



THE NATION'S RURAL PAST REVEALED IN BRITAIN ON FILM: RURAL LIFE

DISCOVER VANISHED RURAL LIFE ON FILM ACROSS THE UK:

- ***EXPLORE 750 ARCHIVE FILMS WITH RURAL CONTENT UK-WIDE***
 - ***DISCOVER BRITAIN'S COUNTRYSIDE FROM 1900 TO 1999***
 - ***OVER 20 NEWLY RELEASED FILMS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND***

NEWLY AVAILABLE THROUGH BFI PLAYER

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#BritainOnFilm

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 Tuesday 24 May 2016, London – The BFI today announces **Rural Life**, the release online of **over 750 films** from **1900 to 1999**, many unseen since they were first shown. The films form part of the BFI's **Britain on Film** project that reveals hidden histories and forgotten stories of people and places from every corner of Great Britain from the UK's key film and TV archives, available for free on **BFI Player** via an interactive map. The archive films will also be visiting over 125 locations around the country for special screenings and events.

Rural Life charts the changing countryside and rural life, highlighting activities, pursuits and traditions still surviving today, as well as customs, trades and skills that have since dwindled or disappeared. Not surprisingly, there is a wealth of footage from **Northern Ireland** about the people and landscapes which give a rich historical insight into the way we lived, from colourful films about life on a farm and old trades and crafts to leisure pursuits and travelogues aimed at potential tourists.

Many of the films were made by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (now Tourism NI) at a challenging time for the industry in the 70s and 80s. Resilient staff adapted creatively to the uphill

struggle to find ways and places where they could responsibly encourage tourists to visit, forgoing the bigger cities and concentrating instead on our picturesque landscapes, earning the nickname the 'Fermanagh Tourist Board'.

Films including *Song of Ulster* and *The Quiet Land* portray idyllic scenes of a sun-dappled Lough Erne and competitive fishing, as well as sheepdog trials in the Glens of Antrim, and a young **Gloria Hunniford** entertaining guests in the Slieve Donard Hotel. You may even recognise the voice of veteran broadcaster **Walter Love** as he articulates the sheer beauty of the Mountains of Mourne.

There is much to enjoy in the collection of Ballyclare filmmaker **Archie Reid**, from glorious footage of his home town's *May Fair* in 1960 to the truly bizarre *Sodom and Begorrah*, the adventures of a priest who finds his new parish in the grip of the most blatant depravity.

Robin Baker, Head Curator, BFI National Archive said, *"These films offer an unrivalled record of our rural heritage in all its richness across the 20th century. It's an immersive experience to watch them, and often deeply moving. People who live and work in the countryside will be fascinated to see how their forbears used to live. Like many other city dwellers, I was born and bred in the countryside, and this collection of films offers all of us an extraordinary and very real social history of the British countryside. It's a very potent portrait of an often neglected cornerstone of our national life."*

The films in **Rural Life** date from 1900 to 1999 and are drawn from the collections of the BFI National Archive and the UK's Regional and National Film Archives, with content spanning the whole of the UK. Anyone can explore Britain's rural past through the Britain on Film map, which reveals films shot in almost every county. Since Britain on Film's launch, over 6 million people have visited the site to discover their country's heritage. With this new collection, there are now over 5,000 films to see online – 97% of which are free. By 2017, 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 be newly digitised and available to view.

Richard Williams, Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Screen said, *"Thanks to the advances in technology, archive material can now be enjoyed by everyone. Our Digital Film Archive team has worked closely with partners including National Museums Northern Ireland and UTV to make accessible for the first time in a long time so much illuminating footage."*

"UTV's reports are a treasure trove of the eccentric and strange aspects of Northern Ireland's people and history. By Tradition captured a glimpse of our farming past for a 1966 television audience, and Lesley Dawes investigates the curious Pub with No Beer run by the Armagh Pioneers."

No one can fail to be moved by the rich and rare discovery of a world almost lost to living memory, but which survives on film as a colourful and nostalgic treat.

