently commissioned her to produce a number of audio interviews with other principals and these became part of the Archive's holding. Her recording work spanned the time when Dorothy Elmhirst died, but it seems did not include an interview with Dorothy, unless it was Archer who recorded Dorothy's Foundation Day speech in 1967. I have been unable ascertain this. Her relationship with Dartington was nevertheless successful.

Perhaps the death of Dorothy in 1968 and the local news coverage it generated also stimulated awareness of the rich pickings for TV subject matter available at Dartington. In the spring of 1969 an approach was made by the producer of the *Peninsular* programme. There seems to be some confusion as to who this was in the first instance Leonard reports an approach from ITV but the programme was made by BBC South West. After the initial approach Leonard had been abroad and returned to find not an ITV crew but a BBC crew wanting to interview him. Apparently there had been some discussion with Robin Johnson at the Records Office, consultations with the Head of Forestry, A.I. Department, Head of the College and others and these had been very co-operative. Bevan Ambrose was the BBC director and the interviewer was a Mr Scully, despite his misgivings and evident confusion as to what was being done Leonard was sat down to interview. The first question set the tone of the whole episode for Leonard.

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107 Archive Papers letter: LK to Harman Jan 10th 1966 DHI A
In view of all the millions of pounds you and your wife have spent on Dartington, how do you feel about the outcome?\textsuperscript{164}

Although the film did not use the question or Leonard’s answer it did contain a line of commentary that suggested that ‘when a Nursery School was needed all “they” had to do was to sign a cheque’.

Leonard reported in a letter to a Mr Hawkins of 12\textsuperscript{th} December 1969 that:

I was surprised to find that this was a BBC enterprise, that I had not been served with any of the questions they proposed to ask, and that their camera men had already been busy with enough film to fill two to three hours of ‘telly’ time. I was dismayed by the first question for I realised then that one of your bright boys was going to be let loose without a script agreed beforehand, and with only pictures to guide him.\textsuperscript{165}

The broad-brush approach of the Peninsular film infuriated Leonard who went to some lengths to make his feelings known. Starting with a letter to the Western Independent newspaper he complained that the film was ‘a kind of hotchpotch of pictures with little bits of sensation popped in’. The BBC wondered what all the fuss was about, so Leonard explained in some detail in a flurry of correspondence with the director and the acting Program controller of BBC South West. He explained in some detail how elements of the film misrepresented what it purported to show. He made the mistake perhaps of suggesting that they take a proper look and produce a film with Dartington’s co-operation. John Elliot’s response was acceptance of Leonard’s criticism qualifying with ‘the inevitable slurring of detail is bound to be infuriating to closer observers’. He goes on to make much of Leonard’s offer but suggesting that ‘it might be as well to let the impressions of our last film fade a little before we try again’.\textsuperscript{170}

The Mayor of Totnes held a meeting of previous mayors and invited the Dartington Trustees to explain how offended they had been by the programme which skewed the relationship between Dartington and the Ancient Borough. This prompted Leonard to write to Lord Hill, then the Chairman of the Board of the BBC, who responds with diplomacy stressing the offer to talk in the studio made by Elliot. There seems no record of this offer being taken up. There is a record of a further letter to Lord Hill from Leonard, this time complaining about a BBC Omnibus programme featuring the work of the Beaford Arts Centre another of Dartington’s enterprises. Here Leonard complains:

It was as though no one had worked out a script of any kind. It looked as though a camera man had been let loose and then the scissor man had gone to work to paste together snippets of this and that to fill the minutes allowed. The result was part misinformation and part misleading snippets that made no sense.\textsuperscript{171}

Lord Hill is polite but firm in his reply:

\textsuperscript{164} Archive Papers LK to John Elliot Acting Prog Controller BBC SW 24\textsuperscript{th} January 1970 DHA

\textsuperscript{165} Archive Papers Mr Hawkins of 12\textsuperscript{th} December 1969 DHA

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid

\textsuperscript{171} Archive Papers LK to Lord Hill May 22 1972 DHA
The producer was not out to criticise or pass judgement, but to inform and contrast. The programme method he adopted was to convey information about centres mainly through 'eavesdropping' with the camera or through interviewing people associated with them. This allowed respective philosophies and activities of the centres to speak for themselves, as it were.

I am very sorry that you should have felt the final result to have been rather snippety. This is a reaction we do sometimes get from those most closely concerned with the subject of a broadcast that has been found rewarding by the general viewer. It may interest you to know that since the programme was broadcast, the producer has received letters of congratulation or warm messages from the Director of the Scottish Arts Council, the Director of the South Western Arts Association and John Lane, the Director of the Beaford Centre.172

Amid these vexed experiences with the media there occurred the most important and timely intervention of its kind by Richard Thomas.

172 Archive Papers Hill to LK 13th June 1972 DHA
Richard Thomas

In August 1971 Richard Thomas of the BBC Man Alive programme approached Leonard to consider a programme about the ‘Dartington Story’. The first contact with Thomas seems to have been the summer of 1971. On 18th August he writes:

I do hope that you received the letter that I wrote to you whilst I was filming in Ashburton. I have now had an opportunity of talking with my bosses about the Dartington Story and they are interested in pursuing further a longer programme about what you and your wife set out to do in terms of rural revivalisation and assessing the success of the project some forty five years later. We would then extend the story via your expansion into the Torrington area, with its Arts Centre and Glass Works, to look at lessons to be learnt by rural areas facing the problems South Devon had in the twenties. I hope that in spite of your rather unfortunate experience with BBC Plymouth you and the Trustees would feel able to co-operate with us on this project.172

Leonard is spending less time at Dartington having passed on the Chairmanship of the Trustees to his son-in-law Morris Ash. In mid 1971 Morris had been talking to BBC Plymouth about a programme. It seems that Leonard met with Richard Thomas and was impressed by him and quite happy for the Man Alive team to take on the Dartington Story, out of the hands of the regional BBC team who had been so troublesome. Leonard passed the information and ideas drawn up by Mr. Way, BBC South West’s producer who had been in communication with Morris Ash, on to Richard Thomas saying that he was not impressed with the BBC South West interviewer a Mr Salmon. So it is out with the regional ‘telly’ and the beginning of a very fruitful relationship between Richard Thomas and Leonard Elmhirst.

The filming seems to have been a well executed campaign both in terms of its scheduling and the development of the relationship between Richard Thomas and Leonard Elmhirst. In his initial plans Thomas saw the Dartington Estate’s link with the mining community in Conisbrough as a vehicle through which to explore the contemporary application of the ideas and ideals of Dartington’s own experiment in 1970’s Britain and as a model for future, wider application. A student exchange programme between Dartington School and Conisborough School facilitated the Conisborough link. Dartington had gone as far as establishing a field centre in the Yorkshire town where its own students could live and where Conisborough students could interact with Dartington ideas and practices through their Dartington contemporaries.

In a draft entitled Progress Report – Dartington dated 11/9/72, Thomas outlines both his progress in researching the film and his plans for the structure. In this he identifies what he sees as the core:

I am convinced that the film must take as its core what I understand to be the central theme of Dartington – that by “intervention” you could halt rural decline, by making agriculture more efficient and more scientific, but since efficiency meant fewer jobs that the countryside would need industries. At the same time, the country dweller should not

172 Richard Thomas to LK 18th Aug 1971 DHA
be deprived of the full life, that there should be schools for the children, and the arts should be available as an important part of people's "emotional" life. This evidently resonates strongly with Leonard's own ideas of what has gone on and is going on at Dartington and his need to make available the useful positive results of the experiment to a wide audience. Thomas's excitement, sincerity and outsider's objectivity must have been irresistible. On the bottom of his Very Provisional Outline of the Film Leonard's hand-written notes, presumably in preparation for the interview, rehearse his own image of Dartington, his script:

Dartington – network by which holes in the net are kept small enough and Sufficiently well in repair so that no human fish can fall through into despair, penury, preventable sickness, the misery of redundancy for young or old, until living has no meaning. Possible - leadership and enterprise and pioneering and bold experiment.

Is this the altruistic man feeling the satisfaction of his life's work, his purpose realised, and through the film opportunity to offer it as experimental results for others to see and use? Or is it Leonard simply taking his own control of the opportunity to look good in the film? The clash between Leonard's need to control the image of his life's work and his delight at having Thomas see it for himself, seems to be at the centre of the relationship between the two men. On 12 October 1972 after the filming but before the film is finished, Leonard writes to Thomas:

I have one 'prickle' which keeps coming into my mind. I should not have mentioned Sunlight and Rowntree in my answer to paternalism. This was foolish. The trouble is that it would have been too complicated to try and describe the various measures we have taken to see that the worm's eye view of the estate is generally, if not always, taken into account. Perhaps you can deal with this as you vet the two things together, photography and interviewing.

The question and answer on 'paternalism' are not available so it is fruitless to speculate on their specifics. Leonard's concern, on the surface, is with specifics; but perhaps it underlies his deeper concern. This concern seems to have been present from the start of the experiment, for example in a letter to F. G. Thomas of the WEA., in response to a requests to speak about Adult Education and the W. E. A. he replies:

... we keep our mouths shut in public, and being classed as a foreigner in this county, I think it would be most unwise to suggest courses of action or policies for an Association about whose activities in this county I know little or nothing.

The context is quite different and in 1972 Leonard may well have been as reticent about talking on W. E. A. policy matters as in 1927. But with Richard Thomas he was conscious of not keeping his 'mouth shut' and of having used the Rowntree example, to answer points about Dartington. He had no need to use other examples he had some 66 years of his own experimental practice to draw on. The question on 'paternalism' was perhaps one that he had tried to avoid. Michael

174 Richard Thomas, Progress Report ~ Dartington. dated 11/9/72, DHA
175 Archive Papers T Arts Film LKE notes DHA
176 Archive Papers LKE to Richard Thomas 12th October 1972 DHA
177 Archive Papers: LKE Education. LKE to FGT April 1927. DHA
Young notes that when the Dartington Ltd. was set up Leonard relinquished 'paternal' control in law but remained the major shareholder (with 90% of the shares). The setting up of the Dartington Trust had a similar effect of distancing Leonard from total control whilst maintaining his (seen from the outside) paternal role of control. Michael Young characterised the Dartington of his youth being a sort of family with Leonard and Dorothy as "... 'Good' parents with a couple of thousand children."\(^{178}\)

Was Leonard aware that poor representation of what he and Dorothy were trying to do could so easily be misinterpreted as their own egos given rein to play with people and ideas because of the abundance of their/her money? Richard Thomas was evidently sensitive enough of Leonard's mistake in using Rowntree as comparison, and objective enough to see how it could undermine the integrity of his own work. On 16th October 1972 he writes:

> Can I smooth the prickles and puzzles? Though I've yet to finalise the first draft of the film I've already decided not to use the part of the interview that refers to Sunlight and Rowntree. You did not extend your implied criticism with examples which would therefore be unfair to you and to them.\(^{179}\)

The Man Alive film *A Job is Not Enough* confirmed Leonard's assessment of Thomas. On the 9th October of 1972, towards the end of the *Man Alive* production, he is moved to write to Leonard:

> 'Meeting you and listening to your views has been for me one of the most rewarding experiences of my BBC career.' Leonard writes to Thomas on 30th November 1972, evidently having seen the final cut of the film:

> Congratulations on the way you put it all together and kept a fair balance around the thesis with which you set out. It was fair to Conisborough and I trust washed out the slip in the Radio Times, and I hope they will feel we were fair to them. Their side was beautifully represented.

He concludes:

> For the rest I found it moving and you had included the things I most wanted to say in a most generous way.\(^{180}\)

A review of the *Man Alive* programme on 1st Dec 1972 by an Eric Davies (for which newspaper he writes I have no record) stated that:

> Could not the Dartington example, made possible with money provided by the late Mrs. Dorothy Elmhirst from an American railway fortune, be emulated on a scale sufficient to halt the depopulation and despair afflicting areas where traditional industry is in decline? In the BBC 2 Man Alive programme on Wednesday "A Job Is Not Enough," the question was compulsively posed and a formidable answer given by Mr. Elmhirst, at 79 as alert and persuasive as he must have been in 1925, when he and his wife launched their great initiative.\(^{181}\)
In his conclusion Davies taps into what seem to be the things close to Leonard’s heart that Richard Thomas had so skilfully facilitated the articulation of:

Sane Advice. The taxpayers’ money is now used lavishly to sustain industry which would otherwise fail. Social consequences are now a major consideration. The moral of Dartington contains so much sane advice based on proven success that this programme should be seen by all concerned with state aid to industry.\textsuperscript{162}

This review echoed the impact of the central message of the film, which I would suggest, articulates so well Leonard’s own view of the import of the Dartington Experiment. I take this to be that it abhors ‘redundancy’, seeks to provide an ‘abundant life’ for individuals within it, yet sees itself as an educational tool for others to learn with (if within it) and from, if viewing its experimental results from the outside.

Other reviews from within the Dartington community saw other implications in the film. Local views were given voice through subsequent screenings of the film by Richard Thomas at the Barn Theatre at Dartington and commented on by Nic Cottis in an article in Dartington Mercury. The feeling seems to have been that the film positioned Dartington as merely a secondary concern to the wider more pressing concern of employment, and so the film was about ideas not Dartington. Cottis shifted the focus onto the political issues inherent in the film and indeed in the aspirations of the \textit{Dartington Experiment}. His critique focused on the lack of practical application of the ideals so skilfully articulated by Elmhirst through Thomas.

Leonard’s ideas of local trusts set up on the Dartington model to administer development funds was not explored further. It would have been relevant to have seen how Dartington’s Trustees make their decisions. But on this the documentary was even more reticent than the Trustees are themselves. In this ‘Manalive’ was following the general respect for the power of capital which is characteristic of Dartington. It’s their money, we say, it’s up to them how they spend it. After all, they spend it pretty well.

He concludes with a thought that intervenes into the comfortable status quo of life at Dartington amid such beauty and seeming openness of ideas.

\begin{quote}
Suppose the future of the Estate depended on Dartington’s thousand or more workers defying the laws of capital with a work-in on the Lower Dart. Would they? And could they?
\end{quote}

The problem posed by the Janus face of Dartington: experiment and model; the freedom to experiment and the need for results to be available, living in it and seeing it from the outside, may well explain why there was no single film made that attempted this until the \textit{Man Alive} in 1972. Despite the external position of Thomas there is no doubt that Leonard had his reflective voice aired in the film. Perhaps it is too easy to criticise the various earlier attempts of Bennett, Vic, Hunter and Stobart without appreciation of the ephemeral nature of the film medium. Too much of the Dartington Experiment was in the process of realisation, so much to be done, how could it be summarised in a single work? An important element of Thomas’ work is that he seemed

\textsuperscript{162} ibid.
possessed of the ability to sum up and articulate Dartington ideas in a single autonomous programme. In 1972 the most abundant resource available to Leonard was of course hindsight. The *Man Alive* film positioned Dartington as a constructive model with the tantalising possibility of wider application of its experimental results. This was not lost on Leonard who commissioned Thomas to produce a compilation of film materials from the Archive. In June 1973 preparations are made to view the 'historic Dartington films'.

The technique used was to copy all the archive film, which seemed to be relevant to the specifics of the Dartington story onto video. This was then played on a monitor in Leonard's study where he sat with Thomas and talked about what he was viewing. There were continuous stops in the video where Leonard recalled and expanded on his memories. It is not clear what Thomas' specific brief was, but I suspect it was to produce the two works that resulted: *The School* and *Farms and Industries*. Both films use extensive archive footage with Leonard's recollections linked with voice-over commentary spoken by Gordon Snell, and occasional interview clips, some of which could have been shot for the *Man Alive* programme. I have no record of the delivery date of the films but recordings took place in August 1973 between the 4th and the 12th. Leonard had left Dartington around this time to live with his new wife in California where he died soon after in 1974. Thus the work he did with Thomas on telling the Dartington story in film, in tidying up the past 48 years of work in film at Dartington was at the very end of his life.

Victor Bonham-Carter suggested that Leonard had a way of recalling events with hindsight as being inevitable. That is not to say he told untruths but selectively arranged recalled events in relation to his personal script. Given that Leonard had left Dartington at the time of the recordings, they must be seen as his final opportunity to set the record straight. The narrative is seductive it seems to be from the horse's mouth, and the film 'cannot lie'. The detailed information he gives us and the emotional delight Leonard feels as he watches the people and projects from the past is palpably evident in the marriage of his voice and the archive images. The two films are possibly the clearest summing up of the work of the School and the Farms and Industries at Dartington. They do however present two problems, the first is that they do not contain everything about Dartington; there is little mention of the Arts for example. Perhaps this helps to identify Leonard's priorities. The Arts were Dorothy's province and such film from the past that illustrates them was left in its original form.

This brings us to the second problem with the two films, which is that while Thomas worked hard to synthesise the different remnants of archive footage into whole stories he mixed up the chronology of material and further obscured its actual authorship. It is very difficult for example to distinguish between the filming of Bennett, Hunter, Vic or Tobey in some of the material shot during 1935, when all of them could have taken it. Leonard is keen in the transcripts from the recording to praise Tobey and Hunter whilst attributing poorly shot material to Bennett. Much

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183 DH Interview 22/04/1994

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remains uncertain about authorship of the images. The marriage of Leonard’s voice and edited archive film does present a sense of a whole picture while it is in fact selective and constructed. How much can Leonard’s memory be trusted, or his knowledge in the first place about who did what filming? The ‘why’ they filmed is taken into his own orbit. In the recording sessions with Thomas in his study, Leonard is looking through the films to find evidence of his story. In the finished works the presentation is of the story, seen as a constructed whole. In this sense the films are seductively complete yet suspiciously partial. Is it in the end true, as was suggested by Hunter and later Sobart that it is not possible to make a single film about Dartington that does justice to the scope and scale of its complexity?

If the Richard Thomas’ A Job is not Enough Man Alive programme was seen as so successful by Leonard why the follow up? What need to put thirties films into ‘documentaries’ – aren’t they already that? In making the films is Leonard clinging onto the re-iteration of the value of ‘being there’, within the active flux of the experiment, seeing it first hand and evaluating, with hindsight, his intentions? In re-framing the materials, the matter of memory as Chris Marker has called it, is he actually constructing a myth of The Dartington Experiment, or the tombstone Ricky Leacock suggests was being built at Dartington? Is this what the films represent: a reality of Leonard’s being there, that even Richard Thomas could not help him to get at, despite the nostalgic seduction of the materials and his oft rehearsed memories. Could Thomas only see it from the outside through his – Thomas’s own - professional BBC social/cultural personal framework? How much did he wish to honour this man Leonard whom he obviously admired? His programme was by necessity, by phenomenal-logic (the logic of empirical phenomena) distanced from being there, yet presents a sense of having been there, a being there presented in a frame of the ‘now’ of 1973, summarising but safely removing its relation to a past. As we move in time away from the filming of the archive films, is it not true that the context from which we view them effects any reading of their meaning? Thomas’s films present a powerful illusion within which the archive films seem to represent a certain truth. But is it that they mask their relation to an historical truth and, seen from Leonard’s view in 1973, is history being replaced by myth?

Was Thomas’s intervention, requested and guided by Leonard, just a muddying of the waters for those who follow? By rounding the whole thing up to synchronise with Leonard’s retrospective overall view of the experiment, at least in relation to The School and Farms and Industry, did he fix on a particular view? A view that itself could only be, at the end of his life, on the outside of the mythic historical time, the reality, of the Dartington Experiment?

164 Leonard is quoted as saying of George Bennet’s attempts to edit his record films into documentaries in 1938 that ‘they are already documentaries and do not need editing, particularly if the cost would be high’. Note not dated or signed in DWE Staff I A-K. DHA.
Community Video

The next phase of activity with moving image was the advent of a Community Video project in 1974, driven by John Lane who was at the time of Leonard's death a member of the Trustees. Leonard's death may well have been a catalyst for the project since those who remained were left to make their own sense of Dartington's complexity as a place to live and work, and had to rebuild their own vision in the absence of Leonard's benevolent controlling influence. In the event a Community Video project was instigated and Mr Rupert Kirkham was employed to run it. John Lane circulated an introduction to all Heads of Department on the Estate on 16th October 1974.

In the course of the next few months you may receive a visit from a newcomer to Dartington, Rupert Kirkham, who is here on a short contract (financed by Elmgrant) to help us make some video films about ourselves. Video films of this kind - made by groups of people in the department being filmed or by another group from outside the department - can prove a valuable aid to understanding. Rupert is not here to make films himself but to help us to make our own films.\(^\text{185}\)

In a new form, appropriate to a new Dartington, post-Leonard and Dorothy, here was Dartington again trying to make sense of itself with moving image. Sony at this time had developed a half-inch black and white portable video system and this was the format used. It was a one-off project at the start but was designed to carry on, being used and run by the Estate after Kirkham left. The way it seems to have worked is that Kirkham gave training workshops for selected and interested people on how the equipment worked, and set up a community video newsletter called Open Circuit, which was screened on monitors in the College, School and Community Centres.

A feature of the Community Video project which is of special interest was a series of recordings termed 'Archive Recordings' made with, mostly elderly, people who had lived through earlier stages of Dartington's history. These included Leonard's younger brother Octavius (known as Pom) and sister, Rachel (also known as Irene) as well as members of the estate, household and community. Some 45 half-hour tapes of interviews with 24 people were recorded between 1974 and 1976.

Ostensibly the focus of the work was on the 50th Anniversary of the Founding of Dartington and the 6th edition of the community magazine Open Circuit was given over to that. This edition was also to be the final edition, determined by the poor attendance at the various screenings of the magazine. A meeting of the Community Video Committee held on 21st May 1975 under the heading 'Review of Present Situation', considered:

The three aspects of the video project were discussed in the light of the remaining four months [of Rupert Kirkham's contract] and the relatively low number of people with access to the Open Circuit programmes. It was agreed that these might be discontinued after June.

\(^{185}\) Archive Papers, John Lane Memo to Heads of Department 16th October 1974. DHA
The Archive was being developed and should continue to be enlarged with new interviews. The Committee felt convinced that video had a potential for the Estate and were disappointed by the relatively negative results of the Open Circuit idea. However, the third aspect of the video project had yet to be explored: the idea of promoting the medium as a tool of communication and a resource that anyone could use.

There is little evidence of developed use of the equipment after Kirkham left save for the making of Archive Recordings. By 1976 Mark Kidel reports that there was little or no activity with this equipment on the estate.

The recording format was flawed from its inception by using a system whereby early and unstable videotape was dragged across a static head-shield resulting in constant head clog, stretching of tape and problematic playback. In 1992 when I encountered this material only the shorter half-hour tapes would play at all on the by then twenty-year old equipment. Open Circuit videos were recorded on hour-long tapes and would not play at all. It is therefore rather difficult to even access the material, although what could be salvaged at my time of working with it was copied onto more stable VHS format. As Archive recordings they have a valuable function of spreading the focus of recorded archive material beyond the centre. The early material was instigated by Leonard's wish to have film record his and Dorothy's experiments, we see this coming to fruition with the films produced by Richard Thomas. Here in 1974 we find a Dartington without Dorothy and Leonard attempting to take possession of its meaning through the ostensibly more democratic franchise of video use – accessible and easy to use - as part of that taking possession. The little evidence available to us of how it worked seems to suggest that it was in the end an experiment with a negative result, save for remnants of the interview recordings. I am not clear how the project ended but most of the surviving tapes seem to have been recorded during the 1974-75 period.

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186 Archive Papers, Community Video Committee 21st May 1975 ‘Review of Present Situation’ DHA
187 Video Interview December 2002 DH
Interpreting Dartington: Mark Kidel

The community video project with its aspirations to be a ‘valuable aide to understanding’ and as ‘as a tool of communication’, was the first of two major video projects between 1974 and 1985. The second was a production rather than a project and had its roots in the appointment by the Dartington Trustees in 1976 of Mark Kidel as Interpretation Officer.

This unusual title – borrowed from the world of environmental education and the US National Parks—and referred to a job which was, to say the least open to interpretation. Central to the idea – as I interpreted it – was an attempt to understand the Dartington Hall Trust’s work, both present—day and historical, in terms of the languages’ or ‘currencies of speech’ as Maurice Ash put it, in use at Dartington. Recognising that the ‘languages’ we use to define and understand the contexts within which we live, do not just describe those realities but actually contribute towards shaping our perception, I became slowly aware of the need to clarify some of the accepted truths – often expressed in tired slogans – associated with Dartington’s history.188

Two years into his appointment, Kidel produced a paper On interpreting Dartington The paper articulates some of his principal concerns that return in his later 1989 book. These could be characterised as an interpretation of the practical experimental ideal of the Elmhirsts and the conditions they created at Dartington for the emergence of new ideas. In the introduction to his paper he writes:

In an era of increasing uncertainty... things that do not fit into tidy pigeonholes are an embarrassment and are misunderstood, ignored or untrue. It is perhaps for this reason that Dartington (the complicated set of facts, processes, people, events, buildings, land, institutions, customs, etc. that has grown up around Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst and the Dartington Hall Trust) provides such an ideal context with which to attempt a more open and courageous approach to the understanding of people and institutions — social, economic, political and psychological realities. Dartington clearly defies categorisation, or in the words of the 1976 brochure ‘stands alone outside inherited concepts and categories’189

The activity of using video as a tool for communication had passed into disuse by the time of Kidel’s appointment. He reports that, although he was a successful documentary film producer, he was not encouraged to use video. His role was more of animateur on the estate. Kidel’s work is difficult to grasp, as indeed any fixed ideas within the Dartington Story are difficult to grasp, but it is clear that it was about understanding and building collective understanding. In a report to the Trustees in 1982 he writes:

I am not grasping at some codified direction or set of goals, but a common meaning, a shared sense of place in the universe, but as well as in this part of the world. The very real disconnectedness of Dartington is intimately related to the nature of our society, and the constraints imposed by our fragmented, materialist world view. I do not in any way stand outside this (I may sound as if I do), for I am as fragmented as the community I strive to reflect.

188 Mark Kidel, Beyond The Classroom Green Books, Devon 1990
Judging by Michael's book, Dartington lost its original intimacy somewhere at the beginning of the 30s - with the coming of specialists, and the institutions. There has been 'us' and 'them' ever since, on a number of different levels. The present Trust cannot provide the charismatic and personal leadership of its founders. The price we have paid is incalculable, for without leadership, formal tradition or a generally perceived and agreed direction, the Trust's activities have grown to a size which has inevitably led to feelings of separateness, disadvantage, or just plain apathy.\(^{90}\)

The shift of the Dartington Trust towards its post-Founders identity was, it seems, driven by Morris Ash and John Lane who saw in Kidel an ally for what might be characterised as their 'green spirituality': a Rousseauian perspective.

Different people had different agendas in relation to what I was going to be useful for. I think that when Morris [Ash] and John [Lane] met me I was at that point absolutely fiery convert to the ...what was then called the environmental cause, what then became the sort of green ecological cause and that had happened before I left London, it was one of the reasons I left London. I had been involved in some of the first programmes on TV about the environment and ecology and stuff in the early seventies. So community development, community arts - well that was all part and parcel of that anyway and I was passionate about those things, very much a post-sixties mentality, thought you could kind of 'save the world' and all those kind of things. Now I think Morris and John, who before I arrived were themselves very much drawn to all that, saw in me a useful ally - agent for change within Dartington and encouraged, although they didn't need to encourage it very much, an interpretation of Dartington that emphasised those things and that point of view, rather than say a crude Darwinian, you know, right wing view of Dartington... You know there are so many other interpretations of Dartington.\(^{91}\)

The history of Dartington as a source of inspiration was revisited and Kidel reports that it was John Lane who was responsible for reinstating Rabindranath Tagore as an important figure in the formation of Leonard's beliefs.

I picked up a lot of notions from John Lane and John Lane picked up no doubt from previous, you know, from Leonard. John Lane made a great thing out of Tagore and I sort of inherited that, you know, that Tagore was important, because Tagore hadn't been part of the 'Dartington tells its story to itself' thing until John turned up and decided that Tagore was important. I think he was much less important. I think that for Peter Cox the connection with India was important but before that. ... But I think John made sure that he was very much in the forefront, and that he was mentioned in publications and exhibitions and there were pictures of him at the Cider Press and that sort of thing. And that fitted with the mood of the seventies you know that an Indian Guru is not a bad thing to have, before all the Rajnish scandals happened I think now people would down-play Tagore a bit - he looks too much like Rajnish.\(^{92}\)

The scope of Kidel's work was wide, but centred on development of collective understanding.\(^{93}\) The work involved organising exhibitions, editing estate and community publications and chairing or organising forum discussion groups like the Dartington Society, which became the Friends of Dartington. His work included an interest in Resurgence and the work of Satish Kumar.

\(^{90}\) Mark Kidel. A Report to the Trustees from the Interpretation Officer. February 1982. Dartington Hall Trust Memorandum. DHA Archive Papers
\(^{91}\) DH video interview 23/12/02
\(^{92}\) Ibid
\(^{93}\) Archive Papers, Mark Kidel Feb 1982. DHA
In an undated paper titled *Development of Audio Visual Resources at Dartington (Film and Slide Shows)* he reviews the on-site publicity vehicles of exhibitions and slide shows at the Cider Press, and the *Man Alive* film and presses for new slide productions and/or a new film. He suggests the potential costs of the slide show would be between three and fifty thousand, whereas the 45-60 minute film costs would be between twenty and thirty thousand. He added that it may be possible to market the film and recoup some of the costs. The paper suggests a schedule of production for either ranging from Summer 1979 to Summer 1980. That no film was made at this time illustrates, perhaps, the discouragement he experienced at Dartington towards his filmmaking. In his paper he evaluates his idea for a film in relation to the much-used *Man Alive* film.

The 'Man Alive' film has served Dartington very well during my own two years here. It is well-made, covers the ground - and, most important of all, communicates very powerfully something of Leonard Elmhirst’s charisma and ideas. It is, however, centred around LKE and, therefore, no longer relevant in the same immediate way. We can no longer describe contemporary Dartington just in terms of LKE’s ideas, although it would be impossible to describe the present-day set-up accurately without reference to the Elmhirsts. The 'Man Alive' film is still useful as a historical document, but if we are to think about a film that expresses what we are doing now, what we hope to do in the future, as well as describing our roots, we shall have to think about creating an entirely new vehicle, not so much to replace the 'Man Alive' film as to be complementary to it.

Before coming to Dartington, Kidel was a successful film producer for the BBC, instrumental in developing the *Arena* arts programme, with a passion for filmmaking. In the 60th anniversary of the foundation of Dartington he saw an opportunity to re-visit this passion while at the same time generating a vehicle which might offer an interpretation of Dartington for those working within it.

DH: The impression I get is that it [the video *Dartington at 60*] was seen as a particular vehicle for a particular job, and it seems to me that that job was about trying to redefine this thing that had lost its centre with Leonard and Dorothy having died, is that true?

MK: Well I think a lot of what I did when I was at Dartington ..The purpose of what I did was to try and help Dartington understand itself; you know and be a mirror. I think that with the film that is partly what you are doing, you are holding up a mirror to.. - you know, you are condensing something, you are drawing meaning out of things.. Certainly all the films I do are about that. They are about taking something incredibly complex, whether it's a person's life or what. Most of the films I do are biographical films - not exclusively. What I'm after is getting some essence out of something. With Dartington I'm sure the attempt was to try and encapsulate some essential things about Dartington, not all of them because it's not comprehensive. A film can never be comprehensive but you can get something. I think probably, objectively, the reason I did the film was that I wanted to make a film, full stop. I hadn't been making films and I had stopped, because not that long after that I went back to making films full time.

The finished film (video) was in Kidel's view less than successful and he claims no particular pride in it. Indeed he made no efforts to have it widely seen and actively discouraged people from

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194 DH video interview 23/12/02
195 Mark Kidel. Archive paper Development of Audio-Visual Resources at Dartington film and slide show. undated but believed to have been written in late 1978. In the paper Kidel refers to his two years of being at Dartington and he was appointed in 1976.
viewing it. The film for Kidel was a vehicle which led him back into his field and in itself was of its time, ephemeral and a necessary step in his life rather than a vehicle which solved or resolved the 'Dartington tells its story to itself' question. From my point of view the film is an illumination of Dartington in its post Founders period which attempts to locate its view of the future on a re-examination of its past. In Dartington at 60 the re-examination of the past is however less reverential than Thomas' compilation films, in a sense it has been let go of in its insistent focus on the film's present.

At the end of his time as Interpretation Officer Kidel embarked on a book which is perhaps more successful in re-examination of Dartington's past. 'Beyond the Classroom', published by Green Books, Devon in 1990 addresses the Dartington Experiment from the point of view of its particular contribution to an educational idea of 'learning by doing'. Kidel identifies two contradictory strands of this idea, the apprenticeship and the researcher. In the former idea the learning is a form of initiation into an established practice which takes account of tradition and is a method of inaugurating new learners into old ideas and ways of doing and thinking. In a more experiential idea of 'learning by doing' the emphasis is on research - experiment, into new ways of doing things, to find form and thinking that is the opposite of tradition and stability represented by the status quo. Dartington with its particular location within a rural environment framed by the cycles of nature and traditional ways of behaviour and response to this was perhaps an impossible combination of these irreconcilable opposites.

The work on and with film at Dartington has always been an appendage to the central concerns of the experiment. In the beginning we can assume that it was driven by what is now a familiar urge to make 'home-movies'. Leonard although a sociable man it seems was also very serious about his role in life and his work. Filming was for him a means of noting outcomes of the experiment, or at least some images of the experiments during their process, perhaps more so than images of results. In this regard film was used as tool for fixing the appearances of the experiments and was seen as a window through which the objects – the experiments – could be observed. In this respect film was, if thought about at all, considered a transparent 'window' on the world.

With increasingly sophisticated use of the medium, with the advent at Dartington of people who had greater understanding of the function and possibilities of the form, film shifted its position to being seen as a specific tool for education. Film becomes a means of broadening the remit of the educational dimension of the experiment. William Hunter's experiments in and development of the 'Classroom Film' form represent actual, if limited experimentation with the form and produced results that were valuable and available for others to use. Importantly the Film Unit's Classroom Films had the possibility of being viable income generating products. The main reasons this form

17th DH video interview 23/12/02
was not developed, despite attempts to build a separate Film Unit, were the death of Hunter combined with the shift in climate brought about by the Second World War.

That Dartington had such an institutional interest in the medium makes the apparent lack of a promotional film from the early period surprising. It is true though that such films were made. The efforts of the Cine-Group combined with the record films of George Bennett and the knowledge of Department heads produced sequentially edited films that dealt with particular aspects of the experiment. There exists a film with limited captions which explore farming and rural industrial practices compiled by Department J R Currie of the Agricultural Economics department and C. F. Nielsen who was running the Parsonage farm.

