



Chris Parsons: Oral History Transcription

Name of interviewee:

Christopher Parsons

Name of interviewer:

David Attenborough

Date of interview:

26th July 2001

Place of interview:

Littleton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

Length of interview:

c. 120 minutes

Copyright:

© Wildscreen

1. The early years

Int: Chris let's start at the beginning. What are your qualifications as a naturalist, I mean how did you become one?

CP: I became a naturalist by being brought up in a Devonshire valley, in the late thirties and during the war, and my father was the country parson. I was the only child, and next door, there was a beautiful farm, Devon farm, with three children, with whom I became very friendly, and I almost became one of the family, so I spent almost my entire life when I wasn't at school with the family, my own family, next door, on this farm, and that's where I really learnt about the countryside I suppose.

In a curious way, I may have learnt more through my own parents in my garden about natural history than the farming community because, both parents had an interest in natural history and I can remember being fascinated by the humming-bird hawkmoths that visited the flower garden. Then I remember one day there used to be a shrubbery, a laurel shrubbery, and when I was about five or six, I found a stone, in which there was a beautiful print of what later I found out was a **brachiopod** and I was so enthralled with this stone that I didn't know what it was and my Dad told me all about fossils and things like that and that's kind of really turned me on. And we were travelling one day and I heard a skylark, and we listened to the skylark and that was a great excitement to me and I used to hear in those days corncrakes were quite common, and each summer we used to try and locate this wretched corncrake never found it actually croaking away in these cornfields, and all these things were very exciting. The problem was that in those days although I was interested in natural history no school was teaching biology. So right up to A' level I wasn't able to actually follow that interest. So instead I joined Devon Bird-Watching Preservation Society and I got together with friends; badger watching and things like that, and it was just really sort of an amateur pursuit.



I had to think about the way I was going to earn my living, I was really interested in music actually and entertainment in general and I was originally going to do a music degree. Now I realised it was probably a pretty unsafe career and probably I'd be very poor, so in those days the country was crying out for scientists, it was after the war and if you had anything that looked like a science degree you were made, you got a job, so I took a general science degree and spent most of my time at university, taking part in amateur dramatics and writing music for reviews and things like that.

Int: Where was the University?

CP: That was in Exeter, it was then the University College for the South West, taking London degrees, now Exeter University, and that enabled me to, I deferred my national service to after university, and the fact that I got that degree gave me a chance to get a post as an education officer in the RAF [Royal Air Force], and that is where it all started to happen. Because, I was posted to a big training camp called Yatesbury in Wiltshire and I became involved in a film unit there, and I was also the officer in charge of the station theatre, which was quite a large theatre and I was very friendly with the officer who was responsible for posting people after there training. I taught air-wires fitters and they went out to various parts of the world and what we used to do was to look at the professions of these guys and anybody who was a professional stage hand, you know, who was a sort of stage hand at the [Bristol] Old Vic or what have you, used to get posted to Yatesbury. So in a matter of about eight months we had a fully professional theatre staff and a wonderful reputation for visiting touring companies of being a really good well run theatre and as a result of that I was actually offered this job in the theatre when my national service ended, but it looked as though I was going to have jobs, I got a job in Marconi and Mullard none of which I liked. I was offered a job teaching mathematics at Bath, City of Bath Boys Grammar School, and I didn't really want to do any of this, I wanted to do something with natural history, or something with films, or theatre, or something like that. And then one day about three days, three months, before the day I was due to be demobbed, I opened the Daily Telegraph (1) in the officer's mess at Yatesbury and I saw an advertisement for several jobs at the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation], and one was for a film editor, another was for a PA, and another for an assistant film editor. And it said, 'must have some qualifications or knowledge of natural history', so I thought this might just be the one chance. So I applied for it and I got a board, and on the board was Desmond Hawkins, and Jack Mewitt, who was Head of Films at Ealing, who I'm sure you'll know, I can't remember who else, and Pat Beech, I think, actually who was Assistant Head of Programmes and I learned later that Desmond and Pat wanted to appoint me, because Desmond liked my combination. He liked the fact that I was a church organist, I was interested in music, I was a member of the Devon Bird-Watching Society, I was a bit of everything and he wanted to appoint me. And Jack Mewitt said, "you can't possibly appoint this guy, he's got no professional experience" and he was totally against it, and Desmond fought for me, and by this time I was getting no answer from the BBC so I wrote, and said you know, have you got anything to tell me because if I'm turned down I would like to know because I've been offered these other jobs. After a bit they said, "yes we will give you a job, if you accept it as a trainee", so I thought that's fine so that was it, I was in.

Int: How long was your contract for?

CP: I think, I think it was a staff job, but I think as far as I remember you, you, after a year, maybe it was three months, yes, I think it was three months, and I was supposed to train under a film editor called Bob Higgins who'd been in Lime Grove before that. I think he'd been in Lime Grove working for Gainsborough Pictures wasn't it at Lime Grove? Because, I know they used to talk to me about my friend Larry Olivier and people like that you know, and Bob never turned up, so I was thrown into the deep end and told to cut films, put together a film for Look (2) without ever being trained.



WILDFILMHISTORY

100 YEARS OF WILDLIFE FILMMAKING

Int: So what was gauge of this film?

CP: This was 16mm

Int: You never worked on 35mm?

CP: Well yes I did, what happened was that at the same time as I joined they were forming what was the West Region Film Unit, and the chief cameraman was a chap called George Sheers who'd come from World Wide Pictures, he was 35mm, and of course he'd worked with 35mm, and 16mm, as you know, was almost a dirty word and television engineers were saying, "ah well you don't want to have any business with that stuff, you know it will never be used". And Desmond and others and Tony Soper were saying "well look it's the only way we can do natural history actually, is to stay with 16mm", so although they were shooting material in 35mm it was beginning to drift into 16mm and particularly in the regions, because of the cost were beginning to say look we've got to work in 16mm.

Int: And what year was this?

CP: This was 1955, when ITV [Independent Television] was just starting. I mean, I think that was another reason why it was much easier to get into the BBC because people were drifting in hoards from the BBC into ITV, and there was a great vacuum, they were looking for people to keep the BBC afloat.

Int: Not from West Region?

CP: Perhaps not from West Region, but I think because people were being drawn up from London, maybe some regional people were being drawn up to London, I don't know but there was a general feeling that the BBC were desperate for people

Int: And what kind of equipment were you editing with?

CP: Well I thought of course in my days in Yatesbury, I'd been working with very simple 16mm equipment **movie stops**, hand wind things and things like this, and I thought gosh this is going to be superb editing equipment and when I arrived I was shown into a little room, and in the little room there was a pair of rewinds, a movie stop, a pair of scissors and a bottle of cement, and I thought this looks rather familiar. I think I can cope with this, and this is what I had to work with. Now in those days what I was doing basically was, I was condensing film made by naturalists over a period of time, people like Walter Higham, and Ernest Neil and others, and this film was being condensed into sequences for Peter Scott's Look (2) programme. So what happened was that their original film which was very often 16mm colour, you had a **duplicate negative** made of it, then you had a print from the duplicate negative, and you edited the print, and it was all black and white of course and then when you got the editing print how it was to be, then you cut the negative. Now the problem was that in those days, for some reason that I have been unable to fathom, there was no **edge numbers** on the duplicate negative. So you had to match by eye the action in the print, to the action in the negative with clues because there was various sorts of marks on the negative, scratches and little triangles

www.wildfilmhistory.org



and squares, and you had to try and match these up by hand in order to make the negative match the print that you'd cut and it was several years before they actually got edge codes on the negative so it was a horrendous job actually.

Int: And what was the very first programme you did?

CP: I think that the first programme that I actually edited was a programme called Away From The Nest, which was based on the work of a chap called Dick Bagnell-Oakley, who was a Norfolk School master who did a lot of wildlife photography in his spare time. And he was really one of the first people to get away from filming birds just at the nest, you know Walter, dear old Walter Higham did very predictable stuff. You know there was an establishing shot, there was a mid shot and there was a close up and the bird at the nest you know, there was a close up of the eggs in the nest, and that was the standard thing, they were really animated stills. But Dick wanted to show birds in action, feeding, and he used a pistol grip on a hand held Bolex camera I think it was and he used to crawl through the reeds and get close to waders and take interesting stuff of waders feeding and Avocets and things like that (3).

Int: Was this a free-standing programme or was it part of a series?

CP: It was part of a series it was. The series I was mainly working on was Look (2).

Int: Was that the very first programme?

CP: Look (2) started as a regular series with the series title Look (2) in 1955. Before that there had been occasional programmes in which Peter Scott introduced his own film (4) and the work of other people including Heinz Sielmann and his woodpecker film (5), which I had seen in the officer's mess at Yatesbury and got very excited about and then when those programmes became regular, every fortnight, they were given the series title Look (2), and Look (2) had just started when I joined.

Int: At that stage in 1955 what was the condition of television down in Bristol, did you have a studio?

CP: Pretty primitive, what had happened was that the West of England Light Orchestra was based in Bristol and that used to play in what was called 'Studio One', which was a large, fairly large studio. And they moved the West of England Light Orchestra down to an old cinema in Market Street in Bristol and turned that into a drive-in television studio, and there was a yard at the back with big double doors and they used to park the **scanner**, mobile control room there, roll the cameras into studio one which they renamed 'Studio A' and do the shows there. And that studio used to do Look (2) every fortnight, the evenings varied, sometimes it was Tuesdays sometimes it was Fridays I think, and then they used to be followed by a repeat the next day for children that we used to do live.

