



Guild of Location Managers

INFORMATION

Filming in your property

You may have met a Location Manager or received a letter through your door and are thinking about agreeing to allow your home or property to be used as a location for a film or television drama, for which we are very grateful. These notes are to introduce you to the filming process and some of the members of the crew that you will meet. Please note that this is not designed to be a 'blueprint' to filming. The process is somewhat 'organic' rather than an exact science and each production is unique in the way that it works. However there are crew members and processes, which are common to most productions.

The initial reconnaissance (recce)

The first person that you are likely to have met is the LOCATION MANAGER. It is their job to find and organise all the locations that appear in the production. In television dramas and films there can be as many as 30-40 locations that have to be found, agreed with the Director and Designer and then administered before filming can commence.

Locations are often found by the Location Manager, driving around the area, looking at streets or areas before finding some likely looking properties. Then it is down to either a letter drop or simply knocking on the door and talking to residents. The Location Manager should be carrying some sort of verifiable identification (business card or letter on headed paper), which should include a phone number that you can ring to check their credentials. If the Location Manager is a member of the Guild of Location Managers¹, they will have an ID card with their photograph and details of phone numbers and a website where you can check their bona fides.

Sometimes the location will be found as a result of a search using a Location Library². In this case, the Library will have carried out some basic checks to ascertain who the Location Manager is and that the project is genuine. In most cases, the Location Manager will be known to the Library (it's quite a small sector of the industry and we tend to know each other).

The Location Manager will want to take some photographs of the exterior and interior of the location to show to the Director and Designer. The photos are not for wider publication and you can ask that they are destroyed or returned to you at the end of the project, but in most cases, they remain on the camera's storage card and are simply deleted when no longer required. With digital cameras, a Location Manager may take

as many as 200-300 photographs in the course of a busy day of location searching³.

Having returned to base with the photographs, the Location Manager agrees with the DIRECTOR and DESIGNER, which properties to return to for a second look. You will quickly discover that each time the Location Manager returns, they tend to bring more people!

The Director's recce

The Location Manager will contact you to make an appointment for a return visit with the Director and often the Production Designer. The decision as to which location to use is ultimately up to the Director, however the Designer is responsible for the overall 'look' of the production and will wish to have a say in the final decision. In period productions there will be further requirements that have to be taken into consideration (noise, pylons or buildings on the skyline, modern fittings inside the property), all of which may have a bearing on the final decision. Modern computer techniques mean that a view out of a window can be changed, but it is expensive and often not part of the budget for a small film or TV drama.

Generally, the Director and Designer will want to wander through the property, imagining scenes being played in the various locations. If the overall 'feel' of the property is right, then the Director will agree to the use of the location and the Designer will make the necessary changes or additions to make it work. It becomes a process of balancing the needs and requirements of the Director against the available budget.

Sometimes a Director will make a decision on the spot, but mostly they will have two or three other locations to look at before coming to a final decision.

The Location Manager will contact you to confirm that your property is one that the production would like to use and to arrange further visits. This approval is still subject to the contract and terms being agreed. A late change in the script or schedule may mean that the production will need to look elsewhere, however let us assume that all is well. If your property is via an agency or Location Library, then the Location Manager will deal with the Library and the Library will contact you (their client).

continued overleaf

¹ www.golm.org.uk

² There are several Location Libraries who administer houses and other properties as an agent on behalf of their clients. The Location owner pays a proportion of their filming fee to the agency when the filming is agreed.

³ Sometimes Location Manager will wish to keep some photos for future use, we are always aware that we might have another project for which your property might be suitable



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The Art Department recce

The Production Designer runs the Art Department. It is their job to provide all the visual artistic requirements of the production. They need to produce detailed scale plans of each location in order that props can be ordered or made, scenery pieces built and the Director can plan his filming in detail. In order to do this, the ART DIRECTOR or assistant will wish to visit your property to measure the areas that the production intend to use and may wish to take further, more detailed photographs of doors or windows that they have to match on a set or in situ.

The timing of this visit depends on the production and the requirements of the location. If the property is an important or major location, or requires a lot of changes or work, then the visit will be soon after the Director's recce. For other locations or smaller productions it may be combined with another later visit.

