



DISCOVER RAILWAYS ON FILM: MAJOR NEW COLLECTION OF RARE RAILWAY FILMS ON BFI PLAYER



Pathways to Perfection (1937)

Wednesday 24th February 2016, London: The BFI today unveils a major new collection of rare railway films for everyone across the UK to enjoy, free of charge. The BFI National Archive and regional and national archives have joined together to release **Railways on Film** on BFI Player, the BFI's VOD site featuring the glories of Britain's railways through the 20th century with a fascinating range of rare and unseen footage. The films in **Railways on Film** are all newly digitised, and show legendary – and lost – locomotives and records of journeys it would now be impossible to undertake. For anyone who remembers any of the golden ages of train travel, whether steam, diesel or electric - or wishes that they did - there is much to enjoy.

With over 200 films this is a major new addition to BFI Player and includes rare footage of some of the greatest steam engines ever built: **Pathways of Perfection** (1937) is a celebration of four British express trains: The Royal Scot, The Flying Scotsman, The Cornish Riviera, and The Golden Arrow. <http://player.bfi.org.uk/collections/railways-on-film/>

Robin Baker, Head Curator, BFI National Archive said: “Many of the classics of British cinema – from *Night Mail* (1936) to *Brief Encounter* (1945) – have demonstrated Britain’s love affair with the railways. There can certainly be no more evocative, cinematic subject than the steam train hurtling across the British landscape. *Railways on Film* brings together over 200 films – many seen in public for the first time – that explore and celebrate not just the romance of the railways, but their importance to the social, political and economic life of Britain.”

Some other curators’ favourites you won’t have seen before give an indication of the sheer variety of the films on offer:

Conway Castle - panoramic view of Conway on the L.& N.W. Railway (1898) (National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales) An early example of the phantom train ride, this beautiful film, shot in February 1898, has a dream-like quality with its hand-tinted colours.

Building a British Locomotive (1905) – shows the construction of a new express steam loco for the London and North Western Railway (which we know today as the West Coast Main Line)

The Official Film of the Railway Centenary (1925)

Newly restored with tinting. The Railway Centenary is the celebration of 100 years since the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway – a grand parade of locomotives on the route of the original track bed with the presence of HRH Duke and Duchess of York.

The Ghost Train (1931) – An undiscovered archive treasure – only 40 minutes survive of this Arnold Ridley feature film of phantom trains and gun runners. Of the 40 minutes only 10 minutes are in sound.

Along the Line (1947) - A documentary showing the growth of, and present-day jobs on the British Railways. Illustrates some of the jobs available including engine cleaner, fireman, and engine driver. Basic locomotive maintenance is shown. The job of a signaller, shunters and the guard is also explained. How the postal service uses the trains to transport mail is also highlighted. The work of the maintenance gangs that look after the tracks is shown. It argues that the jobs are not easy but worthwhile.

Once Upon a Line (1947) – From a series called Model Husbands – offering an insight into the activities of model railway clubs around London.

An advertisement for Rowntree’s Kit Kat – **Model Train** (1957) (Yorkshire Film Archive) Two grown men play with a Tri-ang model train-set whilst their boys have to resign themselves to watch, the boys open a Kit-Kat and offer half to the adults - the only way to get them to relinquish control of the train-set.

A Mug’s Game or How to Squash a Lemon Head (1967) - Puppet cartoon made to deter young people from vandalism which endangers passengers, rail workers and the children themselves.

Holidays with Train Driving Lessons (1979) (East Anglian Film Archive) An unusual choice of holiday, but for a rail enthusiast it fulfils a lifetime ambition, as North Norfolk Railway offer those with a fascination for steam locomotives a week-long experience to work on one of their trains.

Through Britain on Film on BFI Player wherever you are in the UK there are films which will reveal the past of your own area or take you on a journey to places you never knew.

Steve Foxon, curator, Railways on Film, BFI National Archive is available for interview by arrangement with the BFI Press Office.

Join the conversation on Twitter at **#RailwaysOnFilm**

A range of photographs for journalistic use in promoting this project is available at www.image.net/BFI/Britainonfilm/Railwaysonfilm

See the whole collection at BFI Player at: <http://player.bfi.org.uk/collections/railways-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 (2013-17). 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. 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.

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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 organisation 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.

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>



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

