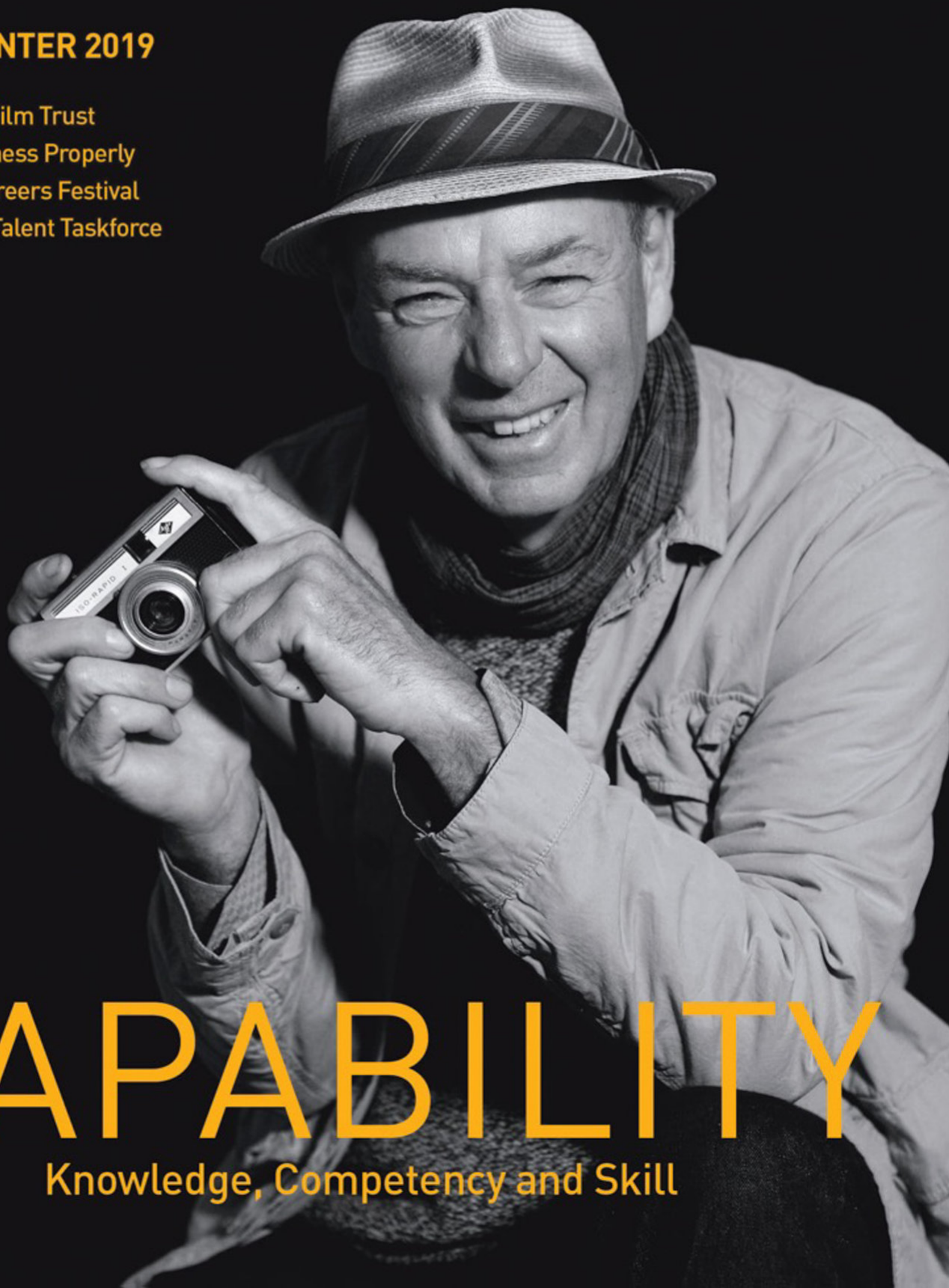


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CAPABILITY

Knowledge, Competency and Skill

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"Since I was a young boy, I have had the capability to sit, wait and be patient with both people and animals."



Martin Hayward-Smith has a lot of strings to his bow. He is most well-known as a film maker and director, but over the years he has added author and small business owner to the list. The common thread through it all, however, is Martin's love of adventure and wildlife.

"I have always lived in North Norfolk.

My dad, Brian, was a photographer for the Eastern Daily Press, based at Fakenham. When he could, he would be on his Albacore boat, and from the age of two I would go sailing with him at Brancaster.

