

A Cirrus Moth A Tiger Moth And two Broughs

“Lawrence: After Arabia”

Lawrence: After Arabia has been a long time in the making. The film was originally conceived in 2010 with the seed planted back when I was a nerdy ten-year old on holiday in Dorset with a Lawrence of Arabia obsession.

This independent, British, full-length feature film follows the last years of the life of Colonel T.E. Lawrence: Lawrence of Arabia. It specifically investigates the motorcycle crash which fatally injured Lawrence, taking his life six days later, and the possible conspiracy behind his death and its aftermath. Chronologically, it follows David Lean's "Lawrence of Arabia" (1962), starring Peter O'Toole, and "Dangerous Man" (1996), with Ralph Fiennes in the title role.

"Lawrence: After Arabia" stars Brian Cox ("Succession", "X-Men", "Bourne"), Nicole Ansari ("Remember Me", "Messy" and "Deadwood"), Hugh Fraser ("Sharpe", "Poirot"), Michael Maloney ("Hamlet", "The Crown", "Trial of Christine Keeler"), with Bournemouth-based actor Tom Barber Duffy in the lead role. The film has a small crew, a tiny budget, a Dorset cast, using "Lawrence" locations, and a huge following of supporters for which I am very grateful.

The film has already won a number of awards at festivals including Best Picture, Best Screenplay, Best Director, Best Soundtrack and Best Cinematography. It was originally slated for release in May 2020 but of course we all know what happened next!

During pre-production, out of the blue I got a call from Adrian Alexander from Motley Film Productions. Adrian has previously worked on "Redcon-01" and "The Flying Lesson" and had noticed we were using Compton Abbas Airfield. I have to say I was impressed by his research! The scene we had planned was called "Mechanically Sound" in which George Brough is asked to examine Lawrence's motorcycle following the crash and is "leaned on" to give a bland report as to its condition. We envisaged that Brough would arrive on his motorbike with Lawrence's bike standing inside an old aircraft hangar. The only one I had found which suited the scene was at Compton Abbas Airfield, which is just north of the town of Shaftesbury in Dorset.

Adrian asked if we were thinking of using any period aircraft for the scene and my first thought involved BIG dollar signs which, as a micro-budget film (less than £120,000), we probably could not afford. My initial reaction was: "I would love to Adrian! I think I would have to rewrite the scene. How much?"

After a long exploratory conversation, we both agreed to speak again. Some weeks later we did speak again. I had had the idea to have Brough arriving on his motorcycle, "racing" one of the aeroplanes and using the other as a backdrop to the set. We managed to reach a "financial

The life of 'Lawrence of Arabia' is well known, but less so are the circumstances of his death as the result of a motorcycle accident on 13 May 1935. Produced and Directed by MARK J.T. GRIFFIN, a new film, "Lawrence: After Arabia", has been shot in Dorset with the aid of some old friends



Above. George Brough, designer of the Brough Superior, played by Michael Maloney.

Below. George Brough examines Lawrence's damaged Brough Superior GW2275 under the watchful eye of MI5 agent John Tyrell, played by Steve Rollins. (Photographs via Mark J. T. Griffin.)



arrangement" and were all clear.

Filming took place in May 2019 at Compton Abbas, an airfield established many years ago and with a flying school and café open all year round. The airfield, beautifully set in the heart of the Dorset countryside, welcomes everyone from regular local customers to visitors from abroad.

In arranging the shoot Adrian was ably assisted by Carol de Solla, a Chipmunk pilot who describes herself as "an aviatrix and purveyor of joy". Carol targeted two aircraft for us and told me:

"Sourcing the aircraft was pretty easy as I am blessed with being well-connected, having been in the aviation and warbird world since 1993, including being very loosely connected with "Aces High", the outfit responsible for the aerial co-ordination on many top-ranking films.

The first two Moth owners I asked were unable to assist with the filming so I swiftly moved on to the next two on my list. I was absolutely delighted when they accepted immediately."

Cirrus Moth G-EBLV is owned and operated by BAE Systems and was flown by senior test pilot Peter Kosogorin with co-pilot David Bramwell. We had arranged for the Cirrus Moth to fly circuits and time her landing in parallel with the arrival of the Brough Superior motorcycle ridden by owner Howard Wilcox.

