

Jewish Britain on Film:

A century of insights and hidden histories of Jewish life on screen



From left to right – top row: *The Barber at Stamford Hill*, *Britain's Jews*, *Some of My Best Friends*, *British Union of Fascists March October 3rd 1937*, *Kidstakes*
– bottom row: *Cast Us Not Out*, *The Robber and The Jew*, *Marriage of Miss Rose Carmel and Mr. Solly Gerschcowit*, *The Vanishing Street*, *Mr. Emmanuel*

NEWLY AVAILABLE THROUGH BFI PLAYER

** <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/collection/Jewish-Britain-on-Film> **

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For immediate release **13 November, London** – BFI today releases **Jewish Britain on Film**, a landmark collection of **60 newly digitised films**, spanning **over 100 years**, with films dating back to **1905**. **Jewish Britain on Film** uncovers insights, injustices and hidden histories across a century of Jewish heritage on British screens, bringing together records of Jewish life across the UK, from intimate home movies depicting family celebrations, to artists work confronting the 20th century Jewish experience in drama and documentary, charting changing attitudes both within and outside the community, exploring issues of observance, identity and assimilation in films such as *Britain's Jews* (1965) *Some of My Best Friends* (1969) and *Simcha* (2000).

Jewish Britain on Film is the latest instalment from the BFI's successful **Britain on Film** project. Having previously released online collections celebrating the history and lives of Black British, South Asian British and LGBT communities on film, this new collection builds upon Britain on Film's unique and richly diverse record of the UK's collective screen heritage over the last century. **Jewish Britain on Film** is available **online via BFI Player**, mostly for free drawn from the collections of the **BFI National Archive and the UK's Regional and National Film and Television Archives**. Since Britain on Film's launch in 2015 there have been **over 41 million video views online**, with people accessing our film heritage via BFI Player and social media channels, 97% of which are free. By 2018, thanks to **National Lottery funding** and the support of the **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation**, 10,000 film and TV titles from 1895 to the present day will have been digitised and made available to view as part of Britain on Film, via an interactive map (<https://player.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film>).

Jewish Britain on Film launches at the **21st UK International Jewish Film Festival** with a rare screening of Harold French's extraordinary British wartime drama *Mr. Emmanuel* (1944) at **JW3** on 13 and 26 November (<http://ukjewishfilm.org/festival/21st-uk-international-jewish-film-festival/>). One of the highlights of this multi-faceted collection, *Mr. Emmanuel* is one of the earliest fiction films to depict the oppression and persecution in Nazi Germany.

Jewish Britain on Film features some of the earliest surviving depictions of Jewish characters in British cinema, offering a disturbing insight into anti-Semitic representation of the era as seen in *The Robber and the Jew* (1908) and *The Antique Vase* (1913). On screen prejudice was later tackled head-on, with a number of newsreels and rare home movies documenting the anti-fascist and fascist movements of the 1930s, covering clashes between protestors at the *Battle of Cable Street* (1936) (Screen Archive South East), a key event in the history of the British left and resistance to fascism, as well as troubling scenes of Nazi-saluting crowds at Oswald Mosley's *British Union of Fascists March October 3rd 1937*. The collection also looks at the various ways in which UK Jewry has supported Jews young and old, from those fleeing persecution, *The Wicked One - What Does He Say?* (1934) and seeking refuge in a new country, *British*

Paramount News No.1532 (1945) by providing charitable welfare to vulnerable members of the wider community through education, **Chief Rabbi's Emergency Council** (1947), health and housing, **Cast us Not Out** (1969).

As a record of the 20th century the collection obviously tackles the trauma of conflict and war, but it also shines a spotlight on resilience and celebrating the strength of community. Here you can also drop in on joyous weddings from the 1920s to the 1980s, **Marriage of Miss Rose Carmel and Mr. Solly Gerschcowit** (1925), **Wedding of Thelma and Danny, 11th August 1946** (North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University), **Lynne's Wedding** (1980) (Yorkshire Film Archive) as well as colourful snapshots of everyday family life at work, rest and play.

Through early comedy shorts, rare newsreel footage and local television news reports, documentaries, charity appeals contemporary short films, experimental work produced by the BFI and British-made historical epic, the collection paints a portrait of Jewish life across the UK and Northern Ireland, with films from Regional Archive partners; **Screen Archive South East, East Anglian Film Archive, North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University, Yorkshire Film Archive** and **Northern Ireland Screen** as well as the BFI's National Archive collections. From Robert Vas's record of the 'lost' streets of London's traditionally Jewish East End in his classic documentary, **The Vanishing Street** (1962) including the film's raw material, to an insider's view of local Jewish communities living in Manchester, **Autumn in Delamere** (1969) (North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University), Leeds, **Sharonah Dance and Modern Food Store** (1975) (Yorkshire Film Archive) and Belfast's **Jewish Community in Ulster** (1966) (Northern Ireland Screen) identity is explored within a wider British cultural context.