*Int: Did you have a **telecine** down there?*

CP: No **telecine** at all, and in fact the telecine was in London and this caused for a lot of hair-raising adventures because the film had to be prepared, it then went to telecine in Lime Grove and it was cued in via

CCR2 control room in Lime Grove. There was a presentation assistant and one of the presentation assistants who did it regularly for us was a chap called Innes Lloyd, who became a very famous drama producer subsequently, and Innes Lloyd was the guy who you used to tell to cue the telecine, now there was no permanent talk back line, for some reason or other it was never open permanently during the programme. So when you came up to the point where you wanted to cue film, you had a little handle that you went [indicates winding action], like that and you hoped that somebody, the presentation assistant's secretary in London, would have the wit to answer this damned phone, because if she didn't, then you'd have to go on talking in the studio because telecine wouldn't run.

And then the picture from **telecine** would go down the line to Wenville transmitter, from the Wenville transmitter it would be picked up and fed into the studio, so you couldn't actually see the telecine, you couldn't actually see the picture of the telecine, until it went on air. So you had the cue to telecine via CCR2, and you would say to them mix on first frame, and they would mix to first frame and then it would come through on the rated picture.

Int: How long ahead did you have to cue it in terms of seconds?

CP: Well, you had to allow a bit of delay time for ringing the phone and then somebody answering, so usually about sort of 30 – 35 seconds at a guess before you needed it.

Int: And what about the commentary, was Peter Scott doing this live?

CP: Yes, Peter was doing it live yes, and he did it live as a sort of ad hoc conversation with his guest of the day, whether it was Walter Higham, or Dick Bagnell-Oakley or Heinz Seilmann. But we used to rehearse during the afternoon with a separate print, **back projected** from an old Gaumont Brill projector on to a rear screen and camera-four would look at this rear screen and feed that into a monitor so we could rehearse. Now of course there was no dubbed sound in those days, so it was lashed up to one of the small sound studios and we had some very, very talented disc players in those days, people called Pat Bloomfield, Jerry Bloomfield, were two that were particularly good, Mariam Mines, there was a whole range of them, and the sound used to be played off old 78 discs. So there were a bank of these disc players, TD7s. They used to rehearse this all day playing in background atmospheres sometimes, you could never do sort of a real synch sound, but you could paint in a bird call at the appropriate time. So they used to rehearse with the projector all afternoon and then they'd do the same thing live on air, including playing in the signature music at the beginning and the end. So it was really flying by the seat of your pants, I mean it was quite extraordinary.

Int: And this because there was no facility to record sound?

CP: Well, tape was only just coming in, when I came to the BBC the radio recordings were still being recorded on acetate, the first TR90s I think, they were the tape recorders, were being installed. And the first fairly portable tape recorder, Emme Midget, which I'm sure you know very well, was becoming available and that you could actually run with an Arriflex camera after a bit, there was an umbilical cord that you could connect the two to keep them in synch.

Int: So there was no tape recorded sound when you started?

CP: No.

Int: There was no electronic recording of pictures?

CP: Right

Int: So you had to do it all live to a degree which —

CP: Yes, Yes, I mean later on they were able to get a reasonable quality **tele-recording** just by photographing the tube. So after I think, two or three years we stopped doing the children's repeat live and they took a tele-recording because sometimes they'd do the children's repeat not the next day afterwards but a week afterwards, or ten days afterwards.

Int: But the commentaries that Peter gave had to be live there was no technical way?

CP: No, no way, no, they had, for the first, I can't remember how many years, but then, we eventually got a **telecine** which went into the basement of the main building near the television studio. At that point we started then, pre-recording the dubbed effects and occasionally pre-recording the narration but Peter did the live narration for a long time afterwards.

Int: I think that has to be born in mind when anyone sees those early Looks (2).

CP: Oh yes, yes.

Int: His commentaries were miraculous I would say.

CP: Under the circumstances yes, but you know, now they look very slow, and I was also very worried at the time, actually, that they were slower and quite frankly sort of rather middle class. It worried me and I felt that we weren't necessarily reaching you know, a big audience as we should, and I found myself rebelling against this a bit and wanting to do things that weren't Look (2) and fortunately Desmond Hawkins and Pat Beech were very sympathetic and allowed me to do all kind of things. Because, for the first two years I was still working in the **cutting room**, what happened was Bob Higgins, under whom I was supposed to train eventually turned up. But by that time I was editing Look (2) so I then had to act as Bob's assistant for drama sequences and other things during the day and I edited, tended to edit Look (2) at the weekends.

Int: Edit in terms of the film?

CP: Yes, yes, at the weekends and evenings. It was also complicated by the fact that for about a year we had no means of actually joining the 16mm negative on a **foot joiner**. So what I used to do is, I used to match the negative to the print, and wind tissue paper and pins to put it together, put it into a roll and then I would catch the half past five or six o'clock train to London. I would go up to Lime Grove and use one of the cutting rooms that Tonight (6) had because they were off the air by seven o'clock or half past seven, so I used to use Mike Tuckner's **cutting room** or something like that and use his foot joiner join up the negative. It would then go in film despatch to Kays. I would be finished at about ten o'clock at night, I would then go to a bed-sit in Settis Gardens and sleep overnight, and then catch the eight o'clock train back to Temple Meads the next morning and then start working as an assistant to Bob Higgins at nine, nine-thirty the next day, and this was the sort of routine for many, many weeks.

Int: For the most influential natural history programmes probably ever been?

CP: Well

2. Working with the early names in natural history broadcasting

Int: All right, let's talk, let's just, tell me a little about those great giants and they were giants in those days. The biggest of the giants, the natural history broadcasters was a man called Peter Scott, what he was like?

CP: Oh, well Peter was a lovely man he, the main problem with Peter I think was that he was trying to do too many things at once and he often became distracted, I mean, soon after I joined of course he was involved in the Olympic Games in Melbourne. So he went away for a bit.

Int: What was he doing there, was he sailing?

CP: Yes he was sailing, I can't remember whether he was sailing or if he was a judge actually and he was involved in sailing anyway. And that led actually to a first opportunity for some filming especially for Look (2), and he took as his cameraman, your cameraman Charles Lagus, he nicked your cameraman Charles Lagus to do the job, that's another story, but Peter then soon after that became involved in gliding, and he had this great thing about gliding and of course everything that Peter did he had to do, he had to be superb at, he had to be the best. So when he got hooked on gliding, he spent an incredible amount of time you know waiting for thermals and dashing away, so he was quite difficult to pin down sometimes. But apart from that he was a great chap and I spent some marvellous times with him and of course he really imbued me with a real sense of urgency about conservation and the way the world was going.

Int: Did he have that in 1955?

CP: Yes, he was already in those days he was getting very concerned and of course he'd done his, he was doing his, his work at the wildfowl, what was then the Severn Wildfowl Trust, later became the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, and he was famous for his work on the nenes, he was very concerned about endangered species and so on. But, I used to go up to his house, every fortnight, part of the routine was, when I'd edited the film, I used to take the sequences up to Slimbridge, and we'd run them on Peter's projector, which went through a little hole from his dining room into his studio, so we could see, see the picture and make sure he

was happy with it and started writing notes on his commentary and then we'd have dinner, so I, every fortnight I went to have dinner with Peter and Phil [Phillipa Scott]

Int: So Look (2) was a formatted programme

CP: Yes, yes!

Int: Was he nervous as a performer?

CP: No, I don't think he was really nervous, because he'd done an awful lot of radio work and he'd also done quite a bit of television work in many ways. He was one of the commentators at the coronation (7) I believe actually, he was a very experienced broadcaster so I don't think he was nervous. He was very concerned about his appearance he was always concerned about the fact that he was going bald, he was very concerned he was putting on weight and I can remember whether Griss the make-up lady, whether she got it right so his forehead wasn't reflecting. And the other thing he was always very concerned about was he was very worried that he was a bit too serious, and he didn't have much of a sense of humour and he was always looking for jokes and little funny things he could do, and he kept a book of little jokes that he could use on occasions. He was all very concerned about this, that he wanted to be, he wanted to amuse people sometimes, because he felt he was being taken a bit too seriously.

Int: It was part of the same business of wanting to be the best, wasn't it?

CP: Yes, yes, I think so yes!

Int: When he told jokes he wanted them to be the best jokes.

CP: Yes that's right yes.

Int: So, did he, how did he react, did he have any idea about how the series, to go about the policy, about BBC's policy for natural history at that time?

CP: Well he was always very keen, he was always very keen in many of his programmes to put a kind of, sort of message at the end of the programme which was something to do with conservation and so on, and that he was always very keen. And I think there was a certain amount of discussion about this because certainly I, and other people, thought that you could actually over do this, and it might actually put people off and you ought to be careful about this, so I think once or twice there was some concern about this. But I think the content of Look (2) was determined frankly by what film was available, I mean we were scratching around, I mean we didn't know what was going to be on the air in three weeks time sometimes, you know you were scratching around trying to get something fixed so you could put the billing in Radio Times (8). So you were alternating between gasping for Heinz Sielmann's next film, pond chorus, or what have you, or finding a new piece of film from some amateur, you know. That's when we discovered, with tears of delight Eric Ashby working in the New Forest, by chance, and that led to a whole generation of films so we were really scratching around looking for people who could take films, because we were using this up, every time

we went on the air we were using up the life work of someone. So I think the content was really determined by what was available, until certain programmes where Peter felt it was necessary to do something. Probably two of the most important things that Peter had a hand in saying we ought to do, was a film called L for lion (9), which was when Bruce Campbell was running the unit. Which was about the time of the launch of the World Wildlife Fund, it was, I think about the time of the Alusha conference actually, and that was especially filmed programme which I directed. I'd kind of moved out of the **cutting room** by then completely, although I was doing a bit of both for a long time, I officially became a PA and eventually when the unit was formed and started directing and that, that had more, a lot of wildlife film, but interviews with Julian Huxley, Frank Fraser Darling various other people. I can't remember, yes, and I think Jim Baker probably was involved and that was a different programme and that was, and in fact there was a bit of film of the Alusha conference which I think was filmed by Armand Dennis actually as far as I remember.

Int: But did you never think that maybe the BBC could commission films?