At this point, the Location Manager is collecting all the information required for filming at your property, including discussions with the Director and Designer as to what changes or additions might be required, which will need to be negotiated with the owners, as well as the practical considerations for filming at the location (parking, administrating the location, council and police considerations etc). We need this information before we can start drawing up the filming contract and agreeing the facility fees and other costs.

Director of Photography and Assistant Director's recce

It would be helpful if both the DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY (DOP) and the 1st ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (Known as 'the First') were available to visit the locations with the Director and Designer, however this is often not possible and so a further visit needs to be organised by the Location Manager.

The DOP is responsible for the lighting and camerawork on a production. It is their input that governs what the camera 'sees' and therefore the 'look' of the film. The 1st Assistant Director actually runs the filming and is responsible for the schedule and ensuring that each day of filming is completed on-time.

While the DOP is looking at camera and lighting positions and discussing camera shots with the Director, the 1st Assistant will be thinking out the best way to schedule the filming at the location (all the scenes on upper floors together, all the night scenes together, any specific location requirements or stunts or weather effects).

The next stage

Having completed the initial visits, the Location Manager will be able to issue a letter of intent. This will outline the current schedule of dates and times for prep and filming and will often include the facility fee that has been agreed with you as the owner of the property. The letter will also outline any changes or additions that have been discussed and agreed with you as the owner. This might include; the removal of your furniture and fixtures and fittings to storage while the filming is in process (though be aware that more often the production will wish to use your furniture etc. and will simply remove photos and items personal to you); possible painting of walls in rooms to another colour more suited to the cameras or production⁴; The installation of scenery pieces, false doors or windows or changes to the exterior of the house.

All the changes will be done with care by industry professionals who are experienced in working on location and are sensitive to the understandable nervousness of location owners who are witnessing the process for the first time. It is important that you keep in-touch with the Location Manager, who is your first point of contact with the production. You will find however that all the crewmembers that you meet are friendly and interested in what they are doing and will be happy to discuss any concerns that you might have with the process. If they cannot help with your particular concern, they will ensure that the Location Manager is informed of your concerns and that steps will be taken to remedy them.

Putting together the filming schedule is like doing a very complicated, three-dimensional jigsaw, where making a small change in one place, tends to have a knock-on effect on other locations and filming dates. It is helpful if you as the Location Owner can be as flexible as possible while all the various elements of the production come together. The Location Manager may need to contact you several times as changes elsewhere, or requirements that you have, have an impact on the schedule. There may also be changes or additions to the script, which have a bearing on the schedule and locations.

A word on the filming agreement and fees

The Filming Agreement or Contract is the legal agreement between you as the Location Owner and the Production. Of particular concern to the production is the conferring of all the rights to the production, including photos and video extracts that may be filmed alongside the main film. This often includes

⁴ The modern use of white or muted, neutral colours in homes is not helpful to film cameras or lighting. The bright whites tend to make the faces of the actors look too blue or washed out. We often wish to paint one or more walls to another, more saturated colour. Sometimes the owner is pleasantly surprised at the result and wishes to keep the new look.



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the conferring of rights anywhere in the universe and pretty much until the end of time or some similar wording!

As well as the expected clauses covering dates, times and amounts, there are clauses that cover the responsibilities of the production and the location owner in terms of ensuring the safety of the location and crew during the filming. Generally the production will require a signed copy of the contract to be sent or handed to the Location Manager before the start of filming and before any payments will be made.

The fees that will be paid will depend on many factors. These include; the size and budget of the production; the amount of time spent at the location; the amount of prep and disruption involved prior to filming and often, the importance of the location in the drama (is it a major character's house or similar, or more simply a street scene or establishing shot?).

You should bear in mind a couple of points. Firstly, that the budget for locations, for even a well established drama or film, is often quite restricted and that a location that becomes too expensive will be replaced by another.

Secondly, that the number of persons that are required to make the film is surprisingly large. A standard drama film crew is about 45-50 persons in total (not all these are going to be at your property), a period drama is more and a large feature film is huge. You need to be aware that on the filming day(s) there will be a crew of at least 25-30 persons in or near to your property. We are all experienced and used to filming in small houses and other locations and have organised ourselves in order to make the process as efficient as possible. It is also part of the Location Manager's job to organise the location in such a way so as to protect the property and ensure that the filming can go ahead with the minimum of disruption.