While the film might be inconclusive the title (see page 44.) suggests that Bennett's and Vic Elmhirst's early plans for producing a Dartington film were being acted on bit by bit. These sequential compilations of record film were silent and lent themselves to presentation as part of a lecture. In this form promotional films were made, unsophisticated but in a form appropriate to their use at the time.

Later attempts to review, understand and explore Dartington's meaning come in the 1970s with the work of Richard Thomas whose function was both fixing a meaning at a particular time and presenting a particular view - Leonard's view of its past. Upon the death of Leonard there is a need to re-construct relevant meanings for those who were left to carry on at Dartington. The Community Video project and the later work of Mark Kidel in producing Dartington at 60 could be seen to be experimental attempts to fulfil this function.

End of Part One.

List of Illustrations From Part One.

1. Close shot of Restoration footage from 1926 spooling across Steenbeck editing table
2. Juniors and Seniors on the estate in 1929. DHA
3. Dorothy Elmhirst typing the first school prospectus in 1925 DHA
4. Leonard in his Repton school cap sets up the camera for a group photograph before church 1906. The photograph of the camera demonstrates that there was more than one in the house. DHA Stills from Family Album compilation video 1993.
5. The Elmhirst children annual line-ups, 1910 and 1911. DHA Stills from Family Album compilation video 1993
6. ‘Mud Larking’ and Pem takes a photograph of Leonard (again two cameras present.) 1911. DHA. Stills from Family Album compilation video 1993
7. Still from Leonard's 1933 film of Russia, copied from Steenbeck edit table at TSWFTA in 2003
8. George Bennett outside the Private House Dartington Hall. DHA
9. Leonard's brother Vic Elmhirst and Bill Curry Headmaster at a Fete in 1934. DHA Family Films. This brief shot is the only moving image of Curry extant in the archive films.
10. Page from the New Learning An Experiment with film in the county of Devon. WEA 1932 report showing a 'typical audience'. Photograph by Stuart Black. DHA
11. Title Idem from Cine Group Production photo from video Copy at TSWFTA in 2003
12. Ricky Leacock shooting Canary Bananas 1935 Picture courtesy of Ricky Leacock
13. Ricky Leacock on the Galapagos Islands 1938. Picture courtesy of Ricky Leacock
14. Dartington Hall Film Unit shooting Coast from 1947. DHA
15. The Film Unit's 1948 Teachers Course shooting How to make a School Aquarium. DHA

Only one film seems to contain a typed credit: “Editing by J R Currie and C F Nielsen in co-operation with Cine Club staff”. The credit seems to appear the middle of two similar films. J. R Currie was not to be confused with W.B Curry headmaster of the school.
A New Archive: Review of work with the Archive

It emerges that Dartington, from the outset in 1925, has had an interest in re-presenting itself to the outside world through film (amongst other forms). It did not successfully do this from within until 1985 when Mark Kidel as 'Interpretation Officer produced Dartington at 60 on U-matic video. 198 Outside agencies, in particular the BBC had succeeded in a more comprehensive telling of the Dartington Story, (not including a less than successful, in Dartington terms, radio programme of January 1948 by Brandon Acton-Bond for the BBC). Success in presenting a comprehensive Dartington story in media form starts with Victor-Bonham-Carter's radio programme in 1952 and culminates in 1972 with Richard Thomas' A Job is not Enough for BBC TV's Man Alive programme. Thomas' work led to the independently commissioned production of two films compiling archive material with Leonard Elmhirst's comments The School and Farms and Industries.

Given that film has from the beginning played a role in the activities of the Dartington experiment, and that it had its own Film Unit linked to its School from 1932 to 1950, why did it take so long to represent itself in this form? A more detailed analysis of the work produced suggests that in partial ways, and in ways contingent on the climate of their time Dartington did produce such work. In posing the question we presume perhaps a contemporary promotional documentary form of representation; what other form might this representation be expected to take?

The filming of history while it is happening is problematic since the most obvious things to film are not necessarily the most interesting to historians. It is also true that trying to make sense of filmed material - shot without a script - is an awesome task. In the case of Dartington the changing nature of the experiment and the complexity of the place compound this task. It seems that a great deal of material shot in the first ten years of the experiment had as an aim the telling of the Dartington story but increasingly this very large agenda eluded the producers. The Dartington Experiment as autonomous phenomena grew too big to be considered as a whole, and only specific elements were the focus of recording and illustration.

198 Kidel was a professional with a BBC background of being, amongst other things, a founding producer of the Arena arts programme. Kidel's video was seen as a way of focusing the Dartington community and looking to the future. It was made some eleven years after the death of Leonard Elmhirst and concerned itself primarily with the Dartington of 1985.
The archive material I have focused on is characterised by having some perceptible intention of relating to the 'Darlington Story' in its production. It emerges that a great deal of the primary visual material under consideration is from the early period of the Dartington Experiment. This material was itself shot almost informally on behalf of the Trustees. Yet there was a conscious attempt to record the various activities on the Estate in a sort of notation of experimental results. Early material was conceived and shot as silent and a contemporary perception, accustomed to the more plastic cinematic space evoked through use of synchronous sound and image, may mask how successful it was in its time at explaining what was going on. The silence – absence of sound track – could be filled in with verbal explanation or discussion.

An examination of Archive film materials can be used to illustrate a particular narrative of history but the materials are always examined from a perspective of a later time. In this respect most examination is retrospective and the context within which it is examined and presented will be part of how it is viewed. At the time of making A Job Is Not Enough, The School and Farms and Industries, Leonard Elmhirst was at the end of his life and reflecting back on both the intentions and the success of the Dartington Experiment. Even though the information he provides is from the centre of the Experiment – himself as the only surviving founder – it must be viewed as partial and not perhaps as objective as it seems. It does however afford an insight into the character and thinking of Leonard.

A further consideration is the way in which the material was kept and this relates to the development and function of the Archive. As the archive has developed the importance of this material, the way it was valued has shifted and the degree to which it has been re-used and edited is a further consideration. The films have been reviewed and reused – re-edited on a number of occasions and this further obscures their actual site of origin.

Allan Sekula has noted:

Archives then, constitute a territory of images; the unity of an archive is, first and foremost that imposed by ownership. Whether or not the photographs in a particular archive are offered for sale, the general condition of archives involves the subordination of use to the logic of exchange. Thus not only are the pictures in archives often literally for sale, but their meanings are up for grabs. New owners are invited, new interpretations are promised.199

Also:

In an archive, the possibility of meaning is 'liberated' from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, an abstraction from the complexity and richness of use, a loss of context. Thus the specificity of 'original' uses and meanings can be avoided, and even made invisible, when photographs are selected from an archive and reproduced in a book. (In

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We now move on to consider my own intervention into the archive and its film materials.

My first contact with the Dartington Hall Archive was in 1992, when I was invited to look through the film materials and come up with ideas for using it and making it available to a wider public. The film material was outside the specialisation of the newly appointed Archivist Maggie Giraud and had not really been touched for some seven years. My initial concern was to learn the history of modern Dartington from the archive materials. There followed a period of work as a consultant to the Archivist with whom I produced a number of compilations of archive materials and subsequently with the archivist's co-operation I produced a video biography of Leonard Elmhirst. During the initial period of activity Maggie Giraud took the archive from its original location in the Elmhirsts' library adjoining the Great Hall, into a new location in High Cross House. The House, built by William Lescaze in 1932 for Bill Curry, Headmaster of the school, had been neglected and the move of the archive enabled its refurbishment. Part of the intention of the move was to make the archive and its materials more visible and accessible. The new Archive also incorporated a gallery.

In the first instance I used the materials to gain insight into the Dartington story, and this led to compiling materials to tell versions of the story. This has given way, or more accurately become incorporated into, my primary interest, which is to produce new work. My approach from the outset was editorial. The early films/videos (1991-1994, see Appendix 1.) produced for the archive, I considered employed a compilation documentary form, but these works can now perhaps more usefully be viewed as documents.²⁰¹

Access to archive materials at the beginning was unlimited, but this changed to a limited, more regulated access under new management regimes at Dartington. Work done after Maggie Giraud left the archive in 1997 followed my own interests. The process of moving from a commissioned consultant/producer to a private researcher/producer saw a shift in the nature of work I have produced. New, independent work from 1997 to 1999 was in the form of photoworks and from 2002 is in the form of a series of video programmes After the Facts. These videos are the culmination of this investigation. Before we move on to consider the final work I will review work undertaken between 1995 and 2002.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.
²⁰¹ See Appendix 1991 - 1994
4 Parts for a Modernist House

This work was the result of collaboration with Flynn Cohen, at that time a music student at the Dartington College. The work took the form of an installation of archive video, live video projections and live music performed as it was composed at High Cross House on 3rd of June 1995. The premise of the work was to take an idea of the cube of cubism, seen as iconic of a 'modernist' form as a cue for the four elements. The four square edges of each face of the cube being its two dimensional form. This was also seen as being pertinent to the rectangular, cube-like construction of High Cross House. The four parts of the music involved works developed from four-part 'rounds' sung by Imogen Holst with the Elmhirst family during the forties. The particular round used was seen as being ironic in the light of the wealth at Dartington.

Hey Ho nobody at home, meat nor drink, nor money have I none, yet will I be merry

Four musician composers, two using violin, and one each using viola and cello developed and performed in different rooms and locations in the house. The four parts of archive video were edited to the 'rhythm' of the original round under titles that reflected the locations of the instruments and embraced ideas pertinent to Dartington. The four titles were Arrival, located in the entrance hall. School, located in the former headmaster's study of the house where the cello worked with deeper tones, Food, located in the kitchen with the viola working with rich mid tones and High, located in the top of the house where the violin worked with higher register notes. Each location was monitored by video and linked through a mixer to a projector in the central stairway of the house. The overall work incorporated visitors interrupting the video projections and harmonic, or otherwise, combination of sounds. While this may have appeared chaotic at times the whole event was underpinned by a simple abstract structure. This structure took its form from a particular reading of archive location and materials.

While the work drew from archive materials and was performed in the new archive location it was not commissioned or supported by Dartington, except in its location. The work did explore the possibilities of using the actual archive and archive materials in completely different ways. This was broadly in line with the objectives Maggie Giraud had for opening up the new archive.

From my point of view the work took the precious film that I had worked so carefully to understand in On Reflection and From the Archive,202 and used it as objectified, thematic chunks of image. The selection of images was made using the themes derived from an idea of Dartington as a Modernist site, they were presented in a historic chronology; older images followed by more recent. But they were given no wider context within which to afford the viewer

202 See Appendix 1991 - 1994
insight into the Dartington story, as had been the case with all the previous work. The film was obviously about and from Dartington but in the context of the work was integrated into the ‘present-time’ event of the overall performance. Dartington’s history was not being told or explained but used here as part of the landscape within which current events were taking place. In siting the work in the modernist High Cross House I recognise a resonance with Jurgen Habermas’s thoughts:

Modernity revolts against the normalising functions of tradition: modernity lives in the experience of rebelling against all that is normative. This revolt is one way to neutralise standards of both morality and utility. This aesthetic consciousness continuously stages a dialectical play between secrecy and public scandal; it is addicted to a fascination with horror, which accompanies the act of profaning, and yet is always in flight from the trivial results of profanation.

On the other hand, the time consciousness articulated in avant-garde art is not simply ahistorical; it is directed against what might be called a false normativity in history. The modern, avant-garde spirit has sought to use the past in a different way; it disposes those pasts which have been made available by the objectifying scholarship of historicism, but it opposes at the same time a neutralised history which is locked up in the museum of historicism.203

In using ‘historic’ film in a way that disengaged its historicism it was intended to open up its possibilities of meaning. While the performance of the work was satisfactory, the ideas embedded in it needed more concerted development. Overall it was a useful experiment and as such it might be said to resonate with the founding experimental ideas of Dartington.

1996

The work involved in 4 Parts for a Modernist House led to a proposal for a further work given the title The Modernist Museum in 1996. This ambitious work again using music and video projections based on thematic issues found in the Dartington story and the archive materials did not attract funding and was not realised.

Another proposal from 1996 called for a series of videos to be produced on a number of Dartington subjects including Architecture, The School, Music and the Summer School of Music, Bernard Leach, Chekhov and Agriculture. The objective was to produce a broad range of information on the subject without unnecessary embellishment building on archive materials supplemented by new interview and contextual material. Again the project did not attract funding and was not realised.

Tobey at Dartington

As with an exhibition of Marianne DeTrey’s work at High Cross House a subsequent exhibition of Mark Tobey’s work at Dartington was accompanied by a video on the subject. The 25 minute video was researched by Fridy Duterloo and produced over a four week period leading up to the opening of the exhibition. The work built on Tobey’s participation in the Staverton Nativity Festival of 1931. Interviews were conducted with many people who knew Tobey or who recalled the 1931 Festival.

The structure of the video was quite conventional outlining the main points of the story with anecdotal recollections provided by the new interviews. As with other productions commentary was kept to a minimum allowing each interviewee to tell the story. The momentum created by the earlier work and the concerted production period meant that a great deal of local interest was aroused within the Dartington Community. A small budget was available for the production, which meant it could be produced on Betacam.SP. format. Editing was completed using facilities of Westcountry TV. The completed video was successful in its terms of reference of providing an accompaniment to the exhibition by offering an insight into Tobey’s Dartington legacy. The work benefited from higher production values afforded by the budget, a concerted production process and the collaboration between the archive, the producers and the exhibition’s curator. The Tobey video represented my final commissioned work undertaken for the Archive.

As the momentum of the new High Cross House Archive waned and financial constraints curtailed the possibility of new work, my research activity shifted to developing a project on my own interests. 1996 saw a shift in my relationship with the Archive from that of a consultant producing work determined by the policies and interests of the Archive to that of a researcher perusing specific areas of interest. These could be summarised as a desire to explore Dartington through an engagement with archive materials and to produce new work drawn from that engagement. The form of the work was not determined but was driven by my interest in film, video and photography.

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294 See Appendix 1992 - 1994
A personal motivation for the previous work had been an intrigue and desire to understand the roots and conception of the Dartington story, to answer the question 'what is Dartington?' At this point I felt that the route to the answer lay in understanding the founders Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst. I determined that archive material in film and video was more available on the subject of Leonard and so I decided to focus on him. The project took the form of a number of lecture presentations at High Cross House which led to the production of a 50 minute video in August 1997.

The video draws on 1975 interview material from the Community Video recordings of his brother Pom and sister, Rachael. Much use is made of audio recordings discovered after the production of the On Reflection series and From the Archive. One of the recordings on audio cassette, of Leonard speaking notes to an unknown interviewer, was labelled LKE Biography and dated August 1973. The recording seems to have been made in Leonard's study because the tone is quiet and intimate and Leonard sounds tired. At one point when he recalls his mother singing to him and rubbing his legs as he tries to go to sleep, his voice tails off, as he seems to put himself back into the situation he is describing. This recording contrasts sharply with a second recording made in 1966 during an address to students at the Dartington College. Here his tone of voice is animated and excited as he recounts his version of the story of his first visit to Dartington with his sister in 1925. Although it is the narrative information contained in these sequences that determine their use in the video, the different qualities of sound: tone of voice, quality of recording and so on informs the overall qualities of the video.

Discovering new material made me aware of the flux of the research process I had been engaged in for five years and how new things coming to light shift the understanding at any given time. Aware of the criticism of From the Archive, it was important that the audience should see this work as a particular perspective not an authoritative one. For this reason it was important to place myself in relation to the material as the 'person with limited knowledge who is telling you this'. In the introduction I briefly explain the process I have gone through to arrive at the form the video will take. My presence in the video also takes the form of voice-over links between sections and a 'piece to camera' reading from The Straight and its Origins dealing with the coming together of Leonard and Dorothy.

\(^{205}\) Community Video Nos: 50 and 5 respectively

\(^{206}\) See Appendix 1991 - 1994
This strategy marks a departure from the earlier works, which are in effect anonymously produced, although there are customary end credits. Stylistically this also departs from a normative idea of using voice-overs in presenting documentary information as anonymous but authoritative. Someone who the audience has been introduced to is presenting the voice over.

The video attempts to present a chronological history outlining some of the main points in a story of Leonard up until and including Leonard’s review of Dartington provided by the interview he recorded with Richard Thomas in 1972. Again there was no budget available and the production was made using VHS format equipment and editing facilities. As a new work it gathered much disparate material on Leonard and provided a wide ranging overview but it offered little depth or contextual analysis.

The material was allowed to speak for itself. Audio recordings and some of the film and video interview footage was heavily over-laid or illustrated with still photographic images from the archive at appropriate points. The general accuracy of placing was an improvement on earlier videos due to the depth of picture research that had been undertaken. It is however true that the pictures as archive objects were lifted out of their context in the archive and placed in the video specifically to illustrate what was being said. This was a more careful application of the same practice used in earlier videos. The reality is however, that the images were used to provide the viewer with a window on moments during events, rather than as photographic archive objects.

The issue of this shift in context of the archive materials was made most apparent in the section dealing with Leonard’s school days where images were taken from his first photo album of 1912. The original images are very small and are included in the video with the borders and his notes visible in the framing. One image has the hand written title ‘Part of study 1912 My last year at Repton’. To one side of the image is also hand written: ‘my pictures’. It remains uncertain as to when the hand written notes were added, at the time or later as Leonard was trying to pin down details of his archive materials. The inclusion of the border and the notes has the effect of shifting the viewer’s perspective from that of looking at the subjects of the photographs to considering them as objects. This issue was not resolved or specifically developed in the video but became a seed issue for future work.

The lack of budget and support for the project meant that the work produced was done so over a long period of time and in the end could not achieve a standard of production which would make it widely accessible to a larger audience. The process of producing the work was valuable, if only to illustrate the enormity of the task facing an independent producer working without commercial or financial backing.

The objectives throughout the process were focused on finding and organising the available material into some kind of logical, chronological order. A critical analysis of Leonard and his life’s work was a secondary concern and this remains the major weakness of the video. There is no critical overview, rather the achievements, manifest in the Dartington estate and legacy are expected to be at least known about and left for the viewer to evaluate. For a more in-depth description of this I would refer interested viewers to Michael Young’s book *The Elmhirsts of Dartington*. The desire to be impartial and simply present an accurate chronology resulted in a video that may be of interest to researchers and Dartington initiates, but has little appeal beyond that narrow audience. The work’s main value is as a chronological assimilation of disparate archive material providing a particular overview and the possibility of connections between these materials.

As to my aim to understand the Dartington story by analysis of the founders, while the process of production considerably broadened my understanding, the video remains lopsided. Little space is given to developing an understanding of Dorothy and her role in the marriage of ideas and intentions that led to Dartington.
The most positive outcome of the work was perhaps the potential it threw up for new work. The process of studying the materials and the processes of engagement with them was productive.

In August 1997 Maggie Giraud left Dartington and with her my principal point of access to the Dartington Archive. While I maintained contact with the Archive the loss of the constructive enthusiasm and support by Maggie Giraud for the work I was doing was a setback. Earlier in that year however, I had begun to develop new ideas and a different approach to producing work with Archive materials. This work proceeded through 1997 into 1998.
The Photoworks: Re-collecting

In April 1997 I visited Manchester and an exhibition of David Hockney's work at the City Gallery. Somewhat resentful at the four pounds it cost to go in I grudgingly approached what seemed to me a new painting in the centre of the gallery. I have never cared for Hockney's paintings and was really killing time, but this new work caught my eye: It had much more energy and presence that I had ever expected from his work. It seemed to be composed of broad expressive brush strokes, a complete and refreshing departure from his sickly straight lines and flat colours. As I got to within about six feet of this new work I realised with a delighted shock that it was not a painting at all but a montage of photographs.

Without taking particular notice of it I had been aware of Hockney's photoworks from the mid-eighties, and was somewhat disdainful of the obviousness and simplicity of these works. At that time my own interest lay primarily in time based works using film and video slides and sound. The graphic still montage was something I had looked at but decided did not embrace time in the experiential way that interested me.

What I was captivated by at the Manchester exhibition was the visual energy of this work, and its use of the static, time-locked, shuttered moments, as part of a larger time and space frame. The work was in fact Pearblossom Highway, (11th –18th April 1986) which was one of Hockney's largest and last works in the format he called 'Joiners', produced as a commission for Vanity Fair magazine. Reproductions of this work, in print do not provide the impact of scale that the original pictures have. The impact of the piece on me opened new possibilities for exploring space and place and time. The engagement with archive film and photographic materials has within it a dimension of time having passed. There is the consideration of time between the present of the observer and the present of the photographer. This is also a constant consideration when dealing with film and video, essentially time-managing media.

In Hockney's photographic work notions of time passing and a movement through both time and space take on a graphic representation. Hockney traces the conceptual issues of his photoworks to the work of Braque and Picasso and ideas inherent in their expressions of Cubism. It is beyond the scope of this current work to discuss cubism in any detail or the complex ideas of David Hockney on the subject. The following extract offers some of the starting points relevant to my subsequent work with photographs.
It can't be a coincidence that cubism arose within a few years of the popularisation of photography... Picasso and Braque saw the flaw in photography - all the sorts of things about time and perception which I've only recently begun to appreciate - the flaw in the camera: but in doing so, they only recognised the flaw in photography's precursor, the camera obscura. Now, the camera obscura was essentially a room - camera means room - it had a hole in it, and the hole was a window. You're looking out a window. That was the idea. In fact that's why you get easel painting, which arose around the same time: the resultant canvas was meant to be a kind of window you could slot into your own wall. This idea of looking out a window dominated the European aesthetic for 300 years. Interestingly, by the way, Oriental art never knew the camera obscura and their art instead looks out of doors. The difference between a window and a door is you can walk through a door towards what you are seeing. Much Oriental art takes the form of a screen, which, like a door stands on the floor. You cannot do that with a window: a window implies a wall, something between you and what you are looking at. I suspect the Oriental alternative was especially important for the cubists. Because what they were up to, in a word, was breaking the window. Cezanne was getting there; in his still lives he observed that the closer things are to us the harder it is for us to place them, they seem to shift. But he still looked through a window at those card players grouped around that cafe table. Whereas as has often been said, Picasso and Braque wanted to break that window and shove the cafe table right up to our waist.

In the emerging intentions of my photowork at Dartington, I saw the act of photographic image making as an index of a history (story) underlying the world perceived as well as a representation of that history at a given period. Here the objection to the questionable authoritative interpretation of the history in From the Archive 1993 begins to be addressed. Within an image derived from a multiplicity of different images, the authority of a monolithic image is mediated. The image becomes a representation of multiple perspectives, not a single authoritative one.

Inspired by my first sight of Hockney's *Pearblossom Highway*, I set out to produce my own explorations of place and time. Immediately I uncovered practical and theoretical difficulties with regard to making as opposed to viewing the work of another. There is a parallel here with my attempts to reproduce a history of Dartington by making 'factual', 'historic', video 'documentary' statements based on the archive materials. I had been both viewing and making, in effect seeing and telling. This is an active process that suffers from lack of reflective space. Time within the video experience is continually becoming and passing, there is, ironically, an absence of time to reflect. Focusing on the production of a single image afforded me this reflective space and it is manifest in the final image as a single entity that the viewer can also reflect on; yet an entity that embodies time having passed.

With Photographs, it is perhaps easier to speculate on the producer's intentions for particular images because of the control that the viewer has over the amount of time that can be given to viewing. Film and video determine for us (the viewer) the duration of our viewing and by montage determine or lead us in a particular direction of interpretation. Hockney discusses some of his

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208 True to Life by Lawrence Weschler in David Hockney, Cameraworks. Thames and Hudson 1984 pp19-20.
My main argument was that a photograph could not be looked at for a long time. Have you noticed that? Hockney led me back into the studio and picked up a magazine, thumbing through randomly to an ad, a photograph of a happy family picnicking on a hillside green. 'See? You can't look at most photos for more than, say, thirty seconds. It has nothing to do with the subject matter. I first noticed this with erotic photographs, trying to find them lively: you can't. Life is precisely what they don't have— or rather, time, lived time. All you can do with most ordinary photographs is stare at them—they stare back, blankly— and presently your concentration begins to fade. They stare you down. I mean photography is all right if you don't mind looking at the world from the point of view of a paralysed cyclops— for a split second. But that's not what it's like to live in the world, or to convey the experience of living in the world.  

Parallels here perhaps of Ricky Leacock's attempt to generate a 'feeling of being there' in his film work.

In the beginning my photographic work had little (I could see) to do with my interest in Dartington. Dartington was only one of a number of sites for works produced during 1997. However, one of the first photoworks I constructed was an image of High Cross House, the new site of the Dartington Hall Archive. This simple application of cubist ideas, extrapolated from Hockney and Picasso, in constructing an image of a modernist house seemed an elegant fusion of form and content. High Cross House explored the reverse perspective idea that emerges in Hockney's early work of this kind. The work utilises what is an essentially modernist notion—developed by Hockney's re-reading of analytic cubism and was felt appropriate for a visual exploration of the quintessentially Modernist architecture of High Cross House.

Fig. 18. High Cross House 1997 Photomontage, 1997

Ibid p9

I began to consider the element of time in the work, made manifest here through intervals between images. My work at Dartington had been an attempt to reduce or explore the intervals between specific events represented in the archive films and photographs (and the peoples’ lives embraced by this mass of material) and my own life and time. As with the introduction of Tracing Leonard, the inclusion of the position of the producer within the work was designed to allow a viewer greater possibility of constructing their own understanding of the subject, so it seemed that a work without the presence of the producer was insincere. This aesthetic notion can be traced back through the ‘distancing effect’ of Brechtian theatre. By incorporating the ‘reality’ of the actors and the performance the viewer/audience is aware of their own ‘reality’ in relation to the theatrical illusion. In the case of my introduction to Tracing Leonard the audience is aware that a particular person is telling the story. Frustrations with the earlier video work, in addition to the technical and very real practical limitations of the VHS format, lay with its anonymity. The videos presented an unmediated but illusory authority.

In an attempt to synthesise my interest in producing photographic work with my interest in Dartington I began to incorporate archive photographs into montage works based in the Dartington grounds. An early idea was simply a notion of including archive images within the montages I was producing. The particular archive photographs I chose to work with determined the sites of these works. I had discovered an image of Leonard standing in the Great Hall on a very early visit to the site at a time when the Hall was roofless. I tried to locate the position it was taken from and to place the image in the same situation eighty years on.  

Fig.19
Leonard during an early visit to Dartington in the Great Hall. Double exposure 1997 and detail of the original from 1925

Another work grew from a photograph of Dorothy and Leonard seated on a wall in the Courtyard in the late 20s, which was used to explore the courtyard in 1997 during the summer school of music. A number of versions of this work were made and now it seemed important to incorporate my hand holding the archive photograph as a transparent representation of a specific time - my time. The starting image was made using a double exposure of a particular scene, once with my hand holding the archive image in front of the scene and once without.

![Leonard and Dorothy from the 1920s superimposed on the courtyard in 1998 during Summer School](image)

The hand seen holding the archive image, serves to underline the deliberate intention of the work. The archive image is being deliberately placed in a contemporary scene. The mismatch between the archive image and the contemporary scene it is superimposed upon is another deliberate way of underlining the ‘hand made’ intention and serves as a ‘distancing’ device. The image is not an illusionist special-effect that puts ghosts into contemporary scenes but rather a visible mechanism to illuminate an idea. The idea in this case is a connection between the past and present, in effect a reduction of the interval between past and present by incorporating them in the same image but in a way that does not hide its construction.

The works shifted from being interpretative landscapes (such as High Cross House), to inclusion of the same place and people from the past in the same place that as I was in, in the ‘now’ of the photographs I was taking.
My life began to impinge on the work in a very visible way, as is the case in the Duke of Kent Visit. This was built on an image I knew I could find the camera location of and fill in around the archive image with the broader contemporary scene. It so happened that this scene included my six-year-old son who accompanied me during the shooting and who appears in many of the subsequent montage frames. His home was within the Estate some two miles from the Hall and the grounds had felt his presence many times during family walks. In the resulting montage as a casual visitor, he is watching the special event of the Duke’s visit if only by being in the same location. But within the broad visual field of the montage his childish playful visit co-exists with the historic one. As the Duke’s visit becomes contemporary so my son’s visit becomes historic.

What is the relation of a photographic image of an event to the event? In the process of becoming an image - mechanically or electronically reproducible to an indefinite degree the event (the scene in front of the camera lens at the point of exposure) becomes objectified, it becomes an object. Roland Barthes has stated:

It is often said that it was the painters who invented photography (by bequeathing it their framing, the Albertian perspective, and the optic of the camera obscura). I say: no, it was the chemists. For the noeme 'That-has-been' was possible only on the day when a scientific circumstance (the discovery that silver halogens were sensitive to light) made it possible to recover and print directly the luminous rays emitted by a variously lighted object. The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, are produced radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.

It seems that in Latin 'photograph' would be said 'imago lucis opera expressa'; which is to say: image revealed, 'extracted', 'mounted', 'expressed' (like the juice of a lemon) by the
action of light. And if Photography belonged to a world with some residual sensitivity to myth, we should exult over the richness of the symbol: the loved body is immortalised by the precious metal, silver (monument and luxury); to which we might add the notion that this metal, like all the metals of Alchemy, is alive.212

Does not the photograph as object, with its processes of creation also bring with it a magic of meaning? Is that meaning intrinsic or constructed by the photographer and the viewer? An application of C.S. Peirce’s trichotomy of signs by semiotologists would suggest the latter is the case.

Hockney has argued in his 2001 book Secret Knowledge that photochemical photography was a blip in a history of making images by hand that has been restored to its rightful place inside the ‘camera’ by the advent of digital photography.

In the 1970s the computer arrives and changes the lens picture. (Technology always seems to have an effect on depiction.) Computer manipulation means that it’s no longer possible to believe that a photograph represents a specific object in a specific place at a specific time — to believe that it is objective and ‘true’. The special position, even legal position, that photography once had has gone. (Manipulate — ‘to use the hand’.) The hand has returned to lens-based images. The computer has brought the photograph closer to drawing and painting once again.213

Hockney’s book deals with a practical thesis setting out to prove the application of optics to image making from much earlier than was previously thought. In this I am concerned with a sense of the meaning of photography and the construction of meaning. What are the generic implications of photographic meaning, how can photographs connect us to the past? What of the alchemy implied by Barthes?

The photograph does not call up the past (nothing Proustian in a photograph). The effect it produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time and distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed. I am the reference of every photograph, and this is what generates my astonishment in addressing myself to the fundamental question: why is it that I am alive here and now? Of course, more than other arts, Photography offers an immediate presence to the world — a co-presence: but this presence is not only of a political order (‘to participate by the image in contemporary events’), it is also of a metaphysical order. Flaubert derided (but did he really deride?) Bouvard and Pecuchet investigating the sky, the stars, time, life, infinity, etc. It is this kind of question that Photography raises for me: questions which derive from a ‘stupid’ or simple metaphysics (it is the answers which are complicated): probably the true metaphysics214

As I considered the photographic work I was developing with archive images I sensed a difficult personal aspiration to find a point of connection with Dartington’s past. This past does not

212 Roland Barthes Camera Lucida p80-81
213 David Hockney. Secret Knowledge. Thames and Hudson, London 2001 P185
214 Barthes p84
include me and yet I seem to illustrate my connection to it by simply being in the same place as the past represented in the archive images. Events also exist as connected points in time and space. From the fused double exposure of the ‘historic’ (archive image) with a contemporary scene at the same place still only two points of reference are made. In the Archive photographs what was there is objectified. It could be argued that objectification fixes things or affords them the authority of objects. In the photoworks the particular space around the edges of the original scene serve to mediate the authority of the single object: the original archive image. Here time, seen as fixed by this single image is represented as a broader continuum.

By photographing the scene from the same viewpoint, but taking it out beyond the edges of the initial framing, and making a montage of these images, the connected events before and after the initial shutter click are implied in the actual ‘before’ and ‘after’ frames surrounding the contemporary image. In the Duke of Kent Visit montage this duplicity of events is graphically represented in the parts of the courtyard where my son appears. The child, who as one person cannot be in more than one place at a time, appears in numerous different places at different times separated by the different frames of the photographs but connected by his movement through time and space from one to the other as I take photographs. The whole is re-presented in the montage as a single image. Does this physical manipulation of images echo Hockney’s insistence on the hand made nature of post chemical photography?

In a sense Barthes has argued that the photograph’s inevitable meaning - that what was once before the lens is no more - is an index of the inevitable death of the moment and or the subject. Within the context of multiple images a sense of multiple deaths are conveyed building into a representation, if not a meaning, of life - in flux of living. Here I echo Hockney’s idea that one requires more than the view of a paralysed Cyclops - for a split second ‘to convey something of the experience of living in the world’. A more recent exposition of this idea comes from Jean-Luc Godard who we will consider later who has said: ‘Everything is locked into its own time. Photos reach out of time, fixing the moment – an absence but also the certainty of before and since.’

I subsequently applied this idea to other archive photographs with a mixed set of results. The work shifted to a more deliberate concern with single images using only one frame to expose my hand holding the archive photograph and the site of that photograph as it is ‘now’. Double exposure of the film once the original camera location, lens and lighting have been approximated, results in an incorporation of the old image and the ‘now’ image within the same frame. The hand holding the images is that of the photographer. This combined with the intentional juxtaposition of a ‘then’ and a ‘now’ underlines an intentionality of the photographer. An intention to ‘get in on the 215

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215 Jean-Luc Godard History(s) of Cinema Part 2.
act' perhaps. It crudely presents an idea of this place having a past, of things having gone on here, of meanings from other times the contemporary photographer cannot access but seeks. The aspiration is facilitated through the mechanism of viewing the photographic 'now' through 'then' – or vice-versa. The resulting images are an expression of this aspiration rather than a new definition.

This became an important aspect of the work. Not only was then and now juxtaposed, by my placing the archive image in the position of a similar contemporary scene, but the two images were photo chemically fused in the one negative - and subsequent prints from that negative. As a formula this is a simple technique to reproduce and I set about reproducing the results with many other Archive images. But formulaic methods do not produce uniformly interesting results. Each image has varying and different degrees of success, dependent on light, lens, film, shutter speed and registration, and each is in its own way as unique and unrepeateable an image as the original Archive photograph. Each is also therefore an index to the past, even at the instant of its capture on the negative.

The work does not therefore present a past and a present but only a past. The sense of past in relation to present is however implied by the distance or interval in time between the two fused images. My emerging aspiration, perhaps at this point unconscious, to find a personal connection with the past became an important issue of these works. The dynamic of the images for me grew out of the embodiment of an idea of interval. Interval seeming to be represented by the superimposition of images from different times but that also illustrated the absence of connection. The two presences, of the archive image and the contemporary image, paradoxically add up to an absence of either. In this Barthes' notion of the metaphysics of the image, and the implied Alchemical fusion of differences generates perhaps a new, more illusive, entity.