CP: Yes, there were a number of problems, because we had used amateur film, controllers thought that natural history was cheap, because it was cheap, because we would pay a derisory sum of money you know to these poor guys for their life's work, to put on air because our budgets were very low. And one of the problems was that controllers thought that natural history was cheap and ought to be cheap, or though it was doing well, it was getting good figures. It was very difficult then to get budgets sufficiently large to actually commission stuff and shoot stuff yourselves. But we knew we had to do it because we were running out of stuff. I mean Tony Soper was in the unit at that stage, before he left the unit, and of course he was the guy, he was supposed to be the guy who was responsible for shooting new stuff. In fact the first Look film that was shot from scratch was on Fulmars (10) with James Fisher and in fact I went up to Fair Isle with Tony to do the recordings for it on an Emme Midget while he was doing the filming.

And we were starting to try and find people who were amateurs like Eric Ashby, who could be commissioned in a sort of part time way anyway. Maurice Tibbles, Ron Eastman were all amateurs but were then given some encouragement to film especially, and much later on people like Hugh Miles, so there was a transition where at the same time you were trying to jack the budget up to get enough money to commission these people.

Int: You mentioned James Fisher in all that, we're still talking about the 1950s?

CP: Yes

Int: He was the other great, well one of the other big names in natural history broadcasting, what was he like?

CP: Well, I didn't have a lot to do with him because James was really a radio man basically, he'd been one of the great stalwarts of Desmond Hawkins early days of The Naturalists (11). Which of course had interested me because I mean, when I was a lad and a young boy, the routine on Sundays was to hear the lunchtime news on Sunday in the home service and at 1:10 you had either The Naturalist or Birds in Britain (12), which came later, or Country Magazine (13) and that was sort of, that's what we had our Sunday lunch to. So I was very familiar with James Fisher in those days, and James started to come into television when Peter couldn't do the series. So when Peter went to Australia, for example James Fisher stood in and did quite a lot of the Look (2) programmes. Peter was quite worried about this actually, he was quite worried that James might

actually usurp him and take over.

Int: How did that manifest itself?

CP: I don't know, I mean Peter would say, "How did James do?" you know, I'd say, "Alright".

Int: Now the third big name who had a very critical fact in the whole series was Heinz Sielmann, how did that happen?

CP: Well the Heinz Sielmann story started way back in I think it was way back in 1953 where Desmond then was, he was then producing the first programmes that Bristol did with this mobile unit, OB's [outside broadcast] from the Wetlands Trust and places like that and he also did the programmes, the first programmes with Peter Scott, showing his film. The first of which were actually done in London before the studio was started up in Bristol and I think Peter mentioned to Desmond that he was attending a bird watching, an ornithological conference. He'd seen this amazing woodpecker film and said that Desmond ought to get onto it and Desmond got onto it very quickly and I'm not sure whether if he went to see Heinz Sielmann or not, but that is recounted anyway in Desmond's interview, oral history. He persuaded Heinz to come over and be on Peter Scott's programme and the programme was called just Woodpeckers (5), it wasn't called Look (2) in those days. And it was amazingly successful and I remember seeing it in the officers mess at Yatesbury and I know from Desmond's account and others, that the public were thrilled by this and the telephones were jammed at Lime Grove and I can remember Desmond telling me that it was so successful that, the name of the man escapes me at Granada got very excited about it.

Int: Bernstein?

CP: Bernstein? No it wasn't Bernstein. Anyway somebody at Granada got very excited and asked the BBC where they could get hold of Heinz Sielmann. Which got Desmond very nervous, I think he then tried to make sure that from then after Heinz Sielmann's films would all come to Desmond in West Region.

Int: Was he an easy man to handle?

CP: He was alright, I didn't really have much to do with him. On the whole I didn't have any work to do on Heinz Sielmann's films because you could just take them as they were and all you did was put a leader at the top, you know, and may be a second leader if there was a studio break. I met him socially in the studio, I think he was ok.

One time I did actually work with Heinz, was when he made a film in cinemascope called Lords of the Forest (14), in what was then called the Belgian Congo. And this is after he had done a whole lot of television films and he made the cinemascope film and it was going to be a wonderful chance to have a programme which would show some of the off-cuts of this film and then the programme would end with a trail, of course, for Lords of the Forest, which had just come in to the cinemas. So, I was sent across to Brussels where they cut it and worked with him and his cameraman editor, George Shurmanski and I spent a whole week going through rolls and rolls of 35mm rushes, trying to glue together some meaningful sequences from the off-cuts basically. That was all very jolly and we got on very well and it was a very intense five days, working about 12 hours a day for five days.

Int: And how did he compare with the, another, of the film-makers who you discovered, Eric Ashby?

CP: Well actually Eric Ashby was probably the shyest man I've actually ever met in my life. We discovered him, it was actually Pat Beech who discovered him I think, Pat Beech saw an article about his work in the *Countryman* (15), which I think was either a monthly or quarterly small magazine. And he passed it on to me, and it had stills from Eric Ashby but it mentioned in one line that he also took movie films of badgers and foxes, and of course in those days the only person who had taken movie films of badgers was Ernest Neale and Humphrey Hewer, who had conditioned badgers to light, which I actually was doing on a badger set at my home in Devon actually about the same time. Roger Perry who was then the senior librarian, one of the early posts of Natural History Unit was called, I think it was called, Senior Research Assistant and Film Librarian, or something or other, it was a general job that was involved in making sound recording and film research and running the library. And Roger Perry went down to find Eric Ashby and saw some of his stuff and he came back hotfoot to me and he said "look, you better go and see this stuff it's pretty amazing". So I went down to Badger Cottage, Lindenwood in the New Forest where Eric was and saw some of this stuff and it was, you know, truly amazing. It was, unfortunately, it was shot at 16 or 18 frames a second and in those days there was only one **telecine** that could show, I think it was called a flying-spot mecca, or something like that, that could show film at that speed, and so I think the first, some of the first stuff had to be shown possibly using a telecine. At any rate I was so excited by this film, that I said look, would you be interested in shooting new stuff for us and at 24 frames a second? And a, he was a very quiet guy, he had a terrible stutter, having a conversation with Eric was awful, because you'd ask a question and it would take you about five minutes to get a reply because he was so nervous and this stutter. But he was a really nice guy, and he had a small holding and all he wanted to do basically, was to have a basic existence in which he could have enough money to put film into his camera and go out and watch deer and foxes and badgers. So when I suggested that we might actually be able to supply some film stock and actually pay him, a derisory amount to do this, he was delighted.

So, Eric was delighted to have an opportunity to spend more time filming his animals, but I thought this was sensational stuff, and I was beginning to feel, as I said earlier, that we weren't necessarily making the most, best, most dramatic use some of this stuff. You know, this sort of rather middle class, lazy commentary that we were doing in the studio, I wasn't quite sure if this was really actually making the best of this material. So I said to Desmond, look I think we ought to be making features, you know, more considered films, you know with production values and things like this. So, having shown some of Ashby's material to Desmond, he said ok, alright, and I sketched out a rough story about a year in the life of the New Forest, seen through the eyes of an owl or something or other, the *Unknown Forest* (16) we called it, the life of the forest people rarely see.

So Desmond allowed me to do this and we eventually put together a film and I, I constructed a little sequence whereby a family had a picnic in the forest and didn't see anything and we said you know in fact there's a multitude of things going on which they don't see and we just follow the course of a year. And we put together this film, and I wanted a completely different approach and I decided to really go to the other extreme. And I asked Johnny Morris to do the narration for this, now half of me bitterly regrets this, and half of me thinks it was actually a very good move. It was really kicking against the traces, I just felt that if we were to compete with ITV we ought to be doing something that was a bit different from *Look* (2) and trying to sort of grab a family audience and making something that was a bit more, I don't know, would have some kind of resonance with you know a family in *Coronation Street* or something like that. So Johnny had been doing a lot of Radio and increasing television work, and I think it was the days before *Animal Magic* (17) actually. And I asked if Johnny would do this and he did the narration and I actually commissioned some special music from Sidney Sager. Sidney Sager was a trombonist in the West of England Light Orchestra who'd been doing a little bit of small time composition and I gave him this big chance to do a special score, which we recorded with the Mailance Ensemble in London, and this was you know big stuff for West Region you know and I was, I think I was, I think I was no longer a trainee assistant film editor, but I'd been given a

lot of rope anyway and we did this and it went on the air. And it was amazingly successful, it got absolutely nailed by the Sunday Times (18) who said it was an absolute travesty and Johnny Morris should never have been allowed to do it and what have you.

3. The BBC Natural History Unit's first colour film

Int: He was doing funny voices?

CP: Well to an extent but not completely. The narration was, he was supposed to be an owl and, but he was established himself, the commentary started as a wise old owl but that idea was dropped almost immediately. It was actually a fairly strait narration after that, actually, quite honestly, and there was a few sort of 'Morrisisms' here and there which were actually quite amusing. And it was amazingly successful and it got a huge audience and it got repeated and what have you. And as I say half of me kind of feels awful about having done it, the other half says it had to be done, because it actually shook things up a bit. And made people realise that there were other approaches, perhaps I went a bit too far, but it gave me another chance to do another film which was The Major (19), which was the first film that the unit did in colour. There was a very small amount of money available in those days for experiments in colour and Pat Beech managed to get hold of about I don't know, five hundred quid [pounds] of this colour fund to pay the difference between shooting black and white and shooting colour because I was saying, look the engineers are saying "you'll never do 16mm in colour" but I said "look if we are going to do natural history in colour it's got to be sixteen 16mm", so we got some money to shoot a film on Ektachrome commercial. Because the engineers said that if you must do it on 16mm it's going to have to be Ektachrome commercial it's the only film that was worthwhile using. The trouble with Ektachrome commercial was that it was an artificial light stock at twenty-five ASA. And when you put the **conversion batton** filter on to film in daylight it came down to sixteen ASA which was pretty hopeless for natural history stuff. So you had to have very bright lights all the time or lights or what have you, so it was a terrible stock to deal with. But anyway, madness took, took over and we embarked on this film. And I had put up, I had actually written a script based on a newspaper article that I'd read about a village tree which was the sort of meeting point and notice board, which was an old oak tree and had to be felled, and how the village were up in a great uproar about this so I thought what a wonderful subject for a film. So I wrote a script in which the village tree had to be felled which started with the tree being felled and then a sort of series of flashbacks about the natural history of the oak tree and little cameo incidents that might involve overlooking a cricket field and boys meeting underneath, whistling at the girls going by and the rest of it. And Desmond liked this and I was allowed to get on with it, while I was doing other things. And in fact I think then perhaps a greater sense of taste began to pervade my production skills. And I got Desmond to write the narration and, again Sidney Snape composed the music and it went out in black and white first of all and it did amazingly well. And I was quite proud of that because I actually got some, I got a lovely post card from a quite, a very well respected drama producer in London, who's name escapes me, but you'll know him because some lectures have been named after him.