"I had a really happy childhood. My brother Duncan and I would spend our time having adventures in the farmland and woodland that surrounded where we lived, building dens, climbing trees and exploring the darkest depths of the Norfolk countryside.

"I had a real passion for wildlife and creatures, and I would love watching nature programmes, especially *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*.

"In 1966 *Born Free* came out and I can remember going to the cinema to see it. Watching that film was an inspiration and it lodged in my head very deeply, so much so, I knew that when I grew up I wanted to have adventures and do something that involved wildlife and exploration.

"I went to Fakenham primary and secondary schools, and in my teens dad would take me over to Scott Head Island between Brancaster and Wells-next-the-Sea in his boat, drop me off and then pick me up on the evening tide. I would spend my day, exploring, watching and examining."

At school, however, as exploration or adventuring wasn't on the curriculum, Martin's strongest subject was art, which was the only O Level he achieved.

"I loved painting and to this day it's still something I can absorb myself in. When I left school, with the support

of my teachers, I decided to go to Yarmouth Art College. So, with my portfolio under my arm, dad took me along for the interview, after which we both went to my gran's house and waited to hear whether or not I had got in.

"The good news was that I was accepted. The bad news was that while dad had been waiting for me outside the college he had been dismayed with the look of the 'arty' students going in and out of the building and had come to the conclusion that art wasn't going to get me a good job and be something I could make money doing. He told me that it was best that I follow the family tradition and go into the Royal Navy instead."

"Dad was quite strict, and his decision was final. I didn't question what he was saying, I just manned up and did it."

Making a man out of the boy

In 1974, aged just 16, Martin joined the Royal Navy and went off to start his training at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall.

"I was mixing with guys from all over the UK undergoing drill and military exercise training to become an able seaman. After three weeks I phoned home and told dad that it wasn't for me. After a couple of days I got a letter back which just said, "You're either a man or a mouse!" So I stuck with it."

When training came to an end, Martin was allocated to Rosyth in Scotland where he joined the frigate HMS Yarmouth in the Firth of Forth.

"I regard this as my first adventure, getting involved in the third Cod War, a series of confrontations between the UK and Iceland around fishing rights in the North Atlantic. We would ram ships and the third ship we rammed made a hole in our bow and we had to limp back to Chatham for a refit."

While undergoing repairs, the Cod War finished and the crew got wind of the fact that their next tour would be taking them further afield to Africa, Oman and Pakistan.

CAPABILITY



"This news led me to decide to make use of the time available and take a two month Ships Divers course at HMS Vernon in Portsmouth. This was tough training mentally and physically and from the outset it set out to break you and build you back up again. Thirty-three of us started the course and only three of us finished.

"The whole experience needed drive and determination and being comfortable in my own skin got me through. We had to learn to get into our suits and be ready to dive in two minutes. They wanted the best of the best. If we failed we weren't given a second chance, we were off the course.

"One exercise held me in good stead for the future: having to wait patiently for hours on end. To test us for claustrophobia we were immersed in small, deep tanks which were filled with water and soft mud. We had to stay put in the mud for 45 minutes. In the cold and with zero visibility, the only way to achieve this was to zone out, controlling your breathing and keeping calm."

Qualified as a Ships Diver, Martin spent the next 18 months having 'fantastic adventures' diving in Mombasa in the Indian Ocean, as well as Oman and Karachi in the Arabian Sea. However, once his three years were up, he decided to come out of the Navy and at only 21, he returned to Fakenham.

"I was in the Fakenham Crown and someone was talking about Offshore Marine, a company based in Great Yarmouth that operated supply ships servicing the oil rigs.

I applied for an Able Seaman's job on a ship that had only six other crew. The job was dangerous as the ships were often getting knocked and there were lots of accidents, but it gave me the adrenaline buzz I wanted.

"I started in the North Sea, then moved onto Spain and West Africa. The money was great and I was working three months on, three months off."

Fulfilling a lifetime ambition

It was while he was back home in Fakenham on a three month break that Martin saw George Adamson's helper, Tony Fitzjohn, on the TV programme, *Blue Peter*. This reignited his desire to visit George at his camp in Kora National Park in Kenya and help him in his work.

"I wrote to *Blue Peter* and asked whether they had an address for George with no success, so I then contacted the Royal Geographical Society and they gave it to me. I wrote to him and asked for a job. He replied with details on how to get to Kenya and said that I would need to bring food supplies and a crate of whisky with me.

"In 1982, I flew with Aeroflot to Moscow, then onto Nairobi via Entebbe. I then joined a flying doctor going to the Kenyan Bush. We landed on a tiny airstrip a mile away from George's camp. I waited to be picked up under a tree which had a sign saying, 'If lions come, climb tree'."