The Technical recce (sometimes called the Camera recce)

This is generally the final visit before the actual day of filming. It is a chance for all the HODs⁵ to see each location in advance of the filming and make their plans accordingly. The numbers of persons on the recce will depend on the size of the production but will generally be about 12-15 persons. We arrive in a mini-bus and spend quite some time discussing the camera positions, lighting requirements and any special requirements or effects at the location. This is also a chance for the Location Manager to discover lighting positions that might require further discussion or permissions to be arranged, parking requirements for technical vehicles and any specific requirements for the filming.

Following the technical recce, the 1st Assistant Director will issue the shooting schedule and the Location Manager will be

able to issue the filming agreement and make any final negotiations with you as the Location Owner.

Preparation prior to filming

It is likely that there is an element of preparation required at your property prior to the start of filming. This will generally include changes or additions to props or furniture, painting of walls and often the pre-rigging of lighting inside and or outside your property. The work will generally be done during the day or days preceding the filming depending on how much work needs to be done. Part of the prep period should also include some time putting in protection materials to cover carpets and flooring to help prevent damage or dirt during the filming day. Any of your personal items will be photographed in situ (so that the Art Department knows where to return the items to) before being carefully boxed or crated up. In most cases, the items will be stored at your property in order that they remain secure, but in some cases they will be removed to secure storage elsewhere.

The PROP MASTER is responsible for the removal and return of your belongings as well as supplying all props and furniture used in the production. The Prop Master and his Dressing Props Team take great care to ensure that your items are not damaged and are stored safely and securely before being returned exactly where they came from at the end of filming.

The actual filming

A standard filming day consists of 11 hours of work (including a 1 hour lunch break). This usually occurs between 8am & 7pm. However, the 'day' can be moved earlier or later to suit the requirements of the schedule and production. The exact times will have been agreed with you and will be set out in the agreement. The first persons to arrive are the Location team; security personnel to organise the parking of technical vehicles and the Location Manager or Assistant(s) to ensure that the location is open and ready for the Director and crew when they arrive. Often the Art Department will arrive with last minute requirements and changes or fresh flowers to 'dress' the set.

The main crew will tend to arrive all at the same time, just before the start of filming. This period tends to look very chaotic as everyone tries to get themselves sorted out and all the trucks and equipment organised. However it soon settles down and once filming starts things become much clearer.

You may feel that you part of a house party though you don't know any of the guests but you will find that the crew and cast are, without exception, friendly and polite and grateful that you are allowing them to work in your home. You are generally more than welcome to stay and watch the filming (unless there are special reasons why the set might be 'closed'), however

⁵ Head of Department. e.g. Art Department



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you may find the experience less than riveting. It takes a considerable amount of time to rehearse and then film even apparently simple scenes that will only be onscreen for a matter of seconds (all day to film 2-3 minutes of completed film is fast!), so don't feel that you have to stay. The Location Manager is responsible for your property and will ensure that it is safe and secure at all times, with only authorised members of crew or cast allowed on your property. The Location Manager will also liaise with your neighbours and the local council and police, informing all interested parties of the filming and ensuring that your neighbours can get on with their lives with the minimum of disruption. Often they will negotiate parking on neighbours land for the many technical vehicles that need to be parked close to the location. In this small way, your neighbours will feel part of the filming and be kept informed as to what is happening.

Ending filming and clearing up

The end of filming on each day is called by the 1st Assistant Director and is known as WRAP (said to be an acronym for Wind, Reel And Print which refers to early hand-cranked and clockwork cameras). At this point, the time spent getting equipment back into vehicles and leaving the location is not paid by the Production and so the crew will not waste time in getting equipment out of your property and back into vehicles. Generally anything that cannot be cleared within about 30 minutes will be left to the following day and will have been agreed in advance in the filming agreement.

The Prop Master and the Dressing Props team will return, generally the following day to remove their props, furniture and equipment and re-instate your furniture and possessions. There may also be some re-painting of rooms or walls that were painted to suit the production.

This document is only to show what the process is for a fairly simple drama or small film. Obviously there are changes in scale and timings for both a larger period or feature film and a smaller documentary style production. However the stages of production and at least some of the crew will be similar.