Int: A Scotsman Jimmy, James Mc.?

CP: McGrath? Was it no?

Int: Anyway, yes.

CP: Him, and he wrote me a beautiful note saying how, what a lovely film it was, how sensitive and how fresh it was, natural history and so on and so I was quite proud of that and that to me was what I wanted to do from then onwards.

Int: So now where are we, are we in the mid 1960s?

CP: We have now got to the early 1960s. The unit by now, when the unit was formed in 1957 I think it was about eight or nine people, it had probably grown to about twenty by then, twenty or thirty.

Int: Who was the boss?

CP: Now that's an interesting story. When the unit was formed Desmond was very keen to get someone in charge of the unit as Senior Producer, the senior post was called just Senior Producer. And I think he was really keen to get you, David Attenborough down, and I think there was a double reason for this. A: the programmes that you had done Zoo Quest (20) were greatly respected, but you also had scientific credibility, a marvellous track record, association with the subject, and there was also a little bit of worry about you doing things up there that might endanger the future of the unit. Attenborough was pretty powerful up there you know, if he went on doing Zoo Quest (20) maybe the unit would have to move to London, maybe he would take over and all this, there was this worry about this. And I think the thought of Attenborough coming down to be the Senior Producer would deal with both eventualities actually. However that was not to be and one or two other things were tried, Desmond Morris for example was approached, whether he was approached at that stage or later I'm not sure, but he was certainly approached at one time. But any rate they couldn't find anyone and so Nicholas Crocker who was an OB [outside broadcast] Producer was put in the job temporarily. He was a good experienced producer and he was safe and it was thought that with Tony Soper and myself and others, Winwood Reaves, we would look after the content and he would look after the quality and the workmanship and so on and he did it for two years and then they had another go and they appointed Bruce Campbell. Bruce Campbell did it for two years, but that didn't work out terribly well, Bruce didn't really know very much about broadcasting and it wasn't terribly satisfactory and I think they parted. And then they had another go then at trying to get, I think that's when they tried very hard to get Desmond Morris down and there were discussions with Bristol University whether we could find him a place at Bristol University, you know a chair at Bristol University, so he could do both things and Desmond wanted to do an animal research centre and maybe we could use Ashton Court. All these discussions were going on but unfortunately it came to nothing, and Desmond [Hawkins] was desperate to get someone.

Int: Desmond Hawkins?

CP: Desmond Hawkins, yes. And he actually said to me, I actually, I think I was still a PA at that time and Desmond said, "we're boarding this job" and he saw me in the corridor and he said, "you should put in for it", I said, "I can't Desmond", I said, "I'm not even a producer you know, I'm still learning!", and he said, "No I want you to put in, it'll be good experience for you". So reluctantly I actually got a board for this job, Senior Producer, and on the board was Donald Baristock, and Donald Baristock of course had quite a reputation in those days as being this sort of fiery **extronite** guy who was then, it wasn't called Controller it was called Chief of Programmes or something like that. He was turning BBC upside down and causing a stir and he was seeing a sort of a, you know, this little welsh guy who probably wouldn't take kindly to this sort of rather, this quiet Natural History Unit in Bristol. Any rate I actually quite enjoyed the conversation with Donald Baristock and I was making The Major (19) at the time and I told him about this and he got terribly interested in this, and as the conversation went on I actually thought for one awful moment I actually might get this job. And I remember saying, I can't remember what I said, but I made it clear that even if he was prepared to take a

chance with me I didn't feel I was ready for it because I wanted to go on making films like *The Major* (19) and so on and I didn't want to get involved with administration. So I, I think I made it abundantly clear that I didn't want the job anyway, so they couldn't find anyone so they re-appointed Nicky again to carry on doing the job, and Nicky stayed with it until he retired, with me really sort of holding Nicky's hand eventually.

Int: And when did Nicky retire?

CP: Nicky must have retired in the early 1960s mustn't he, the mid 1960s I guess.

4. Working with Gerald Durrell and the development of broadcast technology

*Int: OK, so we've missed out one thing that later on, because when you had done *The Major* (19) it seems to me that the next big thing you did was with Gerry Durrell [Gerald Durrell].*

CP: Yes, well Gerry Durrell would have liked to have been David Attenborough I think at one stage and he would have like to have done —

Int: David Attenborough wouldn't have minded being Gerry Durrell.

CP: Gerry was doing expeditions and he would like to have done films of expeditions and so on. And in fact he took a, he bought an Arriflex camera and he took, he'd had a camera with him on one of his Cameroon's trips and he'd shot some film which wasn't very good and it was sufficient I think to put together as a little mini series which Tony Soper produced, I think probably the series was probably called *To Bafut for Beef* (21), the same title as one of his books (22). And I got to know him then and he also took a camera with him to South America and we did a *Look* (23) based on one of his South America trips which was also not very successful. And I think it was felt that Gerry himself wouldn't be able to do it, but there might be mileage if someone went with him on an expedition and produced him with a cameraman and what have you. And Desmond was very keen because Gerry was technically in the region, he was thinking of forming a zoo in Bournemouth originally and then subsequently went to the Channel Islands, so he was technically within the region. So I think Desmond felt that if he could bring Gerry on, he would be another person who would do expeditions and overseas trips. So, Gerry wanted, this was early 1960s, he was beginning to get very interested in conservation and endangered species and he wanted to do a sort of fact-finding trip to Australia and New Zealand. He was particularly interested in New Zealand, some of the rare birds there and he proposed to do a trip which was really going to produce a book, which would give him some insight of some of the problems with endangered species. So the idea was that we would film this journey of him and Jaqui and I would be sent with a cameraman to film it. So it was all fixed, the problem was that I was still a PA and Desmond wanted me to go and there was no post to put me in, but fortunately for Desmond, Tony [Soper] at that point decided to go freelance.

Int: Tony Soper?

CP: Tony Soper, so it vacated a job that was then boarded, the job was called Film Producer, Natural History Unit and there was some sort of worry as to whether I would get the job or not, anyway I got the job that was fine, so that was alright. So I was then set off with Gerry and Jim Saunders the cameraman. Jim Saunders

and I were the two man crew and I was producing, directing, sound recording with an Emme midget and Jim was doing the cameraman, and I was the second camera, I had a Bolex, Jim was with an Arriflex it was an ST with a sort of tea cosy on the top and you could connect that up to an Emme midget. So if you got far enough away from the subject you could drown enough camera noise to do a bit of interview occasionally, a bit of camera work. So that was the crew, and we went with Jaqui and Gerry in a landrover around New Zealand and Australia, and eventually Malaysia and did a series called Two in the bush (24) which was really quite successful actually.

Int: Okay, so what was Gerry like to work with?

CP: Oh, it was absolutely hilarious. At least, it was on Two in the Bush (24). I think probably he, that was about early 1960, it was probably Gerry at his best then. He was always fond of a drink, but he wasn't drinking too much. He'd, he hadn't put on a lot of weight. He was always making jokes, and the thing was, you would have a whole series of incidents during the day, which he would then report to other people in the evening, and you could see how he embroidered this. I know another person who does this actually. But he would turn, you know, a commonplace thing into an absolutely uproarious —. You could see how he developed his material for his books, and it was just, it was just a lot of fun. We used to work incredibly hard, we used to get up at some god-forsaken hour of the morning, drive two hours to wherever we were going, work like mad, until the light went and then eat, and you know, drive on somewhere the next day. Well, you've done all that as well. But, but, it was, it was, and we used to sort of sing as we drove down the road, and we had it was really truly a great time.

Int: Was he a great naturalist?

CP: I'm not sure he was a great naturalist actually. He had a great affinity with animals, and obviously a great love of animals, amazing curiosity about things, and he was particularly, I mean yes, I suppose he was, he was good on insects and small vertebrates and things like that, and he did actually know an awful lot about them. Yes. No I think I'm, perhaps I'm, it depends what you mean by a great naturalist, but I mean yes, he knew an awful lot.

Int: Was he a great observer?