UK HIGHLIGHTS

Britain on Film – Rural Life spans the length and breadth of the UK and viewers can enjoy a whistle-stop tour through Scotland's lochs and mountains in 1924, learn about 'Hot Coppers', the 150-year-old custom – now extinct – once practised in the ancient town of Beaumaris (1929), there is also a rare glimpse from 1946 of the now globally threatened bird, the mistle thrush.

Events celebrating **Rural Life** will be delivered across the UK by the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) and the BFI will release a number of films on DVD and/or Blu-ray in July and August. **Sir Peter Hall's *Akenfield* (1974)** traces three generations of one Suffolk family and their lives in the farming industry. **Pat O'Connor's *A Month in the Country* (1987)** adapted from J L Carr's novel is set during a 1920s summer in rural Yorkshire and stars Colin Firth, in his first lead role), **Andrew Grieve's *On the Black Hill* (1987)** is based on Bruce Chatwin's award-winning novel and depicts the life of a rural farming family set in the beautiful Welsh Border country.

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 (2013-17). 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.

- ENDS -

Press contacts

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Film and TV titles and the Britain on Film trailer can be viewed and downloaded via Panther – for access please contact elizabeth.dunk@bfi.org.uk

Images are available via – [www.image.net/britain-on-film/2016/Rural Life](http://www.image.net/britain-on-film/2016/Rural-Life)

Britain on Film online elsewhere

- Selections from Britain On Film will also be 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 will be writing features highlighting important films and themes on the BFI website. Their expertise will add 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.

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

Scottish Screen 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 Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive

Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive contains over 100 hours of moving images about Northern Ireland from 1897 to 2014. Originally launched in November 2000 as part of the BFI's Millennium Project, the Digital Film Archive is accessible at over 20 partner locations (museums, libraries etc) across Northern Ireland. Much of the material can now also be accessed online at www.digitalfilmarchive.net.

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>

About the BFI Film Audience Network

The BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) is a ground-breaking initiative that gives audiences across the UK the opportunity to see a diverse range of films in a cinema setting. For filmmakers, getting films onto cinema screens is a highly competitive business, particularly for specialised films which includes archive, documentary, independent and foreign language films. The BFI FAN aims to change this.

- With £8.7 million of Lottery funding over four years (2013-2017) BFI has set up partnerships with nine lead organisations (Film Hubs) to work full-time with cinema exhibitors, film festivals, educators, film societies, community venues, film archives and other organisations in their regions or nations to boost audiences for film across the UK.
- The Film Hubs, which drive audience engagement locally, work together with the BFI at a UK-wide level to grow audiences for British independent and specialised film. They currently comprise: Broadway, Nottingham and Cambridge Film Trust; Chapter, Cardiff; HOME, Manchester; Film London; Queen's Film Theatre, Belfast; Regional Screen Scotland; the University of Brighton; Showroom Sheffield and National Media Museum, Bradford; and Watershed, Bristol. These organisations and their partners form the BFI FAN.
- The Film Hub for Central East (Cambridge Film Trust & Broadway Cinema, Nottingham) has secured funding as part of the BFI's Programming Development Fund to administer and coordinate more than 80 screening events across all UK Film Hubs including film from the regional archives to engage with a wider audience in a number of venues.



About the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities throughout the UK both now and in the future. We do this by funding the charitable work of organisations with the ideas and ability to achieve positive change. We are happy to be supporting Britain on Film – a significant, UK-wide film archive project, which will make titles from the BFI National Archive and national and regional screen archives available to the British public, offering a unique opportunity for insight and reflection on places, communities and histories throughout the UK.

The Foundation is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK. We make grants of £30 - £35 million annually towards a wide range of work within the arts, children and young people, the environment and social change. We also operate a £26 million Finance Fund which invests in organisations that aim to deliver both a financial return and a social benefit.

www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk



BRITAIN ON FILM – RURAL LIFE NORTHERN IRELAND HIGHLIGHTS

Northern Ireland Travelogues

1976 Benson & Hedges Fishing Festival in County Fermanagh saw some two hundred anglers from all over Great Britain take part – one of the few events that could still attract international visitors (other than journalists) despite the violence and political unrest.