Martin stayed with George for six weeks helping him at the camp.

As a young boy and growing up with a dad that was a photographer, Martin had taken a keen interest in photography. From the age of eight, he would often accompany his dad to the dark room at the EDP offices and watch the photos being produced.

"Dad gave me an AGFA camera and some rolls of black and white film, so I was always taking photos and I understood how to print off what I had taken.

"By the time I was in Kenya, I had an Olympus camera and I decided to do a photoshoot. I would go out into the bush all on my own, with George's pistol and the advice that, 'If lions come, shoot above their heads. If they keep coming, shoot them!'"

"During this time, I was living among wildlife: bats, monitor lizards, snakes, hornbills etc. I loved it and felt my dreams had come true."

It was also whilst with George that Martin picked up George's old cine camera and started to film him with his lions. This gave Martin an appetite for taking up wildlife filming as a career.

Becoming a cameraman

"When back on the boat, I started writing off to film production companies asking for a job. Then I received a memo from Offshore Marine saying it had been sold. As I had worked for two and a half years in tropical waters I knew I didn't want to return to the North Sea, so I decided to enrol at Southport College of Art to study a City & Guilds in Photography.

"When I completed the course I opened a studio in Fakenham doing commercial photography, advertising, portraits and weddings. However, I was still writing letters off to try and get an opportunity to work with a film production company.

"In the early eighties, Survival TV was the only company producing wildlife documentary series for television. They replied saying that the best way to get into the industry was to get an existing cameraman to give me a job as their assistant.

"I was reading the EDP and saw that there was a cameraman, Chris Knights, living near Swaffham and he had just released his 22nd film on housemartins. I contacted him and went to see him with my portfolio. I told him about my father and my passion for photography and showed him what I had done at college and he offered me a job as his assistant.

"I ended up working with him for three years, firstly on a film about great crested grebes and then one on water voles. I didn't get paid anything and to earn money I kept my studio on.

"Doors started to open though and in 1985 I was offered a commission at Pensthorpe Waterfowl Trust filming

the wildlife there. I then went onto other jobs including being an assistant to Chris Packham."

In 1992 the recession hit and Martin became a luxury commodity. Business took a downturn and he knew he had to hit the eject button. So he bailed and to save face financially, he went back onto the oil rig supply ships for a year.

"After 12 months, the bank balance was back to a healthy position and I could jump ashore. I started pestering others for filming work. I contacted Simon Normanton of Lighthouse Films and he asked me to help as an assistant on a TV series he was doing for Channel 4 on birds.

"At the same time, I had cracked open the door and got my toe into Survival TV. I had the chance to pitch an idea to them. I explained how I wanted to do a film about little grebes on the River Wensum. They gave me some film rolls and I sent them back with footage which enabled them to see my potential as a wildlife cameraman.

"It was an expensive business to get into. Just to make a 3 minute showreel would cost around £600 and that was without the investment you needed to make in equipment. Being self-employed, it was up to me to get the business in. The more I knocked on doors and the more persistent I was, the better success I had.

"Chris Knights, who was by now a good friend, could see that things were beginning to happen for me and as he wanted to give up filming, he offered me his camera and told me I could pay him back as I got my commissions.

"Then I got my break. Survival employed me to produce a half-hour film which would take 18 months. This, together with the job helping Simon Normanton, meant I was kept very busy.

"Over the next decade, I travelled the world doing filming projects. With this brought new pressures as it was my responsibility to bring in the footage, no ifs or buts. The film company was only interested in the results. You would have to manage a budget sometimes up to half a million and the weight was on your shoulders to come back with the goods."

"Filming wildlife requires certain capabilities. You must be able to put yourself in the right place at the right time, to get the right format and the right composition."

"You need to be able to sit and wait and be happy in your own company - the longest I've waited is three weeks when I was filming sparrowhawks. I've worked in some of the remotest areas of the world such as the Arctic filming polar bears and the African jungle filming crocodiles. There is no signal or phones so you're totally on your own.



"Wildlife has never scared me; in fact, the only fear I have in life is the dentist. I can hang out of helicopters or be among sea snakes or crocodiles, but visiting the dentist sends me into a quivering wreck."

"You are aware of the environments you're in and you never knowingly put yourself in danger. Having lived in dried up riverbeds in Madagascar for two years and sat in six foot high cubicles in the middle of nowhere for relatively long periods of time, you develop a sixth sense for anticipating what an animal is going to do and how it is going to behave."

Whilst doing the wildlife filming, Martin was also still carrying out commercial photography, but using the local village hall as a studio.