On making these films accessible to new audiences, **BFI National Archive Curator Simon McCallum** says: "*It's been a privilege to bring together this exploration of the experiences and contributions of Britain's vibrant Jewish community across the turbulent 20th century, alongside the evolving representation of Jews in British cinema. This collection uncovers some painful and troubling moments, and documents times of immense change, but is also full of joyous snapshots of Jewish life in all its diversity, from the secular to the orthodox.*"

Jewish Britain on Film has been **generously supported by the Neil Kreitman Foundation, Shoresh Charitable Trust, John S Cohen Foundation, and Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation.**

Collection Highlights:

The Robber and the Jew (1908), BFI National Archive

A Jew with a bag of gold is targeted by roadside robbers. Like many early depictions of Jewish characters this comic short reflects anti-Semitic stereotypes prevalent at the time.

General Post (1920), BFI National Archive

Wartime heroism reveals the shabbiness of anti-Semitic prejudice, when a small-town tailor becomes a local hero. Antisemitism is the unspoken theme of this romantic drama which depicts many social changes in Edwardian and wartime Britain, including the suffragette movement.

Marriage of Miss Rose Carmel and Mr. Solly Gerschcowit (1925), BFI National Archive

Follow the happy couple from the family shop on Brick Lane to a garden party, where the San Diego Dance Band is playing to a joyous crowd of fabulous flappers and dapper-suited gents celebrating in style.

The Wicked One - What Does He Say? (1934), BFI National Archive

A grief-stricken rabbi recalls life in his home country, only to find that tragedy has followed him to his new life in this evocative amateur film offering a glimpse into the sensibility of Yiddish melodrama.

Battle of Cable Street (1936), Screen Archive South East

Amateur film featuring rare shots of chaos on the streets of east London as police try to contain anti-fascist protesters.

British Union of Fascists March, October 3rd 1937, BFI National Archive

A year after the Battle of Cable Street, Oswald Mosley's Fascists are again out in force. Whilst there are no Blackshirts here, uniformed marching was banned earlier in 1936, the sheer size of the march and unsettling mixture of people including many women, older men and even children and fascist paraphernalia is disturbing.

Mr. Emmanuel (1944), BFI National Archive

Based on the novel *Magnolia Street* by Jewish author Louis Golding, this extraordinary complex wartime British drama was released before the extent of Nazi atrocities became widely known abroad. The film follows an elderly Jewish man

who leaves England to embark on an ill-advised mission to search for the mother of a German child refugee, arousing the suspicions of the Gestapo.

British Paramount News No.1532 (1945), BFI National Archive

Britain welcomes children liberated from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Knowing what we do of the horror and family they'd left behind, these mute newsreel images of happy kids eating and dancing assume an unbearable poignancy.

Chief Rabbi's Emergency Council (1947), BFI National Archive

Poignant postwar appeal for Britain's Jewry to support orphaned Jewish children rescued from Europe, highlighting the work of the London Social Committee, a group of Jewish volunteers devoted to post-war rescue fundraising. The Chief Rabbi's Council was one of the main organisations involved in the Kindertransport, which rescued nearly 10,000 Jewish children from Europe re-locating them in the UK.

The Vanishing Street (Material) (1959), BFI National Archive

Raw images of the disappearing Jewish East End are captured in Robert Vas's rare production material from his classic documentary *The Vanishing Street*, showing images of streets markets, and life in the synagogue. Vas, who'd already made the brilliant Free Cinema short *Refuge England* (1959) would go on to join the BBC where he became a major talent in poetic and often politicised documentary television.

The Vanishing Street (1962), BFI National Archive

One of the best of all film records of mid-century Jewish life and post-war modernization in London. With its back-to-back houses and small shops, the thriving East London Jewish community of Hessel St in Whitechapel is about to be replaced by high-rise flats. The soundtrack intersperses Yiddish songs with snatches of conversation and interaction on the street. Sponsored by the Jewish Chronicle with support from the BFI Experimental Film Fund.

The Barber of Stamford Hill (1962), BFI National Archive

A bachelor yearns for family life. Lonely north London barber Mr. Figg entertains the possibility of marriage, pursuing the hand of a widowed neighbour. Adapted by Ronald Harwood from his 1960 television play, the film is a sensitive portrayal of adult loneliness and desire for companionship.

Britain's Jews (1965), BFI National Archive

Britain's Jews reveals how some sections of the community were receptive to the increasingly liberal attitudes sweeping through British culture in the 1960s. An impressive breadth of interviewees reveals a range of opinions. Made for ITV current affairs strand *This Week*, this documentary captures the variety and nuance of attitudes found in religious communities.