Interval, as a theoretical tenet in understanding Montage, has been described by Annette Michelson as:

Shadowy, ambiguous, quite generally unexplored within the literature of historical and theoretical analysis, it nevertheless bears, as such ambiguous constructs often will, the connotation of a certain privileged status. So any attempt at clarification must first abandon the notion of a unified construct, however subtle or complex. Rather we must acknowledge it as volatile and polysemic.

The term 'interval' she traces to Sergei Eisenstein in his work 'A Dialectic Approach to Film Form':

I also regard the inception of new concepts and viewpoints in the conflicts between customary conception and particular representation as dynamic - as a dynamation of the 'traditional view' into a new one. The quality of interval determines the pressure of the

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tension. (see music, for example, the concept of intervals. There can be cases where the distance of separation is so wide that it leads to a break - to a collapse of the homogeneous concept of art. For instance, the 'inaudibility' of certain intervals, the spatial form of this dynamism is expression, the phases of tension: rhythm. This is true for every art form and indeed for every kind of expression.217

With an accepted opposition between ideas of montage represented in fiction film characterised by Eisenstein and in documentary characterised by the work of Vertov, she traces a more explicitly developed expression of Interval by Dziga Vertov:

... intervals (the transition from one movement to another) are the material, the elements of the art of movement, and by no means the movement themselves. It is they (the intervals) which draw the movement to a kinetic resolution 218

Although these ideas are concerned with montage in Cinema their application to photomontage is also appropriate. In a montage the image is viewed as a whole but made up of component parts. The intervals between the parts themselves and the whole contribute to the overall reading or meaning of the montage. In the developing works I began to see myself as a conscious commentator, looking at photographs from the past in a contemporary context and specifically my contemporary context. There is a sense in which I made my own statements about Dartington which draw from the 'story' (constructed as historic or mythic), and the distance I have from it - its factual or immutable certainty and my interpretation and re-presentation of it. I have made the images/photographs my own, whilst retaining respect for their primary integrity. In a real sense the work attempts to reconcile contradictory elements, or at least illustrate their co-existence. This echoes an idea implicit in a statement by Dartington Hall Trustees in 1989.

Dartington's endeavour has always been a response to human need: never has it been based purely on theory. The Trust views life as a whole. It seeks to bring together those elements which, in general, our society regards as separate and, indeed, opposed. The Trust strives to break down barriers, to make connections, to free the energy inherent in seemingly contradictory forces.219

The notion of the interval is perhaps key to my interpretation of this.

Other production processes grew from a strong interest and sense of fun in putting together images and ideas like pieces of the jigsaw. In the early video works, produced from the archive materials, this element was paramount in what motivated the process. Putting things together as a way of constructing new things is a passion. The connection in time of juxtaposed images and sounds - each coloured in its meaning by what came before and what goes after - is a feature of working with video/film that I love. The notion of time passing both in the telling of the story and


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in the story itself is another aspect with contradictory actualities and spaces presented for the viewer inviting involvement or placement within it by the viewer.

The early video works aimed at an objective portrayal of aspects of the Dartington story. In reality both the objectivity and the story are questionable. The photographic work uses Barthes' notion of the immutable connection between the subject and the person holding the camera. This is particularly so in the cases where my hand is clearly seen holding archive photographs, so even if the story is open to question the objectivity has graphically defined parameters in the photograph of something actual. Also in the work notions of time passing and a movement through both time and space take on a graphic representation.

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219 Mark Kidel, Beyond the Classroom, Green Books, Devon. 1990 p8
Reconstruction

Perhaps the most significant work produced in this phase of the project began when I reviewed the beginnings of Dartington. *The Restoration* film showing the restoration of the Great Hall included some of the earliest footage made at Dartington. The version of this footage, which I reunited with Leonard's commentary, has a simplicity whereby my intervention was a mechanical process of sifting and editing to recreate something of the initial expression of the marriage of Leonard's memories with film images. This had been an early project and in reviewing it I perceived its simplicity and its depth. Two processes are clearly represented: the rebuilding of the hall and what it meant to Leonard to recall this in 1972. Both are outside of my experience and because of this the parameters of my intervention were limited and so more easily defined than other conceptions I had explored in trying to define the whole of the Dartington Experiment. The work represented a particular framing. I had set out to answer the question 'what is Dartington?' and found this too large a question to answer. The first work I produced, *The Restoration* video, now struck me as quite refreshing after six years of struggling with many other forms, images, sounds, constructions and meanings.

In the original 16mm film of the restoration I noticed that the style of the camerawork is quite naive in the sense that whoever shot it (probably a combination of Victor and Leonard Elmhirst but mainly George Bennett) was primarily concerned with making a record of what was going on. George Bennett at that time did not have experience or knowledge to consider how the subsequent pieces of film would be put together - except perhaps in a chronological order. The film displays little knowledge of 'Russian' or other montage techniques emerging at the time, and each shot moves around the subject with a fixed focus lens filming as much of the scene as it can. The camera used is obviously clockwork and as the cameraperson pans around there are occasions when the motor runs out and then after rewinding the pan is backed up - as if to produce continuity of the whole scene- and continued. The result is that the film contains many shots that pan or tilt in partially continuous motion around the construction work. (For as long as the motor running time on one wind) These film shots bear a resemblance to the way in which I was gathering photographic materials for my photoworks: a continuous series of images. It occurred to me that using some of the archive film shots to produce still images it would be possible to produce photomontages with the archive film. I painstakingly photographed sections of the restoration film to produce still photographs and began to piece them together.

Although there were many continuous sections, the film had been shot over the whole process of rebuilding from 1928 to the mid 1930's and so I found that to produce a broad panorama of one location meant using film shot at different times. This amplified the scope of the work by
introducing new intervals. From the restoration footage I selected the material shot from the
screens passage end of the Hall to reproduce a large view. Two main images evolved: one
conforming to a point of view from the ground at this point, and the other to a point of view from,
what was at the time of original filming, the roof line.

As these works grew I returned to Dartington in June 1998 to photograph the Hall as it was then,
using approximately the same point-of-views as were emerging from the 16mm film montages.
The resultant works: Reconstruction of the Great Hall Dartington: Up and Reconstruction of the
Great Hall Dartington: Down, are made up of superimposition of the montage made from film stills
on a montage made from my ’98 photographs. Unlike earlier works such as High Cross House,
May 97, where the work owes its energy to piecing together images taken while moving around
the building, the two works use an approximate single viewpoint in space to conform to a
readable pattern of perspective. They do however represent more graphically simultaneous
positioning in time. In these works the earlier concerns with montage and superimposition are
recombined. A palpable representation of the actual reconstruction of the Great Hall is seen in
Reconstruction of the Great Hall Dartington: Down.

Fig.22 Detail from The Reconstruction of the Great Hall Down. 1998 showing William Wier (left) in 1926

Near the bottom right is an image of William Weir, Architect of the reconstruction, seen probing the walls of the ruined hall on his first inspection of the site to determine if the walls are actually strong enough to take a new roof. When the film image was shot he was standing inside the roofless ruin. The work also contains an element of the atmosphere of the early use of the hall by the Dartington people with a boy riding his cycle through the ruin. In the same area - bottom right of the image Beatrice Straight, daughter of Dorothy and an imposing influence within the newly formed school on many of the boys, walks arm in arm with a young man towards what were then the private apartments.

*The Reconstruction of the Great Hall Down* is made up of still images from frames of 16mm film taken during the actual reconstruction of the Hall 1926 to 1931. These images are physically positioned within a contemporary photographic montage of the Hall. Here the interval is between the obvious times when the photographs were taken but also the different places from which they were taken. Here space and time are represented as a whole but made up of fragments and the whole is only perceived by the viewer ignoring the intervals between, yet it is in these intervals that the meaning rests.
The later work of this phase grew from this idea of using archive 16mm images to create environments within which contemporary images were located. 'Putting Windows in the Hall' and to a lesser extent 'Putting Chairs into the Hall' conceptually and graphically represent my attempts to bridge an undefined period of time between the start of the Dartington Experiment and my engagement with it. In these works I return to the formula of holding archive images in a contemporary scene approximating to the site of the original photograph, but in the final works I am holding a contemporary image taken from approximately the same position as is constructed by the archive film still montages. In the Great Hall montages I am putting the images of the past into a construction of the present, but in the Windows and Chairs works I am putting the present into a construction of the past. Both are constructions. But the final works attempt a sense of closure to the enquiry through their simplicity. The construction of the image is embedded within the final image and clearly visible. Both represent a framing of an idea. What it might, or could, mean is both simple and accessible while in conception complex and elusive. Putting the past within the frame of the present is one level on which this might be read, but putting the present in the frame of the past, is not quite the opposite, it opens up the reflective consideration of framing. In these works I feel I gained some understanding of myself and methods of enquiry, some ideas of photography and Dartington: accepting my distance from the story being told and my inevitable distortion or construction of it by putting things together.
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The final manifestation of this work was an exhibition at High Cross House in August and September of 1998. In this I felt I had found a form that took archive materials and used them to present a new view of themselves, their subject and the processes of engagement with them. In doing this I had found a way of being involved, viewing and telling a form of the Dartington Story. This it seemed was a conclusion of my engagement with Dartington, and the materials of its archive.

Some of the photoworks were included in an Exhibition *Going Modern and Being British* shown at the Royal Albert Museum, Exeter, and the Plymouth Museum. There followed a four-year period where other factors determined that little new work was produced. A process of evaluation began.

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Chapter 6 Context

Film and History

Throughout this enquiry the aspiration to engage with the past, to access its events and meanings, its contingencies and certainties has been an important determinant. My, perhaps, romanticised nostalgia to engage with a history reflects a more legitimate sense of wanting to find connections with where I am – a reflective consideration of the landscape of my existence. My interest in Dartington comes from an intrigue with the place I live in as well as its invaluable resources of environment and the traces of its ontology – the treasure house of material contained in the archive. I have particular interest in images and the illusive promise they offer of access to the past. A particular framing of this concern is with history, and its relation to images. I now consider some aspects of the relationship between film and history.

In his book Cinema and History: British Newsreels and the Spanish Civil War, Anthony Aldgate provides a survey of issues involved in considering film as history. Aldgate lays out a progression of ideas as a framework to be considered in trying to interpret newsreel film as a source of history. He concludes by identifying that it is in the nature of the material to be manipulated and that therefore one needs to look at ‘who it was that manipulated them, what their purposes were and whether they acted on their own initiative.’ Aldgate goes on to use this framework for his examination of the Spanish Civil War seen through British Newsreels of the time concluding that:

If finally, they failed to explain what the Spanish Civil War was about, then there can be no doubt that the newsreels helped to prevent the Spanish situation from being understood.222

Seen from 2003 Aldgate’s mapping of the framework within which the relationship between film and history might be considered may perhaps seem self-evident. A comparable exposition by Rachael Low, in a chapter Film as a Historical Document outlines the seductive possibilities of films from the thirties and concludes:

The realist documentary drama and the historical compilation film have something in common in this respect. Both are modern extensions of old forms, using modern technology to present interpretations of truth, in the one case that of the dramatist and in the other that of the historian. The danger of both lies in the lack of understanding on the part of their public. They both depend on an audience sufficiently educated to appreciate film as a medium of expression, and remember that what they see is not life at first hand but, in their different ways, accounts of it through other people’s eyes.224

223 Ibid. p.184

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Another consideration of this relationship can be found in an essay by Robert A. Rosenstone, from 1988. While Aldgate and Low outline some considerations involved in deriving historical information from film, Rosenstone considers the possibility of articulating history through film. Dealing first with the fact that traditionally history has resided in words not images and in the attempts of filmmakers to tell history inevitably:

...the history that finally appears on the screen can never fully satisfy the historian (although it may satisfy the historian as filmgoer). Inevitably something happens on the way from page to the screen that changes the meaning of the past as it is understood by those of us who work in words.

He discusses his experience with producing documentary film made up of interviews with subjects remembering events, which his analysis suggests:

...compresses the past into a closed world by telling a single, linear story with, essentially, a single interpretation. Such a narrative strategy obviously denies historical alternatives, does away with complexities of motivation or causation, and banishes subtlety from the world of history.

This we have seen already as a problem with the historicism implicit in the Dartington films The School and Farms and Industry. Rosenstone polarises the discussion through the positions of commentators: R.J.Raack, who has been involved in film production and philosopher Ian Jarvie. Raack argues: 'Traditional written history is too linear' and 'Only film can provide an adequate "empathetic reconstruction to convey how historical people witnessed, understood, and lived their lives."' Only film can 'recover all the past's liveliness'. Ian Jarvie espoused the opposite position: 'The moving image carries such a "poor information load" and suffers from such "discursive weakness" that there is no way to do meaningful history on film' and he identifies further problems for the historian: 'How could he defend it, footnote it, rebut objections and criticise the opposition?'

The whole discussion by Rosenstone sets the question in the context of a larger problem:

To think of the ever-growing power of the visual media is to raise the disturbing thought that perhaps history is dead in the way God is dead. Or, at the most, alive only to believers—that is, to those of us who pursue it as a profession.

In grappling with these problems Rosenstone points to the kind of film that addresses the privileged position of written history through the particular qualities of the filmic form. He cites the


work of someone dealing with the problems and challenges of film and history, the 'most interesting and provocative of such works may be the feature-length Sans Soleil (1982) by Chris Marker. We will return to Marker's work later.

Such consideration does lead to the question of history itself — articulated, determined or practised by historians and philosophers - and its framing and relevance within a wider cultural context of use and application. It is perhaps useful to make a distinction between an idea of reality and history's construction. The search for reality, (and perhaps an idea of truth in reality), while motivating historical enquiry, needs to be separated from it. This seems to be the problem identified by Aldgate and Low and perhaps focused by Rosenstone. The aspiration to contextualise events, to see relevance and causality in events, happens in a site outside of the reality or truth of these events. This is more so in the case of recorded (image/sound) information, which is only available outside of events. So what is history?

Walter Benjamin has given us in his Theses on the Philosophy of History, a clear distinction between; a historicism with its view of the accumulative linear procession of events pouring into an empty future and a Historical Materialist view. The latter position built on a notion of an unconscious envy-free construct of the future implicit in the present and in the past. The future is anticipated in each moment of the present (‘the time to which the course of our own existence has assigned us’) with a kind of optimism: in the awareness of its coming.

The same applies to our views of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that.

Do we see in this a Janus faced present looking inside and outside, looking backwards and forwards at the same time? Where is history located in this? ‘History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled with the presence of the now.’ Where historicism appeases our curiousity with the past by establishing causal connections between moments or events, historical materialism recognises facts constituted as causal to be constructed as such — after the fact - by a later, ‘post-humus' view. Within this the causality implicit in historicism, it cannot be dealing with the past, but a view of it through all that separates it from the present.

228 In the case of ‘live' coverage of events this remains true to the extent that our seeming immediate access is mediated through the very controlled and controlling, forms of broad/narrowcast mechanisms.
230 Ibid. p.256
231 Ibid.
232 Ibid. p.263
A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the "time of the now" which is shot through with chips of Messianic time. 233

Is the inescapable conclusion the bankruptcy of historicism and yet the difficulty of articulating the 'time of now' in a historical materialist position? And where does this lead in consideration of the past in relation to artefacts, documents or film? Stella Bruzzi, in discussing the value in archive/documentary footage, the Zapruder footage of the Kennedy assassination, has argued that:

...the document - though showing concluded historical events - is not fixed, but is infinitely accessible through interpretation and recontextualisation, and thus becomes a mutable, not a constant, point of reference. A necessary dialectic is involved between the factual source and its representation that acknowledges the limitations as well as the credibility of the document itself. The Zapruder film is accurate, it is not a fake, but it cannot reveal the motive or cause for the actions it shows. The document though real is incomplete. 234

Is this incompleteness a key to the necessary dialectic positioning of documentary in relation to the 'real' that Bruzzi goes on to postulate? It is perhaps useful to consider Jean Baudrillard's contribution to the debate surrounding history in relation to filmic form. In his essay History a Retro Scenario he proclaims:

In a violent and contemporary period of history, (let's say between the two world wars and the cold war), it is myth that invades cinema as imaginary content. It is the golden age of despotic and legendary resurrections. Myth, chased from the real by the violence of history, finds refuge in the cinema. Today it is history itself that invades the cinema according to the same scenario – the historical stake chased from our lives by this immense neutralization, which is dubbed peaceful coexistence on a global level, and pacified monotony on the quotidian level – this history exercised by a slowly or brutally congealing of society celebrates its resurrection in force on the screen, according to the same process that used to make lost myths live again. History is our lost referential, that is to say our myth. It is by virtue of this fact that it takes the place of myths on the screen. 235

The final sentence above is perhaps suggested in Aldgate's conclusions (see above) particularly the notion of history being our 'lost referential'. Aldgate's newsreels, ostensibly exposition of a history in fact conspire to obscure that history. It is interesting to compare this with Rosenstone's analysis of a documentary about the Spanish war told in interviews:

233 Ibid p.96
Such a narrative strategy obviously denies historical alternatives, does away with complexities of motivation or causation, and banishes subtlety from the world of history.

Is this perhaps the underlying idea in Rosenstone's comment: "...perhaps history is dead in the way God is dead? Benjamin's thoughts might seem to locate the inextricable binding between past present and future that each contain the other. So where is history?

Is it a big leap to suggest that this amounts to a postulation of an end of history? It is beyond the scope of this enquiry to unravel all the implications, referents and considerations in Baudrillard's work, but the notion of an end of history, the transmutation of the 'historic' into myth, driven by the elevation of image over the real in a post-modern, pre-millennium consciousness, is of interest. Baudrillard's concern in the above extract is primarily with the feature film and the immediacy of information disseminated through media. He goes on to discuss the historic period he cited and in particular the fascination with fascism evolving out of a fetishization of history.

Thus the fetishized history will preferably be the one immediately preceding our "irreferential" era. Whence the omnipresence of fascism and of the war in retro-a coincidence that is not at all political; it is naive to conclude that the evocation of fascism signals a current renewal of fascism (it is precisely because one is no longer there, because one is in something else, which is still less amusing, it is for this reason that fascism can again become fascinating in its filtered cruelty, aestheticized by retro). History thus made its triumphal entry into cinema, posthumously (the term historical has undergone the same fate: a "historical" moment, monument, congress, figure are in this way designated as fossils). Its reinjection has no value as conscious awareness but only as nostalgia for a lost referential.

This does not signify that history has never appeared in cinema as a powerful moment, as a contemporary process, as an insurrection and not as resurrection. In the "real" as in cinema, there was history but there isn't any anymore. Today, the history that is "given back" to us (precisely because it was taken from us) has no more of a relation to a "historical real" than neofigurations in painting does to the classical figuration of the real. Neofiguration is an invocation of resemblance, but at the same time the flagrant proof of the disappearance of objects in their very representation: hyperreal. Therein objects shine in a sort of hyperresemblance (like history in contemporary cinema) that makes it so that fundamentally they no longer resemble anything, except the empty figure of resemblance, the empty form of representation. It is a question of life or death: these

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236 For a useful analysis of Baudrillard's writings see: Christopher Horrocks, Baudrillard and the Millennium. Icon Books, Cambridge. 1999. Also of interest the following from Jean Baudrillard: A Revision of History outlines a framework of this idea:

"By means of this retroversion of history to infinity, through this hyperbolic curvature, the century eludes its own end. By way of this retrospective effect of events, we escape before our own death. Metaphorically speaking therefore, we will not even attain to the symbolic end of things, the symbolic culmination of Year 2000. Can we avoid this retro-curvature of a history that backtracks on its footsteps and effaces its own traces; can we side-step this fatal asymptote which in some way rolls back modernity in the way one rewinds a tape deck? We are so accustomed to viewing all films over and over again, the fictitious ones as well as those pertaining to our lives; we have been so thoroughly contaminated by a retrospective technique that we are quite capable, under the blow of contemporary vertigo, to rethread history as one threads a film wrong side up.


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objects are no longer either living or deadly. That is why they are so exact, so minute, so frozen in the state in which a brutal loss of the real would have seized them.\(^{237}\)

The relationship between film and history might be seen, through its articulation within the documentary form (as opposed to the artifice of myth construction in cinema feature film), as taking the ‘frozen state’ and producing through a processing of reconfiguration of Benjamin’s ‘messianic power’, the referential of the ‘now’. But is this a reasonable statement, can documentary construct, achieve this or even aspire to it? A central thrust of this work is perhaps an experiment that also addresses that question.

From the point of view of putting history into film and of being able to access history through film; through ontological interrogation of the form and of representing the complexities of human life in readable frames, an idea of experimental documentary offers a valid, possibly ‘honest’, form of film making in relation to events. Events themselves of course, during and after, are subject to perceptual positions; who sees, how they see, where they see from as well as all the determinants that go into how they think.

An understanding of experimental documentary form could be argued to represent an address to the mythic nature of representation, but only in a reflexive experimental framing. \(^{237}\) In After the Facts I also explore this postulation, but first I will attempt to sketch a definition of experimental documentary.

Experimental Documentary

Perhaps a starting point to understanding the 'attitude' of what has been called experimental documentary lies in Jay Ruby's assertion that:

... documentary filmmakers have a social obligation not to be objective. The concept of objectivity, inappropriately borrowed from the natural sciences, has little support from the social sciences: both social scientists and documentary filmmakers are interpreters of the world. As Sue Ellen Jacobs has put it 'Perhaps the best thing we can learn from anthropological writing is how people who call themselves 'anthropologists' see the world of others.' To present ourselves and our product as anything else is to foster a dangerous false consciousness on the part of our audiences. Reflexivity offers us a means whereby we can instruct our audience to understand the process of producing statements about our world. "We study man, that is we reflect on ourselves studying others, because we must, because man in civilisation is the problem."

As a non-mainstream form, experimental documentary lacks the clearly defined identity of other cinematic forms. I regard it in the first instance as a term (amongst other possible terms) that describes an intentional method rather than a genre. Yet it has antecedents and a lineage, the importance of which may be glimpsed from the above discussions on film and history, going back, like most developments of the form, to the Lumiere brothers. Chris Marker may be cited as a seminal figure within the form but how might it be defined or characterised?

It could be said that the impulse to synthesise the real begins with 'sacramental' images constructed on the walls of caves but let us begin more recently at the impulse enacted through photographic form. This starting point also carries with it the intentional surprise generated by the illusional faithfulness to reality of the image; its similarity to perceived visual experience. A chronology of use of photographic image carries forward into an awareness of the potential of the form to unlock 'scientific information' with Edweard Muybridge's quantification of movement through photographic means. This ability to unlock scientific information can be seen in contemporary images generated by the Hubble telescope and other photographic tools of cosmological and microbiological enquiry. The heirs of photography's usefulness, in seeing more than can be seen by just looking, continue to reveal much of value and curiosity. Another form of scientific enquiry, or at least the curiosity that drives exploration, led 'ethnographic filmmakers', (antecedents of Jay Ruby's field of work) exemplified by Robert Flaherty towards an idea of film's

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240 Ibid. From: Stanley Diamond "Anthropology in Question" in Hymes. Ed Reinventing Anthropology pp 401 –429: the quotation is from p 408

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ability to 'represent reality'. Flaherty's first and seminal work Nanook of the North, made in 1922, may be positioned as a beginning of what emerged, partially through John Grierson's interest, support and criticism of Flaherty, as documentary filmmaking. Flaherty's naive belief in the innate reality of his subjects and his much-maligned manipulations of the 'events' of this reality posed real challenges to his conception of 'realism'. Grierson, here perhaps distinguishing between 'real' and 'actual' said:

Our capital comes from those whose only interest is in the actual. The medium itself insists on the actual. There we must build or be damned. Flaherty's most considerable contribution to the problem is, as always, his insistence on the beauty of the natural. It is not everything, for it does not in the last resort isolate and define the purposes which must consciously or unconsciously inform our craftsmanship.

The 'purposes' here is an allusion to the social educational role of realist aspiration in documentary. Grierson's position on Flaherty was critical yet supportive, offering mitigation and due recognition of Flaherty's role in carving out a cinematic form distinct from its antecedents in theatre.

His screen is not a stage to which the action of a story is brought, but rather a magical opening in the theatre wall, through which one may look out on to the wide world: overseeing and overhearing the intimate things of common life which only the camera and microphone of the film artist can reveal.

On the other side of the Atlantic another 'film artist' Dziga Vertov was experimenting with a form he called 'kino-pravda' a filmic form questing for filmic, or film-truth. In his film The Man with a Movie Camera (1928) the filmic 'truth' of the construction of the work becomes a reflexive, perhaps parody, perhaps document of the film's construction. Barry Keith Grant and Jeanette Sloniowski in Documenting the Documentary provide a useful analysis of the context of Vertov's work and summarise his arguments in the film as 'Life Caught Unawares' and 'Cinema Eye'. While Vertov may have embraced a more radical ambition: (of his time), assimilating futurism, formalism and communism, it is his reflexive deconstruction of the mechanism of film construction that I choose to focus on in this citation. In the film we view 'documented' filmed events while viewing a visual narration of its making. Vertov's form has made a sort of quantum leap from its assumption of the innate 'reality' of its subject to recognise itself within its wider

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research footage. 1898: A.C. Haddon takes Lumiere camera to Torres Strait for the Cambridge Expedition and films fire-making techniques and ritual dances—the beginning of the use of the camera for ethnographic record footage.

242 Ibid. '1922: Robert Flaherty, NANOOK OF THE NORTH. Third person narration with subjective tone, and focussing on an indigenous person as the film's hero. This film is an early example of cultural relativism and the collaboration between informant and filmmaker.'


244 Ibid. p34.

245 Barry Keith Grant and Jeanette Sloniowski, Documenting the Documentary, Wayne State University Press, Detroit. 1998.p47.
angle of view. Grierson's 'magical opening in the theatre wall', is seen as part of a view that contains the theatre as well.

The advent of sound in film in the late twenties has been seen to change much in cinema, it is also an important determinant in the development of documentary aspirations. With the sound film new experiments with the plasticity of film forms took place. Vertov himself undertook extensive, largely unsuccessful, experiments with sound. The British documentary movement with its educationally driven realist 'attitude' might be seen as central in the re-engagement of the spoken word as didactic underpinning of their films' intentions. The making of works such as *Night Mail* (1936) by Grierson's GPO Film Unit illustrates the contortions necessitated to achieve synchronous sound as well as the possibilities of sound imaginatively used. *Housing Problems* and other experiments with sound in England, and the much cited American *March of Time* films of the thirties, no doubt contribute to the way sound changed and shaped the form of films. Telescopied through historicism's causality this has been seen to lead to a form of direct address documentary.

Within this direct address construct the use of sound might be seen as 'empowering' the subject, presenting the illusion of its authority through its greater plasticity afforded by verbal explanation, exposition, articulation and directness. In other words the voice heard at the same time as the picture is seen presents an illusion of being more 'real'. This closer approximation to reality affords a sense of a closer proximity to truth. This truth, afforded to the 'talking head', extends to the framework within which the talking head is located - the direct address of the film to the audience. Given this authority, the positioning of a voice-over widens and extends the illusion of directly addressing the audience from a position of knowing the 'truth'. The Direct address form of documentary filmmaking utilises and privileges the word in filmic exposition of reality. Bill Nichols has commented that 'at best images may illustrate a point that must finally return to words for its meaning or implications.'

Bill Nichols has laid out a genealogy identifying five 'modes' of documentary: The Expository; the Observational; the Interactive; the Reflexive and the Performative. Stella Bruzzi has identified Nichols' categories as being useful but flawed by an insistence on their historic causality – an

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The evolution of documentary in which each mode succeeds the previous one—predicated by documentary filmmakers’ search to find ‘more authentic ways to represent reality.’ Central to Bruzzi’s critique is an assertion that:

A documentary will never be reality nor will it erase or invalidate that reality by being representational. Furthermore the spectator is not in need of signposts and inverted commas to understand that a documentary is a negotiation between reality on the one hand and image, interpretation and bias on the other.

Documentary is predicated upon the dialectical relationship between aspiration and potential, that the text itself reveals the tension between the documentary pursuit of the most authentic mode of factual representation and the impossibility of its aim.

This un-picking of truth, reality and the filmic form into a dialectic operation offers a useful way forward in re-siting a critical framework for understanding documentary form. Bruzzi positions the American cinema verite – direct cinema – of the sixties as a problematic event in understanding documentary.

The role of America’s cinema verite has proved the crucial historical factor in limiting documentary’s potential and frame of reference, and it is significant that, although many theorists suspect and criticise direct cinema, most of them dedicate a large amount of time to examining it. Richard Leacock and his fellows believed that the advancements in film equipment would enable documentary to achieve authenticity and to collapse the distance between reality and representation, because the camera would become ‘just a window someone peeps through’.

The difficulties of theorising direct cinema’s innovations lie in the idea, also located in Grierson’s comments, of regarding film as a window through which one ‘peeps’ at reality while ignoring the construction of the window. This is perhaps illustrated by a line from a Bob Dylan song of 1964, My Back Pages: ‘In a soldiers stance I aimed my hand at the mongrel dogs who teach, fearing not that I become my enemy in the instant that I preach.’ Assuming the position of the one who knows, however well intentioned that position is arrived at, carries with it the idea of telling rather than showing because what is shown is constructed, yet ignores (or hides) its construction.

Richard Leacock in an interview with Chris Buck in 2001 reflects:

I’ve only recently made clear in my own mind what I’ve always been trying to do; incidentally it has almost nothing to do with verite (which means “the truth”), but [it is] to create this feeling of being there. It’s what I’ve always been involved in even using much more clumsy equipment.

It is tempting to speculate on notions of truth and history in terms of the idea that everything that is not the ever present yet changing ‘now’ is history: from what point then is truth observed?

Christopher Horrocks has noted Baudrillard’s taking stock of Niezschke’s ‘famous argument’:

231 Ibid. p.4.
232 Ibid. p.5
What then is truth? A moveable host of metaphors ... which after long usage, seem to a
people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten
are illusions. 255

So truth here is a consensual position arrived at by insight or investigation then fossilised in the
normative processes of social usage. Perhaps it is awareness, or re-emergence of this idea in the
reflective/reflexive atmosphere of the 1970s that is the impetus for the next phase of
development. Deborah Gridwood tells us:

A decade and a half after the emergence of direct cinema, a group of filmmakers based
in Boston began to explore subjectivity itself, and in so doing created the personal
documentary. So in the middle of the 1970s Ed Pincus, Robb Moss and Ross McElwee
emerged from Boston’s finest film programmes (MIT Harvard), taught by some of the
great verite directors (D.A.Pennebaker, Richard Leacock), and found themselves in the
right place at the right time to exploit Boston’s strong relationship with Public
Broadcasting. 256

She continues:

The social and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s called for greater
experimentation across the board: with social order, domestic order, sexual relations,
personal growth. Identity politics made the stories of individuals known as a way of
standing for larger issues affecting minority groups. Feminism took domestic and
personal relationships to implicate large-scale issues with the dictum, “The Personal is
Political.” Personal Documentary makers took the message to heart and more than ever
their documentaries stood as portraiture, but what was new was the mutable nature of
the filmmaker’s point of view according to time of day, state of mind, personality and
background.

And cautions:

The risks of personal filmmaking are great. For the filmmaker there is the ever-present
possibility of going too far, of risking embarrassment at so much disclosure and intimacy
with audiences. They film constantly, at least some of the time at the expense of their
loved ones. Yet personal filmmakers sacrificed comfort and the sanctity of personal
relationships in order to answer the basic contemporary questions: If the authors of
official history can’t be trusted, who can? Can we ever know ourselves? What does it
mean to be honest? Is it possible to tell the truth?

We are reminded again of Nietzsche’s ‘famous argument’, (see above) and find a new framing to
consider in her mention of ‘personal filmmaking’. We have discussed avant-garde and
experimental, mention has been made (in passing) of art film and within documentary we have
noted Nichols’ modal genealogy and now we will look at the essay in filmic form; the ‘essay film’.

For an exposition of this form we turn to a 1998 lecture by Peter Thompson, *The Cinematic Essay*:

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www.mapped.com/articles98/cinemaverite/veriteleackock.html


256 Deborah Girdwood, Do Try at Home: The Evolution of the Experimental Documentary, 2001 From:
www.humanities.org/port/2001/gridwood2.html

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The Cine What? Thompson determines a move from an adherence to the ‘formal essay’, which we can perhaps identify in the direct address form of documentary, wherein arguments were laid out in formal structures that presented the subject of the essay, to a ‘informal essay’ structure.

...what the previous generation of documentary filmmakers took as their ‘subject’ – a passive subject as compared to the ‘active’ fictional subject – film essayists can now take as their theme in which the subject is a particular development or interpretation of that theme, and one which has a determining influence upon the form of the film. The theme thereby becomes extremely active in that the cinematic essay is often a mediation on ideas in conflict and these conflicts actually suggest the form that the film might take. 256

Here Bruzzi’s insistence of the dialectic mediation between truth and bias, within documentary seems to be echoed. Thompson locates this shift in thinking to a simple idea articulated in 1981 by Noel Burch that:

The cinematic revolution now in progress is based on what is essentially a very simple idea; that a subject can engender form and that to choose a subject is to make an aesthetic choice. 259

The informal essay as a form – a new framing of documentary, Thompson locates in the roots of the word:

...essai from essayer – to attempt, to try - and not necessarily to succeed. The Informal Essay is not a form for the fainthearted; it is for those who have experienced experience, which, as we all know, includes failure. The originator of the modern essay, Michel de Montaigne, used the term essai to describe his writings because they were attempts at understanding that were eclectic and showed great curiosity, love, anger and reverence toward the world and were risky in their personal unzippings. The practitioner of the Informal Essay tradition can therefore treat anything: personal experience, history culture, his, or her own body. 260

In Thompson’s analysis the cinematic essay draws from the devices developed within the avant-garde of asynchronous sound, ‘disunity of Time, Space, Tone, Materials and Style’. Not only is reflexivity within the form a characteristic but also self reflexivity and self criticism. He cites the work of Bertolt Brecht as part of the lineage of the Cinematic Essay. In the Epic Theatre of Brecht:

...he strove for a “demonstrating”, non-illusionistic style of presentation which broke stories into modular units or central moments. Brecht wanted to use documentary film in theatres as a kind of “optical chorus”. That is to say, documentary film would function like a commentary medium. This is a surprising use of documentary because we tend to think of the genre of documentary as objective, factual. Brecht wanted to “undocument” the genre, to subject its subjects to overt manipulation by the filmmaker.

258 Ibid.
259 Noel Birch ‘Non-fictional Subjects’, from The Theory of Film Practice. Princetown University Press. 1981
In support of this idea he cites Hans-Berhard Moeller, from "Brecht and 'Epic' film Medium" published in *Wide Angle*:

The salient point in the documentary chorus example, in Brecht's incorporation of film projections into plays and in the Brechtian film is the *separation of elements*. The basic method of the Brechtian film is thus to polarise action, sound, accompanying music and the narrative voice, to bring them into conflict. Unity should be discontinuous, contradictory, dialectical.