The yellow Tiger Moth, G-BPHR, owned by The A17-48 Group and flown by Norman Parry and John Baxter, we would use for the background shots.

On the shoot we used a single camera positioned where the Moth would touch down. We set ourselves up for a long shot with Howard on his Brough positioned at the beginning of the runway. With Adrian in contact by radio with the Cirrus Moth, we could call-up a run, simulate a landing, then Peter could go-around and do another circuit.

Timing the Moth's run with that of the Brough was all important but, after only two runs in good flying conditions, we managed to get it right and then undertook four more runs to ensure Simon Lawrence, our Director of Photography, had filmed a good selection.

We then repositioned the camera so we could film the Moth actually landing with the Brough centre shot, and then riding past the Tiger Moth which was posed with her cowling open as something of a disguise. A quite beautiful shot!

We moved the camera again to film the Brough ride into the hangar with the Tiger Moth in the background, and then actually start the hangar scene with the two actors. Steve Rollins was

Opposite page. Michael Maloney playing George Brough, takes on the speeding Cirrus Moth G-EBLV, flown by BAE Systems' test pilot Peter Kosogorin. (Via Mark J. T. Griffin.)





"Look chaps, this is what we will do....." L-R. Actors Steve Rollins and Michael Maloney, Director of Photography, Simon Lawrence, Producer, Writer and Director, Mark J.T. Griffin and Howard Wilcox, owner of the Brough Superiors, one of which carries the registration plate of the machine which Colonel Lawrence was riding when he met with his fatal accident in May 1935. (Via Mark J.T. Griffin.)



playing John Tyrell, the MI5 agent, with Michael Maloney as George Brough, the owner/maker of Brough Motorcycles.

During his life Lawrence owned seven Brough Superiors with an eighth on order. George Brough was a racer, designer, and showman. All Brough Superior motorcycles were of high performance and superior quality. Most were custom-built and rarely were any two of the same configuration. Every motorcycle was test ridden to ensure that it performed to specification and was personally certified by George Brough.

The SS100 model was ridden at 100mph or more before delivery and the SS80 model at 80mph. If any new motorcycle did not meet its performance guarantee, it was returned to the factory and re-worked until it did. The fit and finish was comparable to a Rolls-Royce car, and they were the most expensive road-going motorcycles in the world.

Brough Superior motorcycles have always been rare and expensive; prices ranged from £100 to £185 in the 1920s and 1930s. Since the average annual salary in Britain during the period was £200, only the wealthy could afford them.

Brough motorcycles are now much sought after by collectors. Indeed, we had hoped to get the original GW2275 on which Lawrence had his accident but, sadly, the reclusive owner declined to assist. The motorcycle is hidden away "somewhere in Great Britain" and is now a non-runner.

In the scene we planned we have George Brough riding into the hangar with Tyrell smoking a cigarette casually seated on Lawrence's damaged motorcycle. Brough's bike pulls up and he dismounts and the scene begins. Brough examines the damage on Lawrence's bike showing it had collided with another vehicle. Tyrell disputes it was involved in anything untoward.

One of the challenges on the day was traffic noise due to a diversion, which meant we had to do a number of retakes. Eventually, with the light fading and the time window reducing for us to release the aircraft, we managed to complete the shoot just in time, and certainly to my relief as Director.

A great day's shoot with many thanks to the pilots who gave their time freely, to Howard Wilcox for both Broughs, Steve Rollins and Michael Maloney and of course my crew: Simon Lawrence, Jan Gill-Lawrence, Kirsten Sare, Ingrid Gruppung and Jennie Veale. Finally, big thanks to Adrian Alexander and Carol de Solla who both win the "Without Whom" award. We did it!

Lawrence: After Arabia
is currently due for release in March 2021, all being well!

For more information about the film please visit our website
www.lawrenceafterarabia.co.uk
or the film on IMDB.

Left. Puffy clouds in a blue Dorset sky; the green grass of an English aerodrome and a yellow biplane at rest. The rake of the handlebars on the black Brough Superior produce something of a menacing image....a creature about to spring. (Via Mark J.T. Griffin.)