CP: Yes. Yes. Yes, he was, yes. I mean I think he would, he would look at an animal, and know whether it was well or sick, or what have you, and he would observe an animal in the wild and understand its postures and movements and things like that. Yes, he knew a fair bit about that. He had a, at the same time, I think he had a terrible chip on his shoulder. I think he was, I think he felt, he was a bit embarrassed about his lack of academic qualifications, I think. And I think he didn't like a lot of people in the zoo world, he just felt that they were often misguided, and misplaced, and not doing things they should be doing. He was a curious mixture, Gerry. He became a great friend of mine, I think he, you know, he had a great feeling for me as well. He could be absolutely maddening at times. Stubborn, unreasonable, and that got worse as time went on, as he drank more, and put on weight and so on. But at the same time, I think that I did get from him another layer of concern about the world, the way the world was going, and I can remember, on that trip, when we went to Malaysia, we saw devastated forests, being cleared for rubber foundations, and Gerry was almost in tears. You really felt that he got very angry, and when he got angry, his language went a bit off the rails very often and so on. But then, he would turn on his nice side and, and he was loved by audiences, he would give these, these wonderful talks with drawings, and people loved him. And I actually was always worried, because I wanted to try and get that onto television, and I never could. It was very difficult to get him to really relax in front of the camera. Some year before, I think it was, I think it was perhaps after Two in the

Bush (24) I got Desmond to give me the studio one day, and I got a whole bunch of people into the studio, and I said, this isn't going on the air, and we just got the cameras in, and I said, "do your stuff". Do one of these 'Evenings with Gerald Durrell' you know, with the anecdotes about the animals, and the drawings. Which, I'd seen him do in Australia and New Zealand, and Malaysia, and they were wonderful. People were rolling about in the aisles, with tears streaming down their faces, and what have you, and I couldn't get it to work in the studio. He kind of seized up and it didn't work, so we, that went. But I still wanted to try and get some of that on the air, and so that led to me doing the Catch me a Colobus (25) expedition with him, which we did in Siera Leone, where I tried then, to film an expedition as it was. The problem was that we still didn't have the right camera equipment. If we'd had, you know, little video cameras like this now, we could have done it. But we were battling around still with an Arriflex, it was before the **self-blimped BL** came, it was sort of tea cosy job, and we couldn't really use the camera in the way that I wanted to use it, a sort of tele — anyway. We got a little bit close, I think, we got closer to the Gerry, he was beginning to relax, and we got a little bit closer to how he really was. But I never really got Gerry on the screen, as I and friends knew him.

Int: Now, we're now in the late 1960s, fast approaching the 1970s?

CP: Yes.

Int: How big was the unit then, I mean there were a lot of people by that stage, were there?

CP: Yes, there were still a lot of radio programmes being done, there was a regular children's series. The first children's series was Out of Doors (26), which I directed for a bit, live, when somebody else was ill and then subsequently Animal Magic (17) started. So Animal Magic with Johnny Morris was still, Look (2) still went until I think about 1966, 1967 something like that, it, a bit later than that was it, certainly into the 1960s, but it was, I think the writing was on the wall I think, by the 1960s.

Int: 1967 is probably about right.

CP: Yes, about 1967 then.

Int: Because I had the unhappy job of telling Peter Scott.

CP: Yes, yes, and Peter was, was of course very upset, and of course he went to work with his old friend Aubrey Buxton for a while after that, but that didn't work either really, no. Peter worked well in the early days of television when it was very middle-class, you know gentle, medium.

Int: Now, so this is quite a big unit now, there must be several dozen people, getting on for it.

CP: Yes, well, we're now in —

Int: And Nicky Crocker is the head.

CP: Nicky Crocker is the head.

Int: You were the most Senior Producer.

CP: I was the most senior producer, yes. And in the late 1960s, and I was, I was, I got myself away from Look (2). I still produced the occasional Look (2) programme, as a guest producer. But it was mainly Jeffery [Boswall] and others doing it. But I was then still trying to develop single documentaries. I did A Bull Called Marius (27) with Gerry Durrell in the Camargue, and trying to start another series, and I'd just started a series which we put up to BBC1 called Animal People (28) actually. Which was films based on, well there's one on Gerry Durrell, one on Peter Scott, one on Frank Sawyer, a water bailiff, another one on H T Hurrell. Which are slightly different approaches, actually. I started that series, and it had to be taken over by Peter Bale, because, about that time, BBC2 was about to come into colour, and someone called David Attenborough rang up, Nicky Crocker I think, and said "We've got to get some natural history, on the screen. We're going into full colour in December 1967", I think it was, "What have you got that you've seen that's in colour?" Well, I was beginning to do a bit of colour, I'd also made The Major (19) in colour, a long time ago, and we were doing one or two of our BBC1 films in colour, when we could get the money. And as a result of that Nicky kind of took me off my BBC1 activities, and said look, you'd better start concentrating on finding stuff that can go into this new series that David Attenborough has invented called The World About Us (29), which is going to be mainly drawn from existing films, or film we've seen that's gone through the Travel and Exploration unit in London, and the Natural History Unit in Bristol. And I think the first series was sort of ten or twelve, wasn't it, or something like that? And it was the first run, and it was a question of putting together, either recycling stuff, that had been out in black and white, or finding films that we'd seen in colour and put to one side, and decided yet whether to condense them to a half an hour Look (2) or not. So I got more and more involved in that, and then, when it was very successful, because as you can remember, Sunday nights, The World About Us (29) and The Black and White Minstrel Show (30) were the two programmes that were really selling colour. I mean, I can remember seeing Radio Rentals, saying 'Rent a set and see The World About Us (29) and The Black and White Minstrel Show (30)'. I mean, they were the two things that were really helping to get people interested in colour. So, obviously there was going to be a demand for this. So at that stage, Nicky then moved me in to say "Well, look you'd better start working up ideas for this, because I think this is where the future's going to lie". So I then visited my old friends. I think I'd already actually discussed with Gerald Thompson and others about the possibility of doing more stuff in colour. And at that stage, and this would be about 1966 I think, they were thinking of forming a specialist unit in Oxford. Gerald Thompson, and Eric Skinner, who'd done the, a lot of early films, had got friendly with John Paling, Peter Parks, and Sean Morris, in the Department of Zoology next door, and had put up the idea to form a sort of biological film unit for Oxford University. And they got the University slightly interested in this, and they wanted to see whether they could work together. And they wanted to go to the University of the West Indies at Kingston, Jamaica, during the summer vacation, to see whether they could work together as a team, and shoot some film. And they got some money I think from an American educational film group, to get some money for educational films. And I think that either Nicky or I contacted you to see whether you would put up some money, to take the television rights, on a chance that we get some films out of this. So they set up an expedition, and they started sending back stuff, which I looked at and commented on, and then I went out, and spent two weeks up there, directing some shots of them working, which sort of provides top and tail. And at that stage Peter Parks was doing some amazing stuff with dark brown photography of plankton. And, I said to Nicky, I said look, I'm sure Peter Parks has worked, needs a programme on its own. And we encouraged him to go on shooting this stuff, and that turned into a film called The Living Sea (31), which was then shown eventually on The World About Us (29), in addition to I think, two or three other programmes, which were being filmed at the time, which then, because they were ready, became World About Us (29). I think when we planned them, when you gave the money to get some film, for them to use, you only invented The World About Us (29), but the film having been made, it naturally fell into the World About Us slot (29).

Int: And by this time, if my memory's correct, Look (2) had come to an end?

CP: Yes.

Int: And there was actually no natural history on BBC1 television and it came on to BBC2.

CP: Yes, I mean the weight was then, for a time, because it was obvious that natural history was better in colour any rate, although only comparatively small people were seeing it in colour I suppose, but I think while this was going on, Jeffery was trying to find some way of getting natural history into BBC1. That must have led to *The Private Lives* (32) which was a sort of derivative of *Look* (2), and he of course also then put up ideas to do expeditions, and he did an expedition to Ethiopia and so on. So there was, there was a little bit of stuff going on, but yes, the main thrust I think, when colour started, was on *The World About Us* (29). And actually there was a very fortunate, I had a marvellous piece of luck about that time, because Hugh Falkus had come to Jeffery. Hugh Falkus had teamed up with Niko Tinbergen, and Niko was doing some very interesting behaviour film, with lesser black-backed gulls (33), and Hugh Falkus had befriended him, and they were working together, trying to polish up this film. And Hugh Falkus went to Jeffery, and, to see in fact, whether it would either be a *Look* (2) or a special programme, Jeffery wanted to turn it into a 25 minute programme, and Hugh said, "No, it deserves a feature. You know, it's a work, a classic work, you know, a fifty minuter". And there was a great impasse, and Nicky rang me up, and said, "Look, there's a bit of a war going on here, and I think, there's probably some good material, will you have a look at it, and see whether it could be diverted into *The World About Us* (29)". So, I went to see Niko Tinbergen, and he, it was very ordinary stuff, but with Niko's interpretation, it was dynamite I thought. And so I, I helped Hugh get this film together, and Hugh was basically sort of writing it, and editing it, and it was quite clear that the whole, that this whole film depended on having a really good soundtrack. It was all about communication and signs, and Hugh was sort going to dub on, you know, a bit of background atmosphere, and sort of drop in a few calls, and I said, "Come on you know, you've got to do this properly, we've got to do real sync sound on this". So I got, I got some extra weeks in the **cutting room**, and I got an editor called David Aliband involved, and I said, "Look, we've got to do a really sophisticated sound track for this, because gulls are calling, answering, and all the rest of it, and we've got all these recordings". At this stage, we were track laying on 16mm and what have you, and David did, probably one of the first really sophisticated track lays, you know, with sort of three or four effects tracks and an atmosphere, and we mixed this, and it was successful. And someone, probably David Attenborough, suggested it went and, went for the Italia, and it actually won the Italia prize.

5. Life on Earth

Int: Now, I may be wrong here, but it seems to me that the next big step, was the sort of major series of which Life on Earth (34) was the first. Tell me how you saw that originate.

CP: Well I think that what happened was, that we saw the Kenneth Clarke series (35), and the Banofsky series (36), and as soon as those went out, we said 'hey guys, we ought to be doing something like this on natural history'. So I got very excited about this, and I started writing ideas to Nicky, and, and I proposed, I think, I think it was a series of, I mean it was quite audacious, thirty-six programmes actually. The first twelve of which were sort of more or less evolutionary taxonomy, which is very similar to what *Life on Earth* (34) turned out, and then the next twelve were on behaviour I think, and the next twelve were on habitats or something like that. And I can — I think the document's still around, I'll probably come, it was sort of written on this, it was typed on this yellow paper. And, and it had the title *Life on Earth* (34) on it actually. And this

sort of lay fermenting for a long time, and I got more and more excited about this, and roundabout the early sixties, I was, I was going through a rather difficult —

Int: 1960s or 1970s?