It is impossible to consider developments in thinking about the filmic form of the experimental documentary and its, at times indistinguishable, relative the cinematic essay without mention of Jean-Luc Godard. Much has been written on Godard and it is beyond the scope of this enquiry to consider his many complexities and the effect that his work has had on many emergent forms of film. For the purposes of this exposition I would boldly state that his work and evolution as a filmmaker contributes to both the development of ideas of the documentary form as well as the feature film or cinematic form per-se.

We have mentioned the development of *Cinema Verite* in France and *Direct Cinema* in the USA. Godard is usually located within a movement of New Wave directors with his first major film contribution *A Bout De Souffle*, (an attack of suffocation-Breathless) 1959. Of particular interest, in positioning Godard in relation to experimental documentary forms, is an encounter between the innovators of Direct Cinema, D. A. Pennebaker and Richard Leacock, and Godard in the abortive production of a film *1AM*. (*One American Movie*). The film grew out of Godard's interest in, or was it critique of their work, and a meeting in the mid-sixties between Pennebaker and Godard. The first collaboration did not happen but in 1969:

Godard decided he wanted to make a film with us and PBL, forerunner of Public Television, agreed to produce it. The film was to be called *1 AM* (*One American Movie*) and when Godard came to tell us what he had in mind I asked Ricky's son Robert to shoot that meeting. It was the first time he had ever shot film and what he shot remains as it came out of the camera – completely unedited – an historic prologue for this film record of our year with Godard.

The meeting described above is the untitled opening sequence of the resulting film and affords remarkable insight into the relationship between documentary, or realist ideas, and art 'or call it what ever you want'. Godard outlines the structure of the film he wishes to make which might be a film that epitomises the Brechtian idea of *Epic Theatre* (see above). It is to be made up of 'five pieces of reality separated by five pieces of Art, or call it whatever you want'. The

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261 Hans-Berhard Moeller, from "Brecht and 'Epic' film Medium" published (no date available) in *Wide Angle*


265 Ibid.
sections representing ‘reality’— interviews/statements – are to come from a young Black girl, a left political activist, a leader of the Black Panther movement, a woman working on Wall Street and The Jefferson Airplane. Actors re-voicing these statements in quite different locations and contexts will generate the ‘Art’ sections. The film is to be made up of these elements, the former filmed in single takes and the latter, possibly so but with provision for re-takes ‘like a Hollywood film’. The meeting’s discussions move to the kind of film stock to be used, Godard is undecided about black and white or colour stock but is adamant: ‘Nothing will be explained in the picture – I don’t want the things to be too separated because the reality is equal to art in just another …’ [form?] (he is interrupted).206

Perhaps this ‘reality is equal to art’ idea identifies and separates the Godard position from the Leacock Pennebaker position on ideas of realism. Each regarding their view to contain the other, recognising their idea in the other’s idea but seen from an opposite position.

Pennebaker explains that the film was somehow ‘in pursuit of the revolution he [Godard] was convinced was about to happen’. But:

Then Godard and Leacock both decided to leave town. Godard with Gorin to start a new leftist cinema and Leacock to teach at MIT. I was left to deliver something to Public Television or face severe contractual coercion. Thus did 1 AM became(sic) 1 PM or One Pennebaker Movie as Jean-Luc called it. Ricky had filmed pretty much what Godard wanted, but I was the extra camera that nobody noticed, and I filmed whatever looked interesting. So when I began putting the sequences together as Godard suggested, I saw a lot of stuff I’d shot that hadn’t been planned and soon I was making my own film. I doubt it was the film Godard had in mind when he started but then it seldom works out that way anyhow and I found what happened entertaining and filled with surprises. It’s some sort of history.

Ricky Leacock has a somewhat different view of that history which affords some insight into the interjection of human relations into the mix of ‘reality’ and ‘art’. In his unpublished autobiography, taking us back to the Direct Cinema period, he writes of Godard’s critique of the Drew Associates films Primary and The Chair, both of which emerge out of the zenith of the Direct Cinema phase of his life.

My friend Jean-Luc Godard wrote that if you want to learn about the Primary process, don’t look at Primary, read Theodore White’s book; if you want to understand the American legal system don’t look at The Chair, look at The Anatomy of a Murder, the Hollywood movie. Godard was making Le Chinoise, a veiled defence of Mao Tse Tung’s “Cultural Revolution”, guided in his Marxist principals by his “expert on Marxism” Jean-Piere Gorin, a fellow member of the Dixiga[sic] Vertov group. Jean-Luc even used my name in a film Le Grande […] where Jean Seberg plays a mindless American girl who always carries a little 16mm. Camera and films everything around her – mindlessly – her name is Ricky Leacock, the “mindless” filmmaker. This was not the view of Henry

206 In later work Godard adds further poetic consideration on this question in Historie(s) du Cinema he muses: ‘The twentieth century invents the photo and strips life of its very identity, we went into mourning for its burial – and in the colours of mourning – black and white - cinema started life.’

207 Ibid.
Langlois, creator and head of the Cinematheque who, when Drew and I showed Primary introduced it as "perhaps the most important documentary since the brothers Lumiere..." 268

He goes on:

In my opinion Godard is not mindless but an obscurantist; far more dangerous but very popular among modern academics who think they are "intellectuals"; who revel in obscurantism whether it be Godard or Wittgenstein or Nietzsche, none of whom had a clear answer to anything. These people abhor the likes of Russell, a logician who wrote an explication of the Theory of Relativity in 1925, long before it was generally accepted. Or Oakeshot who warned us of the dangers of ill-founded rationalization oversimplification and obscurantism. 269

Leacock goes on to discuss the misunderstood claims for truth within the notion of Cinema Verite which:

...was a translation of Vertov's writings about his experiments in making Kino Pravda or Film Truth where he was arguing that cinema truth has to do with the truth that you create by filming and has little or nothing to do with objective truth. But nor is it to be confused with fiction. 270

While this may seem like mincing words to stretch a point, Leacock's 'feeling of being there' here contained in the notion of Film Truth echoes David Hockney's insistence on an idea of 'depiction' in art. Here discussing film, TV and photographs with Paul Joyce in 1984:

More vivid depictions can be made, and will be in the future, I've no doubt. This leads to the central problem of depiction: that it is not an attempt to re-create something, but an account of seeing it. That's what a depiction should be. Cezanne told us that. He wasn't concerned with apples, but with his perception of apples. That is clear from his work. 271

In this analysis truth emerges as 'the event' and verite emerges perhaps a more vivid, if still flawed, depiction. The dialectic or negotiation between reality and depiction again echoes Bruzzi's analysis. With his own positions defined, to return to the 1AM/1PM episode, plain speaking Leacock gives us his account.

However, I worked along with Pennebaker filming for Jean-Luc Godard directing us in his first US feature film. A deal that our business partner David Mac Mullen, from Wall Street, had negotiated with Public Television. 1-AM "One American Movie". We hired the actors he wanted, we travelled with him to the west coast, we had great fun filming whatever he wanted, wherever. ...and there were no arguments and he seemed delighted with the results, but when he sat down to edit with his associate and adviser on Marxist doctrine, Jean-Piere Gorin, there was a lengthy silence which culminated in his announcing that the film had political flaws that could not be overcome ... and left. Leaving our company holding the bag, with no place to go but broke. 272

268 The quote is from a draft of Ricky Leacock's un-published autobiography Life on the Other Side of the Moon draft September 2002, p.260. Ricky Leacock is currently producing the work in which he intends to incorporate extracts from films he discusses.

269 Ibid. p.261.

270 Ibid. p.266.

271 Hockney on Art: Conversations with Paul Joyce, Little Brown and Company, London 1999 p.59

The resulting film 1 PM, produced and edited by Pennebaker is not generally considered within the Godard canon but does present a touchstone for consideration of the divergence between his early and later work which re-engages the notion of cinematic truth, particularly in his Histoire(s) du Cinéma series of films.

Perhaps 1 PM, by actually being made is necessarily excluded from a history of cinema. But to pursue further consideration of Godard's work. A 2001 conference at Tate Modern Forever Godard was organised because:

For the last fifty years, Jean-Luc Godard's work in cinema and video has innovated, provoked and inspired. Since the completion in 1998 of Histoire(s) du Cinéma, an eight-part videographic experiment in cinema history, Godard's recent work on film and video has featured strongly in debates about audiovisual art and culture, especially regarding questions of historical memory, technological change, and the future of cinema in all its forms. This historical moment provides the perfect opportunity for a critical reassessment of Godard's entire corpus and its key role in film culture. It is the aim of FOR EVER GODARD to meet this challenge.973

From ECM records that produced and market the soundtrack of Histoire(s) du Cinéma we learn that:

Undeniably a work of enormous scope, Jean-Luc Godard's Histoires du cinéma eludes easy definition. An extended essay on cinema by means of cinema. A history of the cinema, and history interpreted by the cinema. An homage and a critique. An anecdotal autobiography, illuminated by Godard's encyclopaedic wit, extending the idiom established by JLG par JLG. An epic - and non-linear - poem. A freely associative essay. A vast multi-layered musical composition. Histoire(s) du cinéma is all of these. It is above all, a work made by a man who loves and is fascinated by the world of film.974

Within part two of Histoires du Cinéma Godard tells us:

The Cinema like Christianity is not founded on historical truth, the image will come at the time of resurrection. An Art without future – meaning an Art of the present – An Art that gives, and receives before it gives. Art in its infancy.


974 *Histoire(s) du cinema; as TV series/video essay - was made for Canal+, ARTE and Gaumont, from 1988 to 1998. The work subdivides into four chapters of two parts each. Of those four chapters, the first was broadcast on five European channels simultaneously, the three others have been screened at film festivals. The series was shown as part of an installation at Documenta X, the interdisciplinary arts festival in Kassel, Germany, in 1997. The Museum of Modern Art in New York has screened each episode as it has become available.*

Histoire(s) du cinéma www.ecmrecords.com
Although Godard's work *Histoires du cinéma* was circulating in the late nineties, it came to my attention towards the end of the production of *After the Facts*. The inspiration I derived from Godard was from his earlier work and it is exhilarating to consider the development of his epic 'grandiloquence' work in its formulation and ideas, which I see as familiar concerns in my production of *After The Facts*. Of particular interest is the idea of a history of cinema and history interpreted by cinema. My own work I consider to deal with an interpretation of history within film through film. But before we leave the discussion of an evolution of experimental documentary we will return briefly to acknowledge the importance of Chris Marker. For a useful summary I draw from Jaime N. Christley who tells us:

He is often credited with conceiving the cinematic essay form, with which such disparate filmmakers as Jean-Luc Godard, Orson Welles, Federico Fellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Jon Jost, Chantal Akerman, Wim Wenders, Harun Farocki, Werner Herzog, Errol Morris, Jonathan Demme, Abbas Kiarostami, Nanni Moretti, Terry Zwigoff, and Agnès Varda have had varying degrees of success, and although the cinematic essay has its precedents in early work by Luis Buñuel (*Las Hurdes*, 1933), Alain Resnais, and Georges Méliès, among others, Marker's placement within the context of the development of the essay should begin with *Lettre de Sibérie* (1957), which is not his first film, but certainly the earliest case of his unique narrative style. Perhaps Marker's most pertinent contribution to the debate surrounding the representations of history and truth is the device he uses in *Sans Soleil* of locating the narration at some undefined point in the future. His narrator (Alexandra Stewart) reads letters from a character ('He writes') we assume to be the filmmaker, who begins: 'I write to you from a far-off country'. The information reaches us from a time outside of the time we watch the film; a time not yet arrived at, a time outside the procession of history from where it is being reviewed. Is this more evidence of the notion of the death of history and the filmic extraction of its traces reviewed from a present that by positioning it in the future negates its own procession? We are already beyond the end and therefore there is no end, which ironically it might be said identifies the end of history as articulated by Baudrillard. The following muse, while being focused on wider concern with history, seems to comment on the form of Marker's device.

...are we to invoke all past events for the sake of comparison, to re-teach everything in terms of process? A delirium with process has quite recently gotten hold of us and, at the same time, a seizure or delirium with responsibility, precisely because it is becoming increasingly elusive. To remake history proper - to whitewash all the monstrosities: underlying the proliferation of scandals there is a vague (res)sentiment that history itself, too, is a scandal. A retro-process that will steer us to a delirium with/of origin, to this side

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Senses of Cinema 1999-2003


277 Ibid. Footnote: 'That would be *Olympia 32* (1952), a document of the World Olympics in Helsinki'.

278 Ibid.


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of history, to a conviviality driven by instincts (animale), to the primitive niche, which is already the way things stand in the ecologic flirt with an impossible origin.

The only way to avoid this, to cut the chord tying us to this recession and obsession, is to place ourselves straightaway on an alternative temporal orbit, to leave our shadow, the shadow of the century, to take an elliptic short-cut and go beyond the end by not allowing it time to take place. This, at least, will help preserve what remains are left of history instead of subjecting it to a narrowing revision and then dispense it to those who will do an autopsy on the cadaver the way one does an autopsy on one's childhood in never-ending analysis. This would at least provide us with the possibility of retaining the memory and glory, and under the auspices of revision and rehabilitation we could begin cancelling each and all the events that have come before, forcing them to repent.280

Within the formulation of the essay film Sans Soleil we might see Chris Marker's positioning of the origin of information – the letters he writes – outside of history beyond our 'now'. The present is positioned as something we view from the future or a virtual future determined from its current possibilities of meaning. Does this re-positioning automatically take on the idea Baudrillard articulates? And does it 'rescue' us from the time locked progression of history and our contingency within it? By this I engage a notion of continuity beyond the postulation of the end of history, the point towards which a linear notion of time, 'historical events', progresses. Is this a site of liberation where meaning is surface, the event of the narrative, and depth is exchanged for 'a conception of processes and textual play'.281 Or can there be models constructed only in that liberated position, perhaps in Benjamin's 'messianic time', that have no other form, that can point to a constructive future built on reconfiguration of the past?

Godard's first major film Breathless from 1959 was concerned, as John Francis Kreidl 282 tells us with appropriating the cinematic forms of his childhood – Hollywood forms – in a new wave of production. In this could Godard be said to be exorcising the mythic history of a recent past? Marker's 1957 Lettre de Siberie pre-dates this and according to Christley is already exploring the essay form. While there is limited value, at this point in determining which of these giants came first into this form of production, we should acknowledge the important contribution of both men. Christley's list of other contributors above evokes a potentially valuable exploration of this field but is also outside the scope of the present enquiry.

To conclude this exploration of experimental documentary form I return to the concept of reflexivity, articulated at length by Jay Ruby. 283 Reflexivity features as a central component in the final evolution of Nichols' modes in the 'performative documentary'. This has been developed by

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Stella Bruzzi's conception is 'a mode' which emphasises - and indeed constructs a film around -- the often hidden aspect of performance, whether on the part of the documentary subjects or of the filmmakers. There is a direct link to the observational style of the French cinema verite, and American direct cinema of the sixties, and indeed Flaherty's ideas and initial practices of observation. This form is seen as progressing through the personal film makers central amongst which is Nick Broomfield, whose position of himself in his films exposes its own construction and acts as distancing device. This is a form similar to Ross McElwee's use of himself in his work, except that Broomfield's work invariably is in quest of some information other than his self-enquiry, whereas McElwee's revelations are entirely personal. Yet in Bruzzi's notion of 'performative documentary' the form also embraces the more recent proliferation of observational documentaries based on the 'real events' in the lives of real people who are aware and in contact, in the film, with the filmmaker. Seen perhaps at the end of an evolution of the quest to realism in documentary Bruzzi is clear in pointing out:

The performative documentary is the clearest contemporary exponent of this book's underpinning thesis that the documentary as prescribed by advocates of observational realism is an unrealisable fantasy, that documentary will forever be circumscribed by the fact that it is a mode of representation and thus can never elide the distances between image and event. It is imperative to acknowledge however that this deficiency does not invalidate the notion of the non-fiction film, merely that the non-fiction film is (and largely always has been) aware of the limitations of audio-visual media.

My intention in sketching an outline of forms of experimental documentary and the cinematic essay is to offer a contextual understanding of a form and a cultural tradition within which my work is seen as being located.
Chapter 7 An Experiment

2002 After The Facts

The final phase of the work began by an intensive consideration of the previous work, its aims and achievements. From 1992 I had intended that my work should evolve a methodology from which a new reading of Dartington might emerge. This was embodied in the title of my project at the time: *Towards a re-definition of the Dartington Experiment, Examined through the Film and Video Materials of Dartington Hall Archive.* In some respects the Photowork embraced this notion in a process of understanding enacted and constructed in its making. The photoworks owed much to David Hockney's work with Joiners, but had evolved and developed an application of his ideas and had begun to generate what I considered new work. In making the photoworks I had begun to function as a practitioner within the archive rather than a pseudo historian or archivist.

While they provided a sense of closure and completion to my enquiry they offered little of an expositional narrative of Dartington or my processes of engagement with it. I had studied the histories of Dartington by Michael Young and Victor Bonham-Carter but had made no critical evaluation of either these works. I began at this point to apply my examination of histories to my own practice. At all times the enquiry had been driven by the abstract question, 'what is Dartington? Also it has been my intention to generate/produce new work from the archive materials in relation to this question. I now faced the reflective question of 'what is this enquiry actually about, what has been learnt?'

Since 1975 I have been concerned with constructing work with image and sound from personal experience. Early work manifested in what I termed 'Film-Performance' but developed into film works through the 1980s. During the 1980s and 90s I also worked as a Documentary producer and Videotape editor in TV News. This background was what I brought now to my reflective thinking on the Dartington project. I had always been concerned with the manipulation of image in the context of particular forms and the divergence between work (art) and life. As a documentary producer and a VT editor I was critical of the formulaic construction of news and documentary/feature programmes that facilitated an easy reading of information, but in the process distorted or skewed the subject by an assumed invisibility of the form. I have continually been concerned with the visibility of processes as a way of mediating the inevitable distortions of 'reality' that occurs in all forms of representation. I now considered the fact that my process of engagement had left traces in the works I produced on Dartington, but I had also other documentary traces - of my life during the ten years I had been living at and working with Dartington in the form of home-videos.
I have looked at the development of the Documentary film movement and work going on at Dartington in the 30's and concluded that this documentary film work should be described as experimental rather than avant-garde. This realisation folds back into my own work. In the early films/videos I produced for the archive I considered I was employing a documentary form; these works can now perhaps more usefully be viewed as documents.

The current work incorporates an idea of experimental documentary as a form of Art Film as well as film art: the cinematic essay. I have made a video work that has a number of subjects and importantly has an awareness of some of the characteristics of documentary form. It self-consciously plays with traditions and structures developed in and common to documentary form such as voice-over narration for example, captioned information, talking heads (derived from the 'Direct Address' producers of the thirties), formal and informal essay structures – defining the subject through the selective presentation of arguments. The After the Facts voice-overs for example are used both to convey information and to thwart expectations of serious or useful information and suggest less 'important' or tangential connections between past events. Aural descriptions of events, seen or loosely connected to visual information is another documentary convention used and subverted in the work. Textual information is employed to add both important and trivial information, thus playing with conventions like direct address where information is given a position of importance. As the production develops so does the critical understanding of how it challenges, or not, ideas of documentary form and art film and amounts to a meaningful exploration of its themes.

The themes of the work could be characterised as:

A construction/depiction of the history of Dartington experienced through the Dartington Archive, noting the development or site of the traces of history in the archive, how it began and how it changed, through the film material contained in it. And importantly this construction/depiction of Dartington is seen through an evolving construction/depiction of its mythic meaning.

Some stories of the people who have produced the recorded materials, a chronology. Who did what in filming and recording?

A history of interventions into this material in the pursuit of interpretations framed by and revolving around my own particular story and interventions from 1992 to 2003 during which time I was engaged on this project.


A broad, developing understanding of what might be characterised as 'the Dartington story', seen through a particular presentation of my story.

A comparison between the seduction of images and other phenomena such as place and history enacted as myth.

By using a structure that weaves archive film, interview extracts, document and narrative information around my home-movies, the work attempts to present glimpses/insights into some aspects of the Dartington story from a position that questions the ways in which histories are
constructed and the forms these constructions can take. Specifically film/video – documentary forms. Through the Dartington example it seeks to explore how and why archives are developed and used. It seeks to challenge particular forms of film construction and interpretation. In the latter I am exploring it in an idea of experimental documentary as a form of art film: cinematic essay.

In this the final stage of my project I determined to apply my interest in producing films to my knowledge of Dartington while considering a personal and wider ranging set of experiences I had gone through in the previous ten years. This was my attempt to sum up the work and what had been learned from it. It was to be an experimental documentary production. The personal nature of the story meant that I had reservations about the target audience, indeed, if there was one at all. Certainly I determined that the work would be seen by invitation only and could not therefore be aimed at a wide audience although it may have wider interest. Having adopted this position I was free to draw whatever conclusions I might from the work. The personal nature of the work is used as a way of exposing the mediated contingency of this Dartington story, through the distancing caused by the awkward, possibly embarrassing, confessional exposure of the filmmaker in the work. With this position clear, the work was produced with an, informed, film-literate audience in mind.

A major factor in this work being made was my acquiring of a DV camera and computer editing facilities with which to construct it. This made a dramatic difference in the way I could consider the work, the amount of time spent on it and the technical quality. From the start I discovered that my knowledge of Dartington’s history had limitations and I determined to also produce a form of a chronological history of Dartington’s work with film. Within this I could examine the ‘what is Dartington’ question but also look at the role film played in the Dartington experiment and try to understand the relationship between experiment, the arts and film. From my point of view ideas of experiment, art and film as processes, activities and forms, are interchangeable or at least interdependent. This does not seem to have been the case previously at Dartington.

In compiling a history of film at Dartington, outlined in part one of this thesis, I set out to explore a ‘historic reality’, at least as far as a chronology of events drawn from archive sources could determine. This ‘history’ was written at the same time as I produced the video work and the two fed into each other with questions and information. In producing the films I am mindful of earlier official attempts by the Cine Group and later in 1936 William Hunter of the Film Unit to produce a Dartington film:

In examining the material on which the scenario is based – the Estate – I have learned a great deal about it, and discovered a great deal that could make fascinating film material.
But the more I have learnt the more I have become convinced that it is impossible to convey anything like an adequate view of such a complex undertaking as the Dartington Hall experiment in 30 – 40 minutes.\(^\text{286}\)

He goes on to explain that encapsulating the complexity of Dartington in film is not going to be easy and reviewing the material has clarified the scale of the problem:

When I began, you will remember it seemed to me possible. But even as the scenario stands I am thoroughly dissatisfied with the treatment of every department, except, possibly the Textiles. The present material will take an hour to project, which will mean that it must be even more drastically cut down to be presentable. Such a relatively trivial point (in a whole film) as that only by importing raw materials can so many people be employed here will take a good many feet of film to explain, and omission will obviously create a false impression of the economic basis for the experiment. It seems to me that the type of person on whom the film will have the most permanent effect (if it is good) is not the casual enquirer, but the educated and the interested person who will not be impressed by economic half-truths. A film purporting to show economic and social basis of this experiment in half an hour must inevitably be at an rate vague in certain respects.\(^\text{287}\)

The time it would take to project all the material I have worked with is in excess of one hundred hours. This fact, it may be argued simply illustrates the futility and impossibility of ambition within the task I have set. It may also highlight the necessity of radical strategies of conflation, summation, and utilisation of tension generated through a broad, perhaps poetic conception of 'interval'. I am also mindful of attempts by Tom Stobart to produce a Dartington film the outcome of which is reported on in 1948 by Peter Cox:

Stobart has done a good deal of work on the treatment of the Dartington film which the Trustees commissioned, but he now recommends the Trustees to withdraw the commission since he does not believe it possible to make a really good film on Dartington. A good film needs a simple and compact story and it is almost impossible to make such a story out of the numerous and to some extent unrelated activities at Dartington. Some of the individual activities would make good film stories, but this would mean giving a one-sided view.\(^\text{288}\)

Within a form inextricably bound up in its intentional construction by a (even) culturally constructed author there has to be a starting point in untangling the innumerable frames of reference. Maggie Giraud, interviewed in 1997 on the subject of her work in moving the Dartington Hall Archive to High Cross House mentioned an impulse of reflection when she considered 'what would Dorothy and Leonard make of what I have done?'\(^\text{289}\) In producing the films in the way that I have I am certain I court Leonard's disapproval bearing in mind comments he made in a letter to a Mr Hawkins of 12\(^\text{th}\) December 1969:

\(^{286}\) Letter Hunter to Slater 18 March 1936 T Arts Film, Cine Group. DHA
\(^{287}\) He proposes a series of films, each illustrating 'certain aspects of the experiment'. Not dissimilar to Bennett’s ideas penned in the letter to Leonard from Old Westbury 5\(^\text{th}\) May 1933
\(^{288}\) Archive Papers Arts Administration Report 1948
\(^{289}\) Video Interview Maggie Giraud by David Hilton 1997
... I had not been served with any of the questions they proposed to ask, and that their camera men had already been busy with enough film to fill two to three hours of 'telly' time. I was dismayed by the first question for I realised then that one of your bright boys was going to be let loose without a script agreed beforehand, and with only pictures to guide him.\textsuperscript{200}

And later in 1972 from his letter to Lord Hill.

It was as though no one had worked out a script of any kind. It looked as though a camera man had been let loose and then the scissor man had gone to work to paste together snippets of this and that to fill the minutes allowed. The result was part misinformation and part misleading snippets that made no sense.\textsuperscript{201}

The difference between the BBC Programme Leonard was referring to and my film is perhaps that I did not determine from the start a particular allowance of minutes. The work is also independent of the BBC and even Dartington as determinants of style or content. It does however depend on an idea of Dartington constructed out of its resemblance's. As to the rest, the work must be judged by others.

I am heartened by a statement incorporated into Mark Kidel's book as an introduction to the Dartington Hall Trust, which concludes with the following:

Dartington was founded out of a vision of living and learning as one, and person and world as whole and holy. A concern for the arts as a channel for personal and social renewal is central to the commitment to education. Dartington seeks to explore new ways of living which draw strength from a sense of place and that which is small-scale and personal." June 1989\textsuperscript{202}

Does the sense of an invitation to personal growth through engagement with Dartington, ideas, activities and the place contained in this statement suggest a constructive meaning of Dartington? At the end of his book he tells us:

It should be clear by now, however, that 'integration', the 'full-life' or the breaking down of specialisms and institutional boundaries' provide valuable images, ideas and models rather than goals that can concretely achieved: they suggest 'frames of mind', and what Dartington might offer is a good context for this sort of 're-framing'.\textsuperscript{203}

My final work, which is perhaps a re-framing of a personal sense of history, film and personal development, began in March 2002 and approached completion in March 2003. What has resulted is a three-part video with a total duration of some 125 minutes called After the Facts. After the Facts reflects a concern with history, in so far as I began by trying to understand the Dartington story (its past) from its 'fossilised remains' – its archive films. The work is also

\textsuperscript{200} Archive Papers LK to Mr Hawkins of 12th December 1969 DHA
\textsuperscript{201} Archive Papers LK to Lord Hill May 22 1972 DHA
\textsuperscript{202} Kidel, Beyond the Classroom, Green Books, Devon. 1990.p.xiii.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid. p.151
concerned with a reflective view of my time spent doing this. Since I begin with
acknowledgement of the film form as a construction, not unmediated truth, my intention is not to
prove or disprove the historical validity of the material I have considered. The work seeks to
comment on the nature of the documentary/art-film form by conflating its ability or not, to tell my
own story - history - with its ability or not, to tell the Dartington story. To pose problems and grope
towards solutions. I have considered the Dartington story as my knowledge of the Dartington
subject has developed, as my life has developed. The films consider these 'histories' from a
variety of sources, and my own partial, reflexive, position in relation to them. The film evolves out
of a position that is one of an 'attitude' (to borrow from Dunisberre\textsuperscript{294}) of experiment towards film
practice rather than a determining structure, or plan. The documentary form is under scrutiny
together with some of its conscious and unconscious constructs. In this respect it is appropriate
to see my work \textit{After the Facts} as being located in a tradition of experimental documentary and
cinematic essay.

It is advised that the video work be viewed at this time.

\footnote{See earlier discussion on avant-garde.}
A critical commentary on the films

Part One – Finding Dartington

Part one of the film establishes a stylistic approach, the operative layering of chronologies and the central subjects of the work.

The film opens with an image of Polly Church (a student of Dartington School in 1928) viewing archive material, this is revealed to be playing on a monitor, which it is itself being viewed by the camera and by implication the audience. From this we encounter a very close shot of archive film spooling on an edit table whilst a voice-over gives a rapid outline of the Dartington Founders’ lead up to Dartington. The very close shot of what is some of the earliest film from the Dartington Experiment operates on a number of levels. The scale of the image, filling the screen, is an epic scale presentation of what in reality is a mere 16mm. The effect is that the image imprinted on the 16mm film is clearly visible in the video image. However because the film is not being viewed through any stop frame as the transport is engaged, the film image, moving so close to the camera is blurred. From the film being presented so large with its subject information inaccessible we are left to consider the physical form of the film, not its subject. This introduces a theme, of irony, since the subject of film, considered in such detail negates access to its function of presenting objects as subject. There are echoes in this of a conception of structuralist / materialist film where by:

In structural film, form became content, the viewers identification with the ‘dream screen’ was disrupted. The structural film rejected the cinema of pure vision. It posited viewing as an act of reading, literally so in films by Michael Snow, Hollis Frampton and George Landow.280

While employing what might be termed a structuralist device, suggesting the need to read as well as watch the film, After the Facts retains its concern with narrative form. The video is telling a story but employs structural concern with the particular filmic form of the narrative.

The voice-over is assigned the task of verbally articulating a subject: a history of the founders of Dartington. Yet the style of delivery of the voice over again plays with expectations. There is a great deal of information packed into the first voice-over and it is spoken at a rapid pace. Without previous knowledge of the Dartington story, it is difficult to imagine a viewer could access or digest all this information. The information is fairly accurate and relevant to the Dartington story, yet we are not given a clear run at understanding this narrative. The voice-over use echoes the structural device employed by the very close shot of film. The intention is to divert focus from a sense of ‘content’ to form, and to suggest that too close examination distances understanding. This distancing may well be experienced as frustration by the audience but may well form part of the seductive intrigue that the film intends to engage them in. The conceptions embodied in these stylistic devices echoes a notion of
perception, whereby from a background of noisy signals we select and extract those elements we are previously tuned into. The impression a viewer may gain from these overloaded sound and image information structures will be largely their own individual impression. Echoes here of the Brechtian 'distancing' device whereby the foregrounding of structure presents a dialectic portal through which the narrative is engaged.

The very close shot film image dissolves into to a lengthy wide-shot from inside a car driving from Exeter to Dartington, which we are told, is shot in 1991. We are told this by a second female voice whose information positions its/herself some time after the image from 1991. In this way the precise present of the film is made up of different framings of past and future.

From the outset it is suggested that the Dartington we are going to/trying to find is accessed through looking at archive film, through physical/technical film/video processes and through people. The information presented in the rear-view mirror is, perhaps self evidently making the reflexive comment that the film is looking back towards the past. There is a separation between the filmmaker and the initial image seen in the rear-view mirror of Leonard and Tagore. It might be thought that the image is symbolic or a virtual projection by the filmmaker. Both are intended possible readings, but the expansion of the images, to intrude into the wider frame of the windscreen and car interior, serves to separate the character driving the car, who might be the filmmaker, from the actual filmmaker who is co-ordinating the wider frame of the narrative. The in-car image is over-laid with sound extracts and images from some key elements of the early part of the Dartington story. These include:

- a background on Leonard Elmhirst (he and his wife Dorothy were the founders of modern Dartington),
- the influence on Leonard of Rabindranath Tagore (Indian poet/philosopher with whom he worked),
- Leonard's first visit to Dartington with his sister Rachael,
- The setting up of a school as part of the central ideas/phenomena of Dartington.

![Tagore and Leonard superimposed on 1991 car journey. Frames from After the Facts. 2003.](image)

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As well as the devices of image and voice-over structural manipulation, the video makes extensive use of text in the form of moving, crawling and scrolling sub-titles. The text presents additional ‘commentary’ information as in its first appearance to explain the close, blurred, image of moving film. We are told what it is: both subject – the Dartington Hall Restoration, and form - a piece of film being viewed at close quarters on a Steenbeck. As well as providing information this use of text acts to mitigate the distancing effect initially caused by the image: it is explained. There is a deliberate idea of the intertextuality of the separate but connectable signs and symbolic elements of the work. Other forms of text engage a colloquial dialogue with the viewer, deriving from the ‘history’ and the form being used to re-present that ‘history’. For example a voice over narration suggests the image seen must be the result of a ‘new camera to think this is worth filming’. The text, at this time seen in the rear-view mirror tells us the make of the camera and where/when it was purchased. Dialogues between visual text, verbal text, images and sound are set up to point to the reflexive intentionality of the work. At other times text is used to address the viewer directly or to add information to the Dartington history represented in archive films and images or the ‘lesser’ history we see unfolding within the filmmaker’s home movies. An important aspect of the titles is that they always move.

Following this are sequences that introduce the person and family of the filmmaker moving to Dartington in 1991. Subsequently we are introduced to the Dartington Hall Archive through the Archivist in 1992 and a history of its production articulated through interview with Victor Bonham-Carter (the man who set it up). By implication we are introduced to the idea of telling (writing, collecting, making) the Dartington story, or more importantly the constituent documents from which such a story might be derived. Through the juxtaposition of home movie and Dartington Archive material this is repositioned as A Dartington Story told from a particular perspective. The different function of a ‘history’ and an ‘archive’ would seem to be that while a history emerges as a fixed formulation of past events, an archive seems to offer the possibility of numerous readings. By detailing the construction of the archive what emerges is its own contingency: like a ‘history’ it was also constructed through processes of selection, imagination and expedience. Like a ‘history’, an archive is intentional, but open to multiple or indefinite readings. The film itself is witness to its own possibility of being an archive.

Towards the end of part one we return to close shots of the early film material when the filmmaker asks ‘who shot this?’

Throughout the video simultaneous presentation of events, information, chronologies and observations are layered in images, sounds (voice-overs and interview clips) and text (in the form of moving subtitles). The project is itself a process involving many layers, which include:
• A sense of The place and a personal engagement with it
• Elements of the history of Dartington and the Dartington Story: the creation of the Archive
• Questions about the nature, development and use of the archive
• Questions surrounding the Film/moving image form locked into particular times, attitudes and technology.
• Questions around the particular partiality of story telling and how this affects the story being told.
• Considerations of what kind and what amount of information may be assimilated from audio/visual montage - by implication the parameters of the form.
Part Two – The Film Unit

Part two expands to incorporate more of the people and historic contexts through which the archive film materials were/are being produced. In Part one I profile George Bennett who shot a great deal of the early film records at Dartington from 1926 to around 1939. Further information on Bennett is included at the beginning of Part Two.

