

## **WALES' RURAL PAST REVEALED IN BRITAIN ON FILM: RURAL LIFE**



### **DISCOVER VANISHED RURAL LIFE ON FILM ACROSS THE UK:**

- **BRITAIN ON FILM OFFERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE WALES' RURAL CUSTOMS**
  - **DISCOVER WALES' COUNTRYSIDE FROM 1900 TO 1999**

### **NEWLY AVAILABLE THROUGH BFI PLAYER**

[player.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film](http://player.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film) | [facebook.com/BritishFilmInstitute](https://facebook.com/BritishFilmInstitute) | [twitter.com/bfi](https://twitter.com/bfi)

#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. Go on a 1960s whistle-stop tour through **North Wales**, learn about 'Hot Coppers' the 150-year-old custom – now extinct – once practised in the ancient town of **Beaumaris** (1929), enjoy the retelling of the legend of the **Llanymawddwy** bandits and pre-war high-jinks in **Abergavenny**, and soak up a golden harvest at Trebetyyn, near **Cowbridge**.

Robin Baker, Head Curator, BFI National Archive said, *"These films offer an unrivalled record of our rural heritage in all its richness across the 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Rural Life** presents an illuminating and moving record of Britain's changing countryside and its people, highlighting staple traditions like village pageants, farm shows and harvest festivals, Morris Dancers and Queens of the May. Rural Life also sheds light on local peculiarities such as Somerset's Punky Night lantern procession, Bacup's coconut dance or Ardboe's Wishing Tree. There are fairs, fêtes and festivals as well as countless other seasonal celebrations, while that great British institution, the village pub, features throughout. The gorgeous heritage of rural pursuits is captured in films about sporting events. Hunting (and hunt saboteurs) and horseracing feature alongside newer additions like motocross. Idyllic country holidays are captured in evocative amateur films, while travelogues offer enticing sights to lure more hikers and ramblers. There are also films exploring the varied history of farming and agricultural techniques, from sowing to harvesting. These are films which give a rich historical insight into the way we lived outside of big towns and cities, with landscapes and people who could have walked off the pages of Thomas Hardy, Walter Scott, John Betjeman or Catherine Cookson.

**Highlights from the collection of films being made available from Wales include:**

#### **North Wales**

A series of comic dramas set in Llanymawddwy in the 1920s and 1930s: **Early film-making at Welsh camp (1929)**, **Farmer John (1930)**, **Jack Reforms (1931)**, **We Regret (1932)** – the work of John W Meredith who, with his camera and colleagues from Staffordshire, enjoyed an annual camping trip to Penyeulan Farm.

**Gwyliaid Cochion Mawddwy/The Bandits of Mawddwy** – In 1935, John W Meredith worked with locals Reverend H E Hughes and Richard Elis Jones to produce a film which tells the folklore legend of red-haired robbers who were notorious in Mawddwy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

***On the Isle of Anglesey Topical Budget 950-2 (1929)*** – A Topical Budget newsreel from Beaumaris. What made the Anglesey Hunt newsworthy was its observance of a 150-year-old custom - the throwing of heated coins, known as 'Hot Coppers' to the locals at the end of the hunt.

***Land of Song (1960)*** - A short tourist film of Wales featuring 'the majestic Snowdonia range of mountains – spiritual home of the Welsh' and many other tourist landmarks. The film was made by "the makers of Lanry – the bleach that has no equal."

***Highlights of the Royal Welsh Show – Rhyl (1956)*** - It's July 1956 and the Royal Welsh Show is in Rhyl. Miss Wrexham takes the Dairy Queen crown while cobs and bulls are awarded rosettes.

***North Wales, England: The Land of Castles and Waterfalls (1907)*** - A travelogue film, made by London and North Western Railway, which links scenes of towns and places of interest between Chester and Bettws-y-Coed with views from a moving train. The film was originally produced as an advertisement for the LNWR railway and was shown in 1909 at the White City Exhibition.

### **South Wales**

***Cheshire Territorials at Abergavenny (1913)*** – A holiday of sorts for Stockport army reserves, fitting high-jinks between drills over two weeks of summer training in Abergavenny. Title card was misspelt.

***Premier at Neath Gaumont Graphic No. 772 (1921)*** - Mr Lloyd George, who received the Freedom of Neath, was accorded a tremendous reception. A military band leads a parade of infantry and women workers/nurses while Mr David Lloyd George seated in an open car waves to the crowd.

***Haymaking - Trebetyyn, Cowbridge (1949)*** - A golden summer: the Iles family are cutting hay for the first time on the farm they moved to just before Christmas 1948, and a boy wearing a schoolcap is having the time of his life driving the tractor that is pulling wagonloads of hay to the barn. Mrs Iles calls the tired, thirsty workers in to the farmhouse for tea and over the fields they troop, milk being fetched fresh from the cows.

***Merthyr Vale and Aberfan: Coronation festivities (1953)*** - The wide streets of the mining villages are perfect for street parties and bunting, and the 1953 coronation brings everyone out to celebrate.

The Screen and Sound Archive of Wales has teamed up with the BFI on the Britain on Film project. **Film development officer Iola Baines** said:

*"There are some absolute treasures from Wales in Britain on Film's Rural Life collection. Golden harvests, tales of bandits, sheep shearing, beautiful travelogues – they all tell us so much about our shared history and a rural way of life. Unlocking film heritage in this way allows us to share these glimmers to the past with the wider public."*

### **BFI DVD RELEASES**

- ***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. Starring

Bob Peck (Jurassic Park) and Gemma Jones (Bridget Jones's Diary), and will be released on DVD on **22 August 2016**

#### **UK-WIDE ACTIVITY**

***The BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) will be staging over 160 screening events in 129 locations. Full details and how to book these events can be found at [www.britainonfilmscreenings.org.uk](http://www.britainonfilmscreenings.org.uk)***

#### **WALES – SINEMAES:** The National Eisteddfod of Wales

Film comes to the Maes for the first time with a full programme of Welsh language features, special events and archive at the world renowned cultural festival, from 30<sup>th</sup> July to 6<sup>th</sup> August

***ARCHIVE ON WHEELS, Wales and Western England:*** A substantial programme of rural archive screenings across Wales and the West Country will tour Agricultural Shows and Festivals. **Archive on Wheels** will be screening archive films – in the places they were filmed – at agricultural shows throughout the area. **Confirmed dates include:**

- 17 to 19 June – across three county shows in Malvern
- 18 and 21 July – Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells
- 6 August – Oswestry Show
- 20 August – Minsterley Show
- 10 September – Kington Show
- 17 September – Ellesmere Festival

#### **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**

Jane Thomas – [hello@janethomaspr.com](mailto:hello@janethomaspr.com) / 07967 351 827

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

**Regional press releases and press contacts can be found at [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk)**

### **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 the National Screen and Sound Archive Of Wales**

The National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales preserves and celebrates the sound and moving image heritage of Wales, making it accessible to a wide range of users for enjoyment and learning. Its film collection reflects every aspect of the nation's social, cultural and working life across the 20th century, giving a fascinating insight into Welsh filmmaking, both amateur and professional.

### **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.



**Life changing®**

#### **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](http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk)