CP: Early 1970s, sorry. Early 1970s, Early 1970s. So we're talking about the early 1970s now. After *The World About Us* (29) had become fairly well established, at any rate. And I'd gone through a difficult phase, because my first marriage had come to an end, and I was in a bit of a state, I was footloose, I was also a bit frustrated in Bristol. I felt I was getting into a little bit of a, you know treadmill. And I'd always been interested in other things, you know, I'd been interested in music and drama, and what have you, and I just felt that I'm, I'm locked into doing natural history of the type, maybe I should be getting out and learning some other skills. And I can remember coming up to see you, in quite a state, and saying look, I really, I really want to get to London, and have an attachment. And, and, see the other half of the world, because I'm interested in doing some, some drama, but I don't know anything about drama, what can you do? And you very kindly rang up Steven Hirst. And Steven Hirst said "Yes, we'll have him up here", and Steven set me up with oh, it's terrible I can't remember the chaps name. He's dead now, he's an ex-Tonight (6) guy, he was beginning to do a lot of drama in arts. And he was doing a film on, on Modigliani (37). Fred, I can't remember his name. Anyway, he was directing this. So I was put, I was put with Fred as, as a sort of Associate Producer, to look after the sort of mechanics of the production. While he was directing, and you know, I knew how to book cameras, and deal with making all the arrangements and what have you. And at the same time, I was learning about, you know, how to direct films, and direct drama, and so on. And I was given a PA who had just come from radio to help, to help me, who didn't know much about television to sort of help me.

Int: Burnley

CP: Pardon? A chap called Alan Yentob. Fred, Fred Burnley, yes. And the PA was Alan Yentob, yes, yes. And we did this thing, and I stayed in London, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And it kind of resurrected me, and it opened up a lot of new things and gave me a lot of new ideas, and I came back sort of re-invigorated, and by that time I'd met Liz, I think, and you know there was a new life opening up for me. And I think about that time, I thought, come on we've got to get on with the series, and somewhere about that time I came to see you again, I think, and said "Look, we want to do this series", and I think we were terrified that you were going to do it anyway. You know, that there was a possibility of you coming out of an administration, and going back in to producing or writing, and, and you were going to do it anyway. And I thought you know, if we're going to do this series, I want you to do it anyway, so, I can remember talking to you, and you saying, "Well, I'm not going to be doing this job for much longer", and I said to you, you know, "If we're able to get this series, would you do it?" And I think you said, "Yes, I'd be delighted", and you probably were going to do it any rate. Anyway, that's all I can remember about the conversation. And then, by this time Mick Rhodes had been appointed. I actually applied for that job, and you were on the board actually, and I was pretty disappointed not to get the job, at the time. With hindsight of course, I was very glad that I didn't get the job, for a number of reasons. The unit needed a lot of shake-up, there was a lot of dead wood in the unit, and it needed a shake-up, and it would have been quite difficult for me to do, within the Unit. And the other thing of course, was of course, if I'd had that job, I never would have been able to produce *Life on Earth* (34). So, things always work out in the end.

Int: And you eventually became Head of the unit.

CP: Yes. Yes.

Int: Just finish with Life on Earth (34). Well, I have thoughts about that, too.

CP: Yes.

Int: To me, it was the most, the organisation of it brought television production onto a new level. That was remarkable. It had the best, and most carefully conceived music track of its time, certainly until this time I think it compares still. Tell me about the organisation of it. Did you see it, think it was going to be a major problem?

CP: Well, yes, I mean we were of course into new territory. And of course it was the most expensive thing that the Unit had ever done, and there was concern in London, as to whether we could cope with it of course. And I can remember Aubrey Singer, ringing up, I think Stuart Whiteman was Acting Head of Programmes at that time, ringing up Stuart and saying "Do those chaps know what they're doing down there, and do you think we ought to bring it to London?" and things like that. Of course, that made me see red, you know. But of course, before we got to that stage, you know, as you well know, we'd been through a lot of discussion, because round about that time, John Sparks, in parallel to me, had also put up some ideas for a series. He wanted it to be much more kind of scientific, a more scientific approach than I had. And, as you well know, we had a series of meetings, and Richard Brock came in, as the next office person, and there was a bit of sticky time, because I think, and to an extent I did as well, and you particularly felt that John was going out on a bit of a limb, and perhaps making it too much like Horizon (38), or something like that. And Richard was the other end of the spectrum, and I was probably somewhere in the middle. But, we had a sort of time where we had some quite fierce discussions I seem to remember. Before, we agreed on a formula which you then went away and wrote. But when, in terms of the organisation, the problem was of course, that although we'd by now got a lot of specialist cameramen, you know, we'd, there was Roger Jackman, and D Klein, Jim Frasier - discovered in Australia, and Maurice Tibbles, and Hugh Miles, there were all these things sort of merged, so there was a range of people, who could do the filming. But nobody knew how to actually cost this exercise. You know, you were writing extraordinary things, that no-one had ever filmed before, and we said, you know, how are we going to do this? How long is it going to take? And we knew how long we had to do it. It was three years. So, the difficulty was, budgeting it and costing it. And Nick and I agreed to have two approaches. And I said, "Well, let's take two different approaches. And you go down one route, and I'll go down another route". And, given that you had three years, and that the first year would be mainly research and some filming, the second year would be entirely filming, and perhaps a bit of editing, and the third year would be finishing up the filming and editing, and what have you. Well, the team of x people, and a certain number of days, and that gave you the number of shooting days available.

So the problem was, what was this going to cost? I mean it was obviously going to cost a lot of money. What would be a realistic budget? And because nobody had ever done a series on natural history, although the Bernosky (36) and Civilisation (35) series had been done, you could plan those, you know. If you were going to film it in a museum, you know where it is, it's not going to move, you know how many days you're going to spend there and so on, with natural history it's different. So, we said, all right, we've got a certain number of days to film it in, and we've got a certain number of people to film it. We cost it one way by saying x people, y days, we can't spend more than this given time, we can also take a programme by programme approach, and say okay, this programme requires us to film in Australia, in South America, and New Zealand. We'll work out the cost of getting a crew there, and we'll put another, a factor in, which says that while we're there we'll do fifteen percent of our work will be for other programmes, so that we can reduce the budget a bit. So, we had two different approaches, and Mick did one, and I did the other. And they actually came out remarkably close. So we thought well we may have got it right. So, we did a little bit of embellishment, and took the difference between the two, and up came the budget, you know, which was a

£million plus, above the line, basically. And it was quite clear because of all the locations, that you'd have to film the whole series as one programme. You couldn't have twelve producers, doing different things, it would never get done. So, we agreed to carve it up, in that I would be the Senior Producer, Executive Producer, and therefore, I would look after the programmes that would probably require less of me being on location, on the whole, whereas Richard Brock and John Sparks would do more of the travel. And that we'd also, although we would have producers nominally responsible for programmes, so Richard Brock would be in charge of fish and amphibians and so on, and John Sparks would do reptiles, and mammals and so on, we would have to work for each other. And that the other producers would have to direct sequences, under instruction of the other producer, if they happened to be in North America at the time. So, we evolved a system whereby we allocated the specialist work to certain people, so Roger Jackman did amphibians, or somebody else did birds, and Densley Klein did spiders, and Jim Face did spiders, and some other insects, and David Thompson did some other insects and so on. And there would be one principal sound crew that would go along with you, David Attenborough, which in turn would be picked up by either Richard Brock, or John Sparks, or Chris Parsons, as they progressed across North America, or Australia, or what have you. And that turned out to be quite an effective and an efficient way of doing it, and I had a unit manager working with me, and I insisted, unfortunately, I would have liked to have had one big open plan office, so that everybody was in the same room, we didn't have that luxury. So, we had the largest room available, where I could sit with Derek Anderson, and my own PA, and a couple of researchers, and I insisted, I wanted it that way, because I wanted to know what was going on. Richard and John were in other offices, but we had regular meetings in the morning, so that we knew what was going on. So, communication was pretty good. And of course, this was the days before email of course, and computers, and things like that, so we had to have lots of speaking conversations, and so on, which is a good thing. And it worked remarkably well I think, and, and we came out pretty well on budget too.

Int: Tell me about how you approached the problem of music.

CP: Well, I wanted, obviously I wanted one composer to do the whole thing, so it had a sort of classic style. And I, I called in, I called in the work of a lot of composers, about seven or eight composers, who had written for television and film, and looked at their work, and just really, music is a really personal thing any rate, I guess you've got to go with what you like, with approaches you like. And I was very impressed with a lot of the work that Edward Williams had done for various shell unit films, and so on, and I found out he lived in Bristol. I don't think I knew he lived in Bristol at that time, but he lived in Bristol, which was an added convenience, but wasn't the major factor, and I got to know and work with him, and discussed ideas with him, and I just felt I could work with the guy. So, I commissioned him to do it.

6. Moving out of production

Int: And very good it was too. Well then, after that, Mick Rhodes didn't last all that long.

CP: No, he actually, he actually got a job with WGBH Boston, before Life on Earth (34) was finished. It was in our third year. And by that time Phil Daley was Head of Network Production Centre, and I thought well, Life on Earth (34) is coming to an end. Maybe, maybe is the time to run the unit. Because I could see, you know, Life on Earth (34), if it was a success, there would be Son of Life on Earth, and there might be all kinds of opportunities for doing really quite exciting things. Also, I wanted to try and, I felt time had come to develop the resources of the library, and I also wanted to try and bring in-house some of the facilities, particularly in terms of macrophotography, that we were putting out to OSF [Oxford Scientific Films] and so on. So I felt that it might be a good time to have a go, to try and make some of these things possible. So Phil said, well, go in for the board, and if you get it, don't worry about it, we'll, we'll manage between us for six months, so I actually got the job. And it was then, the job was then was Editor at NHU. So I was

appointed to it I think during the last four, five months of producing Life on Earth (34). And I used to have regular meetings with Phil, and we kind of kept the Unit going between us until I was able to take it on full time. And then soon after that, Life on Earth (34) was such a success, that we were immediately getting interest for other series. It was, I mean it was just taking off in a big way. And there were, and Phil put it up to the Board of Management, I suppose, that that the Unit should be given departmental status, which it was, so I then, my job was converted to being Head, rather than Editor. So I was the first sort of Head of the Unit as it were.