Eschewing the standard voiceover, ***Song of Ulster*** weaves a story from stunning scenery and song. Enjoy diving-board hi-jinks and cruise along a sun-dappled Lough Erne. At Belfast's Victoria Park children show their skipping prowess, whilst a young Gloria Hunniford entertains guests in the Slieve Donard Hotel.

Similarly, ***The Quiet Land*** is a serene travelogue during turbulent times and paints an idyllic portrait of Northern Ireland as “a land where the pace of life is more friendly, where everybody cares and nobody minds”. In contrast to the media images of the time, viewers of *The Quiet Land* got to experience a timeless mystical and mythical vision, delighting in the rhythms of nature and traditional crafts.

In ***Charm of Ulster***, Walter Love is the narrator who guides you through the six counties as you discover the beauty of this land of mountains and many waters.

Land of Ulster covers all aspects of Ulster agriculture – growing up as a child on a farm, the importance of Northern Ireland produce to the local economy, and the introduction of the Marketing of Eggs Act 1924.

Sport in Northern Ireland provides an energetic overview of the region's sporting life, from the Ulster Grand Prix to homespun horseshoe throwing. There is plenty for all tastes including kart racing, golf, sheepdog trials, and angling.

County fairs

Northern Ireland's popular spring and summer county fairs make for colourful viewing.

Lammas Fair, Ballycastle captures many of the traditional facets of the festival, be it the multitude of stallholders selling their goods, or the general air of celebration conjured by musicians, dancers and people playing games.

From 1958, the graceful ***Hollywood May Queen***, crowned with flowers, glides through the town with her delighted young attendants. A bemused crowd watch the jester skip and kick her way to the Maypole.

Horses take over the main street and the sounds of bumper cars compete with the gospel meeting at the 1960 ***May Fair***. Fancy dress and fairground rides steal the show despite the sober song of the

congregation. This enchanting portrait of Ballyclare's annual fete was created by local resident, history teacher and filmmaker Archie Reid. May Fair is just one of his many intimate rural portraits (others include the narrow gauge railway at Shane's Castle and lambs frolicking in a field in County Antrim), but you can also find some of his other delightfully absurd gems on the Britain on Film map.

Archie Reid Collection

Sodom and Begorrah is an amusing fantasy of the adventures of a priest who finds his new parish in the grip of the most blatant depravity. How will he resist temptation in a town where sex, sin and violence are the order of the day?

There are several tantalising versions of the myth at the centre of offbeat thriller ***The Hungry Grass***. Known as féar gortach in Gaelic the hungry grass 'cursed' those who dared to tread on its mischievous stalks with insatiable and perpetual pangs of hunger. Some believed that it was planted by fairies whilst others say that it grew wherever people died during the famine.

And is mythology stronger than history? Listen to children's takes on why they commemorate the Battle of the Boyne in ***Sash My Father Wore***. Whether seen as celebration or propagation there's plenty to make you smile as well as think in Archie Reid's wry take on the 12th of July.

UTV Collection

History comes to life in ***By Tradition***. See the tools in action that helped our farmers win back the soil from the weed and wilderness over generations. Ulster Folk Museum takes its artefacts out of their cases and lets you see them in use. With these rushes UTV captures a glimpse of this farming past for a 1966 television audience.

James Boyce's reports for UTV are a treasure trove of the eccentric and strange aspects of Northern Ireland's people and history. In ***The Dry Village***, Camlough brags six pubs for 98 people but Bessbrook boasts neither pawn shop nor police station. Which would you choose?

What is the truth behind the strange chips embedded in ***Ardboe Wishing Tree***? Will it grant you a wish or cure your warts? Locals warn that anyone who dares to remove a coin from the tree will become ill. With this in mind and a rock in hand, Ulster Television's intrepid reporter Charles Witherspoon investigates.

And enjoy the craic without the temptation in ***Pub with No Beer!*** How can opening a pub help you resist the temptation of a drink? Meet the Armagh Pioneers to find your answer.