At the end of the twenties Dartington began a concerted process of expansion as the family centred institution grew into a more corporate structure. The limited company was formed in 1927 and Dartington Hall Trust in 1929. In the late twenties Leonard was brought into consideration of the work of the Workers Educational Association through the rural outreach work of Mr. R J Thomas. In 1931 an experimental project with the WEA involving the use of film as an educational tool in rural outreach work called New Learning took place. During this project members of the Newton Abbot WEA Film society who co-ordinated the projection of films were also involved in the production of what was referred to as an experimental film, with members of the Dance Drama Group drawn from WEA members at Liverton. Also in 1931 Mark Tobey and Dicky Odlin joined the school as part of the Dance Mime Group operating under Margaret Barr. This increase in activity and personnel combined with the growing complexity of the structure of Dartington determined the rationalisation of film activity. This rationalisation took the form of the founding of a Cine Group in 1933 with Vic Elmhirst as its chairman. Within the Cine Group filmmaking activity took on a more deliberately organised form.

Part two begins with elements of this story presented in voice-over, in still images from the New Learning experiment inter-cut with more home-movie material. There is a deliberate and obvious play on an idea of new learning in the use of images of a child whose whole experience at an early age could be said to be 'new learning'. Further elements of the Dartington narrative, in relation to the production of film materials are presented in brief voice-over narration during a sequence dealing with the observation that home-movies are shot by many members of the family. In this particular case the functions of the camera are demonstrated to the child’s 'mum' as she records what we see. This idea is developed or echoed in other ways throughout the following sequences.

The voice-over continues into a sequence made up of images from the building of the school in 1931, presumably, (but not certainly,) shot by George Bennett, and sections of commentary made by Leonard in 1973 and added to the footage by Richard Thomas in his production of The School. At the end of this selection Leonard says 'I can't remember all that'. This phrase is repeated a number of times as his actual commentary fades out underneath. The image he is referring to of himself laying a foundation stone in the Foxhole school building and a crowd of workmen applauding is repeated with his repeated statement. Here the point is to illustrate the plastic nature of film. The images are not a
memory for us the viewer but by seeing them again we remember our first experience of them. The viewer is invited to remember what has already been seen. This is also a distancing effect, for in remembering the viewer’s concern with the flow of the narrative is interrupted. The point is to demonstrate that while Leonard seems to provide a factual commentary he is relying on his memory and as he says ‘I can’t remember all that’, his memory is fallible. In this his position as authoritative commentator is fallible. Also implied here is perhaps the fallibility of the filmmaker with no experience of the events shown.

At this point the image dissolves into a sequence where the filmmaker offers insight into his position in the general chronology of engagement with the archive materials. A telephoto shot of the window of the records office slowly zooms out to reveal a wide shot of the title yard. Over-laid on this is a faint image from a super 8mm film and still images from one of the photoworks set in the tilt-yard. Banjo music and a voice-over by the filmmaker accompany this, articulating an abstract feeling about unspecified changes about to take place while we see an agglomeration of events/images that, clearly have already taken place. The intention is to signal matters that will appear later and hopefully be remembered by a viewer triggered by the repeat of the music in part three.

![Image](image.png)

Fig.28. Caleb in the Tilt Yard picking daisies. 1998

296 see Appendix Photoworks
In an analysis of film activity at Dartington, the work of the Film Unit, though of import in its own terms of reference, has been seen to be a cul-de-sac. Or at least an experiment with more negative than positive results, or again, perhaps an experiment that lived out its usefulness or practicality. While the works produced remain engaging historic documents, the focus was external and educational rather than descriptive or interpretative of Dartington. Concern with interrogation of the form was progressive but limited to its potential as a workhorse for other concerns. For this reason, little of the Film Unit films despite the title of Part Two, are included in *After the Facts*.

Some work from the Cine Group by Mark Tobey, Dicky Odlin and George Bennett is included. The Film Unit as an entity is described in interview clips with Polly Church and Mary Bride Nicholson and is developed in a section with one of its young members, the now eighty-plus year-old Ricky Leacock.

This section of the video uses more of a 1995 VHS interview with Polly Church, who was a school and life-long friend of Leacock’s, inter-cut with a viewing of this by Leacock in 2002, the year after she died. The sequence also incorporates material which may have been shot by Leacock of school camps, commentated on by Leonard in 1974 where he recalls Leacock’s enthusiasm for filming.

Leacock offers an insight into his work on one of the most successful Film Unit films: *Galapagos* made in 1939. He also describes the prevailing sense of ‘professionalism’ that meant the film unit did not film themselves: this is a source of regret to him. This section uses the opportunity to mention in subtitle Leacock’s later work for Flaherty, as cameraman on *Louisiana Story* in 1946 and his desire to revisit the Galapagos footage in a more personal interpretation in 2002. Leacock’s continued interest in filmmaking, which saw its first expression at Dartington in the Film Unit, also serves to illustrate a continuing engagement with the form. In this case the actual film he shot that was edited in 1939 into a ‘classroom’ teaching film by David Lack, its director. In this the separation between intention and objective artefact are alluded to. The plastic nature of the form, mouldable into a limitless number of particular forms, has particular relevance to this exploration of a ‘history’ seen through ‘archive’ materials which are themselves plastic and are incorporated into another version of film form, itself also plastic. The difference between *history* as ‘particular’ – crystallised and *archive* as ‘mutable’ is a continuing theme of the work.

The production of the Dartington Archive and the production of my own archive are introduced in part one and continue as a point of reference throughout parts two and three. The possible directions a particular narrative can take using sensitivity to its origins and later interpretations are vast. This particular narrative is only one of a vast number of possible narratives. As was suggested as a problem in deriving History from film by Ian Jarvie as quoted by Rosenstone:
"The moving image carries such a "poor information load" and suffers from such "discursive weakness" that there is no way to do meaningful history on film. History, he, [Jarvie] explained, does not consist primarily of a descriptive narrative of what actually happened. It consists mostly of "debates between historians about just what exactly did happen, why it happened, and what would be an adequate account of its significance." While it is true that a "historian could embody his view in a film, just as he could embody it in a play," the real question is this: "How could he defend it, footnote it, rebut objections and criticise the opposition?"297

Such issues are intended to be considered, if by implication not explication, during the viewing of the work. Part two of After the Facts draws to a close with contemporaneous material shot during the move and reestablishment of the Dartington Archive at High Cross House in 1995.

The archive moves into a site that facilitates its visibility. The site is seen by the Archivist Maggie Giraud, as a potential venue for new forms of exposure and exploration of its materials. Four Parts for a Modernist House in 1995, soon after the move, was just such an event. With such intentional repositioning of the archive, without its veiled status 'hidden away' in the 'very beautiful rooms' of the Elmhirsts' library so disclosure of the film's own intentions are made. That is to say the filmmaker reveals more of the personal story which is perhaps part of the motivation for producing the film. The revelation begins with disclosure that in 1992 he fell in love with Dartington and in 1995 he started an affair with a person not connected to Dartington, that was the reason he moved away from Dartington and his family at Huxham's Cross.

A theme that is being presented here is not just small town scandal or a narrative of misguided passions but rather the idea of falling in love as a form of projection. In the statement/confession of falling in love with Dartington the filmmaker states both an absurdity and a commonly felt emotion. Just what is the Dartington that has been fallen in love with? In some ways the whole production has been an attempt to answer that un-asked question. Now it is stated as being loaded with emotion - love - not just the neutral 'what is Dartington' expressed as intrigue in earlier discussions, seduction has taken place - is taking place. There is an intention to draw parallels between the seductive power of images - in this case archive images of Dartington - which seem to make accessible the reality of their source objects, and notions of falling in love with a real person to whom is attributed similar seductive power. Both perhaps exist as working illusions.

In this consideration I draw, in my analysis from Jean Baudrillard's conception of successive phases of the image building towards simulacra.

Level one: signs (images) are thought of as being a direct reflection of reality, a sacramental connection exists between the sign and the subject. 'It is the reflection of a profound reality'.

In the first instance the Dartington images were seen as records of events, people and buildings of the experiment. The films were regarded as being clearly connected to the objects, people events of the subject in the films. In this regard they are seen as a window on the original reality of the subject. In this there is a conception of film as document representing reality.

Level two: signs (images) are seen as representation and not reality, therefore they mask reality. 'It masks and denatures a profound reality'.

The increased sophistication in using film that came into being during the various incarnations of the Film Unit demonstrates a shift in this position. The term documentary still applies to the films shot and made but awareness of the uses film can be put to, in producing educational and instructional (classroom) films, demonstrates an awareness of its plastic form. That is, the material can be moulded to articulate ideas, information: tools of education. In this film has taken on a second order of being whereby it is acknowledged as being not reality but the appearance of reality which can be moulded. If it can be moulded into certain appearances of reality, then it can also be said to mask the reality of the subject by presenting a particular position, which excludes or masks other possible positions. The films as a system of signs mask the reality they emanate from. In the position I choose to consider the films from, in relation the question 'what is Dartington' Film Unit productions clearly mask, hide a reality of Dartington, its complexity and ideals, by selective use of elements such as forestry, farming, the school, etc. As Ricky Leacock said, 'we didn't film ourselves, it wasn't professional'.

This notion of professionalism, in line with developing ideas associated with the documentary film movement of the thirties sees film as separate from reality but able to articulate and explore ideas and observations of reality, (possibly Grierson's 'underlying reality) drawn from reality but existing independently of it. Within the work of the Film Unit within the ontology of the Dartington Experiment film operates at a second order of signification.

Level three: signs are seen as masking the absence of reality. 'It masks the absence of a profound reality'.

At the end of Leonard's life in the post-Film unit period of the sixties and particularly the seventies the films are seen and used again. At this point, particularly in the work of Richard Thomas they can be seen as being used to mask the absence of reality. Leonard is at the end of his life, he views the films and comments on the events and situations that gave rise to the events in the films. Thomas

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299 Ibid.
300 Interview with Ricky Leacock by the author October 2002.
constructs these archive films and Leonard's comments into works which embrace and synthesise the events in the images on archive film and his backward looking view of the underlying intentions of the events represented. In the constructions (The School and Farms and Industry 1973/4), there is clearly nothing that is real or represents an unmediated reality. Rather they are structures that, by presenting such a clear illusion of factual 'historical' reality, by presenting a retrospective homogeneity of reality, mask the absence of their source reality. The seeming completeness of the works lies in their summing up from a position of authority, afforded by the original archive film of Dartington and comments from an original architect of Dartington's objectives. But this actually masks the fact that the reality, (of the past), is absent in the works and they are therefore located in a virtual frame. This virtual frame can be said to contain an idea or depiction of the reality of the events depicted and described and the illusory construction of meanings of Dartington. The meanings of Dartington have never been concisely or precisely articulated. Rather they have existed in various forms throughout its history, stemming from the various interpretations at different times by commentators and authority figures; but have also resided in the living out of these abstract meanings through innumerable lives of the people who experienced them and their influence. As a comprehensive and hermetic entity Dartington's meaning is itself an absence of a single meaning, Rather it exists as framework of ideals and ideas within which meaning can be constructed on a collective but most usefully I would argue on an individual level.

Level four: signs become pure simulation or simulacra and have no relation to reality. 'It has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.'

The ambivalence of this position is such that it may be either ridiculous or self-evident. For example it is self-evident that a recent tableaux or exhibition of archive photographs at the Dartington Archive presented in a chronological order within the context of the archive provides a snapshot chronology of some of Dartington's history. On the other hand it does not present the reality of a history of Dartington. The images and the connections they make individually to the reality of the past are apparent but they are not the past. The connections between them involve the viewer in assuming a virtual timeline different from the viewer's own time, since they are not the past and, as Barthes has pointed out, they represent an absence of the past. In adopting a 'historical' chronology they mask the absence of a reality and overall they exist in relation to the connections between the different images and the context within which they are presented. Nothing in this relates to the reality of the original subject. The whole could be said to operate as simulacra.

Baudrillard's 1979 treatise on the phenomena of seduction offers a model for the way in which the idea of seduction is being used in After the Facts to articulate the fascination of or engagement with

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103 Ibid
the Dartington Archive film, the Dartington story, as an abstract entity. This I compare to the function of seduction in human relations. A central tenet of this idea is the notion of the lost referential. That is to say one is seduced by the absence of meaning or reality rather than its actuality. The Dartington experience which seems to be offered by the archive materials seen as simulacra is being compared to the experience of falling in or being 'in love'. In such a condition the loved one (or phenomena) has little to do with the objective reality of the actual person or phenomena: the more so if this reality is masked by appearances. It is in the absence of a referent 'reality' that simulacra exercise or generate seduction.

The continuing theme of a journey to or through the Dartington Estate is deliberately geographically confusing. The journey represents an 'idea' of journey. In fact it is comprised of a number of different journeys, the actual purpose of which is to view representative selections of its landscape (seen through the limiting car windscreen, and always on the move) and to present the audio recordings playing on the car tape/radio. Sometimes the journey connects different sites on the estate and portrays a sense of its disconnectedness. The importance of an idea of journey also echoes Leonard's initial discovery of - journey to - Dartington with his sister depicted/described in part one of the film. The idea of journey also operates on another level, which is to particularise this depiction of Dartington, by limiting it to a composite journey through it by the filmmaker. The filmmaker like Leonard in 1925, is searching for Dartington. This composite journey is constrained by the intrinsic qualities of the film form: its constraint of a linear progression of time. The represented journey - the depicted virtual journey - is particular. That is to say it is only one of many possible routes/pathways through the landscape, archive material, the stories and the exposition of the film with its narratives and ideas. But it is a route that even those who know the estate well will have problems deciphering the logic of, except where the route or particular reason is articulated by the filmmaker. This is the point: that the journey, the route is singular to the filmmaker. It is only one of many, not the only or authoritative one.

The film adopts a chronological re-telling of events to do with Dartington, via the female voice-over. There is also a chronological (for the most part) re-telling of the filmmaker's personal story. From the outset the film sets up a context of its being a factual film. In the juxtaposition between the formal - possibly academic (or pseudo academic) - information presented by the female voice-over and the more confessional narration of the filmmaker there is intended to rest an uneasy tension. The audience is being presented with a seemingly factual film - documentary - about an 'important' historical phenomena, yet this is at times in conflict with the uneasy, intimate revelations presented by the filmmaker. This operates as a distancing device, which is designed to signal the possibility that the analysis of a history, a number of parallel histories, will not necessarily be subject to a predictable 'documentary' form of presentation and analysis. It is also intended to suggest that the idea of history is contingent. The point at which the filmmaker directly addresses the audience (albeit in the
transparent superimposition of his haggard face and voice on footage from Four Parts For a Modernist House) is pivotal. From this point the film shifts from a generalised experimental documentary stance of presenting a depiction of Dartington, to an appropriation of Dartington to depict an exploration of personal responses to illusion, projection and interpretation. The film focuses into a phenomenological exploration of falling/ being in love: a seduction.

Part two concludes with more perambulation in the car around the Dartington Estate, from the Hall towards High Cross House, listening to Dorothy from 1967 (as a scrolling title in the rear-view mirror tells us) discussing the importance of the individual at the centre of Dartington life:

As you grow bigger, you grow more complex and there is always danger of losing the contact with the individual which is one of the human values (I talked about at the beginning) that is absolutely essential to the inner life, the real life of Dartington.  

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32 Dorothy Elmhirst, Founder’s Day Speech, audio recording 1967 DHA.
Part Three – Interpreting Dartington

Part three attempts synthesis of meanings and some closure of narratives evolved through parts one and two. While the 'historical' narratives opened up in parts one and two of the role of film in the Dartington experience continue, the personal investment of engagement with these narratives and interpretation of the possible models they offer becomes the objective. 'Historically' we move further in time away from the Dartington Experiment but closer to the subsequent – After the Facts use of its mythic and practical ideas on a personal level.

The section opens with a similar image to parts one and two – a close shot of archive film running through a Steenbeck editing table. This time we are informed by the scrolling title that it is a married print of one of Richard Thomas’ productions. The Steenbeck transport is paused on, first a still image (a film frame) of Dorothy from the early twenties and then Leonard from the same time.

Fig. 27 Close Shot of 16mm married print of The School from After the Facts part three Interpreting Dartington. 2003.

The scrolling text information of this being a 'married print' is obviously some kind of pun on the marriage of Leonard and Dorothy which is explored later. A Married print is also the end of a process
of production in photochemical (in this case 16mm.) filmmaking. The marriage referred to here is of sound and image. The image is usually made up from three separate rolls of negative. The film at this the final stage before release printing (for cinema projection, usually the final print form of the film) is the synthesis of many processes and is in effect a copy of all those processes which has the effect of eradicating the traces of those processes. The idea of simulacra has echoes in this. Again in this presentation we are denied the intended experience of this film by seeing it running freely across a spooling device (a Steenbeck edit table). We are denied access to its illusion by a kind of hyper-real scrutiny. We look at the form of the process rather than the processed form. We see this via the very plastic medium of Digital Video. Were we to do a similar thing with DV we would see no trace of the images electro-magnetically coded on the tape. Processes have become more sophisticated but something is lost, in this there is a commenting on evolving forms of depiction or perhaps nostalgia for the seemingly less complex earlier forms.

We also hear the sound generated by the optical track of this film as it warbles out of the Steenbeck speaker. On top of this we hear the, now familiar, female voice of the narrator who tells us after a glitch where she complains about having to do it again, the same information as at the start of part one. The use of a narrator – voice-over throughout part one and most of part two could be said to fall into a 'direct address' form of documentary, in siting the point of 'now' – the present - in the same 'now' as the film's audience. This 'now' is a point of uncertainty where history is not fixed but contingent upon events being witnessed or described. The film was begun without a determined end. Each element, section, choice of shot, information, sequence and direction was approached as it occurred in the film's construction. There were subsequent revisions additions and extractions of material. The text of the voice-over was written as the film was made. In this way the voice-over became stitched into the fabric of the film's 'now'. By accident (serendipity) events in life as the film was being made became intentionally included. Artifice and life actually converged as the film progressed. The voice-over, initially seen as an abstract source of dry but factual information, enters a relationship with the film's other main narrator, the protagonist filmmaker. They are separate sources of information and separate kinds of information, one personal the other more as is traditional in voice-overs authoritative, even pompous, but self-mockingly so. The text of both is of course the product of the filmmaker and the distance between the two – the relationship between the two – filmmaker and voice of god(ess) begins to take on a disturbing difference towards the end of part two and again at the beginning of part three. Here the anonymous voice-over complains about having to 'do it all again' and the faint remnants of a discussion between the filmmaker and the voice-over trail off under other sounds coming from the archive film we see here.

It becomes important that the constructed relationship between the protagonist's reflective journey through a particular history of Dartington and the seeming 'impartial' narration of a history
of filmmaking at Dartington (or at least a chronology of events) becomes a suggested representation of a 'real' relationship between two people. From the film being a monologue whose author is ostensibly the filmmaker it shifts to become a dialogue or perhaps a discourse. The question is intended to be posed as to the nature of a 'real' relationship being hinted at between the man (filmmaker) and the woman (voice-over) characterised as the filmmaker's confessional 'falling in love' or being in a seduction. The filmmaker has fallen in love with Dartington, in the form of his engagement with archive materials, and fallen in love with a woman who in the film has been given the voice of authoritative information – the voice-over. The role of knowing that which the filmmaker seeks and is seduced by: information – facts.

From this introduction part three takes on a more familiar and accessible form of the 'video diary'. This form, pioneered in the experimental – personal documentaries - of people like Ross McElwee, has moved into the vernacular through the work of Bob Long at the BBC Community Programmes Unit in the mid eighties. *Video Diaries* of the BBC has popularised this form where individuals, who also do the filming/recording (but not the editing), tell their own stories. In the final part – three – *Interpreting Dartington* a video diary form is employed by the filmmaker to tell what seems to have become his story about him finding out about Dartington while living at Dartington seen retrospectively in the construction of the film we watch.

The central section of part three deals with Dartington's use of film at the end of Leonard's life with Richard Thomas' *A Job is Not Enough* and the post-Leonard and Dorothy Dartington's Community video project culminating in Mark Kidel's *Dartington at 60*. This period is characterised as *Interpreting Dartington*. The stylistic devices employed elsewhere throughout the film are less evident and this is intended to present more accessible narrative strands. These narrative strands during the central part of part three are more clearly separated and distinguishable, if still a little confusing. Access to a way of interpreting Dartington – through exposition of those who have tried before – is being suggested. After an initial rupture in the distance between the filmmaker and the voice-over narrator, where they seem to talk to each other, in a space normally excluded in the film's logic; where 'she' seems to make mistakes in the reading, they return to their accustomed places. These might be determined as the filmmaker colloquially addressing the camera and the voice-over providing 'factual' information as before.

The sequence where Michael Young is heard in interview from 1997, and seen visually in 1995 offers another point where the idea of narrating or historicizing the past from a particular point of view is touched on. Michael Young has his back to the camera through most of the sequence: we cannot see him. The image is slowed and repeated, we look closely, more slowly than we can in 'real time/life' but still he is obscured. Michael Young has been described as the 'principal witness', his account of Dartington and the Elmshirsts remains the principal source, account/explication of their work. In the
interview he discussed his position within his book of them (in response to questioning) and articulates his position that 'it was a book about them, not about me'. Yet he recognises himself within the book. Does this implicate his view, his position within their lives, and theirs within his, as suspect or authoritative? There is no question of his close position and meticulous work within the book as underpinning an authoritative position, my interest here was in the idea of his personal relationship and presence within his work as both supporting and distancing his view. In distancing the work from an idea of 'unbiased truth' through its reflexive dimension the sequence offers its own reflective positioning of the film within which it appears. The film seeks to bear witness to itself as mediation of its questionable authority.

Two thirds of the way through Part Three a long section shot from inside a car completes the journey from the hall to the filmmaker's initial home at Dartington at Huxham's Cross. During this journey Michael Young addressing the Ways With Words festival in 1997 is heard on the car audio tape player. Young in his speech is summarising the legacy of the Elmhirsts. Towards the end of this journey a caption presents the following information from a general statement published in 1988 by the Dartington Trustees about Dartington's 'Aims and Policies'.

Of particular interest are the lines:

'To promote patterns of living, which draw strength from a rural environment, are economically viable, meet the emerging needs of society and offer the individual a fulfilling, well balanced life.

Dartington's endeavour has always been a response to human need: never has it been based purely on theory. The Trust views life as a whole. It seeks to bring together those elements which, in general, our society regards as separate and, indeed, opposed. The Trust strives to break down barriers, to make connections, to free the energy inherent in seemingly contradictory forces.

Dartington identifies the challenge of change with the necessity to discover fresh forms of integration.

Dartington was founded out of a vision of living and learning as one, and person and world as whole and holy. A concern for the arts as a channel for personal and social renewal is central to the commitment to education.

Dartington seeks to explore new ways of living which draw strength from a sense of place and that which is small-scale and personal.'

Is this a charter for self-discovery? Well perhaps an interpretation of Dartington's meaning could be characterised as the lessons it offers for personal growth that flows from collective growth; collective growth that flows up to social frameworks and down to individuals.

We have been told, in part two of the filmmaker falling in love with Dartington and a separate affair which took him away from Dartington. In part three we follow him to visit a counsellor for help, ostensibly with issues located in the morality of his film and his use of other people's stories. On the way to visit the counsellor textual sub-titles also reveal that the 'affair' is over, but he did not know it at that time. These clues are intended to draw a parallel between the idea of projection within a notion of
falling in love, which as Leonard is heard to say is a ‘creative act’, and ways in which meaning is constructed through images. An idea of being drawn into a seduction, especially of one’s own projection, is suggested in any formulation of interpretation, itself a constructive, creative act. In the final sequence Leonard is heard to exclaim Tagore’s notion that everyone is an artist and art is for everyone. Michael Chekhov is introduced towards the end of the film through Leonard’s anecdotal recollection of his idea of a human tendency to fall asleep. Leonard uses this to underline his own concern with the importance of research feeding into life, and vice-versa. He seems to posit a constructive feedback loop, which might be central to his whole notion of the experiment. This might be interpreted as a way of ‘keeping awake’ to possibilities for development. Chekhov also posed a different kind of lesson for Leonard in the way his teaching and insights provided a framework of deep personal focus for Dorothy. Michael Young articulates Dorothy’s involvement with the Chekhov Theatre School as an important feature in her life. I do not in this suggest any impropriety but rather wish to consider the emotional pressure this put on Leonard, in close proximity to, and yet exclusion from, his wife’s near obsession with Chekhov and his work.

This narrative strand is intended to resonate with the filmmaker’s emotional ‘confessional problems’ of being excluded from his own affair – by it being over without him knowing. We have seen in an earlier shot a telephone conversation where someone he invites to tea declines his offer. Ostensibly this articulated his unwitting detachment from the person he still thinks he is in the ‘affair’ with. Chronologically this is placed in a position where it has already been stated, in caption that the affair is over. The question: are we observing his ‘upset’ or a construction for dealing with it, after the fact, is intended to hang here.

The film ends with a, perhaps clichéd montage of images we have mostly seen already within and amongst which the filmmaker is seen to dance. The point is being suggested that in the face of the mutability of image, in the face of uncertainty of meaning, action may be antidote; learning or simply being, defining itself, confirming itself, expressing itself in being.

Within my methodology in producing After the Facts I have acknowledged the possibilities of historical interpretation but approached the problem with at least one of the vital elements of history missing. This missing element: knowing the end of the story I am constructing. The end of the story, when it might be considered historical material - document - will only emerge after the process of construction. This is a deliberate methodology which takes past, and therefore more limited knowledge/understanding, of the subject and the form and attempts to focus the two through/within the process of production. During this process an enquiry is traced as it progresses. History is presented as being viewed as history is being ‘made’. The form of this

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Dartington Hall Trustees, General Statement, June 1989 (Mark Kidel. Beyond the Classroom, p xiii)
particular history - film/video/moving image - is also in a deliberate state of flux. Strategies commonly used in production of Documentary films are deliberately employed, subverted or avoided, determined by the particular direction the emerging work dictates. The film does not know what it is trying to say or where it wishes to take the viewer, because in the process of its construction the principal author is also on a journey whose destination is not fixed until it is arrived at.

In discussing these processes I am aware of the use of the term 'the filmmaker' to site the film's central protagonist as a construct that is different to a more ontological understanding of 'myself'. This self is partial and narrativised within the predictable logic of the form; it moves in and out of being a self conscious construct and an unconscious expression or articulation of a real self. The reflexive dimension of the work seems to present an examination of self-obsessed quest for enlightenment. This may or may not be the case but siting such a quest within a more deliberate and visible quest for understanding of Dartington is intended to set up a tension - an interval - between an uncomfortable proximity to self seen in its dialectical relationship with other. The other posited as Dartington, itself being subjected to a particular form of analytic and synthetic construction.

In this sense the film work is experimental. The experiment seeks to conflate an understanding of Dartington history seen through its use of film and a personal history leading up to and seen during the production of the work.

The work attempts to construct a critical context within a process of producing an experimental type of film/video that seeks to articulate the position from which I am considering the material as well the subject. It is of importance to the work that research has taken place within the geographical context of the subject, that is: at the Dartington Hall Archive, and whilst living within the geographical, and emotional orbit of Dartington.
After The Facts: Evaluation

The final film work, the three parts that comprise After the Facts, function as a laboratory of ideas and as an experiment in filmmaking. As such it is pertinent to enquire as to the success or failure of the experiment, or in Leonard’s terms to assess the negative and positive results. The films represent a particular methodological engagement with Dartington: an idea of what Dartington might be and what a Dartington Experiment enacted in this way might entail. It follows that the films should articulate something of the intentions and purposes of the Dartington Experiment. These I would summarise as an enactment of ideas that would yield social, educational and personal experimental results. I derive this summary from readings of statements by the founders, Victor Bonham-Carter’s history, Michael Young’s book and observations by Mark Kidel. 307 To these, I would add the (post-founders) Dartington Hall Trust’s general statement of 1989 as a signal of the intention to perpetuate a functional idea of Dartington as an experimental framework through which new ideas might emerge.

The Trust views life as a whole. It seeks to bring together those elements which, in general, our society regards as separate and, indeed, opposed. The Trust strives to break down barriers, to make connections, to free the energy inherent in seemingly contradictory forces.

Dartington identifies the challenge of change with the necessity to discover fresh forms of integration.

Dartington was founded out of a vision of living and learning as one, and person and world as whole and holy. A concern for the arts as a channel for personal and social renewal is central to the commitment to education.

Dartington seeks to explore new ways of living which draw strength from a sense of place and that which is small-scale and personal. 308

Within this rubric of ideas I have largely concerned myself with the personal. In this I have attempted ‘to break down barriers, to make connections’ and considered articulations of meaning through film. Within After the Facts I have brought together ‘separate and indeed opposed elements’, such as personal experience and a wider institutional history, I have approached through an editorial methodology employing montage, ‘fresh forms of integration’. I have employed the arts – specifically a concern with film as art – as a ‘channel for personal renewal’ within a more general concern with contemporary media practices.

My intention has been to articulate an understanding of Dartington through its traces in archive materials and through this activity create conditions for the emergence of new ideas. Again it is pertinent to ask what these emergent ideas might be. The central notion of using Dartington as a

307 See Chapter One pages 9 – 10
framing of personal identity and a tool for personal growth is explored as a transparent idea within After the Facts. Concern with film as a medium of expression – an experimental form – has been developed by considering the question of its apparent absence amid the experimental arts and general support for the arts at Dartington. Dartington's deliberate use of film – begun by Leonard in 1925 – as a tool, if only for recording the experiment, leaves open the question of its use in an experimental way. Indeed film use was developed in the experimental form of Classroom films within the Film Unit but for its expository function rather than its expressive possibilities. My particular filmic framing of and intervention into archive material has also explored questions of the experimental possibilities of film. I have sought to provide a framing device for the examination of the Archive materials and their implied stories: an interrogation of film by film. After the Facts articulates these ideas as an enacted enquiry in the filmic form. In the context of this thesis submission the film work, After the Facts, is a working hypothesis of how such an enquiry might be undertaken rather than an exhaustive exposition of such an enquiry.

An editorial methodology runs throughout this enquiry in selection and placement of the materials; in generating the early compilation videos, in the production of the photoworks, in gathering and compiling the written history of use of film at Dartington and in After the Facts. My intentions within this editorial strategy moved from a commissioned and constrained apologist of Dartington, through to a concern with image and montage motivated by independent academic and practical curiosity.

The functioning of the film work as an autonomous art form is a different proposition to its role as the result of a particular methodological enquiry into learning by doing, itself an idea derived from a study of Dartington and embedded in the enactment of ideas. To assess the films as a coherent entity is problematic because the work deliberately eschews or subverts tried and tested conventions of documentary.

As a way of developing a critique of the ways in which the films develop new meanings I have engaged in discussion with a range of people whose views I respect. In the following evaluation I have not tried to counter their criticisms but rather I have used extracts from their commentaries as a framework or matrix within which I have positioned my own critical understanding of the films.

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249 Dartington Hall Trustees, General Statement, June 1989 (Mark Kidel. Beyond the Classroom. p xiii)

250 The Films were seen and comments provided by: Dalila Hamdoum – a recently graduated filmmaker, Carole Lochhead – a BBC features director, Liz Wells – Cultural Theorist and author, Maggie Giraud ex-archivist at Dartington Hall, Mark Kidel – ex-Interpretation officer at Dartington and documentary filmmaker and Ricky Leacock – documentary filmmaker.
Finding Dartington asks a number of questions notably about the use of film as a method of recording history. Its anti-BBC documentary stance, its refusal to "wrap up" everything, draws the audience further into its broken narrative.\(^{310}\)

To break down the possible meanings or readings of After the Facts is a complex task since each element used in the production, each shot, title, sound, framing and conjunction was the result of an open process of exploration and discovery. Each edit was the result of a complex decision-making process involving intentions, implications and effects, which were continually moderated by subsequent edits. It would be possible to consider each edit within the film in terms of this complex process, but it is more difficult to determine a single coherent reading of the film as a whole.

It wasn't clear enough at the beginning what you were setting out to achieve or the journey you were sending us the viewer on. If you wanted the viewer to question the status of archive per se, that request needed to be made more clearly. You needed a mission statement. The subliminal layers of the film were often overwhelmed by the weight of the Dartington archive, which gave the impression that the films were just about the story of Dartington, i.e. its school, its agricultural side etc and nothing else.\(^{311}\)

While the interplay of form (text, image, voice) is intentional the work suffers at times from the density of this material's conjunction resulting in no threads being apparent amidst the poly-informational unravelling of the forms. Information of different kinds presented in such a dense form may cause the viewer to be left not knowing which aspect is central to either the theme or the narrative. While this may echo the complexity of Dartington as a phenomenon that might be difficult to understand, it might also present an impenetrable opacity to the viewer.

I felt you needed more commentary and the bits you had popped out of nowhere and took the viewer by surprise - the on screen information was, at times confusing because there was too much of it. You were asking the viewer to read a crawl along the bottom, a scroll of words through the rear view mirror of the car and watch several images all at once. It was too much.\(^{312}\)

Part one as an introduction suggests the complexity of the subject: Dartington, a history, a personal history, filmic form and a quest, and positions the filmmaker as the means of articulating the subject and as a subject himself. This may well frustrate a viewer in that one narrative is constantly overlaid or interrupted by other quite different narratives. For viewers interested in the history of Dartington, for example, the interjection of an unrelated personal history may be a source of irritation. This has been the most prevalent criticism of the work that the balance between personal and Dartington information/narratives has not been struck.

\(^{310}\) Dalila Hamdoun Review of After the Facts. Part One. Interpreting Dartington 10\(^{th}\) February 2004

\(^{311}\) Letter Carole Lochhead to David Hilton 17\(^{th}\) Feb 2004

\(^{312}\) Letter Carole Lochhead to David Hilton 17\(^{th}\) Feb 2004
I would say your intention is not really clear, or rather it gets bogged down at times - then suddenly comes back on track again. You need to get a better balance on the personal stuff, which at times is too lengthy and rather confusing, and the viewer starts to worry about you rather than follow the story of the films. The balance is not quite achieved.\footnote{Letter Maggie Giraud to David Hilton 17th May 2003}

On the other hand the ambiguity of the central theme – Dartington’s story or my story – is a pivotal tension in the work that might be seen as equally frustrating from the other side:

\begin{quote}
I think you needed to make it clearer that this exercise was and had been a journey for you and that was central to the thesis. You did appear in the films occasionally but not enough at the beginning for us to appreciate this was your story/experiment.\footnote{Letter Carole Lochhead to David Hilton 17th Feb 2004}
\end{quote}

The distancing devices, deliberately employed as part of a reflexive strategy, and the self-reflexive stance of the work might well result in alienation of the viewer. The work demands a great deal of engagement by the viewer and might not reward this attention by insight, illumination or information that the work seems to promise or lead the viewer to expect.

