Gender and class in the amateur film collection of Wessex Film & Sound Archive

This study asks:
What is the demographic (and especially gendered) composition of the region’s known amateur populace?
What impact did the socio-economic status of amateur filmmakers have on production?
How did the work of individuals contribute to the construction of a regional collective identity?

1920-1950. 38K in collection. 12K Cinefilms. 50 case studies

The collection comprises

8859 16mm film reels
and a range of other amateur gauges including

521 9.5mm reels
1571 8mm reels

The Cine Kodak 16mm camera and the Pathé Baby 9.5mm were the first ‘amateur’ gauge cameras to the market in 1923/4. The development of amateur cinematography sits against a backdrop of debate around how we define ‘amateur’.

AN ARCHIVE BASED STUDY

Methodology

Collection Survey
through watching film, interviewing filmmakers and depositors;
Conducting Oral History Interviews

Survey will provide empirical evidence for

Women amateurs in the region
Amateur filmmaking as vehicle for social mobility

Suggestive findings

9.5mm equipment was cheaper and therefore more accessible than 16mm. This afforded greater participation from lower income individuals.
Female amateurs are more active than popular assumptions acknowledge (in cine clubs and as part of filmmaking couples). Challenging the male, white middle-class visage.