Int: How big was it then?

CP: Now we must have got up to, I think it was only about sixty people, I mean it was still quite large, by that stage. But, then expanding very rapidly, in the two or three years after I took over, it doubled, it almost doubled in size. Because we were getting, WNET were starting Nature (39). And, we were doing all kinds of co-production deals. Life on Earth (34) being a success, that was leading to, you know, the other series that followed. Mini-series, like Flight of the Condor (40), and Kingdom of the Ice Bear (41), were proliferating because of WNET's involvement. Very big expansion, I mean I think we doubled in probably, in that time, 3 or 4 years I was running it actually.

Int: And then you decided to resign?

CP: Well, it was forced on me, really. What happened was, I was doing an awful lot of travel. Setting up co-production deals, and I was doing, I was doing a big annual round-the-world trip. We were doing quite a lot with ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation]. I'd been to ABC years before. I went down at the invitation of ABC to help them sort of more formalise the establishment of their Natural History Unit.

Int: In Australia.

CP: Yes, in Melbourne. So I had a lot of contacts with ABC in those days, and so Melbourne became a regular visit. New Zealand were beginning to get going. So, going through the PBS [Public Broadcasting Service] stations, and then Australia, New Zealand, and Africa sometimes, it was an annual trip of about 5 or 6 weeks, doing co-production deals, and trying to get money and all the rest of it. And, quite demanding, and I got back from one of these trips, and I think I got back to Heathrow in the morning. And Liz at that time, was at medical school and we met for lunch, and my heart went into a tri-fibulation and she thought I had a heart-attack. So I was carted off to the BRI [Bristol Royal Infirmary] and put in an intensive ward at the BRI for three days, and it turned out I hadn't got a full heart attack, but it went into this curious rhythm, and they had to sort of stop it and start it again to get it back. And so they said, well you'd better take care, and it went again about a year later. So I thought, probably, it would make sense to do something else, and have a more rested life, so I said to Phil, I think probably I ought to resign, and perhaps do some gentle freelance work. Liz will be earning money as a doctor by then, so we can probably live. And Phil I think discussed it with Bill Cotton I think, and Bill Cotton said no, we can't have this, we can't have him leaving it. Because at that stage I was just about started Wildlife magazine (42). I was getting BBC enterprises off their bottoms, and getting them much more involved in co-production and what have you, and the video market looked as though it was going to take off. So Bill invited me up for a chat, at Television Centre, and said "Look, we don't want you to go. But we realise why you want to do this. We don't want you to, you know, keel over or anything like that. Would you accept a job that we make for you as Head of Natural History Development, which would be more of a 9 to 5 job, look after the development of the library. Make sure Wildlife Magazine's (42) going alright. Look at other opportunities, and look at the commercial possibilities much more, of the Natural History Unit?" So it seemed too good a chance. And it, I thought, well that's fine, and so it was, I

think it was a two year contract originally, and after two years, there were some other things going on and so they extended me. And so that got me to the age of fifty-five, or something like that, I think it was. And at that point there was a lot of re-organisation, they were wanting to lose jobs, and there wasn't really a good reason for having a development job then. So I was able to retire, you know, with a, under really quite favourable financial circumstances, having got my pension up. At that stage, I thought then I'd form a little company and I formed a company with Tom Poore, to do a little bit of editing, and a little bit of programme development, and lead a happier life. But that started on another phase of my life then.

7. Imax, the Electronic Zoo and Wildscreen

Int: Okay, so what was that phase?

CP: Well, that took a very curious turn. Before, while I was head of development, I'd, one of the ideas which I tried to get enterprises involved with was a concept of a rather different type of visitor attraction, which I called the Electronic Zoo. The reason for this was that, that I'd become very disenchanted with existing zoos. I'd become rung up, during the years that I was Head of Development, I was constantly being rung up by Natural History Museums and Zoos, and, who were really sort of begging for bits of film, and for advice on how to run bits of audio-visual exhibits. And I just felt, well this, we shouldn't be gluing on audio-visual exhibits onto existing zoos and museums, it's not going to be very successful. But there is a good case for actually using the resources of our industry, and creating a different type of attraction, which is going to be much more holistic. Because I was, I was really fed up with zoos on two counts. I mean I've always been a great supporter of zoos. I mean I love zoos, when I was young. But I felt that zoos were making this big thing about you know, being, you know great for conservation and education. And apart from Gerry Durrell, I thought it was a load of baloney quite frankly, because zoos concentrated mainly on big vertebrates, they do very little on invertebrates. And if you actually look at biodiversity, you suddenly realise that it's actually a very small segment of the world's biodiversity. And their education was very much tied to this, and at a time when I just felt people should just be much more aware of the true extent of biodiversity and how the planet was being worked by animals; run by wildlife, by nature, it was actually not very constructive. And what really got me going at that time, was a dinner party that I had in Washington. This was when I was Head of Development. I was going to North America to do a sort of lecture tour, promoting BBC enterprises. And they'd booked me to go to the Smithsonian, Harvard, Cornell, Chicago, and several other places, where I was to do a presentation about the work of the unit, and show some films, okay. And Tom Lovejoy, whom I had known, for some years, because he was a great friend of Gerry Durrell's, who was then chief scientist at WWF USA, knew I was coming over, and said "I've got a very interesting dinner party tonight, when you arrive. You might like to join us, you'd find it interesting". So I got off the plane at Washington, and I was due to give a talk in the Smithsonian the next day. Got out of the plane at Washington, got in a taxi, and went to Tom's, have you ever been to Tom's place in the country? It's nice, nice country place. And this dinner party was Tom Eisener, from Cornell, Peter Raven, from the Zurich Botanical Gardens, Paul Ehrlich From Stanford University, George Woodwell Was it? From Wood's Hole, and I think Ed Wilson was supposed to be there, but couldn't be there. And it was a very **convivial** evening, cooked by Tom, because he prides himself on being quite a good cook, and lots of fun, we had a lot of very good conversation. But there was a very serious side to the conversation and it was just about the time when this group of people were saying look, this is getting pretty serious guys. You know, if we go on like this, the world's going to fall apart within a few decades. And I sort of heard all this conversation going on, and I thought jeez, you know what, did we ought to be doing something about this, are we doing enough? You know, are we doing the right programmes, you know. And that got me thinking about this whole approach about zoos and museums, and I thought well, you know, this electronic zoo approach can help perhaps, address the rest of this problem. I got enterprises a bit interested in it, because they saw a way of using some of the film resources of BBC and what have you. And they actually put up a little money to get the English Tourist Board to do a feasibility study. Which they did, but they lost interest after that, and they said well no, perhaps we shouldn't be getting into this. And when I left the BBC, they said well, if you want to go and do it, do it. You know, we don't think you'll do it, but you

know, good luck, and all the rest of it. So while I was running this company two things happened. First of all, I was approached by IMAX Corporation. Actually, I was approached by IMAX Corporation the month before I left the BBC, by two different, I was approached by two different people. I was approached by the guy who was running the Boston museum, which had an Omnimax theatre, and was running something called the Museum Film Network, which was a group of museums, trying to improve the quality of IMAX films. And I was approached by Graeme Ferguson who was the President of IMAX Corporation, who said, "We want to do more natural history. We realise it's difficult in this medium. Would you do a bit of consultancy for us? And tell us how we might do it?" So, I got quite interested in this, and I signed a contract for IMAX to spend a year, off and on, looking at theatres, looking at cameras, and trying to figure out how we might get some natural history, some meaningful natural history onto IMAX. And at the time, they were making Blue Planet (43), so I was advising a little bit on Blue Planet (43), and we took a crew to Africa, with Adrian Warren, actually, and Dave Douglas, and while we were there, we actually got Hugh Miles and a couple of other guys, to visit us, to learn a bit about IMAX cameras in the field actually, while we were making this sequence for Blue Planet (43). And at the end of the year they said "Look we'd like you to develop some natural history films for us. We might get some money, from some Japanese and others, to do this. Would you form a sort of little, small Unit?" And I said "Yes, I'm quite interested in doing that, but I'm not prepared to do it in Toronto. If you want to do it in Bristol, that's alright". So that's what they did. And in name, they called me a Natural History Unit, and told me to start developing films, and I started developing the Mountain Gorilla (44) film for them, which they had great difficulty in funding. They thought they were going to get a sponsor, and they didn't get a sponsor. And as a result of that they had to, well, they had to fund the whole thing almost themselves, and they were desperately short of money, and the only way they could get more money in was to make it a Canadian film, so they had to move the centre of gravity back to Toronto, in order to get a Canadian Producer, and a Canadian Editor, and all the rest of it. So that was a bit unsatisfactory, but I subsequently got some money to make other films, through other sponsors. And we did have a sort of a, a sort of pseudo IMAX Natural History Unit in Bristol for a few years. But while that was going on, that enabled me to make quite a lot of money, which I could then spend, developing the electronic zoo idea. So while that was going on in parallel I was —

Int: That was your company you were making —

CP: Yes, yes, yes. Christopher Parsons Productions was making money under contract to IMAX. And I was spending all the profits, actually, working to develop this electronic zoo concept. Which I started doing and I got into conversations with the people in Bradford, who wanted to do it next to the Museum of Photography. Then David Jones wanted to do it at the London Zoo. So we had a period of spending a whole year at a time on the London Zoo, on Bradford. Then North Avon were interested in doing it, building a complex at the M4/M5 junction, that went away. Then Bristol Corporation, Bristol Development Corporation were formed near Temple Meads, they wanted to do it. All of these things never came to anything, they all fell apart, one way or another, hours and hours and hours, thousands of pounds of investment, nothing ever happened. And then Bristol suddenly got its act together, appointed a Head of Cultural Development Partnership, called Andrew Kelly, who thought this was a wonderful idea, started promoting this, and then the Lottery Fund came about, and it, suddenly it opened the doors, it might be possible. So we developed this concept in which the electronic zoo was one part of a whole complex [At-Bristol], in which we had an IMAX theatre, a Museum of Natural History Photography, which we had to drop eventually, an education centre, and also the headquarters of another concept that I developed a long time ago, called, now called ARKive, which was a central resource in which you bring together photographs and film and recordings of endangered species. That was always a dream I wanted to do. And suddenly all these things started to come together and we got the money. No, what happened was we got the idea, the backing of the idea, and then we did a deal with the people in the Exploratory in Bristol, who also wanted a site for the exploratory. And the whole thing became a much bigger complex, as part of the harbour side development, and by that time, I had to give up, I virtually closed the company down, and then, and then just started working full-time on the development of the Wildscreen Centre [At-Bristol].