Your family is used sometimes as a substitute for Elmhurst footage – when it is not available, e.g. the arrival at Dartington seen through the eyes of children new to Devon. But what is the effect of this? Is it a technique for covering lack, and, effectively a sort of parallelism, which is fine, again because it reflects on discovering the same place, differently, at different historical moments. Knowing you I find it interesting in itself. But how does it appear if viewers don’t know the filmmaker? Perhaps it makes the first section of the film appear more centred on you than some might view as needed.\footnote{Letter Liz Wells to David Hilton Your Film 26 Jan 2004}

Some of the interplay between different forms has been described as having a poetic resonance but other instances simply serve to confuse. For example Maggie Giraud has commented that the rear-view mirror displaying textual information is used for too many different strands of information in Part One. The success of such devices is variable with certain collisions of form and idea working well and others less so.

\begin{quote}
I feel there are some very nice little ideas, images, comments etc. buzzing around the opening sequences of rapid film, which are almost subliminal. Did I hear LK saying something about going fast like they do in old films? Or did I dream it? Nice narration saying that Dartington and the film already covered is all ‘safely in the past’. Suddenly makes you anxious about the future.\footnote{Letter Maggie Giraud to David Hilton 17th May 2003}
\end{quote}

The interplay of personal and Dartington stories combined with the deliberate mix of documentary and structuralist film idioms, where distancing devices are foregrounded to bring the viewers attention to the constructed nature of the work, necessarily interrupts the narrative flow. When this is happening at the same time as the apparent convergence, or parallel running of distinct

\footnote{Letter Carole Lochhead to David Hilton 17th Feb 2004}
\footnote{Letter Liz Wells to David Hilton Your Film 26 Jan 2004}
\footnote{Letter Maggie Giraud to David Hilton 17th May 2003.
narratives, conveyed through distinct forms of text image and sound, the mixture may be read as a cacophony of information.

I basically find the interweaving of your personal life with you marriage etc...interesting, and there is not enough of that kind of personal/non-personal film-making in this country. But it inevitably becomes a little self-indulgent, maybe it's just too nostalgic, and lacks the distance, which might make it truly moving.317

The balancing of these documentary, narrative and structuralist ideas with a sense of some coherent trajectory is perhaps the most difficult aspiration of the work and perhaps the most elusive quality.

There is more than one story to be told here and one way to tell it hence the multi-layered soundtrack. It is incredibly rich, harmonious and alive. The voice of the narrator is often accompanied by a second even a third recording. Who is the narrator anyway? There are so many. The filmmaker's preoccupation with fairness and equal share of "the voice" forces him to minimise his personal story. Leonard and Dorothy never divided their attention between the boarders and their own children. They were not made that way. Attention was there to be had, simply and wholly. The filmmaker strives to achieve similar selflessness. Twice his actions are commented upon although they don't need to be, like most of the titles, the words are redundant and deprive the audience of their privilege to put the pieces together.

Integrity is far from guaranteed.318

This 'negative result' of the experiment, that the After the Facts might represent, can be compared to the more positive results achieved in the photoworks (based on public responses to exhibitions of the works). Both phases of the work employ montage as both a strategy and an editorial form, and both explore the reflexive positioning of the author within the work. The author character in the photo works (represented by the thumb in the earlier photoworks) is perhaps easier to look past – to see through - into the Dartington subject, since the autonomy of each photowork is evident in their immediate visual framing as a single montage: image.

The montage employed and explored in the films is not simply the putting together of discreet shots pertinent to single focused narratives, it might be described as the montage of different narrative ideas and forms. To a degree the rough edges of these conjunctions are permitted to stand in the film as devices intended to deregulate an adherence to an orthodox expositional documentary form. This orthodoxy might be linked to the ideas of essay – the cinematic essay form – articulated by Peter Thompson319 (see page 152) that prescribes an organised unfolding of events and ideas to support a particular argument. This deregulated construction necessarily has the effect of de-focusing a particular reading, again deliberately to induce other possibilities of

317 Letter Mark Kidel to David Hilton, 20th Feb 2004
318 Dalilb Hamdoun Review of After the Facts, Part One. Interpreting Dartington 10th February 2004

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meaning, but this may well serve to alienate the viewer. The simulacra that the films are, is actually constructed through reflexive address to the meanings within it. Even the interplay and exchanges of meaning between the forms and narratives are subject to distancing devices. While all this is intended to present an uncomfortable awareness of the fallibility of humanness, presented here a constructed form eliding beauty and the sublime as seductive agents, it makes it difficult for a viewer to position themselves within the work. This also relates to the intention of the work to be a text so dense that it cannot be accessed easily in one viewing, and to seduce viewers into re-viewing. The density of the work might well alienate to such an extent that review is forgone and possibilities for re-reading and the emergence of new ideas negated. In itself this might be considered a negative outcome of the experiment.

After using a lot of personal material and making it integral to the films you seemed to sweep your own story under the carpet at the end. One minute you are married then you have an affair then you’re divorced then the affair ends.... It all happens very quickly and without much explanation. It left me confused and unsatisfied.  

An important aspect of the work is the evolution of the focus of the subject throughout the film. This evolution gradually arrives at a simplification of devices and strategies as the narratives become more clearly distinguishable. In some ways this mirrors the evolution of the ideas in the photoworks which move through quite complex, perhaps mannered techniques towards a simplification of technique that I would argue through a simplification of framing, more simply and clearly articulates the subject and ideas of engagement with the medium and Dartington.

The film is perhaps most accessible when the information is focused on a particular idea and presented sequentially as is mostly the case in part three. This focusing is the result of the experimental nature of the method of production whereby the method reveals the central issues, and the fact that in the chronology of events (both historic and personal) part three moves closer to the present, which is by proximity easier to describe.

The film goes forward and backward just like the whole narrative. It is as if the truth of some past event depended on the present. But the present, contrary to the past, is evolving. The filmmaker’s wish for truthfulness remains as vivid and unfulfilled as desire itself.

Throughout the process the subject, playfully positioned in the earlier parts, gradually comes into focus. Here the dialectic tension between an aspiration to articulate a form of truth and the necessary manipulation of such truths by the form plays out its paradoxical enigma.

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320 Letter Carole Lochhead to David Hilton 17th Feb 2004
The film also explores a theme of falling in love with Dartington and subsequent rejection by Dartington or more precisely non-reciprocation of that love by Dartington. If *After the Facts* seeks to articulate a sense of romance and falling in love why is there no concerted use of the emotive and seductive power of visual and audio material? Why are there few carefully crafted or beautiful shots?

Very complex project and I like much of it and am dubious of some things, especially the way you use your camera! But that is my Holy Grail.

The (perhaps impossible) intention is to present the love affair through information, not seduction and this deliberate perhaps pedantic stance, which employs much hand-held, point-and-shoot ‘home-movie’ style filming may well disengage the viewer. However there remains an intention to seduce the viewer into an engagement with the archive materials, to echo the seduction inherent in a Dartington Experience. This may well have resulted in presentation of absence, and the *After the Facts* film (on one level a framing device for the archive film material) being seen as a frustrating assemblage of disparate information, or perhaps the kind of work Leonard feared most from outside observers (see earlier). Mark Kidel found the open form of the resulting films rather difficult to evaluate:

I found the films much too long and repetitive. The absence of form (at least I could not see it) was a problem for me, although there is a kind of story struggling to come out from under the deluge of material.

In a telephone conversation Kidel, whose own experience at Dartington spanned ten years up to 1989 and whose own life underwent a number of emotional transitions there, recognised the struggle with a sense of depression and felt that the emotional positioning of the self in relation to Dartington, was evident (if not clearly articulated) in the film. He particularly noted the poignant sound clip spoken by Michael Chekhov in the final section of part three of the film. In this Chekhov advocates an engagement with the world, a response to events, led by the ‘heart’. The ‘mind’ Chekhov says can always be brought to bear after the heart has felt its response to events.

The theme of a personal romance being enacted and expounded, has been noticed by other reviewers of the films:

Interview with Leonard E. at the beginning of *Man Alive* seems to have been illustrated in advance through the material on your own family – I think this works OK, but again difficult to judge when my starting point is knowing the filmmaker. And if we take the filmmaker’s account/portrayal of Leonard Elmhirst, realising that Leonard Elmhirst himself emphasised major emotions such as love etc. In other words, the personal dimensions

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322 Letter Ricky Leacock to David Hilton 5th February 04
323 Letter Mark Kidel to David Hilton 20th Feb 2004
324 Conversation, not recorded, Mark Kidel with David Hilton 30th January 2004

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of the film (filmmaker's life) start to seem justified through Elmhirst's equivalent. Intertwining of history and biography within this archaeology.\textsuperscript{325}

This idea of the filmmaker's personal life standing for Leonard Elmhirst's personal life is used in the film both ways, so that elements of Leonard Elmhirst's thoughts and statements are used to stand for similar ideas (thoughts, feelings) not otherwise expressed by the filmmaker. The interchange and positioning is always playful and deliberately avoids direct comparison.

I resist the sensible, tried and trusted, formulations of sober voice-over, differentiated information - text, voice, image, clear narrative strands etc, for a more eclectic meandering though 'filmmaker' decisions, having fun with formality and illusion. In effect playing with the material as one might playfully seek to surprise a lover with one's own take on the rituals of seduction.\textsuperscript{326}

A critical reading of the film \textit{After the Facts} is open to many interpretations of which negative and positive results are either side of the spectrum and this spectrum of analysis needs to be considered in the context of the research project. The films must be seen alongside the earlier work, not as a conclusion but as evidence of the continuing search for meaning. As an integral part of a research project the films represent a set of considerations from which new views of the subject might emerge. At best they represent a speculative consideration of the initial research question 'What is Dartington?'; since the production process has been one of opening up and exploring ideas rather than defining extant or historic forms.

\textsuperscript{325} Letter Liz Wells to David Hilton 26\textsuperscript{th} Jan 2004
\textsuperscript{326} Filmmaker's statement
Conclusions

The structure of this project has evolved out of a progression of phases of creative involvement with Dartington Hall Archive film materials. The first phase from 1992 to 1995, was designed to make visible aspects of Darlington's history. The second phase from 1995 to 1998, explored archive materials and their relationship with the Dartington story. This resulted in the production of a video installation *Four Parts for a Modernist House 1995*, a video biography of Leonard Elmhirst *Tracing Leonard 1997* and a series of photographic works *Reconstructions* 1998. The final phase of involvement from 2001 to 2003, resulted in *After the Facts* a three-part video which synthesised and explored through filmmaking practice a reflexive analysis of Dartington and film.

Constructed around the question 'What is Dartington?' the research examined recorded archive materials, principally film, audio and video but including photography and texts. In part one of the current written work I have discussed how photographic practice and then filming were seen and used as a process of recording the events, results and changes within the Dartington Experiment. I have moved on to examine the Film Unit's work in relation to the experimental ethos of Dartington to ask in what way was this work experimental? I have found the experimental focus allied to the British documentary movement both through limited connection with its principal figures and its broad social and educational aims. I have then considered the work done at Dartington in film to interpret its activity and in my final film *After the Facts* I have taken the idea of the mythic ethos of the Dartington Experiment and located my own identity in the narrative. As I have already identified in my evaluation of *After the Facts* experimental documentary, this system has led to some confusions in the interpretative process. That being recognised, the work articulates the sense of open possibilities of meaning inherent in an archive.

The primary research methodology has been that of a filmmaker and this thesis proposes that what was begun as the Dartington Experiment has through its traces in the archive materials become a living mythology, a romance that is enacted by engagement with Dartington. Through the distinct strategic phases the history and its depictions have been considered within a specific framework, as the recalling/retelling of events from the past, which has shaped historical narratives.

The particular experiment is not intent on finding what is apparent – already there, but rather what is not there until found in its own formulation. In this there is danger of finding nothing, or worse constructing nothing. This idea, a formulation of 'learning by doing'.
Mark Kidel\textsuperscript{37} has suggested, is a central conception of the educational imperative in Dartington's foundation. I am, like others, looking for personal and/or professional closure, to have personal meaning. In this thesis I have overtly sited the individual – the filmmaker – within a form - the film – whose subject is a place and a set of ideas associated with that place: the cultural junction-box that might be an idea of the \textit{Dartington Experiment}. Central to that set of ideas is development through enactment: learning by doing. The title of my final film \textit{After the Facts} embraces both a reflection on facts after they have been established as well as a quest – as in \textit{going after} or 'looking for' factual information. The particular methodology of producing the film involved a process of tension between those two (forward looking and retrospective) positions.

I have considered the role of film within the \textit{Dartington Experiment} and considered the role of film in constructing myth. Film activity at Dartington has featured in larger histories, usually as a footnote with the name of William Hunter attached to it. It is important to remember that the activity, including and perhaps exemplified by the Film Unit, existed within the broader framework of many other social, economic, educational and agricultural experiments that were themselves parts of the macrocosm that was the \textit{Dartington Experiment} begun by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst.

Throughout the production of the practical work of this project I have employed an editorial methodology and the experiments with photoworks I would cite as producing the most successful outcomes. In these the process of constructing montage is confined to the visual subject of Dartington. Time is incorporated in a fixed residual form within a single image and in the intervals between images. A viewer may regard the work in their own time and the possibility of meaning is channelled into the resemblances and manipulations of single composite images. The photoworks are perhaps the clearest appropriation of a form of practical enquiry whereby a methodology, (derived from an interest in Hockney’s work and thinking) is articulated and employed to find a new way of creatively engaging with the archive images on a personal and productive level.

By negotiating a particular path through the archive materials, and their seductive power to simulate a history of Dartington, by holding that transit to be quite singular the intention is to leave the 'reality' of Dartington intact, if as inaccessible as it ever was. The archive materials return to the archive to be considered anew, as the film as a creative interpretation becomes an archive of sorts – an archive contingent on its production by the filmmaker who himself became a construction within it trying to articulate projections of new meaning.

\textsuperscript{37} see: Mark Kidel, \textit{Beyond the Classroom}, Green books Bideford, Devon. 1990
The new understandings that emerge from the work are difficult to pin down since the work has been a process of opening up. There has been an attempt to experiment with materials, histories, personal positioning and, in a rudimentary sense, a philosophical enquiry. As such the speculative possibilities emerging from the project as a whole are by no means exhausted in this body of work. Rather ideas have been seeded that necessitate further enquiry. For example the history of film at Dartington has not simply answered the questions of Dartington's relationship with the Documentary movement or answered the charge that no experimental work was produced at Dartington. Rather these subjects have been raised and there has been an address but more avenues of enquiry are possible.

If there is to be a summation of the work it rests with the variable outcomes of the elements – positive and negative and the attempt to employ a variety of methodologies to probe and articulate understanding. Filmmaking has been the subject and methodology in the After the Facts and this work needs to be seen in relation to both the broader enquiry and the resultant text and films. Filmmaking has been seen as a process of research, perhaps at the expense of its function as a product. In this strategy making was seen as a strategy to explore the range of meanings implicit and explicit in Dartington.

The overall thesis, made up of its distinct component parts and a range of specific methodological enquiries, attempts to piece together a history of work with film at Dartington, and to place this in the context of an understanding of ideas emerging from the Dartington Experiment. It brings together through a pervasive editorial methodology, concerns with experience, information, myth, time, place, history and the filmic form.

The written history of Part One of the text represents a comprehensive overview of Dartington's engagement with film over the years and is seen as a necessary contextualization of the final work After the Facts. The concurrent writing of the text and production of the film informed and shaped both. The historical information in the film needed to be, in the first instance, based on fact and the struggle to engage with the neglected history of the Dartington Hall Film Unit and subsequent film use at Dartington posed and answered questions employed in both. For example the influence of Flaherty on Dartington seemed an enticing point of enquiry, yet was not substantially supported by research findings in archive materials or personal interview of Ricky Leacock. Leacock's concern is focused on his own development as a filmmaker – to which indeed he is indebted to Flaherty, but he was able to shed little light on the speculative connection between Flaherty and Dartington. The relationship between the emergent Documentary Film movement and Dartington was another such focus of enquiry, which resulted in scant substantive evidence emerging from the research process. To this end both questions
are implied in the film work rather than substantially developed. These examples demonstrate the way in which the project has sought to open questions for further discussion.

The submission as a whole, including early film work, historic survey, photoworks, *After the Facts* and the contextual evaluative text represents a framework or matrix, each element helping to define, contextualise and illuminate the other elements in address to the question: what is Dartington? This emerges as a specific Dartington Experience, considered, facilitated and enacted through film.

This research has engaged in a process of speculation, projection and construction. It has resulted in a creative intervention into archive and archive materials. The various stages of work have produced a research enquiry that employed intellectual and imaginative methodologies, enacted learning by doing, and the outcome through film and text positions these responses to Dartington, the place and its myths as an 'Experience'. It is anticipated that the reader/viewer will make an intellectual and imaginative engagement with this material as a way of sharing the experience, and even re-interpreting the experience.
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**Archive Papers.**

Dartington Hall Archive. Referred to in the text as DHA

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  - Film council of the South West & Library
  - Cine Group – Film Unit 33 – 44
  - Film Unit 44 –
  - Films and Staff
  - Press cuttings

- **Box:** Victor Bonham-Carter Dartington Hall 1925 – 56 (Main Report)
  - 8 The Arts V II

- **Box:** Arts Enquiry 4. Film
  - A Group minutes
  - B Memoranda
  - C Drafting

- **Box:** DWE Staff 1. A – K (on George Bennett)
  - DWE Arts 3,
  - D Film – contact with Grierson

- **Box:** LKE Devon 1 (on George Bennett)

- **Box:** LKE General 27 – Strand films loan

- **Box:** LK Education 1.
  - Social Services. F. G. Thomas.
  - U.C.S.W
  - W.E.A. (Devon)
    - 1926 – 27
    - 1928
    - 1929
    - 1930
    - 1931

- **Box:** T Arts Administration 1
  - A – H
  - Etc

- **Box:** T Arts Administration 2
News of the Day

Transcripts of recordings of Leonard Elmhirst recorded in 1973 by Richard Thomas.

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Catalogue papers "Brief List of Archive Recordings" (list of recordings made on B&W Video)

Catalogue of the Dartington Hall films 1979. Possibly produced by Horace Davis and Josephine Wightwick for the Archive. Robin Johnson was the Trust’s Archivist at this time.


Mark Kidel. A Report to the Trustees from the Interpretation Officer, February 1982, Dartington Hall Trust Memorandum. DHA Archive Papers


Mark Kidel. Archive paper Development of Audio-Visual Resources at Dartington film and slide shows. Un-dated but believed to have been written in late 1978. In the paper Kidel refers to his two years of being at Dartington and he was appointed in 1976.

Dartington Hall Archive Films

A Job is not Enough. BBC TV Man Alive. Dir. Richard Thomas 1972

Farms and Industries Richard Thomas 1973/4
The School Richard Thomas 1973/4
Tagore and India Richard Thomas 1972

Dartington Christmas, presented by Huw Weldon, BBC TV 1960

Children’s Christmas Festival, 1959. A Film by Roger Mayne

Dartington At 60 (produced on U-matic Video) Mark Kidel D. Hall 1985

Restoration Film – the courtyard, George Bennett, Ed. D. Hall material 1926–31

TSWFTA material

Dartington Hall Films now held by TSWA See attached notes and list in Appendix.2.

Other Films:

Major Barbara, by Gabriel Pascal 1940 Wendy Hiller, Robert Morley, Rex Harrison

I Live in Grosvenor Square, by Herbert Wilcox 1944?

Theatre without Actors BBC TV Arena. 1993?

Beyond The Open Road Vivian Braun. Film Art Group, 1934.

1 PM. D A Pennebaker. Leacock Pennebaker. 1969

Fools and Angels BBC 2 TX: 8/4/84. Producer Christopher Sykes. On Cecil Collins

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Manufacturing Consent Noam Chomsky and the Media, Dir. Peter Wintonick, Mark Archer 1992

Shermans March, Dir. Ross McElwee

Time Indefinitely, Dir. Ross McElwee

Gallivant, Dir. Andrew Kotting 1996

Mapping Perception, Dir. Andrew Kotting, Mark Lythgoe et al 2002

David Hockney in Perspective, Monique Legonade, Pierre Saint Jean 1999

Secret Knowledge, BBC2 2001

The Passing, Bill Viola 198?

Sunless. Chris Marker

La Jetée, Chris Marker

Blue, Derek Jarman 1995

Garden, Derek Jarman 199?

Glitterbug, Derek Jarman. BBC TV. Arena 1989?

Slow Glass, John Smith.

The Gleaners and I, Agnes Varda, 2000

Robinson in Space.

London,

Fat Man on a Beach BBC TV Arena 1977

The Man With a Movie Camera. Dziga Vertov 1928.

Radio/audio

Dartington, BBC Radio by Brandon Acton-Bond, Jan 1948. From 78rpm disc. Recording January 1948 DHA

Dartington Hall, BBC Radio. Victor Bonham-Carter, September 1951 DHA

1945 recording of Michael Straight’s address to the UN DHA

Recording of DWE’s 25th Foundation Day speech. 10th June 1967. DHA

The Dartington Story, Mary Hardiman Jones, BBC Southwest, Radio. 1997

LKE Address to Students at the College, 1966 Introduction by Peter Cox. DHA
LKE Autobiography 14th August 1973 DHA

Video recordings from 1972 onwards.

Irene Baker, By John Lane
Pom Elmhirst, By John Lane
Sundry Community Video tapes see list Appendix. 2.

Video and Audio Interviews by David Hilton

Paula Morel 1992-93 (4 in all)
Victor Bonham-Carter 1996
Bill Elmhirst 1995
Polly Church 1995
Marian DeTrey 1996
Mary Bride Nicholson 1997
Maggie Giraud 1997 (2 sessions)
Ricky Leacock various formal and informal discussions 2002
Rachel Harrison 2002
Mary Hardiman-Jones 2002
Mark Kidel, December 2002
Audio Interview with Michael Young 1997
Audio recording of Michael Young Address to ‘Ways With Words’ Festival Aug 1997

Video work produced for Dartington by David Hilton

On Reflection, 10x30 minute VHS video compilations produced with Maggie Giraud

Tagore and India
Finding Dartington
The Restoration
Farms and Industries
The School
The Family Album
The Early Arts
Christmas 1959

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A Job is Not Enough
Dartington at 60.

From the Archive 1993, 52 minutes VHS video, produced with Maggie Giraud

De Trey at Dartington Using material from Bristol University Arts Archive 1995

De Trey at Middlesborough at an exhibition of Sam Haile's pottery on VHS video 1996

Tobey at Dartington produced with Fridy Duteroo 1995

Non-commissioned Work produced about or at Dartington

Installation work 4 Parts For A Modernist House, in collaboration with Flynn Cohen, 1995

Tracing Leonard 52 minute video produced on VHS video 1997

Reconstructions, photoworks, Exhibition at High Cross House 1998

After the Facts, experimental documentary produced on DV. 124 minutes in 3 parts. 2003

List of Illustrations from Part Two.

Fig. 17. A Page from Leonard's First Album of Photographs from his Repton School days, 1912. Taken from Tracing Leonard 1997. DHA

Fig. 18. High Cross House 1997 Photomontage

Fig. 19. The negative of Leonard and an unknown companion in the Great Hall in 1925 located in the Great Hall 1997 Leonard during an early visit to Dartington in the Great Hall. Double exposure 1997, and part of the original photograph

Fig. 20. Leonard and Dorothy from the 1920s superimposed on the courtyard in 1998 during Summer School 1930s Visitation of the Duke of Kent superimposed on Caleb in the Courtyard 1998

Fig. 21. Detail from The Reconstruction of the Great Hall Down. 1998

Fig. 22. The Reconstruction of the Great Hall Down. 1998

Fig. 23. Putting Chairs in the Great Hall. 1998

Fig. 24. Tagore and Leonard superimposed on 1991 car journey. Frames from After the Facts. 2003

Fig. 25. Caleb in the Tilt Yard picking daisies. 1998

Fig. 26. Close Shot of 16mm married print of The School, 1973, from After the Facts part three Interpreting Dartington. 2003
Appendix 1

A review of work with Dartington Hall Archive from 1991 to 1994

David Hilton March 2003

The following is a survey of work resulting from a ten-year, part-time period of activity with the Dartington Hall Archive Film Video Photographic and audio materials.

1991

My work at Dartington grew from an initial consultation in 1991 with Maggie Giraud, the newly appointed Archivist. This initial consultation involved a survey viewing of materials comprising:

- various cans of 16mm film,
- A series of U-matic Video Tapes which seemed to relate to a Catalogue of Dartington Hall Films 1979, thought to have been written by Horace Davis and Josephine Wightwick in consultation with Robin Johnson the Trust's Archivist in 1979.¹
- A collection of reels of Black and White High-Density Videotapes referred to as Community Video, produced mainly from 1972 to 1976.²
- A number of audiocassettes and 1/4 inch audiotape reels with few dates and no catalogue.
- The rushes and tape-logs for a production called Dartington at 60 from 1985

This work led to the setting up of a broadly defined process of engagement with the Archive film and video materials in consultation with the Archivist Maggie Giraud.

1992

As time went on the objectives of the work emerged as being:

1. To gain a more complete picture of the extent and nature of the Archive film and video holdings.
2. To transfer materials that may be of general and specific interest onto VHS video format for accessibility.
3. To assess the prospects of making programmes using this material which would explore and explain the Dartington story

1. During this early period of work I was aware of the inadequacy of the records and the methods of dealing with this material - there were no strategy or policy in place at the time. However this awareness, which called for the attentions of a film archivist or someone with specialised training, was outside of my specialised interests and on my part has remained neglected.³ The particular role I adopted was one of using the materials to produce new work, which would be in line with Maggie Giraud's broad aims of making the archive more accessible. To this end it was decided to produce a series of half-hour tapes of various aspects of the Dartington Story which could be shown to interested parties on the Estate.

¹ See list of U-matic tapes viewed and copied onto VHS 1993
² See list of Community Video tapes viewed and copied 1992-3
³ The work cataloguing the Dartington Hall Archive Collection of film and video material is (from 2001) being carried out by The South West Film & Television Archive at Plymouth.
2. In 1992 the work undertaken mainly involved making copies of the existing U-matic and Black and White videotapes. The latter being particularly problematic since the format and the equipment were at this time twenty years old and quite obsolete. The original design of the format, which uses a process of dragging the oxide coated tape across a static drum, was problematic. Twenty years later this was exacerbated by worn video heads, tape stretch and oxide deterioration. It was in some cases impossible to produce any readable signal for duplicating, particularly in the case of a number of hour-long tapes of a Community Video Magazine called *Open Circuit*. Most of the U-matic videotapes were transferred to VHS at this time without problem.

3. With no background knowledge of Dartington the viewing of this material was an initial introduction to the place, its story and people. The viewing and copying of material became a way of piecing together aspects of the Dartington 'Story'. This approach fed a curiosity: because, as much as the film and video materials revealed they also obscured. For me the central question, that did not seem to have any one clear answer, was *what is Dartington?* This simple question has continued to underpin all subsequent work. The initial project was given the title *On Reflection*.

1993

**On Reflection**

In the autumn/winter of 1992, in conjunction with Maggie Giraud I produced a series of ten Videotapes that were shown in the spring of 1993 in a programme of events organised by the Archive. The ten tapes were each approximately half an hour long and attempted to present a chronology of aspects and events from Dartington’s history. The series was called *On Reflection* and ran for ten weeks up to Easter 1993.

The titles given to the individual works, some of which were lifted from existing films, were:

1. Tagore and India
2. Finding Dartington
3. The Restoration
4. Farms and Industry
5. The School
6. Family album
7. Early Arts
8. Christmas 1959
9. A Job is not Enough
10. Dartington at 60

As film/videos these ten screenings had as an overarching objective of telling the Dartington Story using film/video fragments, photographs and audio recordings from the archive. The practice of presenting Archive materials in a form with few explanatory comments perhaps has its beginnings in a publication by Dartington Press *A Dartington Anthology 1925 – 1975*.

Our aim has been to let the past speak for itself, and we have kept both notes and commentary to a minimum. In doing so we have left much unexplained for the reader who is not already familiar with Dartington’s aims and history, but hope that the broad
outlines of the development of the Dartington Hall Trust and its purposes will emerge from the writings and pictures themselves.4

This was certainly the model used for the approach adopted by Maggie Giraud and myself. The material that made up each tape was designed to allow the viewer a window into the past - the history of Dartington. At this time little of the textual material held by the archive was known and the primary source material was film video photographs and audio recordings. This did lead to some gaps in knowledge. It is true to say that the videos employed an unsophisticated conception, and they were produced with unsophisticated domestic VHS video equipment resulting in technical lack of sophistication.

All but four of the tapes were edited - cut-down - versions of existing films. The four that attempted to get at an aspect of the story that had not been specifically dealt with before were: Finding Dartington, The Restoration, Family Album and The Early Arts. Of these Finding Dartington, Family Album and Early Arts had no substantive precedents.5 In this they represented new formulations of specific aspects of the story. With these my objective to produce new work from the archive materials began.

The overall strategy was to find and select material then edit this into broadly chronological order. The process was a combination of learning about the Dartington Story, as represented in the Archive film and video material, and re-presenting this material in some narrative form. The methodology could be described as editorial and somewhat curatorial. The audience for the series was conceived as people who lived and worked at Dartington or who might have an interest in Dartington. There was an assumption that all would be familiar in some way with the subject matter. Little of the material had been seen outside the Archive since 1985.

It is perhaps most useful to deal with the ten videos individually and chronologically:

1. Tagore and India

Leonard Elmhirst had spent a number of years working for and with Rabindranath Tagore in India and accompanying him on his world travels up to 1925 when he married Dorothy Whitney Straight and together they founded modern Dartington. In 1961 Leonard had published Rabindranath Tagore, an account of his relationship with Tagore and from this alone it is clear Tagore was a major influence on his thinking in 1925.6


The Restoration had been edited on at least two previous occasions, once for a projection of the film accompanied by Leonard Elmhirst speaking, and on another occasion when it was cut to a music track on VHS video by D. Hall. This latter version was the used in conjunction with a U-matic video version labelled Estate Films. (re-labelled E1). OHA The U-matic video copies were made on commission in 1983 at Plymouth Polytechnic from original 16mm versions of archive films. Much of the archive material was tele-cine copied onto video by Richard Thomas in 1971-72 during the production of A Job Is Not Enough, for BBC, and The School and Farms and Industry for Leonard Elmhirst in 1973-4. It is not clear what happened to these video copies.

4 Publications by Leonard dealing with his work with Tagore include:

- The Robbery of the Soil and Rural Re-construction. Visva-bharati University, 1923
- Poet and Ploughman. Visva-Bharati Publishing, Calcutta. 1975 (This publication was post-humus, Leonard having died in 1974.)

In a video interview in December 2002 Mark Kidel suggested that it was John Lane, a Dartington Trustee at the time of Leonard’s death, who brought the connection and importance of Tagore to the fore. It is likely that Lane, as a publisher, had a role in the post-humus publications by Leonard which also included The Straight and its Origin. Cornell Alumni Association, Vai-Ballou Press, Binghampton, New York 1975.

1975 also was the year A Dartington Anthology 1925-1975 (with a foreword by Nicolas Cottis and John Lane) was published by Dartington Press which contains many illuminating images and extracts including a piece entitled Our Work at Sriniketan written by Leonard in 1939, previously published in Visva-Bharati News Jan 1939. In this Leonard referring to his work with Tagore states:

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In 1971 as part of his production of a BBC film for the Man Alive programme, Richard Thomas had interviewed Leonard Elmhirst during an Indonesian Exhibition at the Cider Press Dartington. This interview was not used in Thomas' final film but has been made up into a Black and White film labelled Leonard Elmhirst in India. Thomas' interview begins with a voice-over explaining how Dorothy financed Leonard to go out to India in the early twenties to work for Tagore setting up a new project: Rural Reconstruction. Leonard then talks of his experiences in outline and in some detail. The film concludes with a summary voice-over by Gordon Snell who provided the voice-overs for the BBC Man Alive film as well as the two films Richard Thomas subsequently made for Leonard: Farms and Industry and The School (see below).

In this, the first of the On Reflection series, the only change to the original copy (taken from U-matic video, itself a copy of Thomas' original 16mm film) was the inclusion of some Elmhirst's home-movie footage. This footage of Shantiniketan, site of Tagore's work in India, was taken during the thirties when Dorothy accompanied him there on a visit. The interview tells its own story, introducing Leonard, some of his formative experiences and ideas as well as a providing context for the following films in the series.

It is perhaps interesting to note that Dorothy appears very briefly in the Archive films, whereas the flurry of Richard Thomas' activity between 1971 and 1974 has left a number of interviews and commentaries by Leonard.

2. Finding Dartington

The construction of this video was the main opportunity to produce a new work using the archive materials and the limited technical resources available at the time. The video used a number of sources including an opening clip from a feature film made during the 40's called I Live in Grosvenor Square. The brief clip shows two protagonists, a woman and an American soldier walking through the archway into the courtyard at Dartington. The man says "this would look good in the movies". The clip used humorously sets up an idea of both how the visual image of Dartington has the effect of being an 'other': an image one might see in the movies, and how the tape is going to present a moving image portrait of Dartington. Already by this simple visual quip there was a sense of irreverence towards the hallowed material beginning to creep in.

Having said that the second sequence is built around a document read by an actor and illustrated by archive photographs. The text is an extract from the Dartington Anthology where Leonard recalls Tagore's advice to him on setting up his own school with Dorothy. As well as this being a possible chronological beginning of ideas for Dartington it was placed here to remind viewers of the series of part one.

During the Community Video project, in January 1975, John Lane had interviewed Leonard's sister Rachael. The two reels of black and white videotape transferred in 1992 yielded a poor but readable signal where Rachael recalled the early days of Dartington. In particular she

For 16 years now we have carried on this research and experiment into the social, educational, economic and scientific problems of village life, and though the work has grown beyond my recognition, the old principals we learnt from the Poet remain the same and, as I believe, would apply not only to the whole of rural India but to most of the rest of the world as well ...

It is some of these same principles that we learnt from the Poet that we have been trying out in Devonshire at Dartington Hall since 1925. p. 9

7 See List of U-matic tapes viewed and copied onto VHS by David Hilton 1993 Tape:FA2
remembered the first visit she and Leonard made to view the Hall and Estate in February 1925. Her description of buying a car, learning to drive it, travelling down to Devon from London culminating in a fondly remembered picnic in the garden of the derelict Hall are very evocative. This recording and Rachel's description of the difficulties of actually finding the Hall inspired the title and structure of the tape. Finding Dartington was meant to echo a sense of romance as indeed the intention of the founders had made itself felt as a kind of romance in my survey of the archive video holdings.

