

● Jim Abel outside the Parish Church with his Argus C4 camera. He intends to take pictures of Ormskirk as part of a collaborative project with 55 photographers worldwide

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# Jim's travels with the Argus camera

**M**EMORIES loves old things, photographs, and bizarre stories. It's what we trade in week in week out.

So imagine our delight when Jim Abel popped into the Advertiser with a 1950s Argus camera and a rather quixotic tale of a travel diary in which nobody leaves home.

Let us explain . . .

Jim, 66, of Thompson Avenue, Ormskirk, has been a collector of Russian and American cameras for over 30 years.

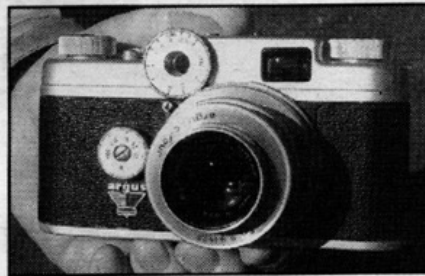
It's a hobby which has found him trawling the internet in search of like-minded souls, and to a website called Argus Argosy.

Argus Argosy is an attempt by a group of 55 camera fanatics from around the world to pass an old Argus camera between them, documenting themselves and the places where they live, in film, to be collected on their website.

It's the brainchild of James Surprenant, a photographer from Mannville, Rhode Island, in the USA.

James, who definitely takes the spot for our longest distance interviewee, said: "The idea for the 'Argosy' came several years ago when another member had loaned me an Argus camera he had modified.

"He lived in Las Vegas and sent me the camera to check out. We thought it might have been a good idea to send his camera to some other club members who might have been interested on its way back to LV. From that I got the idea of the original Argosy.



● The Argus C4 which is travelling the world

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"The original Argosy in which we passed a classic Argus brick (C3) camera around the planet, ended with the camera getting lost in South Africa along with the second Argosy camera, an Argus model A. We never learned what happened to those cameras. So we figured third time is the charm, and here we are!"

What is it about Argus cameras that makes people so batty over them?

James said: "Folks love Argus cameras for various reasons - it was an American made camera that brought 35mm to the masses, as Charles Verschoor, the owner of International Research Company introduced the Argus A in the late 1930s. His firm was a manufacturer of broadcast radio receivers and was looking for a summertime product when radio sales were down.

"He saw the Leica when in Europe and

was inspired. He made an everyman's Leica, so to speak, at a fraction of the cost. Many attribute the Argus A as the camera that guaranteed 35mm becoming the film format it is today."

James reckons the most interesting place his latest camera has been to is Iraq, where Argosy member and coalition soldier Hrad Kuzyk, took a picture out of the door of a Blackhawk helicopter while in flight.

"Why keep trying? Why not?" said James. "It's a lot of fun and it's fun hearing about our members' experiences.

"Jim Abel is one of our active members from the UK and he has brought a lot of 'international' colour to our group. He's knowledgeable and funny and been a great guy to know. Get a good shot of 'Limey Jim' for the article will you?!"

Back in Ormskirk, Jim, also a member of the Ormskirk Camera club, said: "They don't make them like they used to. The ACG's just a bit of nostalgia really. The first one we sent around was called the brick. You can see why!

"I'm planning to go around and take a few photos of Ormskirk. The Parish Church is an obvious one, and then write up a biography of myself for the site."

After Jim has finished, the camera is off to Stephane Bastien, of Longjumeau, France.

You can keep track of the Argus Argosy and see the photos Jim took of Ormskirk at <http://www.surprenantphoto.com/argosy3.html>