

29 June 2012

BFI UNCOVERS “CHARIOTS OF FIRE” ORIGINAL ATHLETES IN 1924 FILM



Harold Abrahams in the lead in **Running – A Sport That Creates Both Bodily and Mental Health (1924)**. Photo credit: courtesy of BFI National Archive

A routine search for footage in the BFI National Archive has uncovered an all-but-forgotten film **Running - A Sport That Creates Both Bodily and Mental Health (1924)** featuring two of Britain’s most famous Olympic athletes, Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell, made legendary by their portrayal in Hugh Hudson’s Oscar-winning film **Chariots of Fire**. With Olympic fever sweeping the nation and a July nationwide re-release for **Chariots of Fire** along with the release of new film **Fast Girls** this is a timely reminder of Britain’s great Olympic heritage and a chance to see two of Britain’s greatest Olympic running heroes. This rarely-seen documentary footage will feature in a 4 minute extract on the BFI’s YouTube channel today.

www.YouTube.com/BFIFilms

The film's full title is **Running - A Sport That Creates Both Bodily and Mental Health** (1924): *Juvenile Races at a Country Sports Meeting, and scenes from the 1924 Olympics with W.M.Cotterell, Harold Abrahams, E.H. Liddell, D.G. Lowe, H.B.Stallard, G.M.Butler and D.McLeod Wright.*

19 minutes approx @ 16 fps dir. John Betts

Bryony Dixon, curator, Silent Film, BFI National Archive said:

"How incredibly timely to come across the real Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell in this beautiful quality footage with less than a month to go before the 2012 Olympics."

The film has been in the BFI National Archive collections since 1938 and was viewed by producer David Puttnam and scriptwriter Colin Welland when they were researching the **Chariots of Fire** story 40 years later. This is the first time a significant portion of the film will have been made available to the general public and features Harold Abrahams demonstrating the correct and incorrect methods of starting a running race. Abrahams is also shown training with Sam Mussabini, and his distinctive lean-forward running style is filmed in detail. The film also features excellent footage of Eric Liddell attending a race meeting and running.

The film was part of a series 'Sporting Life and What Not to Do but How to Do It' which was made by Stoll Film Company.

The film will feature in a forthcoming ITV 1 documentary *The Real Chariots of Fire* due to be broadcast at 9pm, Monday 2nd July.

The full film will be available later this year in BFI Mediatheques across the UK at BFI Southbank, London; QUAD Derby; Central Library, Cambridge; Discovery Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; and the Library, Wrexham

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting the BFI National Archive can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI National Archive/