A letter from Leonard to Dorothy about his first visit to Dartington copied into a version of this interview, as John Lane was reading it to Rachael, was another important element of the video. Footage taken in early 1993, at a time when the ground was frosty, also illustrated the section used in this video. The subsequent ten minutes of Finding Dartington were taken up with this material. Leonard's letter is used again, read this time by an actor, detailing his excitement with the place. His language is itself very romantic and he talks about his ideas for her as his 'Squire's wife' at Dartington. The section ends with a montage of press clippings of their wedding in Long Island in 1925. Subsequently a letter to his brother Vic is used as contrast to illustrate his very practical excitement at all the things that need to be done. Archive photographs illustrate this voice-over reading.

Another John Lane recording of Leonard's brother Pom Elmhirst made on 23rd July 1975 provided insight into Leonard's youngest brother's role in the setting up and early days of Dartington. He recalls his first visit and his sense of the impossibility of doing anything with the dilapidated place. Again archive images from the 1920s were used to illustrate.

There is a strong romantic element in this video which builds on the fact that most of the recollections are of a much later time and are undoubtedly coloured by hindsight. The text of the 1925 letter from Leonard to Dorothy, here read by an actor, is in itself romantic and full of a sense of possibility for Dartington and for Leonard and Dorothy's relationship. Dartington is the subject of the series of videos it is the place where the archive is and where most of the viewers of the tapes will be when they see the tapes. It is in this respect seen as a centre and the sense of it having a beginning is not just historical but romantic. Finding Dartington unashamedly sought to tap into this non-spectacular but very human dimension of the story.

Lest the work become too sentimental and revering of the Elmhirsts a second clip was used from a Feature film, this time Major Barbara, from a play by George Bernard Shaw made in 1940 by Gabriel Pascal. In this clip Pascal has set Major Barbara's father's workers community in Dartington. The community depicted is a futuristic place where their employer takes care of all the workers' needs of housing and social welfare. The clip concludes with concern by a visitor that this will make them less motivated. The Major's father in the film is an arms manufacturer and he quips that they live with the knowledge that they could all be blown to blazes at any minute. Because of the caricature image of an utopian community, of sorts, and the fact that the Dartington Landscape is clearly visible under the scenic painting used in the film, the clip used in a video about Dartington was intended to by both humorous and satirical.

The video uses many archive photographs. It is quite possible that some images alluding to a particular time in the narrative were misplaced. For example images of the Hall from the Sales Brochure of 1925 clearly show clean walls on the derelict Hall. Yet some images used in the video depict the Hall covered in ivy. I suspect most of the ivy-covered Hall images pre-date the purchase by the Elmhirsts. In this respect the video is not meticulous sacrificing some historical precision for overall visual effect. The dominating factors are the spoken (interview) and textual (read) information used to determine the pace and direction of the video. The archive photographs are used with as much accuracy as knowledge and available information allowed.

but the narrative drives the piece and this is determined by a particular sense of the romance of the story. This particular way of constructing owes much to my experience of Television news editing where journalists 'copy' largely determines the structure of news items. Images are often used as wallpaper to paste over the cracks in the flow of information.

The Community Video tapes, of Leonard's sister Rachel and brother Pom, were recorded on the one of the earliest forms of portable video formats. This was at a time when Dartington was casting about for ideas to reconstruct the sense of identity that had been lost with the death of Leonard, the last surviving Founder.

Neither Leonard nor Dorothy has lived to share in the celebrations of the Dartington Hall Estate's 50th year. Indeed one of the problems that faces the Dartington Hall Trust in 1975 is how it is to maintain a clear sense of its direction without them.10

Of the 50 or so tapes recorded most were with people with experiences and stories from the early period of the Elmhirsts' Dartington. In a real sense these recordings were an attempt to consolidate or fix the past echoing the above statement. In practical terms it was an obvious thing to record the memories of elderly people at a point when a cheap format became available.

The Sony High Density video technology was portable and Dartington had a second recorder for editing but this process was cumbersome and editing it seems was reserved for the magazine project Open Circuit. It is probable that these recordings were not widely seen after the initial excitement of the recording. Because of lack of editing they would be long and tedious. It is possible that the recordings were regarded as records to be kept for posterity. This echoes the early record filming practice a task given to George Bennett in the twenties and thirties. The obvious difference is that while Bennett was looking at activities in the twenties and thirties, the Community Video interviewees of the seventies were looking back.

In Finding Dartington the material was edited into a form that attempted to select and contextualise the fragments of memory into a version of the broader Dartington story. The limited knowledge of the detail and broad scope of Dartington history meant that as historical source material the video is flawed and exists as an impression of the romance of the beginning. The facilities available meant that this work was also technically flawed; copies of copies of material using a format that degenerates at each copy, but it represented the first attempt to construct a new aspect of the Dartington story using archive film since Richard Thomas's work with Leonard in 1974."11

3. The Restoration

This work was made using a U-matic video copy of 16mm material shot during the restoration of the Great Hall from 1926 to 1931.12 This video had been dubbed with a music track to play along with the images. It is evident that George Bennett shot most of the restoration material, and it became evident that before the material had been cut to music – presumably some time in the early seventies – Leonard had recorded a commentary on 1/4 inch tape.13 The commentary as recorded on audiotape had been made while watching a film that was different to the versions extant on U-matic video in 1992.

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11 Arguably Mark Kidel's video Dartington at 60 made in 1985 did this but was more of a snapshot which looked forward than a fix of the past.
12 See list of U-matic videos viewed and transferred to VHS by David Hilton 1992/3
13 It is conceivable that the restoration audio tape is recorded during a projection of the film at the Beaford Centre since an extant version of the audio tape was found in an envelope with the address of the Beaford Centre on which dated 13th July 1973.

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This the third tape in the On Reflection series was produced by laying down Leonard's commentary and building shots from the restoration footage to fit his descriptions. The commentary was recorded on 1/4inch audio tape at about the time Leonard recorded interviews with Richard Thomas. This tape is clearly different to Thomas recordings in that Leonard is less at-ease, more excited and more consciously projecting to make his voice heard. It is possible that his voice is being relayed through a public address system and so he is in-effect speaking to a live audience. The tone in his voice certainly echoes the tone in his voice recorded in 1966 when addressing students at Dartington College. An estate plumber accompanies him during the later recording, who he confers with in stage whisper at one point about a detail that he has forgotten. The companion could be actually recording the tape. Richard Thomas’ technician was known to have been around, playing the video copies of tapes and operating the audio recorder (see below). The particular quality of Leonard’s voice is that of a person trying to take his audience with him on a journey through the images into a past that is, for him, still alive. The recordings made with Thomas are less exuberant, and in them Leonard is free to divert into more detailed recollections. In the Restoration commentary he is also keeping up with the flow of the images and less able to digress.

The audio included a pre-amble where Leonard outlined a background to the restoration including the development of the Dartington sawmill and forestry department that provide most of the beams for the Hall roof. This audio pre-amble was illustrated with other relevant archive film material taken largely from the Farms and Industry video. The Restoration can be read simply as Leonard describing events and images we are seeing in the video. It was also a video reconstruction of an idea of the event of projecting the film by Leonard.

4. Farms and Industry

This video was a simple cut-down of the compilation film made by Richard Thomas in 1973/4. Thomas' version was an hour long and the video version used in the series was thirty minutes. Having impressed Leonard in 1972 with his work for the BBC on Man Alive programme A Job is Not Enough Thomas was commissioned to make sense of the old archive films from the 30's. Thomas described the material in a voice-over in the film as that which 'chanced to survive from the thirties'. He screened the films on video for Leonard who chatted and recalled the subjects of the films.

I had hoped that it would be possible for us to install a television receiver in your study and to place a microphone there as well. You and I would then watch the film (previously transferred to video tape) and record your comments on it. The picture would be fed from a video tape recorded in some convenient adjacent room where my colleague would also record you. Thomas also used filmed interview material from his work on the Man Alive programme and possibly new interview footage. Thomas' compilation films have an air of professional authority in the skill with which they are put together and the in silky BBC commentator's voice of a Mr Eric Snell who also did the Man Alive voice-overs. The cut down version used in the On Reflection series attempted to preserve the sense of the film as a 'from the horses mouth' version of what went on - by Leonard.

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14 Archive audio recording of Leonard's Address to Students at the Dartington College, introduced by Peter Cox. 1966
15 Letter from Richard Thomas to LKE 9th July 1973. DHA. The recording was done between the 4th and 12th of August 1973
5. The School

The fifth video in the series was again a cut-down version of the Richard Thomas production of 1973. Thomas uses extensive and expertly applied sound effects throughout his film as Leonard comments in a relaxed way. These post-sync effects add a strong sense of 'being there' to the original mute/silent material. In his version of The School Thomas also incorporated a film made by the school Film Unit directed by William Hunter in about 1937. Hunter's film is silent and it is incorporated into Thomas' film with a music atmosphere track. The silence, which occurs before the music gives this section an air of authenticity — absent are the sound effects that have been so expertly applied to the other archive footage he uses. This contrast works well in giving the viewer a sense of Hunter's film being authentic.

Hunter's film called Dartington Hall School is undated but contains a newspaper image with the date 1937. The film must have been made after that date. Archive records offer a variety of references to films being made by and about the School, one of which is a brochure listing for a film called No Work on Sunday.16 Polly Church in 1995 identified much of the footage from Thomas' film as being originally from No Work on Sunday yet it was a different title and clearly a different film. This demonstrates the way in which the Film Unit, like a contemporary production unit or TV company, re-use and re-cycle material into different versions. I suspect that the 1937 film, extant in the archive and used here in 1973 by Thomas, was a version of the film made to be used as promotional vehicle for a school with dwindling pupils as the war approached. According to Polly Church and considering the original Title: No Work on Sunday was a celebration rather than a promotion film.

As used in the On Reflection series the cut-down Thomas version of The School (as was also the case with Farms and Industry) conveniently packaged a narrative description with early footage in a form more comfortable to watch for a modern audience accustomed to continuous sound and seamless editing.

6. Family Album

This video was produced in much the same way as Finding Dartington, drawing from the 1975 recordings of Irene Elmhirst and Pom Elmhirst, illustrated by many archive photographs and extracts from the Elmhirst's Family Films. The production schedule of this video was tighter than previous ones, which results in an unfinished feel. Most of the second half of the video uses silent footage and there is little explanation, apart from sparse subtitles, to explain who is who.

The video begins with insights into Elmhirst family life, at the turn of the century in Yorkshire, provided by Rachel and this is followed by a section from Pom Elmhirst from 1995. We then hear a reading by Kate Caddy (granddaughter of the Elmhirsts) in which recalls Dorothy's childhood.17 This is illustrated with archive photographs from the time. From here the marriage of Leonard and Dorothy is illustrated by a sequence of press cuttings from 1925 accompanied by labor and drum music by Winsome Bartlett from the archive recordings. Most of the remainder is silent Family

16 Archive Papers Box: T Arts Film. Film Unit Brochure 1940.
Film footage with the exception of a clip from the feature film Network in which Beatrice Straight gives an Oscar winning performance.

Overall the piece offers glimpses of Leonard and Dorothy and their children – the family of the title. It does not present a coherent idea and is rather a collection – in style and in formats – of images and impressions available at the time of making in 1993. Knowing the audience would have a considerable amount of knowledge of the subject, meant that this 'loose' approach to collecting and presenting material was appropriate, or at least acceptable in this context.

7. Early Arts

As with Finding Dartington and The Family Album, this video employs an editorial strategy without much editorial comment. It is perhaps sufficient to simply outline the sequential arrangement of material.

It opens with an audio recording of Dorothy Elmhirst’s 25th Foundation Day speech of 10th June 1967, where Dorothy herself describes some of the founding ideas of Dartington. This is illustrated by footage of the estate grounds and gardens from the thirties. As she goes on to discuss the influx of Artist from America in the late twenties and early thirties the illustrative images still images are used of Mark Tobey and his work on the estate. We then see a community Video recording of Bernard Leech who describes his experience of Tobey’s drawing class. Still images of Leach’s work are used to accompany this. We then return to Dorothy’s 1967 recording as she describes the theatre work of: Ellen Van Volkenburg, Louise Soelburg and Margaret Barr, as well as Dicky Odin and his puppets. During all of this still images or film footage from the time accompanies the audio.

In a chronological way her speech moves on to the pre-war days and mentions the refugee artists Kurt Jooss, Hein Hechroth, Michael Chekov and Hans Oppenheim all illustrated with appropriate still images of themselves and their work. Bernard Leach from his 1974 recording recalls the occasion Heckroth took over Tobey’s drawing class. This is followed by Willi Soukop in conversation with Bert Foot remembering their time at Dartington, from a 1975 recording (tape No: 7A & B).

Paula Morel is then seen with Beatrice Straight in discussion of the Chekov theatre and Dorothy’s work with it. This is followed by a reading of Chekov himself taken from an archive recording of his lectures illustrated by still images of the Theatre group and some film footage from a Chekov production of The Women of Voe. Bernard Leach then appears reminiscing about the Jooss

Audio recording of Dorothy Elmhirst’s 25th Foundation Day speech of 10th June 1967. DHA

People often say to us well how did Dartington emerge, how did it develop? Was it just a haphazard development, a hit or miss, or trial and error sort of process Or was there from the start a clear concept of what we were trying to do? Well yes there was an absolutely clear concept in Leonard’s mind from the very start. He wanted to create here in the countryside, a centre where a many sided side of life could find expression. Where living and learning would flourish together, where there could be a balance between all the practical things that were being done on the land and the activities of the mind and the spirit, which should be carried out together and always have been. Because, if the spirit is not fed it will die. And he knew that from the start.

...And then from America we drew that remarkable group of artists who were here for several years. Mark Tobey, a painter, up in that exhibition room where he held his evening classes...his own studio was next door and he held classes down at Shinners Bridge as well. And we had Ellen Van Volkenburg who started all our work with theatre. And we drew...Margaret Barr and Louise Soelburg and we built the Dance School for the School of Dance Mime. And we had Dicky Odin making his puppets and teaching in the school...So we had this remarkable group here for six or seven years.

Tape:2. A.& B. 14.11.74 Bernard Leach recorded by John Lane. Leach came to school in 1932 to teach pottery. Left 1940. The original tape was unreadable. A VHS copy was made during 70's. DHA
ballet which is followed by an extract from 1930's film footage of Jooss Ballet production *Danse Macabre*.

Edited extracts from a BBC film made in 1984, Fools and Angels on Cecil Collins, the painter, follows and the Early Arts video concludes with Willi Soukop and Bert Foot discussing the golden days of the late thirties at Dartington.

Perhaps more than any of the other videos this chronological compilation presents archive materials without comment to tell their own story of Dartington’s early activities in the Arts. Again this compilation approach was considered appropriate in the context it was used as a point of departure for further discussion with the audience.

8. **Christmas 1959**

In December 1959 Huw Weldon made a film for the West Region BBC of a Christmas Festival at Dartington. This was screened in its entirety during the *On Reflection* series.

9. **A Job is Not Enough**

The penultimate video of the series was a selective cut-down of Richard Thomas' BBC programme from 1972.

10. **Dartington at 60.**

The final video was again a 43-minute cut-down version of an existing programme, this time; Mark Kidel’s 1985 video *Dartington at 60*. The Dartington Trustees appointed Mark Kidel as Interpretation Officer in 1976.

This unusual title – borrowed from the world of environmental education and the US National Parks- referred to a job which was, to say the least open to interpretation. Central to the idea – as I interpreted it – was an attempt to understand the Dartington Hall Trust’s work, both present –day and historical, in terms of the languages’ or ‘currencies of speech’ as Maurice Ash put it, in use at Dartington. Recognising that the ‘languages’ we use to define and understand the contexts within which we live, do not just describe those realities but actually contribute towards shaping our perception, I became slowly aware of the need to clarify some of the accepted truths – often expressed in tired slogans – associated with Dartington’s history.

It is interesting that the era of the Community Video, using the Sony portable Black and White video system lasted for only one year from the end of 1974. Kidel reports that by the time of his appointment it was not being used. He reports that he was not encouraged to use video. His role

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20 Fools and Angels BBC 2 TX: 8/4/84. Producer Christopher Sykes.
21 TSWFTA Record No: 224,534. Tape Number BOX 9. E4. DART 5. Although the information on the can calls this Christmas 1960, the commentary on the film talks about Christmas 1959. Either the festival was recorded in 1959 and screened the following year or screened by the BBC early in 1960 having been filmed during Christmas of 1959.
23 Mark Kidel ‘Beyond The Classroom’ Green Books Devon 1990
was more of animateur on the estate. The shift of the Dartington Trust towards its post-Founders identity was, it seems, driven by Morris Ash who became chairman after Leonard, and John Lane who saw in Kidel an ally for what might be characterised as their ‘green spirituality’:

Different people had different agendas in relation to what I was going to be useful for. I think that when Morris [Ash] and John [Lane] met me I was at that point absolutely fiery convert to the ... what was then called the environmental cause, what then became the sort of green ecological cause and that had happened before I left London, it was one of the reasons I left London. I had been involved in some of the first programmes on TV about the environment and ecology and stuff in the early seventies. So community development, community arts – well that was all part and parcel of that anyway and I was passionate about those things, very much a post-sixties mentality, thought you could kind of ‘save the world’ and all those kind of things. Now I think Morris and John, who before I arrived were themselves very much drawn to all that, saw in me a useful ally – agent for change within Dartington and encouraged, although they didn’t need to encourage it very much, an interpretation of Dartington that emphasised those things and that point of view, rather than say a crude Darwinian, you know, right wing view of Dartington. You know, there are so many other interpretations of Dartington.24

Kidel was a successful Television producer at the time he came to Dartington and he saw the production of Dartington at 60, at a time when his role at Dartington was shifting, as a way back into that field of work. The video is a kind of snap shot of the Estate in the 1980’s, acknowledging the past but most importantly it tried to define the present Dartington.

A lot of what I did when I was at Dartington, that was the purpose of what I did was to help Dartington understand itself, you know and be a mirror. I think with a film that’s partly what you’re doing you’re holding up a mirror, you’re condensing something, you’re drawing meaning out of things. A lot of the films I do are about that. They are about taking something incredibly complex, whether it is a person’s life or what. Most of the films I do are biographical, not exclusively. And what I am after is getting some essence. And I think that with Dartington the attempt was to try and encapsulate some essential things about Dartington. Not all of them, because it is not comprehensive, a film can never be comprehensive but you can get something. I think probably, objectively the reason I did the film was because I wanted to make a film. I hadn’t been making films and I’d stopped. Not long after that I went back to making films full time. I didn’t find the process of making it very easy, but it was exciting. I worked with Fred Carrow who did the editing. ... With everything that I do in film it was instinct led and justified rationally afterwards. Stylistically I do remember the film quite well because I know that there are these quirky bits of editing that are reflecting the disparity amongst things on the estate: the contrasts.25

... it is not a film I am at all proud of. It is not a film I watch, or show to anyone; it is one of my rare failures, I think, in terms of good filmmaking. But it was a necessary step in my life but it is not an accomplished film.

Despite the video being seen by Kidel as a ‘rare failure’ it stands an image of Dartington at a particular point in time. By the time of the On Reflection series was shown Dartington at 60 was eight years old and things had changed a great deal at Dartington. This alone justified its inclusion in the series.

24 pH video Interview 23/12/02
25 Ibid
Evaluation: On Reflection

It is perhaps worth noting that the production of these compilation tapes was achieved without any substantial budget. The Video copying was done using Dartington Archive facilities, my own equipment and VHS editing facilities of the University of Plymouth at Exeter where I worked during this time. Dartington Archive at that time did not have funds to facilitate higher quality copying or production values.

Despite the poor production values and the limited scope of the work the series was well received and did achieve a number of objectives set by the Archivist Maggie Giraud. The material was brought out of the archive and members of the community at large were made aware of its existence. The series also helped the process of redefining the archive as place with which members of the wider Dartington community could interact. The series led to new interviews and discussions with people around the archive.

The series also began the important task of taking stock of some of the material the archive held. There was a sense in which the work was reconstructing something particularly in the example of The Restoration. In this video something that had a form at one time in the past was restored to a version of its original form. Since the restoration footage is some of the earliest film material in the archive it is possible that there have been many versions over the years. However only one version was commented on by Leonard and it is this particular version that was re-constructed on VHS video.

The Community Video tapes were in effect brought out of obsolescence. While the VHS format they were copied onto is unsatisfactory, at least they could be viewed. Of all the achievements of the project, this is perhaps the most useful to the archive and researchers in the future.

Producing the series opened up the possibilities of constructing new work using the archive materials. It also highlighted some of the pit-falls and complexities involved with historical representation. Since the material was manipulated primarily into a loose chronology with little artifice or commentary from myself or Maggie Giraud it was possible for it to be seen simply in its own terms, or for its own sake. There is a degree to which it is unsophisticated: as presenting historical record or strictly accurate historically narrative, but, the minimal intervention or manipulation of the materials (perhaps best illustrated in The Early Arts) does allow the original materials to retain a degree of their integrity.

The response to the series prompted the production of a single more comprehensive compilation video. This became the project for the rest of 1993.

From the Archive 1993

The initial series of films were successful in the limited terms of addressing a particular informed audience. It was subsequently felt that a more comprehensive, single video should be made to appeal to a wider audience and offer people with a more limited experience and knowledge of Dartington a constructive insight. Again of principal concern was presenting the story through archive material. It was important that this archive material retained as much of its initial/original integrity as possible. The production values, in terms of the format, quality of production and copying were to be the same at the initial series. The video would be produced on VHS. The main difference between the On Reflections series and the proposed production would be that it could be approached with a greater degree of familiarity with the material, and a more detailed knowledge of the Dartington story, gained in producing the series.

The new video was to be called From The Archive 1993. The simple '1993' in the title reflects the assumption that the work would reflect a particular phase of activity within the archive. As such it
was not designed to be the final word, or a definitive statement, rather an exploration of archive materials at a particular point in time. It was thought that there could be subsequent titles 1994, 1995, etc.

Maggie Giraud’s vision of the Dartington Hall Archive was of a more visible, accessible and utilised resource. The Tape was intended to be available for visitors and researchers as an introduction to the ‘founding intentions and development of the early arts (1925 – 1947) at Dartington’.

Copies of the video were to be available for viewing and sale at the archive.

The stories of Finding Dartington and the Early Arts had not been the specific subjects of any earlier attempts to present Dartington in film. It was therefore felt that these subjects should be the focus of From the Archive 1993. It is probable that since Leonard Elmhirst commissioned the work by Richard Thomas: The School and Farms and Industry, they would reflect his main preoccupations. These subjects are practical and have clear value as models for future ideas, or at least reflect clearly defined practical applications of ideas. The subject area of the finding of Dartington is romantic and part of the mythology therefore less easy to use as any kind of model since it is a sequence of events. While these events were at the beginning of, and led to, the contextual setting up of Dartington, they were in themselves not easy to view as models other’s could use. They were not part of an experiment rather; they describe a beginning from which experiment could take place. Similarly with the early arts activity the artists were individuals and the complexity of an arts policy at Dartington is more difficult to extrapolate from a series of people and their work. While it is undoubtedly true that integration of the arts into the Dartington Experiment was deliberate and intentional, the activities were determined more by who was there and what they did, than an over-arching policy. These areas then emerged as the subjects for the video From the Archive 1993.

Editorially the work would adopt the style of the earlier works by allowing the materials to tell the story. This meant a minimal use of commentary and editorial information. This time however there was an attempt to present the materials in a more coherent narrative form. New material had also come to light and it was possible to be more accurate and more specific than had been the case in the earlier videos. It was also intended that the new work would not repeat material used in the earlier series but introduce new extracts.

Outline description of From the Archive.

It has been inferred by a number of commentators that Leonard was the pragmatic and practical part of the partnership and that Dorothy was the spiritual, aesthetic determinant. The video sets out to establish this idea with an introduction to Dorothy provided by a reading by her granddaughter Kate Caddy of a biographical address she gave in the late thirties. This is illustrated with still images from Dorothy’s childhood. The extract deals with her father’s influence on her appreciation of the arts, her first marriage, widowhood and marriage to Leonard in 1925. Further insight into her character is then provided by an extract from a 1975 video recording of Rachael Barker describing Dorothy’s first visit to Dartington. Dorothy then speaks herself from a 1967 recording of an address she gave on Foundation Day of that year. In this she talks about the concepts Leonard had at the start of the way Dartington would develop. This section is illustrated by 30’s film, possibly shot by George Bennett, of the grounds and gardens. Additional sound of the birdsong in the gardens is used to accompany this providing the viewer with a more accessible sense of the images and sounds of Dartington. It may well have been sufficient to hear Dorothy’s voice and see images of the gardens but the sound was added as a deliberate

28 From the Archive 1993 publicity information.
29 For a fuller survey of the Arts at Dartington and a comprehensive analysis see Rachael Harrison, unpublished Thesis, University of Plymouth, 2002
31 Community Video Tape: 5A recorded by John Lane 1975
attempt to provide a contemporary audience with a familiar and comfortable picture: one accompanied by sound.

Leonard appears after seven minutes of the foregoing material from a clip, originally filmed by Richard Thomas in 1972 for his BBC *Man Alive* programme but subsequently used by BBC West in a short 1973 programme. Here Leonard is outlining his ideas for Dartington. This interview is here inter-cut with extracts from Dorothy's 1967 speech and gardens footage. In this way the differing but convergent ideas of the Founders of Dartington are presented.

As in *The Early Arts* from the *On Reflection* series, Dorothy's speech lists some of the main artists and activities which are illustrated with appropriate photographs and film footage. By this time more photographs and footage had been found and used here. In these details at least the video improved on the earlier attempt to tell this part of the story. A further element used to facilitate the narrative flow of the video was incidental material recorded in the Archive such as Maggie Giraud locating and extracting Dorothy's diaries from an archive film. Also a contemporary (1993) interview with Paula Morel on her experience with the Dance Mime Group of Margaret Barr in the early thirties.

A number of different extracts from the *Community Video* recordings were included in the video: Bernard Leech from 1974 describing Tobey's character and work. Similarly Dorothy's daughter Beatrice in conversation with Paula Morel is used to expand on Dorothy's involvement with the arts. Willi Soukop, a sculptor at Dartington in the pre-war days, in conversation with Bert Foot, barman and later cameraman with the post-war Film Unit, recall other eminent artists from the period. Kate Caddy incorporates a further dimension of the Chekov story in a 1993 reading, from Dorothy's notebooks written during her participation in his classes. This deals with the subject of concentration, which is subsequently amplified by Paula Morel, who recalls these exercises. Chekov himself, from the text of a lesson given at the Theatre Arts School in 1936, read by John Hall, illustrated with photographs of himself in various character poses offers the final word on the matter. Footage from *The Women of Voe*, provides an end to this section. Bernard Leech, from 1974 then recalls the Jooss Ballet which is illustrated by still images and followed by archive film footage from the Jooss Ballet 1937 production of Danse Macbre accompanied by the music from the ballet.

A major error is made in the Jooss Ballet section of the video by including footage from the Chekov Theatre Studio students working in the Till-yard in the mid thirties. At the time of making the video it was believed this footage was of the Jooss Ballet.

The foregoing is seen as dealing with the arts up to the war in 1939. There was felt to be a gap in understanding and certainly in available archive material of the arts activities during and immediately after the war. Many of the artists were refugees who were removed from Dartington during the war. Maggie Giraud persuaded Peter Cox, post-war head of the Arts Department at Dartington, to provide us with information. There follows a lengthy extract from a 1993 interview with him. While Cox's information is salient, the way it is used in the video disrupts the flow. There was little film footage or photographic material available to illustrate what for him was an important and complex set of circumstances and issues. This remains the main flaw in the video as a dynamic and moderately paced, if not in-depth, survey of activity in the arts at Dartington.

Cox interview does provide a link into the post-war music activity in the form of Imogen Holst who appears in an extract from what appears to have been one of the last *Community Video* recording

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30 *TSWFTA* record No: 225,266. Thomas' original was shot in colour, here it is printed in black and white. It is interesting to note that the image of Leonard used in this film is reversed from the original which demonstrates the knowledge of Dartington's geography by its producers.

31 *Community Video* tape No: 2, A.

32 *Community video* tape No:13
of her in conversation with Jack Dobbs in 1976. Photographs from the time are again used to illustrate this interview which is followed by a reading by Maggie Giraud of Imogen’s students’ recollections of her.

The concluding five minutes of the video are made up from a further clip from the 1975 recording of Willi Soukop and Bert Foot discussing what they felt the atmosphere of Dartington in the late 30’s was like. This is interrupted by an extract from a BBC film made in 1959 A Dartington Christmas of the only known sound footage of Dorothy Elmhirst speaking. The same clip was used at the conclusion of the Family Album video of the On Reflection series. In the extract Dorothy is speaking as a narrator from a Christmas play put on in 1959.

The world grew older and no longer believed in magic. No one was afraid the sun would die for men learned that spring followed winter. They made clocks and calendars to tell the hours and the seasons. Men studied the stars and made their journeys by them. And in the east three kings saw a star brighter than the rest and they followed where it led them.

While the text obviously refers to the biblical story of the Three Kings, it was used here to suggest some of the epic quality of the Dartington story. The rare phenomenon of Dorothy speaking on film is intended to have impact at this point in the closing stages of the video. The latter part of the extract which originally showed scenes from the 1959 are replaced with footage from 1948 foundation Day fete which is in colour. This rare material is also used for its impact at the end of the video.

Evaluation: From the Archive

While the work broadly fulfils its intended criteria and has enjoyed modest screening and sales success, the editorial strategy of using as little intervention as possible results in it being difficult to understand by an uninformed viewer. The chronology is roughly accurate but little detail or contextual background is presented.

Broadly the pace of the work is built on interweaving different kinds of material: film from the thirties, black and white video and filmed reflections from the 1970’s, still photographs from the turn of the century up to the late forties and interviews and incidental material from 1993. The difference between the formats used, their respective visual qualities, although blurred somewhat by the poor quality of VHS format, give the viewer a sense of the varying time-scales of the subjects and the broader time-scale of Dartington. This pace is interrupted by the nine-minute section of interview with Peter Cox, where the complexity and detail of the information is not mitigated by a variety of images and formats as in the rest of the work.

The attempt to produce an overview of Dartington is ambition or impossible, as was concluded in the mid thirties by William Hunter when asked to produce a Dartington film, he writes:

In examining the material on which the scenario is based – the Estate – I have learned a great deal about it, and discovered a great deal that could make fascinating film material. But the more I have learnt the more I have become convinced that it is impossible to convey anything like an adequate view of such a complex undertaking as the Dartington Hall experiment in 30 – 40 minutes.

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This video is not listed in the archive’s catalogue of Community Video recordings since it was made at a time when the project had ceased but is extant in the collection.

Letter Hunter to Slater 18 March 1936 T Arts Film. Cine Group. DHA
He goes on to explain that encapsulating the complexity of Dartington in film is not going to be easy and reviewing the material has clarified the scale of the problem. Such was the case in the experience of producing *From the Archive* which is why it was conceived as one of a possible number of videos.

In 1985 Mark Kidel in the commentary of his *Dartington at 60* reported that:

Drawing together Dartington’s many contrasting strands has been difficult. The span is wide, with over fifty enterprises ranging across education business research, farming, forestry, the arts and community development and with out-posts in Devon, Plymouth, Bristol and London. The Trust’s work doesn’t lend itself to packaging, neither can it be described in simple terms, at least not without losing touch with Dartington’s richness and contradiction.

To sum up the foundation and early arts work at Dartington presented a similar difficulty. The rational of using a non-interventionist editorial strategy was employed as a way of addressing this problem. The work has a certain integrity because of this but also lacks a sense of overall coherence. Even knowing the limitations there was an attempt to be as comprehensive as possible and this necessitated a rather surface approach. As a work that offered some visibility of archive materials and a chronological survey of names and kinds of work it suffices.

Peter Cox was particularly critical of the finished work as being made by the Archive and so presenting some kind of authoritative account of material and events that could have other interpretations. He felt the importance and complexity of post-war arts at Dartington, the period when he was Head of the Arts Department and College of the Arts, was particularly poorly presented. This is a valid criticism and illustrates another level of complexity in working with the materials. Dartington as a community embraces many individuals who have participated in various activities at various stages in its history. These people rightly have a sense of ownership of this history. Any representation that presents the history in an incomplete way or from a different angle is bound to raise objections. This is partly why the title was chosen to represent simply something coming out of the archive and not the definitive statement.

1994

During the year no specific works were produced rather activity was confined to broad research work with the archive film material

1998

**Exhibition of Photoworks at High Cross house August to September 1998**

The entrance hall:

*High Cross House - south side*. photomontage 1997  
*Path layer on path*. double exposure. 1997  
*Duke of Kent visit (1940’s) on Caleb in the courtyard*. photomontage including double exposure. 1997  
*The Hall on duke of Kent visit on Caleb in the Courtyard*. photograph of double exposure montage. 1997

The dining room:

*High Cross dining room - inside/outside*. photomontage 1997  
*Garden door at High Cross*. photomontage 1997
The gallery, upper floor:

*Girl in arch with visitors*, double exposure 1997
*Part arch with girl*, double exposure montage 1997
*Leonard and Dorothy 1920s*, double exposure 1997
*Leonard and Dorothy 1920s*, double exposure in courtyard 1997
*Caleb in the Tiltyard with Victorian garden*, photomontage 1998
*Victorian garden on Caleb in Tiltyard*, double exposure 1998
*Caleb in the Tiltyard picking daisies*, photomontage 1998
*Dorothy in the Morning room*., double exposure 1997
*Dorothy in the morning room montage* (detail). photograph of montage 1997
*Leonard in his study* (detail). photograph of montage 1997
*Leonard in his study*, double exposure 1997

Lower floor:

*works on glass ground:*
*Man working on floor in screens passage*. montage of stills from 1920s 16mm film. 1998
*Window frames on the floor of the Great Hall*. montage of stills from 1920s 16mm film. 1998
*Steam tractor*. montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film. 1998
*Courtyard montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film*. 1998
*Stone masons with foreman*. montage of stills from 1920s 16mm film. 1998
*Workmen fixing roof beam*. montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film. 1998
*Tree down in courtyard*. montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film. 1998
*Workmen in the Arch*. montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film. 1998
*Workman and trowel*. montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film. 1998
*Hall chimney and fireplace on wall roof and chairs*. double exposure and montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film. 1998.

