

Travelling together

▲ Prayer flags for a Buddhist festival, Sichuan, China.
Winner, First Shot - Festival of Colour: Stuart Beesley, UK

with the GTC: a 21st century Guild

One of the great strengths of the GTC is the way in which it can connect members with a wide range of skills and needs, all of whom may be at very different stages of their career – to everyone's mutual benefit.

The clue is in the name. Started in medieval times, 'guilds' were associations of craftsmen working in the same trade. There was a hierarchy, based on levels of expertise, which enabled the 'arts' and 'mysteries' of the craft to be passed on from the most experienced 'master craftsmen' to the novices or 'apprentices'. In the television industry, for a few decades, this chain was provided by the staff crew structure within broadcast TV companies, but in these 'post-crew room' days, things have come full circle and the Guild of Television Cameramen has a more important role than ever as a modern-day incarnation of its ancient predecessors. The principle of preserving trade skills is still very much intact – only now the methods of communicating include all the latest digital methods: Skype, text, email, websites and social networking. Here is a tale of how this recently worked very well, as told by Guild members who came together to organise a shoot for this year's Travel Photographer of the Year Awards.



I have had an interest in photography since as long ago as 1953 when I took my first proper pictures at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on a borrowed Brownie Box camera. A year later, I went abroad and also flew for the first time, on a school trip to Switzerland. This was pretty unusual at the time but the Headmaster had a Swiss wife so we benefited from an educational trip while he enjoyed a family holiday. From that trip, on which I took a Brownie 127, I won a prize for 'Best Swiss Photographs' – which is the only qualification I achieved at school since I left at 15 to start work in the ATV postroom, a move that kicked off my career in television.

Having an uncle who was a Pathé News cameraman had got me involved with film from a young age and as a teenager I bought a battered secondhand 9.5mm camera, and would cut and splice the film together. Other cine cameras – 8mm, Super 8 and 16mm – followed but I've never owned a video camera.

TPOTY

Some years ago I met travel photographer Chris Coe, founder and owner of the Travel Photographer of the Year Awards (TPOTY). We are both members of the British Guild of Travel Writers and had got on well, so when he started TPOTY nine years ago, I offered to help and was delighted when Chris asked me to be on the judging panel. I have been a judge each year since, an influential role in a major international competition that regularly attracts 10,000 entries from around 90 countries. The standard is always high and I feel continually sorry for those that don't make it. The pictures with real impact that tell a story are the ones that go through to the next round.

Jeremy Hoare, The Master Craftsman

Nowadays this process is done online and in 2010 I could do the judging from Kyoto in Japan. After holding the exhibition at various venues over the years, Chris has now secured a five-year deal with the prestigious Royal Geographical Society (RGS) to stage TPOTY in their Exhibition Pavilion gallery. Founded in 1830, the RGS is a world centre for geography, supporting research, education, expeditions and fieldwork, as well as holding a great collection of travel photography from the past, such as Herbert Ponting's images of Antarctica taken with a plate camera. These are still stunning 100 years later and they would be hard to equal today.

Connections

With a website revamp nearing completion, Chris asked me if I could shoot some video of the exhibition launch party for the new site. Not having a video camera, I declined... but said I did know an organisation who might be able to help!

My first idea for this project was young GTC Council Member, James Fulcher, currently the GTC student liaison officer. I've known James for a few years and thought this shoot might be right up his street and also connected to his current work, as he regularly camera assists on shoots all over the world for Inside Luxury Travel (ILT). But James was just about to leave for an ILT shoot in the USA and the kit was already stashed in flight cases.

Knowing James to be resourceful and well connected, I asked him if he knew anyone who might be able to take on the shoot instead. He came back to me with new GTC member, Adam Singodia, who could not only do it but was extremely keen. Although Chris couldn't offer the full going rate, it was a paid job and just right as a learning experience for someone just starting out. I would have jumped at it if I were in my early twenties!

At the time Adam was GTC member Paul Osborne's assistant. I always read Paul's GTC Forum posts with interest as he seems a very hands-on 'can-do' person. Although we have not met in person we have had phone conversations and Skyped as I sold him a Nikon lens a while ago. Paul very kindly loaned the gear for the shoot, without which it would

not have been possible – another great example of the generosity of GTC members in helping out fellow members.

The shoot

When Adam arrived at around 5 p.m., we were still rigging the exhibition for the 6 p.m. opening. I knew straight away that he was just what I had hoped for – young, enthusiastic and with the right attitude, which is so important.

I briefed Adam on what was needed and the use the final video would be put to (although this was a bit of a guess as I wasn't sure myself – never mind, appearing confident when you're not is all part being a cameraman!). Then I suggested it would be good to use an ND filter to ensure softer backgrounds – but Adam had already thought of this.

It was a nice sunny evening so Adam went off to shoot some establishing GVs as the guests began to arrive, before coming inside once the hall started to fill up. We then conducted interviews with the winners with me as interviewer – a new role for me. Still, I had a nice professional

I was impressed by his ability to acknowledge his mistake rather than try to cover it up.

GTC

None of this would have been possible without the GTC and the very generous attitude of its members in helping one another. The GTC Forum is in many ways reminiscent of the 'crew room' from years gone by when almost everyone worked for a company and there were few freelancers. The conversation, bouquets and brickbats that went on there made everyone aware of their input, contribution, success or failure on a programme. This is now replaced by the Forum and contacts made through the GTC.

