



SCREEN HERITAGE UK MARKS NEW ERA FOR BRITAIN'S FILM ARCHIVES

Master Film Store, Search Your Film Archive, Revitalising the Regions

Embargoed until 29 August 2011. Screen Heritage UK (SHUK) launches on the 5 September 2011 at BFI Southbank to celebrate the culmination of 4 years of planning and work from the BFI and regional film archives across the UK. Thanks to over £22.8 million funding from DCMS, this major collaboration between the BFI and regional film archives across the UK represents a historic moment for film archives, encompassing digital innovation and pioneering new methods of film archiving.

SHUK will also ensure everyone in Britain will be able to find out about their film heritage for free from wherever they live regardless of where the material is held via a new cataloguing and online access drive – **Search Your Film Archives**. Joining forces as never before, the national and regional film archives have created this resource to give the public online access to information about film archives across the UK and is for everyone; from those curious about their region or family, academics and students undertaking research, to film makers looking for background material. Some films will be available to view online.

Through SHUK the BFI will ensure Britain's film history is safe for future generations with the world's most sophisticated new archive facility – the new **Master Film Store**. Containing film prints and negatives from the extraordinary early works of Mitchell and Kenyon to Hitchcock's masterpieces and, most recently, *The King's Speech*, the new store at Gaydon, Warwickshire is state-of-the-art, architecturally striking and been built to the highest environmental standards.

Revitalising the Regions is a programme of projects, overseen by Screen Yorkshire, designed to support significant collections in the English Regions, leading to plans for their preservation and access. SHUK has also enabled the creation of a **Memory Bank** of films used by health professionals in treating patients with Alzheimer's.

The project is launching with the BFI and BBC co-production **The Reel History of Britain**, presented by Melvyn Bragg, which brings the film archive to life in a 20 part series launching on BBC2 on September 5th 2011, 6.30pm.

Heather Stewart, SHUK Programme Director and Creative Director BFI, said: *'Through Screen Heritage UK the film archives of Britain have joined forces to truly take film archiving to the next level. Film is an integral part of British culture and SHUK will ensure that we not only safe-guard our film heritage for future generations but that everyone in the UK gets the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from it.'*

FURTHER INFORMATION ON SHUK

MASTER FILM STORE

The BFI is securing the film collections of the BFI National Archive with a new state-of-the-art, environmentally sustainable and architecturally pioneering film storage facility at Gaydon, Warwickshire. Representing a unique record of our culture, history and identity the BFI National Archive's master film collection is precious but fragile and unstable. Without the proper storage conditions it is at risk of deteriorating and being lost forever. The new Master Film Store is a sophisticated and innovative component in a range of conservation strategies that the BFI uses to preserve the nation's film heritage for future generations. The Master Film Store (budget £12 million) was constructed at Gaydon, Warwickshire, at a disused military installation and uses green technologies to keep the films at a stable temperature of minus 5 degrees Centigrade at 35% relative humidity. These are the optimum conditions to inhibit decay and preserve the films. The building, designed by Edward Cullinan Architects, has six large acetate film stores and 30 smaller nitrate stores in a building of just under 3,000 square metres capable of storing more than 450,000 cans of film. Nitrate film is highly flammable and cannot be extinguished once it catches fire. The building has therefore been carefully designed to eliminate all fire risks. In the highly unlikely event of a fire, the nitrate cells each have their own 9 sqm pressure relief doors and sophisticated ventilation systems to ensure that the fire burns cleanly and safely, and the rest of the collection is protected. The construction of this new facility will ensure the national master film collection is secured for the foreseeable future, using the minimum amount of energy necessary.

Before and during construction the team has had to carefully relocate and accommodate greater crested newts, badgers and bats in order to minimise disturbance to their habitat. The roof has a layer of soil and growing plants to act as

a rainwater attenuating insulating layer as well as contributing to reinstating biodiversity.

During the building process acclaimed film-maker **Patrick Keiller** shot many hours of film footage which is a striking record of the beauty of the site and the building under construction.

Two key collections in the care of the BFI National Archive have recently been added to the UNESCO Memory of the World register: the pioneering documentary films of the GPO Film Unit 1933 – 1940 and the early films of Mitchell & Kenyon c.1900 – 1912 which offer an unparalleled record of British life. The entire collection contains home movies, advertisements, shorts, experimental films alongside professional documentaries and big studio feature films adding up to one of the most significant film collections in the world.

SEARCH YOUR FILM ARCHIVES

The great diversity and richness of film collections around the UK has not until now been able to be easily searched. Thanks to a ground-breaking collaboration between the BFI and the regional film archives, for the first time these film catalogues can be searched for free by any visitor to the websites of the BFI or our partners in the regional film archives.

Based on an open source platform this has been a mammoth task of sharing data and creating new information protocols. Its unique interoperability means that this new tool offers a new way of learning about and discovering our film heritage. A small selection of film material is also available to view on-line and when additional funds are available we will be able to offer more online access to moving image material. In the meantime a wealth of data will be of enormous value to historians, researchers, students and genealogists, with around 330,000 records.

Film archives have truly entered the 21st century with this multi-search facility offering a staggering range of possibilities unknown to a world previously organized in card index files or other stand-alone databases

REVITALISING THE REGIONS

Revitalising the Regions (RTR) is a programme of projects to support significant collections in the English Regions to make those collections more accessible to audiences and help ensure they are preserved for future generations (budget £3.6 million). It covers a vital programme of preservation, collections care, cataloguing

and access work overseen by Screen Yorkshire. Exciting new material has been discovered through this work, collections have been saved and many thousands of films have been catalogued.