*on solid grounds:*
*Reconstruction of the Great Hall - Up*. montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film. on montage of Great Hall 1998
*Reconstruction of the great Hall - Down*. montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film on montage of Great Hall. 1998
*Leonard framed by great Hall ceiling* double exposure and montage 1997
*Leonard visits framed by the Great Hall in 1925* double exposure and montage 1997
*Leonard visits the Great Hall in 1925* double exposure negative/positive. 1997
*works not in exhibition:*
*Putting the windows in the hall*. photograph on montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film on hall montage 1998
*Putting chairs in the hall*. photograph on montage of stills from 1920’s 16mm film on hall montage 1998
*photographs of versions of Restoration of the great Hall* 1998
Appendix 2
Notes on Film shot/made at Dartington now held by The South West Film & Television Archive.

Contents:
Early Film Activity
Cine Group Films
Film Unit Productions
Films made after William Hunter had left
Films Made by DHFU under Tom Stobart
Films made after the closure of DHFU
Community Video Recordings
Dartington at 60
U-matic videotapes viewed and copied 93
The South West Film & Television Archive references

These notes are an attempt to summarise the film making activity and extant films of the Dartington Hall Archive collection. The films are now held by The South West Film & Television Archive and I have included their reference numbers in as attempt to place them chronologically. Not all TSWFTA records are included but the selection was made on the basis of those films most pertinent to the chronology, concerned with the intentional filmmaking activity at Dartington from 1925 to 1985. These notes do not include any 8mm film from the collection.

TSWFTA record information on the Dartington Collection is indented.

Early Film Activity

In 1925 Leonard Elmhirst seems to have owned a 16 mm Cine Camera with which he took home-movies and started recording the reconstruction of the Hall. The camera was also used by his brother Vic Elmhirst and in 1926 Dorothy's late first husband's batman George Bennett, who through Leonard developed an interest in photography, was given the task of recording
reconstruction, new building and other estate activities. School Camps were filmed, presumably by Vic or Bennett.

**TSWFTA refs:**

| Record No: 224,528 | Record No: 224,798 |
| Record No: 225,265 | Record No: 224,531 |
| Record No: 224,537 | Record No: 225,279 |

**Cine Group Film**

In 1932 this informal filming activity was placed under the auspices of a Cine Group and members included:

Leonard Elmhirst, Vic Elmhirst (as chairman), George Bennett, Bill Curry (by then headmaster of the school), Mark Tobey (artist working with the school and Margaret Barr's Dance Mime Group), and Dickey Odin (a puppeteer, producers also working with Barr and the school).

Tobey seems to have owned his own Cine-camera since in October of 1931 he showed his films of Mexico and the East Coast up at the hall. Leonard, in 1973, recalled him making careful studies of estate farm workers activities. Odin produced a film on how to make puppets and also recorded some puppet show activities with the school children. I believe he also shot film of his travels but none have been identified as surviving in the archive.

| Record No: 224,752 | Record No: 225,915 |
| Record No: 225,912 | Record No: 225,911 |

The Cine Group attempted to make films with Estate Department heads, primarily illustrating the activities of The Farm, Orchards, Forestry, Saw mill and Laboratory.

| Record No: 224,536 | Record No: 225,318 |
| Record No: 225,028 | Record No: 225,029, |
| Record No: 225 196 |

A note from Film Unit Papers: 'Restoration and construction of Central Offices, courtyard Paving, Marley Farm plantations, Piggeries at Rattery, Churston and Warren Park houses (none of these films, presumably shot by Bennet have been seen by DH)

There are a number of films of early arts activities but few mentions or references in archive papers beyond Odin's occupation and presumed authorship of puppet films.

| Record No: 225 914 | Record No: 225,919 |
Film Unit Productions:

William Hunter and David Lack joined the school in 1933 and the Cine Group. Hunter had more ambitious ideas and was responsible for changing the Cine Group into the Film Unit around this time. He was a Geography teacher and passionate about the use of film as a classroom teaching aid. He was the 'leading light' of the Dartington Hall Film Unit. The Unit was part of the Dartington Hall School and was successful as a small-scale producer and distributor of Classroom Films.

David Lack was an ornithologist and this interest led to his film Galapagos made in 1938-9.

Cinematography by Ricky Leacock. (see below)

*Scientists and Explorers.* A classroom – geography film with demonstrating a practical model making illustration of topographical features. Presumed to have been made by Hunter around 1934.

Record No: 225, 197

Note from 1934: 'Mr Hunter and the school group have been engaged on several school films' (Film Unit papers):

Record No: 225,918

*Boat Making* in the School Workshop
*School Camps 1935*
*Geography* – classroom film.

*Derbyshire film 1934.*
*The Face of the Land: Physical* 15 mins
*Communications* 7mins

*The use of the Land:*
*Industrial* 14 mins
*Agricultural* 10 mins

Note from 1934: 'the Estate Darkroom used by 40 people helped by Bennett. 57 film shows given' (Archive Papers)

1935 'projections of things to be done' (from Archive papers):

- Geography film and Sheep dip and Limestone
- Bird Trapping – Noel Florence and David Lack
- School Workshop film – Noel Florence
- The Plough – David Brown.

No trace of these films.

1939 brochure says: *the Unit is also responsible for the production of the following documentary and propaganda films:
'No Work On Sundays' 1934. No title ever found but resembles film called Dartington Hall School (see above) which contains shots of newspapers dated 1937 which could have been added later. Polly church identified some of the material in the latter (Dartington Hall School) as being what she recalled from the former (No Work On Sundays).

The Senior School. No specific information but I presume this was edited into above.

Camp Newsreel  Richard Thomas seems to have cut the 'Lundy' section out of this reel. There are various bits of film – the newsreel is I believe the parts with titles like 'Beesands' and 'Pilacombe' etc. this seems to have been shot in the early Hunter days but there is material from before Hunter – notably images of dancing girls and Dicky Odlin which could have been shot by Vic or Bennett.

Other Films mentioned in papers but not seen:

Farmers of the Fjord

Minor Dermatological Surgery

Robins (Kodachrome) presumable made by David Lack

The work of the Forestry Commission.

Limestone 1936 (is this ?Derbyshire film? Seen by Grierson June 36 prod 35?
Sheep dip 8mins (10 minute version in 1940) 36

By 1939 The Film Unit Brochure advertised the following Classroom films:

South West Peninsular:
Climatic conditions: 20 mins inc veg, flowers, soft fruit cyder, Dir: Peter Ebert reel 2 slate, china clay, Limestone, Sheep, Cattle, Milk, Dir Peter Ebert. Extant in TSWFTA
Pastoral Farming Part 3 20mins Exant in TSWFTA
Industry 20 mins.

Record No: 224,743

Regional Geography:
Norway Today
West and North 15 mins
Central Plateau Eastern valleys and forest lands 20 mins
Communications 8mins
Norwegian Harvest 7 mins

Economic Geography series:
Canary Island Bananas Dir. Ricky Leacock, 1933-4 assisted by Noel Birch and Polly Church 15 mins (Leacock has a copy of this his first ever film modelled on the inspirational Turksib)
Canning fish Sweden 14mins
Slate Cornwall 5 mins REEL 2 Exant in TSWFTA BOX 10 224, 743
China Clay – (no RT)
Comish Tin Ores 5 mins

Story of Timber:
1 Distribution Felling and Transport 20 mins
2 Conversion and uses 16 mins


Record No: 224,529

Also extant in TSWFTA is a third reel of out-takes from David Lack's production filmed by Ricky Leacock.

Record No: 225,265

Other notes from Archive papers:

Nomads (in collaboration with Kino films)
'The nomadic material is taken from the Russian film 'Turksib' and shows the nomadic Khirghiz of Turkestan. Specially made for young children (9-11) 14 mins'. (Text from brochure) Is this a re-edit by Leacock? The film is not in the archive and Ricky Leacock does not recall producing this, though is clear on the influence 'Turksib' had on him.

'Development of a river System sound 15 mins ready by Christmas '39'. Is this the film that became Scientists and Explorers?'  

During the war years William Hunter left the unit in 1941 to work with the photographic unit of the RAF. He maintained contact with the school but died in 1942. John Wales took over the running of the unit and Sydney Sharples joined as technician. Later Bert Foot, who was previously a bus driver and barman at the White Heart pub on the Dartington Estate became cameraman. Foot subsequently joined the BBC as news cameraman.

The uncertainty of things in 1941 was also offset by the newly created Film Council of The South West, formed under the auspices of the British film Institute and located in Exeter, who asked the Unit to manage a small educational film library. The Petroleum Films Bureau added their instructional films to the growing distribution library at Dartington. The Ministry of Information who were considering the establishment of regional circulation centres for their films also made use of the developing expertise of the Film Unit. The Film Library of the South West started as a side-line of the Film Unit but was to become an important part of its operation. The Dartington Hall Collection housed at TSWFTA contains a number of films that relate to this distribution activity - retained after its closure for their interest to students at Dartington. They have not been included here.

Films made after William Hunter had left:

Somerset Peat. Dir Sydney Sharples (tec/cam/dir from 42 to 44/5) Extant in TSWFTA BOX10 224,744

Record No: 225,744

Films cited by John Wales in a 1944 memorandum as 'under developments since 1942':

Hawkmoor Nurse – produced for Devon CC
Fall of the Year. Extant in TSWFTA

Record No: 224,751

Clogs in Lancashire Extant
Bacon not seen.
Timber – not seen - made for Timber Development Association
Milk – not seen - used by farmer groups (possibly shot at D)
Apple vintage – not seen - shot at D

War-time material

Record No: 225,286

Film of war-time and bomb damage in Exeter

Record No: 225,925
Record No: 225,926

The post-war Film Unit had a crisis in 1945 and as a result of a Conference held at Dartington in June 1945 to discuss it and the findings of Factual Film section of the Arts Enquiry, was re-incarnated as a separate commercial enterprise under the directorship of Tom Stobart. This Film Unit began operations in 1947 after extensive re-equipping and re-housing.

Films made by the Dartington Hall Film Unit under Tom Stobart from 1947:

Artificial Insemination Film made by the Tom Stobart Film Unit but developed by John Wales prior to incarnation of Stobart unit in 1947,

Setting Up an Aquarium Made as the result of the first Teachers Course in Filmmaking run by Tom Stobart at Easter 1948

Record No: 225,027

Timber made in 1948 by another group from Stobart's training course. This may be the same as Timber listed above.

Record No: 224,530

Pony Riding Director Alec Stafford Photography Bert Foote 1946-7 This film is tagged onto Family films copied onto U-matic video in the 70's and on 16mm at the end of:

Record No: 224,531

Films made after the closure of the Dartington Hall Film Unit:

Dartington Christmas. 1959 A BBC programme film made with Hu Weldon.

Record No: 224,534

1960. Director Roger Mayne.
Leonard Elmhirst in India. June 1971 filmed by Richard Thomas of the BBC and seems to be Thomas' first film on Dartington:

Record No: 224,523
Record No: 225,026


The School 1974. A compilation film made by Richard Thomas commissioned by Leonard Elmhirst. The film used early footage, which Thomas' commentary describes as 'chanced to survive from the thirties'.

Record No: 225,262
NB. As film is about LKE reminiscing about school, much of the footage is in other films (Darl 35 and Dart 36 especially).

Farms and Industry 1974 A compilation film made by Richard Thomas commissioned by Leonard Elmhirst. The film used early footage, which Thomas' commentary describes as 'chanced to survive from the thirties'.

Record No: 225,267
Record No: 225,278

1973

Record No: 225,266
Record No: 224,535

228
Community Video recordings

The project was set up by John Lane and Rupert Kirkham was employed to start it up. From 1974 to 1976 a series of interviews were recorded on Sony High Density Black and White video. Some 45 half-hour tapes of interviews with 24 people were recorded between 1974 and 1976. These are now almost impossible to view. VHS copies were made of some of them in 1992.

These recordings were made on Sony High Density Black and White portable video under the auspices of the Community Video Project instigated by Dartington Trustee John Lane and initially serviced by Rupert Kirkham in 1974. The project seems to have run for only year from October 1974 to the end on 1975. In its hay-day the project produced a community video magazine called Open Circuit which had its last edition in June 1975 around Founders Day. During the life of the magazine it is believed that five hour-long editions were produced.

The format was an early development of portable video very cumbersome and technically difficult. The early tapes were poor quality and the recording/playback system entailed the tape passing over a static drum within which the heads made contact with the tape. This meant that the friction caused by tape on drum effected the base of the tape – in stretching it, and the oxide coating on the tape. The net result is that these tapes are very difficult to get a signal from and therefore difficult to view. In 1992 I obtained a replacement head from Sony UK and after fitting this was able to obtain poor signals from some of the tapes which were copied onto VHS video format for viewing.

The original recordings were made on half-hour long tapes and the Open Circuit tapes were produced on hour-long tapes. These latter have been most difficult to view due to friction problems and the weight of the tape which proved too much for the old equipment to transport. The following is a list of the tapes viewed and copied onto VHS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tape No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>7.11.74</td>
<td>Jim Maddock</td>
<td>Rupert Kirkham</td>
<td>Painter in Estate Dept. Came in 1925, one of first 12 employed on reconstruction of the Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A.B.</td>
<td>14.11.74</td>
<td>Bernard Leach</td>
<td>John Lane</td>
<td>Came to school in 1932 to teach pottery. Left 1940 Original tape unreadable. A VHS copy was made during 70's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A.B.</td>
<td>8.1.75</td>
<td>Paula Morel</td>
<td>John Lane</td>
<td>Came to work with Dorothy in 1927. Tapes poor quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A.B.</td>
<td>29.1.75</td>
<td>Roy Boutl</td>
<td>Dorothy Ward</td>
<td>Came to work in Accounts Dept 1926.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A.B.</td>
<td>7.1.75</td>
<td>Rachel Barker</td>
<td>John Lane</td>
<td>Leonard's sister. Came in March 1925 to first view Hall. Tapes poor technical quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A.B.</td>
<td>14.2.75</td>
<td>Ray O'Malley</td>
<td>Jack Hamsher</td>
<td>Came to school 1932 to teach English. Jack Hamsher came in 1945 to teach Physics. Tapes very poor and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.B.</td>
<td>will not play.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.A.B.</td>
<td>17.2.75</td>
<td>Willi Soukop</td>
<td>Bert Foot</td>
<td>Resident Sculptor/artist 1935. Foot, barman White Heart in late 30's then work with Film Unit then BBC News cameraman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.A.B.</td>
<td>21.3.75</td>
<td>Stan Ivey</td>
<td>Stuart Bunce</td>
<td>Both worked in Forestry Dept. Stan 1933, Stuart 1948. Tape unreadable and no copy made.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. A.B. 21.5.75 Bridget Edwards Isobel Cabot Came to school (head for a while) in 1932 left in 1953.

11. 22.5.75 Ron Hawtin Peter Sutcliffe Farm Manager 1945-74

12. 4.6.75 Marjory Wise John Lane Came to School in 1926

30.6.75 Dick Rushton Rupert Kirkham L.K's Chauffeur in 30's

13. 5.6.75 Beatrice Straight Paula Morel Dorothy's daughter by Willard Straight (see 3D) Tapes very poor quality only part transferred.


16. 11.6.75 Mrs Powell John Lane Came mid 30's housekeeper and there with Chekov and Jooss Ballet

17. missing

18. 4.7.75 Cyril Hodgkin Francis Huntingdon. Neilson's cowman in 30's. Poor signal on tape

19. 17.7.75 George Honeywell John Lane. Estate Plumber 1927-75


21. missing

22. missing


Open Circuit Tapes. All hour long tapes which produced little or no readable video signal.

Subject

28. Feb 75 Open Circuit 2 What should we do in the future .
29. March Open Circuit 3. Meadowbank and some interviews
30. April Open Circuit 4 Paula Morel Bernard Leech etc

There is no trace of a sixth edition.

Of a total of 45 items listed in an Index of Archive Recordings Produced 1974/75 (Archive paper) which amounted to approx 50 actual video tapes only some 40 were copied onto VHS. The remainder would not play or produce a readable signal. An additional tape of an interview with Imogen Holst recorded by Jack Dobbs, undated survives in a copy on VHS format. DH1993
Dartington at 60

Mark Kidel was appointed as Interpretation Officer by the Dartington Trustees in 1976.

"This unusual title – borrowed from the world of environmental education and the US National Parks- referred to a job which was, to say the least open to interpretation. Central to the idea – as I interpreted it – was an attempt to understand the Dartington Hall Trust's work, both present-day and historical, in terms of the languages' or 'currencies of speech' as Maurice Ash put it, in use at Dartington. Recognising that the 'languages' we use to define and understand the contexts within which we live, do not just describe those realities but actually contribute towards shaping our perception, I became slowly aware of the need to clarify some of the accepted truths – often expressed in tired slogans – associated with Dartington's history."

It is interesting that the era of the Community Video, using the Sony portable Black and White video system lasted for only one year from the end of 1974. Kidel reports that by the time of his appointment it was not being used. He reports that he was not encouraged to use video. His role was more of animateur on the estate.

Mark Kidel was a successful Television producer at the time he came to Dartington and he saw the production of Dartington at 60, at a time when his role at Dartington was shifting, as a way back into that field of work. The video is a kind of snap shot of the Estate in the 1980's, acknowledging the past but most importantly it tried to define the present Dartington.

_Dartington at 60_ 1985 Director: Mark Kidel, produced on U-matic Video. This production generated extensive footage of rushes and these are part of the Archive holdings. These have not been viewed by DH

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35 Mark Kidel 'Beyond The Classroom' Green Books Devon 1990
Arts and Crafts Films  A


Fetes and Foundation Days  F

F2  Fete Days.
1932. Sign, games, police-man, bowling, piano, kids, dancing in courtyard, the band, bowling, cars, club-house?
1935. Jubilee Fete. (projector seems to have racking problems)

F4  Foundation Day 1969 (Bert Foot camera)
1972 and 1973

Elmhirst Family Films  FA


FA2  Dorothy rides a camel. Egypt and India various shots. Shantiniketan etc.

FA4  The Chalet, Ruth and Bill. Walter Thomas (butler) seaside. The Gardens Ruth Bill Curry Margaret Ishenwood: Whitney Straight in airplane. USA Beatrice Straight, ruth and Bill, LKE, Kathryn Ash

FA5  Airiel shots of estate and Hall. Early gardens, central office, bus service, LKE playing tennis. Collingbourns wedding. Also Pony Riding

FA6  Early fete days, Immogen Holst conducting Marines Band, evacuuees? Early Gardens, visit of the Duke of Kent to injured airmen. (Whitney worked for him I believe). Shots from the making of Major Barbara (by Gabriel Pascal) 1940.

School films  S

S5  *The School* by Richard Thomas 1973/4

Resource Centre films  RC

RC7  Ballet Jooss (see A5)

RC8  Early Arts: Chekov, Making puppets, movements, children's play, dancers (Chekov Theatre Studio dancers) rehearse in lityard.
The South West Film & Television Archive references:

Early Film Production

Record No: 224,528
Tape Number BOX 10. NUMBER 1. DART 14.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type 6 MM.
Description BOX 10. NUMBER 1 ELMHIRST FAMILY FILM (CARD IN CAN- CHILDREN; A.O. ELMHIRST’S FARM; DOROTHY ELMHIRST; LK ELMHIRST & J.CURRY PLAYING GOLF; BOATS (LKE) R.ELMHIRST; V.ELMHIRST; ELOISE ELMHIRST.)

Record No: 224,798
Tape Number BOX 10. NUMBER 2. DART 23
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. FEB 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 10. NUMBER 2 (CARD IN CAN-NUMBER 2 DOROTHY ELMHIRST RIDES A CAMEL)

Record No: 225,285
Tape Number BOX 8 NO.3. DART 50.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUN 00.
Material Type 35 MM (suspect this is an error and would be 16 mm)
Status X
Description BOX 8. NO.3 NEG GREECE AND EGYPT. CARD IN CAN NO 3 NEGATIVE DOROTHY AND L K ELMHIRST IN GREECE AND EGYPT.

Record No: 224,531
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type 16MM.
Status X

Record No: 224,537
Tape Number BOX 9. FA4. DART 8.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type 16MM.
Description BOX 9 (FA4). CHILDREN IN AMERICA IN COLOUR (CARD IN CAN- NO 4 CHALET: RUTH & BILL ELMHIRST; WALTER THOMAS; GARDENS; RUTH ELMHIRST, BILL CURRY, MARGARET ISHERWOOD; RUTH ELMHIRST AND OTHERS AT SEASIDE; WHITNEY STRAIGHT FLYING, USA; BEATRICE STRAIGHT, RUTH AND BILL ELMHIRST; LKE; KATHRYN ASH.)

Record No: 225,279
Tape Number BOX 8 NO.2. DART 48.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUN 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 8 NO.2. "NO.1 FETE DAYS 1932 & 1934, NO.2 JUBILEE FETE 1935, NO.3 FOUNDATION DAY (1948 COLOUR) CARD IN CAN- FETE DAYS 1932 & 1934; JUBILEE FETE 1935; FOUNDATION DAY 1948. COLOUR
Record No: 224,752  
Tape Number BOX 10, NUMBER 1. DART 20  
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. FEB 00.  
Material Type 16MM  
Description BOX 10. NUMBER 1 ARTS AND CRAFTS FILMS 'MAKING PUPPETS' (CARD IN CAN-NUMBER 1  
MAKING PUPPETS).

Record No: 225,915  
Tape Number BOX 12, DART 4.  
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. MAY 01.  
Material Type 16MM  
Description PUPPET PLAY - BLACK & WHITE, SILENT, POS.

Record No: 225,912  
Tape Number BOX 12, DART 8 RCF.  
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. MAY 01.  
Material Type 16MM  
Description EARLY ARTS - CHEKHOV, MAKING PUPPETS, MOVEMENT, CHILDREN'S PLAY, ADULTS PLAY, BALLET JOOSS. BLACK & WHITE POS. SILENT.

Record No: 225,911  
Tape Number BOX 12, DART 7(1), 7(2).  
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. MAY 01.  
Material Type 16MM  
Status X  
Description L. K. ELMHIRST RUSSIAN TOUR 1933, SILENT, POS. LEADER CAN CONTAINS TWO REELS LABELLED AS THE SAME, SECOND REEL HAS DAMAGED SPROCKET HOLES. THE FILM IS SCRATCHED, AND WARPED IN PLACE. NO TITLE OR CREDITS.  
SEE ALSO BOX 8 DART 47: ELMHIRST MENTIONS HIS VISIT TO RUSSIA WITH A GERMAN AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE TO VIEW THE ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION PROCESS.

Record No: 224,536  
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.  
Material Type 16MM.  

NB SAME FOOTAGE WITH LIKE COMMENTARY IN DART 43 'FARM AND INDUSTRY'

Record No: 225,318  
Tape Number BOX 8 NO.2. DART 52  
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUL 00.  
Material Type 16MM  
FARM ACTIVITIES 1. WALLOWING, THATCHING, PLOUGHING 2. HEDGING, DITCHING, GATE REPAIRS, THRESHING, HARVESTING FRUIT, PREPARATIONS FOR XMAS WITH MARY BRIDE WALES AND FRIENDS 3. ORCHARDS, BEES, POULTRY, HAY & SILAGE MAKING 4. LABORATORY (MR PATTERSON) 5. PARSONAGE FARM BARTON FARM.

NB. SOME FOOTAGE SAME AS DART 47 BUT WITHOUT COMMENTARY. HOWEVER, THERE IS EXTRA FOOTAGE WHICH MAKES UP FOR LACK OF COMMENTARY.

Typed title which appears in the middle:
"EDITING BY J R CURRIE AND C F NIELSEN. IN CO-OPERATION WITH CINE CLUB STAFF."

Record No: 225 028
Tape Number BOX 11 NO 2. DART 34.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. MARCH 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 11 NO 2. CARD IN CAN- ALLER PARK SCHOOL (EARLY THIRTIES).

Record No: 225 029,
Tape Number BOX 11. DART 35
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. MARCH 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 11. ON CAN-"DARTINGTON" REV BW MASTER FROM ROLLS 5 & 6 (CAUTION- SHORT Pitch).
SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: BROADSANDS OUTING-RUTH & BILL-CAMP-FOXHOLE ARRIVALS. BUILDING FOXHOLE SCHOOL REEL 2 FROM REELS 5-6 1932. CARD IN CAN- NO 3 TWO REELS: 1. SCHOOL ACTIVITIES; BROADSANDS OUTING; RUTH & BILL ELMHIRST; SCHOOL CAMP; ARRIVALS AT FOXHOLE; 2. BUILDING FOXHOLE (EARLY THIRTIES).

Record No: 225 196
Tape Number BOX 11 NO.6. DART 36
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. APR 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 11, NO.6. ON CAN-SCHOOL 2 REELS JOINED IN CAN-NO.6 NURSERY SCHOOL;SENIOR SCHOOL CAMPS;HAY MAKING;MAYPOLE DANCING;CHILDRENS PICTURES AND CRAFTS;CHILDRENS DRAMA;CHILDREN BY ALLER PARK SWIMMING POOL;VIC ELMHIRST WITH CHILDREN;SEASIDE CAMPS. (MADE IN EARLY 30S)

Record No: 225 914
Tape Number BOX 12. DART 15 (ON CAN) 5 (ON STICKER)
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION, MAY 01.
Material Type 16MM
Description EARLY ARTS - PERFORMANCE OF CHEKHOV'S WOMEN OF VOE. BLACK & WHITE, SILENT, POS. NO TITLE OR CREDITS.

Record No: 225,919
Tape Number BOX 12, DIN PRINT
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION, MAY 01.
Material Type 16MM
Description BALLET JOOSS RUSHES - BLACK & WHITE, SILENT, POS. STAGE SETTING, DANCERS DRESSED IN BLACK WITH WHITE MASKS. CUTS OUT TO BLACK. SMALL REEL INCLUDED - TOO SHORT FOR VIEWING ON STEENBECK, POSSIBLY TRIMS.

Film Unit Productions:
Record No: 225, 197
Tape Number BOX 11 NO 7. DART 37.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. APR 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 11, NO 7 SCHOOL CAMP-SCIENTISTS AND EXPLORERS-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES. NOT IN THIS ORDER 'GALAPAGOS' ON EDGE OF CAN. CARD IN CAN NO 7 "SCIENTISTS AND EXPLORERS"; SCHOOL ACTIVITIES. (HANDWRITTEN CARD NO 42 (FROM ROBIN JOHNSON'S LIST OF FILMS) BURMA/TEMPLES ETC)???

Record No: 225,918
Tape Number BOX 12, DART 7
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION, MAY 01.
Material Type 16MM
Description THE SCHOOL. DIRECTED BY WILLIAM HUNTER. THE DARTINGTON HALL FILM UNIT, SCHOOL FILMS. BLACK AND WHITE, SILENT, NEGATIVE. NO OPENING TITLES.

Record No: 224,743
Tape Number BOX 10. DART 16.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. FEB 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 10. SOUTH WEST PENINSULAR (CARD IN CAN- SOUTH WEST PENINSULAR: 3 REELS MADE MOSTLY AT DARTINGTON)

Record No: 224,529
Tape Number BOX 10. DART 9.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 10 GALAPAGOS (2 REELS). NO CARD IN CAN.

Record No: 225,265
Tape Number BOX 11 NO 4. DART 41.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUN 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 11 NO 4 GALAPAGOS (CARD IN CAN- NO 4 GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (DAVID LACK WAS INVOLVED IN THIS) )
NB. DIFFERENT FOR ORNITHOLOGISTS. USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH DART 9.
B/W. NO SOUND. NO TITLE. OPENS-GVS OF BUST OF DARWIN.

Films made after Hunter left:

Record No: 225,744
Tape Number BOX 10. DART 17
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. FEB 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 10 "SOMERSET PEAT* (SIC) (CARD IN CAN- NUMBER 10 PEAT DARTINGTON HALL FILM UNIT)

Record No: 224,751
Tape Number BOX 10. NUMBER 9. DART 19.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. FEB 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 10 NUMBER 9. FALL OF THE YEAR
Record No: 225,286
Tape Number BOX 8 NO 6. DART 51.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUN 00.
Material Type 16 MM
Description BOX 8 NO 6 "DARTINGTON" 16MM BW REVERSAL MASTER ROLLS 21-23 (CAUTION SHORT PITCH). FETE DAYS-DUKE OF KENT VISIT INJURED AIRMEN- EARLY GARDENS-SHOTS FOR "MAJOR BARBARA" FILM
Film of war-time and bomb damage in Exeter

Record No: 225,925
Tape Number BOX 12, NEG 42. REEL 1 OF 2
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION, MAY 01.
Material Type 16MM
Description NO TITLE. CAN LID SAYS "EXETER NEGATIVE".
REEL ONE. BLACK & WHITE. SILENT. NEGATIVE.
OPENS WITH KITCHEN STOVE AND SOMEONE ROLLING
PASTRY. CUTS TO GENERAL VIEWS OF THE EXETER -
POSS BOMB WRECKAGE. LEADER. CUTS TO WAR
MEMORIAL. MEN IN UNIFORM. CUTS TO SIGN "AIR
RAID DEATH CERTIFICATES AND REGISTER OF
DEATHS, MESSENGER SERVICE." LIST OF PLACES
TO OBTAIN MEALS...etc

Record No: 225,926
Tape Number BOX 12, REEL 2 OF 2.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION, MAY 01.
Material Type 16MM
Description NO TITLE. EXETER NEGATIVE ON CAN. - BLACK &
WHITE. SILENT, NEGATIVE.

Tom Stobart Film Unit

Record No: 225,027
Tape Number BOX 11 NO 1. DART 33.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. MARCH 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 11 NO 1 "SETTING UP AN AQUARIUM". CARD IN
CAN-NO 1 SETTING UP AN AQUARIUM (1948).

Record No: 224,530
Tape Number BOX 10, NUMBER 11. DART 15.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type 16MM.
Description BOX 10 NO.11 (DARTINGTON HALL ESTATE
FILMS). LABEL ON CAN READS 'TEACHERS COURSE
2ND-17TH APRIL "TIMBER" ORIGINAL REVERSAL.
CARD IN CAN- TIMBER (1948, MADE BY GROUP FROM
TOM STOBART'S COURSE AT DARTINGTON).

Record No: 224,531
Tape Number BOX 9, FA 5 (12). DART 2.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type 16MM.
Description BOX 9
Films made after the closure of the Dartington Hall Film Unit:

Record No: 224,534
Tape Number BOX 9. E4. DART 5.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type 16MM.
Description BOX 9 E4. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL-1960.16MM
OPTIONAL SOUND (CARD IN CAN-CHRISTMAS
FESTIVAL 1960 16MM OPTIONAL SOUND; COMMENTARY
BY HUW WHELDON),
END TITLES...COMMENTARY-HUW WHELDON,
PHOTOGRAPHY-GEORGE SHEARS AND STAN CAFFELL,
SOUND-HOWARD SMITH, FILM EDITOR-PAUL KHAN,
DIRECTED BY JOHN IRVING. A WEST REGION PRODUCTION BBC TV.

Record No: 224,835
Tape Number: BOX 10. NUMBER 2. DART 25
Key Words: DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. FEB 00.
Material Type: 16MM
Description: BOX 10. NUMBER 2. CHILDRENS FESTIVAL 1960

**IN CONNECTION WITH DART 5.***
BW, NO SOUND. OPENING TITLE "CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL 1960". NEXT TITLE "THE TENTH CHILDRENS FESTIVAL AT DARTINGTON HALL ARTS CENTRE". NEXT TITLE "A FILM BY ROGER MAYNE".

Record No: 224,834
Tape Number: BOX 10. NUMBER 3. DART 24.
Key Words: DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. FEB 00.
Material Type: 16MM

Record No: 224,523
Tape Number: BOX 9. (17) DART1
Key Words: DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type: 16MM
Description: BOX 9

Record No: 225,026
Tape Number: BOX 11. DART 32.
Key Words: DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. MARCH 00.
Material Type: 16MM
Description: BOX 11. NOTHING ON CAN. CARD IN CAN- NO 20 ONE OPTIC B&W 16MM TRACK, ONE ACCOMPANYING MAG SOUND TRACK. LIKE TALKS OF EARLY SCHOOL DAYS AND FAMILY LIFE, OF DWE'S EDUCATIONAL STUDIES, IDEAS AND INFLUENCE, OF TAGORE'S ARTISTIC AND EDUCATIONAL IDEAS (SOUND TRACK HAS BEEN RECORDED ONTO CASSETTE NO 1)

BW, SOUND, NO TITLE. LIKE BEING INTERVIEWED (IN SAME LOCATION AS DART 1).

Record No: 225,262
Tape Number: BOX 11. DART 38
Key Words: DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUN 00.
Material Type: 16MM
Description: BOX 11. DARTINGTON "THE SCHOOL" COPY NO2 (CARD IN CAN-NO5 "THE SCHOOL" MADE BY RICHARD THOMAS )

NB. AS FILM IS ABOUT LIKE REMINISCING ABOUT SCHOOL, MUCH OF FOOTAGE IS IN OTHER FILMS (DART 35 AND DART 36 ESPECIALLY) BUT IS MUCH BETTER WITH LIKE'S COMMENTARY.

Record No: 225,267
Tape Number: BOX 8 NO 16C. DART 43.
Key Words: DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUN 00.
Material Type: 16MM
Description: BOX 8 NO 16C. "DARTINGTON". FILM 1 FARMS AND INDUSTRY. ACTION/COPY REEL 2 (CARD IN CAN-16C FARMS AND INDUSTRY. BLACK AND WHITE 16MM

239
Record No: 225,278
Tape Number BOX 8 NO.16A. DART 47.
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUN 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 8 NO.16A "DARTINGTON" FILM 1. FARMS AND INDUSTRY ACTION. C/COPY- REEL 1 (CARD IN CAN- NO.16A "FARMS AND INDUSTRY" B/W 16MM REEL 1)
NB. USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH DART 52. ALSO DART 46 (SOUNDTRACK) AND POSSIBLY WITH DART 4.

1973

Record No: 225,266
Tape Number BOX 8 NO 6. DART 42
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JUN 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 8 NO 6. BBC WESTWARD TV FILM ABOUT DARTINGTON, 1973. LKE AND MAURICE ASH (CARD IN CAN- NO 6 L K ELMHIRST TALKS ABOUT BEGINNING OF DARTINGTON HALL; INTERVIEW WITH MAURICE ASH 1973)

Record No: 224,535
Key Words DARTINGTON HALL COLLECTION. JAN 00.
Material Type 16MM
Description BOX 9 (F4) - FOUNDATION & FETE DAYS 1972 & 1973 (CARD IN CAN- NO 4 FOUNDATION & FETE DAY FILMS. FOUNDATION DAY 1969 (BERT FOOTE) FOUNDATION DAY 1972 FOUNDATION DAY 1973.)