

Steve Gresswell MBKS talks about his production and the success of the Hawick Common Riding Film



BKSTS Members might be interested to know that my company, Orbital Productions, which provides many services, including film making, documentaries and music videos, with video and DVD production for private clients, as well as offering technical training, has produced a documentary film on The Hawick Common Riding, which is the first and largest of the Scottish Border festivals.

To explain about the "Common Riding" - many years ago land owners had to have their land marked where it "marched" (basically where the boundary was) with the property of a neighbour. The boundary line was usually a natural feature, such as a valley, a ditch or burn. Sometimes it was marked by piles of stones or mounds of turf. Turf or "sods" were cut and placed on top of those cut on previous visits. The duty of riding the marches at the annual Common Riding became an important and colourful ceremony.

Another aspect of the Common Riding is marking the bravery of the youths of Hawick at the battle of Hornshole, which took place in 1514, the year after the Scottish Army suffered defeat at the hands of the English at the Battle of Flodden. The English soldiers stayed in the area after Flodden, organising raids which were carried out to make sure that the people of the

Borders could cause the English little trouble. On their way back to their base in England, some of these soldiers stopped at Hornshole to rest. News of their presence reached the people of Hawick who thought that a party of English raiders was advancing towards the town. As almost all of Hawick's fighting men were killed in the Battle of Flodden, the youths of Hawick bravely decided to set off to Hornshole where the English soldiers were encamped, carrying what weapons they could find. The youths of Hawick defeated the English soldiers and triumphantly returned to the town with their flag. The commemoration of the bravery of these young men is now a very important part of the Hawick Common Riding festival.

Each year a "Cornet" (leader) is chosen from the young men in the town. The Cornet must be a "Teri" (the name given to someone who hails from Hawick) and must be unmarried. In fact the Cornet must remain unmarried for the next two years. The Cornet's duties (and those of the other Principals involved) are varied and extremely important. The film produced by me (with my company Orbital Productions) follows the Cornet (and his many hundreds of followers) as they ride around the boundaries of the town, as they perform their various tasks, and as they celebrate with ceremony and song.

I filmed The Hawick Common Riding on Sony VX2100 Cameras. We found



Cornet Jamie Turnbull Receives his copy of the Hawick Common Riding DVD from (left to right of picture) Jacqui Gresswell of Orbital Productions and Steve Gresswell - Branch Chairman of BKSTS - The Moving Image Society for Scotland & Borders (Photo: Alistair Learmonth)



the cameras excellent, especially at low light (we had to film one of the Common Riding's important ceremonies at daybreak and the camera coped extremely well with the change in light). The cameras were excellent in all weathers - and we had to film in high wind and rain on occasion. We had Kata rainjackets on the cameras which were a God-send! The cameramen were myself and my son Chris Gresswell.

Technical notes:

- Editing was on PC and Mac G5.
- The software used was Avid XPress Pro, Sorenson and DVD Studio Pro 4.
- The audio was edited on ProTools and then re-imported into Avid.
- We burned off a dual layer DVD for testing using the latest Dual Burner Lacie Drive - and found it to be 100% without errors and usable as the master DVD.
- Although this film was edited on Avid, Final Cut Production Suite was also used, choosing the software depending on the job.
- The titles on the film were done on Boris Graffiti and the effects were courtesy of Boris FX.
- To keep the quality levels high on DVD we used VBR 2-pass. Obviously this creates bigger data files but the quality is well worth it!
- The DVDs were manufactured by Sound Recording Technology in St Ives.

The finished film has turned out to be brilliant - and is selling like hotcakes all around the Globe! It has been shown at the Salle Rabelais as part of a Film Festival, and will be shown in New York in 2006 as part of the "Tartan Day" celebrations. To see an excerpt from the DVD, go to www.orbital-productions.com and follow the link to the Hawick Common Riding DVD.

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