Research has revealed that the significant collections across the English regions including nine Regional Film Archives (RFAs) as well as numerous other collections that exist in universities, record offices and private collections add up to more than 480,000 items. The RFAs hold collections of film and video material specifically relevant to their regions, preserved in specialised storage facilities and made available to the public through active outreach and screening programmes.

Examples of critical work being undertaken across the regions include:

- Moving the South West Film and Television Collection (over 120,000 items) to new safe, dry storage conditions and cataloguing over 22,000 previously inaccessible items
- Securing a new base for the Media Archive of Central England at the University of Lincoln
- Creating an inventory and cataloguing thousands of films and making these available to the public through the **Search Your Film Archive** project
- Digitising hundreds of hours of film so these can be seen by the public online
- Undertaking conservation work on critical items at risk of decay and loss to the nation

As well as the core Revitalising the Regions funding to ensure preservation and access there have been a number of other specific projects funded to trial new uses of archive and build new partnerships. These include:

- **Memory Bank** – led by Yorkshire Film Archive – is a hugely exciting project which seeks to embed film archive content into therapeutic interventions in dementia care. Research has shown that older people in this category can become marginalised and excluded from innovation and dynamism in the provision of their care and that archive footage is unique in its potential to resonate with this audience. The project brings together health professionals with specialists in the film archive sector in an exciting partnership. It is supported by partners including Methodist Homes for the Aged, Age UK, Alzheimer's Society.

A series of themed multi layered interactive DVDs and Memory Sticks, providing a smaller library of content for settings where online access is not

possible or appropriate. This will complement a wide-ranging on-line resource.

- **Strength in Numbers** is a highly strategic consortium project involving four regional film archives: MACE, SWFTA, WSFA and London Screen Archives. Between them they cover a total population of 30 million people and a collection of some 250,000 titles based on current holdings. Their project begins the move towards aggregating facilities and functions. By working together they will develop an integrated approach to core archival functions to make best use of existing assets, creating a more sustainable approach to delivery from the regional moving image collections.

REGIONAL FILM ARCHIVES

There are currently nine publicly-funded Regional Film Archives (RFAs) in England. The oldest, East Anglian, was set up in 1976, the newest, in London, was established in 2006. All are city-based and are either independent trusts or companies, or part of the universities and record offices which house them:

East Anglian Film Archive, established 1976 and part of the University of East Anglia www.uea.ac.uk/eafa

North West Film Archive, established in 1977 and part of Manchester Metropolitan University www.nwfa.mmu.ac.uk/

Wessex Film and Sound Archive, established 1987, and administered by Hampshire County Council www3.hants.gov.uk/wfsa.htm

Yorkshire Film Archive, established in 1988, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, based at York St. John University in York, but financially and administratively separate from it www.yorkshirefilmarchive.com

South East Film and Video Archive, established in 1992 and part of the University of Brighton www.brighton.ac.uk/screenarchive/

South West Film and TV Archive, established in 1993 as a private company and based in Plymouth www.swfta.org.uk

Moving Image Archive for Central England (MACE), established in 1995 as a private company, hosted by University of Leicester www.macearchive.org

Northern Region Film and TV Archive, established 1998 as a private company, although it has been hosted by the University of Teeside www.nrfta.org.uk/

The **London Screen Archives Network**, established in 2006, supported by Film London and Birkbeck <http://filmlondon.org.uk/networks/lisa>

THE REEL HISTORY OF BRITAIN

The Reel History of Britain is a major BFI/BBC co-production, coinciding with the completion of the Screen Heritage UK project which reveals some of the fascinating stories and individuals behind key archive films from the BFI and national and regional film archives.

Presented in 20 episodes by broadcaster and historian Melvyn Bragg, the production team have travelled the length and breadth of Britain, from Glasgow to Plymouth, from the East End of London to Sheffield and Cardiff. The series launches in early September 2011 on BBC One.

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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
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of filmmakers and audiences

BFI National Archive

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the largest collection of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films. With specialist storage facilities in Warwickshire and Hertfordshire the archive also boasts significant collections of stills, posters and designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera. We are funded partly by OfCom as the official archive for ITV, Channel Four and Channel Five. We record a representative sample of television across Britain's terrestrial channels and are the official archive of moving image records of Parliament.

BFI Mediatheques

Anyone can get access to collections of over 2000 titles from the archive for free at BFI Mediatheques around the UK, currently at BFI Southbank, BFI National Library, QUAD Derby, Central Library Cambridge and Wrexham Library, and Discovery Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

BFI National Archive Online

Our YouTube channel **BFI Films** has over 300 items which can be viewed online. [Over 1,000,000 views have been recorded for *Alice in Wonderland* (1903) uploaded to coincide with the release of Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*]. Academic access for higher education is through the **BFI InView** project. Schools and educational institutions have access to a wide range of material at **screenonline.org.uk**. This is in addition to paid access at the BFI for other research needs.

BFI Films

12,000 prints a year are loaned out by the BFI National Archive to support the programmes of 800 venues across the UK and overseas and our DVD label regularly issues selected items. These have included the hugely popular British Transport Films Collection series, the legendary documentaries of The GPO Film Unit, the collections of the Central Office of Information, *Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain 1951 – 1977*, *Tales from the Shipyard: Britain's shipbuilding heritage on film* and most recently Herbert Ponting's magnificent record of the Scott's ill-fated polar expedition *The Great White Silence* (1924).