"My life was hectic and something I had to do was offload the administration of the business and hire people to help me. I didn't want to be tied to a desk doing paperwork. My advice is to get the right people on board and let them get on with it."

"I had also got married and my daughter Megan was born in 1997. From two days old she was in a baby wrap and out with me on a filming shoot in North Norfolk. In her early years she came everywhere with me, even out to Madagascar when we lived in a tent for six weeks beside a cave where I was filming lemurs and crocodiles. She lived and breathed it with me, but the hardest thing was trying to get her to take malaria tablets."

But how difficult was it taking a small child out on wildlife filming projects?

"It wasn't easy. However, it was something my wife and I both wanted to do, so we put things in place to get it to happen."

"My philosophy through life is if you want it badly enough you make it work."

"Megan stopped coming with me when she went to school, but we still had adventures together. I taught her to climb and put her through sailing courses. She is currently studying Marine Biology at Exeter University."

In 2002, Survival TV's parent company, Anglia, was bought out by Granada and they closed Survival TV. At the same time, Martin's marriage collapsed. The two affected him deeply and as he needed to think things through, he took himself off to Oman and stayed with a Bedouin tribe in the desert.

"Just before this I was doing a job for the BBC at Snettisham and got talking to another cameraman. He said he was doing his own film and was hoping to then sell it on to the RSPB. He was concerned that the new blood entering the industry was making it more difficult for those that were older."

"This got me thinking and so, with everything that happened, I took time in Oman to decide what I wanted to do. The result was that I set about starting other things."

Becoming an author

"I still continued filming and I picked up jobs with the BBC, ITV and Sky working with Bill Oddie, Alan Titchmarsh and Ray Mears. I also did *The Living Planet* with David Attenborough."

"However, I took a new direction when I decided to produce a book, *Elements of the North Norfolk Coast*. I needed someone to help me write it and I supplied the photos. I decided the best option was to self-publish. The cost would be around £32,000, but I could make the investment from the savings I had accumulated from my filming work."

"I paired up with the writer David North and we worked together on the book."

"We wanted to be in total control. We found a bookbinder and printer and had 5,000 books printed. It was then up to us to visit the local retailers and booksellers to get them to stock it."

"From this success, in 2014, I decided to do another book. Called *My Year with Hares*, this time around I was both author and photographer."

"The story behind it was that I had completed a film on hares for Japanese TV and I had spent several months in the field studying them in their natural habitat."

"I was back at home and someone came to my door with a leveret. They explained it was one of three. A dog had killed the other two, but this one had survived and would I look after it. So I took it in and for the next four months it lived with me in the house. I have always kept a diary, so I was recording my experiences, plus I was taking photos to accompany the story. Swallowtail Publishing in Norwich produced the book for me, and from 5,000 printed I have only 100 left."

Life is Ticketyboo

Another small business that Martin runs stems from his purchase of his home, Ticketyboo Cottage in East Barsham in 1996.

He had spent several years renovating the cottage and after taking time out in Oman, he decided to diversify. So between the two books, in 2010 he converted the old wash house into a one-bed studio which is now rented out through Norfolk Cottages. Then this year, Martin built a shepherd's hut beside the River Stiffkey at the bottom of his garden.

"I bought it as a flat pack, designed, built and fitted it out myself. I have just started renting it out as a romantic getaway called 'The Bohemian Blue Hut', through Airbnb."

Bringing us to today, how does Martin spend his time?

"I'm still filming and travelling. Most commissions come via word of mouth, email and telephone. People have seen my work and they have the confidence that I have the capability to deliver the project."

"In 2017 I filmed *Australian Wilderness* with Ray Mears, and in 2018 I filmed *A Year in the Life of Sculthorpe Nature Reserve* which premiered in April at Wells Maltings."

Also last year, Martin set up another new company, North Norfolk Safaris.

"I've used a Land Rover for years for filming, so I decided to offer an opportunity for people to join me on local safaris across private fields for a day or two in search of wildlife to observe and photograph."

"Everything I do gives me so much pleasure and I am very lucky, although filming takes precedence and keeps feeding the adventurer in me."

"In my spare time, you'll find me on my houseboat on the North Norfolk Marshes. I also love having parties and for 22 years, coinciding with Glastonbury Festival, I have hosted the *Ticketyboofest* for my friends in my garden."

"Overall, the advice I would share with other business owners and directors is that if you want to do something, then you need to set yourself goals and have the tenacity, self-motivation and perseverance to keep going until you get where you want to be."

"I regard myself rather like a Russian ice breaker: I take it slowly, but I'll get there in the end."

