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Creators: Rick & Julia Goldsmith
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UK
Source: Catcher Media Social CIC
Interviewee: Graham Essenhigh (speaker, male)
Interviewer: Julia Goldsmith (speaker, female)
Camera & Sound: Rick Goldsmith (speaker, male)
Producer: Julia Goldsmith (female)
Language: English

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Video Format: MPEG-4
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Aspect ratio: 16:9
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Audio Format: AAC
Audio Sampling rate: 48.00 kHz
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Summary of Interview with: Graham Essenhigh

Graham Essenhigh was Derek Evans' last apprentice, and in this interview he explains what it was like to work with Derek and what he learnt from Derek not just about how to take a photograph but how to capture the person and the occasion, and how Derek would charm people.

0.00

Graham was Derek Evans last apprentice starting in 1987 and going on to have a long career in the press and media industry. Derek used to tell a slightly different story to the one Graham remembers, having recently lost his last apprentice Derek was looking for a new one and Graham walked through the door, a fresh faced 18 year old clutching his portfolio, Derek told Graham that he said he told Derek he would give him the job but Graham doesn't quite remember it happening like that. Derek wasn't all about the technology, he drummed into his apprentices that it was more about the people, to get the picture you needed to understand the subject and the person, Graham says he owes so much to Derek it gave him the best start in his career having gone on to work for ITV, first in the region then nationally.

When asked about his first assignment he says he can't actually remember, it was probably one of the annual events or shows, such as the May fair or apple harvest, these were put into the diary at the start of the year and covered every year so it was probably something like that. Derek also covered a lot of court cases so it could have been one of those but he can't quite remember.

4.00

Graham then goes on to explain the first court case he covered with Derek. The case was held at Worcester Shirehall and he was told by Derek to go and buy $\frac{1}{2}$ doz doughnuts from the bakery across the road, he wasn't sure why. The trick was to go and see the custodian sit down and offer him a doughnut and say 'how about a cup of tea, I've brought the doughnuts', then during conversation say you didn't know where to park and 9 times out of 10 they would say you could park in the court precinct, blagging your way into the court this way would often give you your next story.

Graham goes on to explain how Derek was a people person he knew how to use the camera but it wasn't about the technical ability,

in order to get the best shot you had to understand the subject, be polite and friendly, on many occasion Graham would have someone come up to him in the street long after he had covered a story and say hello, he would be desperately trying to remember who they were, for them the 1/2hour or sometimes up to 2 hours spent taking photos would be a big thing in their lives that they would never forget.

By the time Graham started with Derek a lot of the events such as hop picking and the apple harvest were starting to die out but they were fabulous days captured by Derek for history.

7.00

Asked how he felt Derek adapted to the changes Graham explains that Derek and the studio adapted very well, they were busy and kept on top of things, moving from single plate shots to film and then video. Technology was never an obsession with Derek, he used the new tools available but for him it didn't matter what he used it was always about the core skills, understanding and getting the most out of the subject. You might need to take a different approach when taking a moving image and building the story but Derek's understanding was the same.

Graham feels he arrived at the right moment, he'd wanted to be a film maker since he was 6 or 7 years old and Derek was just moving from film to video, Derek was getting towards the end of his career and Graham was a willing camera assistant, but he never shot anything on film. Videos were cumbersome bits of kit but changes in the industry meant it was exactly the right time for a fresh faced 18 year old to start his career.

10.00

Graham is asked if he thinks Derek's studio was reprehensive of Herefordshire. He explains how he feels Derek was during the 50's and 60's one of the top 6 freelance news photographers in the country. He was in an unique position away from London he found stories throughout the area often finding one story whilst working on another. He captured a social historic record of all the special events and festivals which were not found anywhere else and got these into national press, very few counties will have such a record. This was drummed in to Derek's apprentices and Herefordshire hit the headlines because of Derek and his studio.

Graham recalls a number of people who went before him and worked with Mike Charity a lot who had been an apprentice with Derek. He recalls being at Laurie Lee's funeral with Mike, there must have been over 50 photographers and journalists there but it was Mike's pictures that made the nationals the next day. He had gone across the other side of the valley and taken a picture of

all the press watching the funeral cortege as it arrived at church, this made it an unusual picture and the sort of thing Derek would have done.

15.00

Graham explains how Derek kept a diary and each year would slot in events such as the May fair and the hop harvest and there would usually be annual events such as the Christmas day baby of a fatality or murder on boxing day but these couldn't be predicted. The floods would usually take place in Jan/Feb and if there was deep snow they always knew the regular places to go to capture the best photo and who to contact.

Graham recalls being asked when he left ITV if he would pass his contact book on to a colleague, but he told them it wouldn't be much use, it was just a list of phone numbers that meant something to him, the people knew him personally and it wouldn't be much use to anyone else.

He left Derek at what he feels was just the right time, he moved to ITV where he had a contract for 20 years but he feels that without Derek his career wouldn't have been the same, Derek had a massive influence on $\frac{1}{2}$ doz people who went through him as an apprentice.

When asked about the current work that is being done with Derek's collection Graham says he is pleased that a number of the photos that have not been seen by the vast majority of people in Herefordshire will be shown, the exhibition prints that have been stored away tell wonderful stories such as the one of the coronation seen through the eyes of a small boy, the photo shows a policeman's legs and a young boy peeking through to get a glimpse of the procession. Another shows miners at the Aberfan disaster, these pictures are stunning and record social history he's pleased that so many will be shown together so people can remember the occasion or see it for the first time.