In conclusion

On one level, this whole story has revolved around photography of one sort or another – from a plate camera in 1911 to a DV camera in 2011. But the main message is one of connections. As a travel photographer now (and occasional cameraman – I still regularly film ballet in Kyoto for recently rejoined member Christopher Fryman) – I like to pass on what

Passing on knowledge and expertise is something we can all give to those just starting out in what, despite all its faults, is still the wonderful world of television

Sennheiser mic with Rycote for credibility so I looked the part! It helped that for my book *Through The Viewfinder* I had interviewed around 20 people using a Minidisc but nevertheless capturing pictures with words is a different thing altogether.

I started the interviews with a very positive 14-year-old winner from New York, Chase Guttman and in all we filmed about 15 short interviews.

I quickly felt confident that Adam was at home shooting the interviews and so I could stop directing, leaving him to place the interviewee and to say which side of the camera he wanted me to stand and so on. The light varied quite a bit throughout the shoot but Adam coped with everything very well. During one of the interviews, Adam got something wrong and asked if we could repeat the last question. I wasn't in the slightest bit annoyed (even though I'd forgotten the question!); instead



▲ *Lion charges camera, South Africa. Commended: One Shot – Adventures: Marsel Van Oosten, Netherlands*

I've learned through a career that has supported me over the last half century. Passing on knowledge and expertise is something we can all give to those just starting out in what, despite all its faults, is still the wonderful world of television.



▲ Monks watching a solar eclipse on Bemri Mountain, Bhutan. Winner in the One Shot - Adventures category: Maja Flink, Sweden



▲ Free diver shares an encounter with a stingray, Antigua. Winner, Encounters Portfolio: James Morgan, UK



▲ Mosque made of mud bricks, Djenné, Mali. Travel Photographer of the Year: Larry Louie, Canada

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Paul Osborne, The Patron

James Fulcher rang me to see if I could help with Jeremy's TPOTY project. I have known James for some years now; he was my camera assistant of choice until he secured a 50-date tour of the world on a travel programme at which point I had to seek someone else to fill his very big shoes.

Adam Singodia has been his very suitable replacement; a guy with a great work ethic and willingness to learn. So,

it was fitting that I suggested to James that Adam would be ideal for the TPOTY gig. Adam is always keen to expand his experience and I suggested the best approach would be for him to borrow one of my shooting kits, especially as he was familiar with it from the numerous shoots he has assisted me on. I specified the Sony Z7 kit with CF card recorder on the back, hybrid recording to HDV at the same time, plus a simple ME66 sound kit.

James Fulcher, The Journeyman

I was contacted by Jeremy while I was on a remote shoot to ask if I knew someone who would be suitable to film the opening of the TPOTY Awards. As this seemed like an ideal training opportunity for a young GTC member and a perfect situation and environment for a trainee, I contacted one of the first people to give me a chance in the industry, Paul Osborne.

Paul kindly lent his kit to his trainee, Adam Singodia. From all reports, Adam did a great job and was a pleasure to work with. It was a fantastic for me to be able to pass on the type of opportunity that has helped me get started in my career, which I am now a few years into.



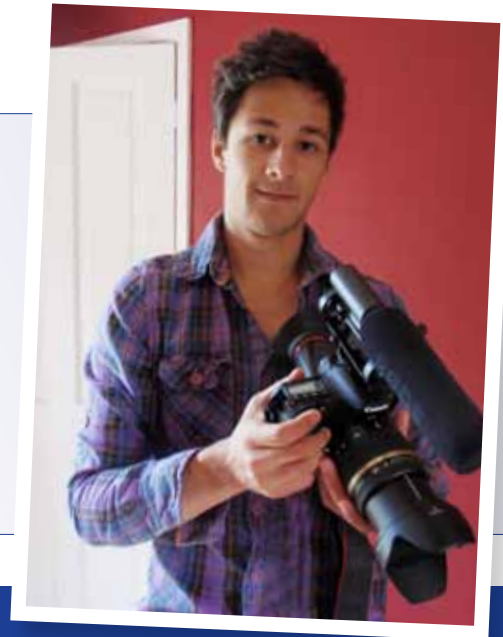
Adam Singodia, The Apprentice

I have been working as a cameraman over the last few months since starting out as a camera assistant with GTC member, Paul Osborne of Greenfield TV. I graduated last summer from the University of Exeter with a degree in film and knew I wanted to pursue a practical career path. I have been very lucky to be given the opportunity to shadow and work alongside an experienced professional cameraman.

Paul kindly allowed me to borrow his Sony Z7 to shoot the TPOTY exhibition, and I then edited the footage at home on Final Cut.

Having worked primarily in corporate video, I was familiar with interview techniques, so documenting TPOTY 2011 was a great opportunity to put this knowledge into practice and I was very grateful to have been given this chance.

I was particularly proud to have worked alongside Jeremy Hoare who allowed me full control over the shoot and I felt confident in delivering the finished version. I look forward to building upon my experience in my new job as an assistant producer at Fresh Media Group.



Fact File

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Travel Photographer of the Year:
www.tpoty.com

Royal Geographical Society:
www.rgs.org

Why join the GTC?

GTC membership will give you:



THE GUILD OF
TELEVISION
CAMERAMEN

- career development opportunities: workshops and training days by accredited trainers
- member level access to the GTC website: www.gtc.org.uk
- free online CV and showreel listing on www.gtc.org.uk
- two issues of the highly regarded magazine Zerb
- four issues a year of the informative members' newsletter GTC In Focus
- expert opinion and advice from the GTC Internet Forum
- prestigious annual awards celebrating the best television camerawork
- discounted carnets and PAT training
- networking opportunities at events and through the Internet Forum

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