Int: Which brings us, it seems to me, to where we are. Have we missed things that we should have been talking about?

CP: Well, I think the, now, for the first time, I am really retired now. Although I'm involved, obviously as a Wildscreen Trustee. And the thing I care about most now is ARKive, and I think that ARKive will turn out to be, if I've contributed to anything to the cause of public knowledge about the planet, I think it will be ARKive, yes, because I think it has enormous potential. We, it was an idea I first discussed with Peter Scott, way back in the eighties, and the idea was, that you've got all these resources, you've got the resources of the Natural History Unit, of Survival Anglia, Partridge, ABC, TVNZ [Television New Zealand], photo-agencies, a lot of Universities that have got interesting film, and they weren't really talking, they were competing, but not talking to each other. And I just felt that somehow or other one ought to be able to get from all these sources, a central resource that would, if you like, define a species, in terms of the pictures, and moving images and sounds that were available. Which even with the BBC's resources the BBC couldn't do alone. Nobody could do it alone, it would have to be a global, global thing. And we, the WWF UK put up a bit of money, and I got a bit of money out of the Department of the Environment, to do a feasibility study on it. And the result of that was that everybody thought it was a wonderful idea. It had the backing of IUCN [World Conservation Union], WWF [World Wildlife Fund], Wildlife Trust, the Universities, even the image providers all thought, said yes this is a good thing that ought to be done. But it was before digital technology had really taken off and technically it was, it's going to be terribly difficult to do. So the advice from everybody was, it's a good idea, put it on the backburner until the technology catches up. Now, the technology caught up, the Internet was invented and developed, digital technology is available, and suddenly, this thing has become possible. So we got it off the backburner a few years ago, and as Wildscreen got going I started approaching people to try and find money to form a foundation for ARKive to make this possible. Didn't get anywhere for a long time. But then the Heritage Lottery Fund came up, and I said well, maybe we can do it for the British species, on the Heritage Fund. But if we just did British species that probably would be a bit small, why don't we do a definitive British chapter of ARKive, because I'd always envisaged that we would do the endangered species first, but in fifty years time maybe this has expanded, to become a great sort of resource in which defined all species that have ever been photographed, you know, aim for the stars. So after a lot of time, we actually managed to get, quite recently, about a year ago, less that a year ago, the money to do the, what was called the British Chapter, which we've now started work on. We've also now got money from the New Opportunities Fund to do the first, we've got a first half million to do the first 500 species of the world's endangered species. We've now got great support from this internationally, and I'm just about to appoint an international advisory group, which consists of, Ed Wilson has already agreed to be on it, Tom Lovejoy, Tom Eisener I hope, Sylvia Earle, hopefully Toshi Taki... in Japan, David Jones is coming on board, Richard Leakey, to promote ARKive as an international resource. So the idea is that we will do the endangered species from Bristol, and create the British Chapter, but we will try and get links, and we will try and persuade Australia and Japan and North America to do their own chapters. So that eventually you form a mosaic, a network, a family of ARKives and that also, Ed Wilson's got very excited about this, because Ed Wilson is putting forward a project next year to do what he calls is the biological equivalent of human genome project, which is to bring together all the data of all the species, and he sees ARKive as being a kind of, sort of public shop window, I think, of this, so he's got very interested in this, and has agreed to come and give the Peter Scott lecture next year, at Wildscreen. So he's a great supporter of it. So I think this thing is probably going to take off. What it needs now is a rich Texas billionaire to create a foundation in his name, to enable us to put a permanent team in, just to do this forever, you know, to, you know, alright, because, BBC's there now, but what's going to happen to BBC live in fifty years time? I wouldn't like to say. All these resources may disappear, get taken over by horrible commercial things and, rare film of the golden toad, of no great value to somebody who wants to sell OXO cubes, or what have you, therefore, it'll get forgotten. So, I think I'm quite optimistic that ARKive is going to take off in a very big way, and will probably become the most important feature of the Wildscreen Trust, you know, more important than the festival, probably.

Int: Great, is there anything more you want to say?

CP: Oh, I know I could go on yapping for hours.

Int: Well you could do.

Other: You want to write Christopher? You want to write a couple of books.

CP: Yeah, I don't know if I've got the energy, I mean, I've got lots of stories for what's happened since I left the BBC, and people were saying I ought to write it down, I don't know. You know, unless you're David Attenborough there's not a lot of money in, people don't buy books. I mean I'd quite like to do it for my family, you know, I'd write it down for my family, and if it gets published. And I'd quite like to write, I mean I wrote True to Nature (45), which I was under pressure to do for the 25th anniversary, in a sort of, a slightly clinical account, personal, but slightly clinical approach of the history. I suppose one ought to write a bit more truthful account of it sometime, I don't know.

END

Glossary

Back projection: A technique whereby live action is filmed in front of a screen which the background action is projected on.

Brachiopod: A marine invertebrate resembling a bivalve mollusc, with tentacles used for filter-feeding.

Conversion batton:

Convivial: Friendly or lively

Duplicate negative: A duplicate negative produced from a specially made fine-grain print or from a colour positive.

Edge numbers: Consecutive numbers which appear at regular intervals along the side of the negative; as they are printed on the rushes, allow fast and accurate matching of the negative to the cutting copy.

Extronite:

Foot joiner: A device for joining film shots in the cutting room.

Movie stop:

Scanner: The mobile control room of an outside broadcast

Self-blimped BL:

Telecine: A machine which electronically scans film and converts the visual information into a television signal.

Tele-recording:

References

1. *Daily Telegraph* (1855 – Present)



WILDFILMHISTORY

100 YEARS OF WILDLIFE FILMMAKING

2. *Look* (BBC, 1955 – 1969)
3. *AWAY FROM THE NEST* (Peter Scott) (BBC, tx. 17 May 1955)
4. *Peter Scott* (BBC, 1954 – 1955)
5. *WOODPECKERS* (Peter Scott) (BBC, tx. 15 January 1955)
6. *Tonight* (BBC, 1957 – 1979)
7. *The coronation* (BBC, 1953)
8. *Radio Times* (BBC Worldwide Ltd, 1923 – present)
9. *L FOR LION* (Look) (BBC, tx. 10 November 1961)
10. *THE FULMAR* (Look) (BBC, tx. 19 February 1958)
11. *The Naturalist* (BBC Radio, 1948 – 1965)
12. *Birds in Britain* (BBC Radio, 1954-1963)
13. *Country Magazine* (BBC Radio, 1942 – 1950)
14. *LES SEIGNEURS DE LA FORÊT* (Fondation Internationale Scientifique Belge, 1959)
15. *Countryman* (Country Publications Ltd, 1947 – Present)
16. *THE UNKNOWN FOREST* (BBC, tx. 19 January 1961)
17. *Animal Magic* (BBC, 1963 - 1984)
18. *Sunday Times* (Times Newspapers Ltd, 1983 – Present)
19. *THE MAJOR* (BBC, tx. 20 May 1963)
20. *Zoo Quest* (BBC, 1955 -1961)
21. *To Bafut for Beef* – Gerald Durrell
22. Durrell, G. (1954) *The Bafut Beagles*. Penguin, London
23. *PATAGONION JOURNEY* (Look) (BBC, 9 June 1960)
24. *Two In The Bush* (BBC, 1963)
25. *Catch me a Colobus* (BBC, 1966)
26. *Out of Doors* – children's programme
27. *A BULL CALLED MARIUS* (BBC, tx. 10 November 1966)
28. *Animal People* (BBC, 1967)
29. *The World About Us* (BBC, 1967-1986)
30. *The Black and White Minstrel Show* (BBC, 1959 – 1978)
31. *THE LIVING SEA* (The World About Us) (BBC, tx. 23 June 1968)
32. *Private Lives* (BBC, 1969 – 1975)
33. *SIGNALS FOR SURVIVAL* (The World About Us) (BBC, tx. 8 December 1968)
34. *Life on Earth* (BBC, 1979)
35. *Civilisation* (BBC, 1969)
36. Banofsky series





37. REQUIEM FOR MODIGLIANI (BBC, tx. 22 November 1970)
38. *Horizon* (BBC, 1930 – Present)
39. *Nature* (BBC, 1983 – 1994)
40. FLIGHT OF THE CONDOR (The World About Us) (BBC, 1982)
41. KINGDOM OF THE ICE BEAR (The Natural World) (BBC, 1985)
42. *BBC Wildlife Magazine* (Origin Publishing, 1963 – Present)
43. BLUE PLANET (IMAX, 1990)
44. MOUNTAIN GORILLA (Imax Natural History Film Unit, 1994)
45. Parsons, C. (1982) *True to Nature*. Cambridge, UK.

Copyright

All material contained in this document is © Wildscreen or its contributors.

For terms and conditions of use, please see www.wildfilmhistory.org/termsfuse