Jewish Community in Ulster (1966), Northern Ireland Screen Digital Film Archive

Production footage for a short television documentary on Belfast's small Jewish population. Depicting social customs, Sabbath preparations, synagogue interviews and questions of community welfare.

Cast Us Not Out (1969), BFI National Archive

The impact of wars, immigration and the breakdown of traditional family structures in the 20th century led to an increasingly isolated elderly population. An emotionally arresting portrayal of the lives of the elderly in 1969, explaining the practical steps being taken by the Jewish Welfare Board (now part of Jewish Care) to improve living conditions and honour Jewish traditions of charity, respect for the elderly and communal pride.

Autumn in Delamere (1969) North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University

Documentary about the lives of Jewish children at Cheshire's Delamere Forest School, celebrating its 50th year. Responsible for the provision of support services for Jewish children with special educational needs in the wider Manchester community, Delamere was an educational pioneer, providing one on one tuition, pastoral exercise, and religious observance, before the closure of its school in July 2011.

Just One Kid (1974), BFI National Archive

A Jewish Eastender reminisces about his childhood and growing up in poverty in the 1930s, and reflects on his complex emotions towards the East End's changing cultural mix in the 1970s, being part of a community now long gone in this moving ATV drama-documentary.

Jewish Pensioners' Controversial Pools Win (1975), East Anglian Film Archive

An ecstatic posse of retirees hit the jackpot, flouting religious laws on gambling in the process in this hilarious local news report.

Sharonah Dance and Modern Food Store (1975), Yorkshire Film Archive

A jovial contingent of the Jewish community in Leeds show how to make merry, then it's back to work at the Good Jewish Grocer, with a fine selection of kosher food. This film is from a collection of films made by Leeds based filmmaker Jack Goldberg, who owned the family Modern Food Store at 80 Street Lane in Leeds.

At the Fountainhead (Of German Strength) (1980), BFI National Archive

A German-Jewish musician seeks exile in Cold War London in this rich and challenging experimental work, made by the BFI Production Board.

Simcha (2000), London Film School

An extremely rare insight into the closed world of Hasidic women through the life stories of a powerful mother/daughter team who live in the Jewish ultra-orthodox community of North London. The film depicts the crucial role of the woman in Hasidic religious life and nurturing Jewish identity.

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Images are available via – www.image.net | BFI > Britain on Film > Jewish Britain on Film

ABOUT BRITAIN ON FILM AND UNLOCKING FILM HERITAGE

Britain on Film is one of the largest and most complex archival projects ever undertaken and is part of the BFI's Unlocking Film Heritage programme (2013-18). Unlocking film heritage for everyone in the UK to enjoy is a key strategic priority for the BFI, and Britain on Film is the public launch of a vast programme of work, which has been ongoing for over three years. Bringing together a partnership with Regional and National Film Archives and rights holder collections across the UK, this work has included a sophisticated programme of data capture, cataloguing, copying to archival standards, meticulous preservation of original materials, thorough searching of archives across the country, new state-of-the-art equipment and digital storage facilities and the transfer of films to the BFI's online video platform, BFI Player.

Unlocking Film Heritage and Britain on Film are thanks to £15 million funding from the National Lottery and the additional support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

BRITAIN ON FILM ONLINE ELSEWHERE

- Selections from Britain On Film are hosted on the BFI's YouTube channel, Facebook and Twitter, so audiences can find and experience it in the easiest way possible
- BFI and regional and national film archive curators have written features highlighting important films and themes on the BFI website. Their expertise adds context and provide new ways in for the British public to find films that illuminate the places they know and love
- Join the conversation at **#BritainOnFilm**

Britain on Film is a project from the BFI National Archive and the UK's Regional and National Film Archives

ABOUT THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVES

The English Regional Film Archives and other National Film Archives (listed below) hold significant collections of film and video material specifically relevant to their regions or hold dedicated collections such as Imperial War Museums, preserved in specialised storage facilities and made widely available for education, research, communities and the wider public.

UEA's East Anglian Film Archive

Imperial War Museums

London's Screen Archives

Media Archive for Central England at the University of Lincoln

North East Film Archive

North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University

Northern Ireland Screen Digital Film Archive

National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive
Screen Archive South East
South West Film & Television Archive
National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales
Wessex Film and Sound Archive
Yorkshire Film Archive

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

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

ABOUT THE BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage.

That heritage includes all time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts a significant collection of filmmakers' papers as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.

ABOUT BFI PLAYER

BFI Player is a ground-breaking video on demand service which offers a uniquely diverse range of films, from the latest releases to the rarest silent cinema classics, giving UK audiences a rich and rewarding digital film experience. The Britain on Film collections are accessible through the BFI Player. <http://player.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film>