

## ANYONE FOR TENNIS? Tennis on Film, 1903 to 1984



*Earliest film in the collection, 1903, Edwardian players jump over the net*

*Wimbledon Love – earliest film of the tournament at its first location, Worple Road in 1921*

*Ace female pioneers – footage featuring Maud Watson, the first female Wimbledon Champion and Althea Gibson, the first black person to win a Grand Slam tournament*

*Deuce pay debate – British tennis Champion, Ann Jones, on equal pay in 1968*

*Smashingly stylish male players – both Fred Perry and René Lacoste, the players behind the clothing brands, feature in the collection*

### **NEWLY AVAILABLE FOR FREE THROUGH BFI PLAYER**

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/collections/tennis-on-film/> | [facebook.com/BritishFilmInstitute](https://www.facebook.com/BritishFilmInstitute) | [twitter.com/bfi](https://twitter.com/bfi)  
#TennisOnFilm

**Embargoed until Monday 26 June 2017, London** – Game, set, match! On the cusp of this year's **Wimbledon 2017**, BFI serves up over 70 films from the BFI National Archive and the Regional and National Film Archives, tracing **80 years of tennis history**. The newly digitised collection examines tennis' roots from 'real tennis' to the now popular lawn tennis played by both amateurs and professionals worldwide. **Tennis on Film** gives tennis fans a rare opportunity to watch famous players from past and present in a combination of news footage, adverts, instructional videos and promotional sponsorship films available for free, on [BFI Player](#) from 26 June.

Tennis on Film features a surprising on court appearance by the **only royal ever to compete at Wimbledon, King George VI**, trying his luck at the men's doubles in *Duke Beaten at Wimbledon Gaumont Graphic No. 1593 (BFI, 1926)* as well as **iconic tennis players** more natural on the court. These include British tennis and polo shirt legend **Fred Perry**, Australia's multi-grand slam winner **Ken Rosewall**, both seen in *The Wimbledon Story (BFI, 1956)*, and French tennis star and, like Perry, the name behind the global clothing brand, **Rene Lacoste** in *Wimbledon Topical Budget 880-2 (BFI, 1928)*. The collection features female pioneers of the game, who rallied against boundaries and set world firsts, including the first woman to win Wimbledon, **Maud Watson**, in *Wimbledon's Jubilee Topical Budget 774-1 (BFI, 1926)* and **Althea Gibson** in *Festival Wimbledon (BFI, 1951)*, the first black person to win a grand slam tournament and the first black player to compete at Wimbledon. The familiar face of tennis player turned BBC Wimbledon presenter, **Sue Barker**,

features in a 'David versus Goliath' screen moment at just 15, playing against the then Wimbledon Ladies' Champion in *Sue Barker plays Evonne Goolagong* (South West Film and Television Archive, 1971).

### Wimbledon

This year's tournament marks **140 years** since **Wimbledon** was founded in 1877, but it is only the 131<sup>st</sup> tournament, as play was suspended during the two World Wars. The Championship has since become the most prestigious event in the tennis calendar. The **Tennis on Film** collection celebrates our continued love for Wimbledon, the **world's oldest and most famous tennis tournament**, tracing the tournament back to its first home at Worple Road. *Tennis World Championships Open at Wimbledon* (BFI, 1921), provides a unique record of the **final tournament at the old grounds** after which The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, home to the Championship, moved to its present site at Church Street in 1922.

### Women and Tennis

It took Andy Murray 77 years to reclaim the Wimbledon Gentlemen's singles title for Britain, however Tennis on Film highlights the many achievements of **British ladies**, from the first, **Maud Watson** in 1884 to the last champion, **Virginia Wade**, in 1977. Maud Watson entered the tournament alongside 13 other female players, including her sister Lilian Watson, who she defeated in the final, much like the Williams sisters, but the Watsons played in white corsets and petticoats. Watson is seen in *Wimbledon's Jubilee Topical Budget 774-1* (BFI, 1926) at the opening of the championship in 1926 where she is greeted by **Queen Mary** and **King George V**. Other British Ladies Wimbledon Champions in the collection include **Dorothy Round** (w.1934, 1937), **Kitty Godfree** (w.1924, 1926), **Angela Mortimer** (w.1955), **Charlotte Cooper Sterry** (w.1895, 1896, 1898, 1901, 1908) and **Ann Jones** (w.1969) – with the latter competing against another champion in *Virginia Wade v Ann Jones in Dewar Cup Tie* (South West Film and Television Archive, 1970).

Wimbledon introduced **equal prize money** in 2007, but women have been advocating for more just pay long before. **Ann Jones** speaks about the difference of professionalism in tennis between the sexes in the self-titled film *Ann Jones* (BFI, 1968) and asks not for equal pay, due to the different amount of sets played, but for two thirds. In 1968 she explains the disparity of pay was £300 prize money for women and £1000 for men at the British Hard Court Championships in Bournemouth.

2017 also marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BBC's coverage from Wimbledon; with audio broadcasting starting in 1927 and the first television broadcast in 1937. Former tennis player **Sue Barker** continues to lead the TV coverage of The Championship this year and the collection offers the opportunity to see her play early in her career at age 15 and also in one of her last professional matches *Sue Barker competing in Torquay* (South West Film and Television Archive, 1984).

### Amateur tennis

In the collection Sue Barker speaks of her introduction to tennis through school, this is often the case for many budding young players. *Short Tennis for Children* (East Anglian Film Archive, 1979) takes a nostalgic look at children playing the adapted 'short tennis' – a scaled down version of the game – using a lighter plastic racket and sponge balls. For aspiring players of the full scale game, the instructional video *How to Improve Your Play* (BFI, 1947) offers pro tips from Fred Perry's previous doubles partner Pat Hughes, from how to hold a racket and move around the court to the different techniques of hitting the ball. And for those that struggle with hand eye coordination, take a leaf out of the Passmore family's book in *Jumping over Tennis Net* (BFI, 1903), the **earliest film in the collection**.

### Fashion

The tournament is a fantastic opportunity for people-watching, looking both for famous faces in the crowd, to the most stylish audience members and players alike. The collection reflects the **impact of tennis on fashion** over the decades, both on and off court. For example *Detachable Dress for Sportswomen Topical Budget 760-2* (BFI, 1926) was the height of sportswear innovation allowing female players to manoeuvre around the court while maintaining the demure standard of clothing appropriate for 1926. Off court however you can see the tennis stars's level of glamour in 1922 with French tennis celebrity **Suzanne Lenglen**. In the film *Tennis and How to Play It* (BFI, 1922) she is greeted by autograph hunters whilst draped in a fur coat. *Teddy Tinling Fashions for Wimbledon* (East Anglian Film Archive, 1971) sees on court fashion

move swiftly on with designs made from modern fibres and much shorter hemlines. The dresses are modelled by a line-up of tennis pros as well as designed by yet another ex-tennis pro, **Teddy Tinling**.

### Sponsorship

Tennis on Film charts the role and increased presence of sponsorship over the years with a series of promotional films and advertising produced by leading sponsors, there's Dunlop in *How to Improve Your Play* (BFI, 1947), Slazenger in *Colourful Wimbledon* (BFI, 1954), and even a full tennis circuit was named and sponsored by Dewar, the Scottish Whisky firm, as seen in *Virginia Wade v Ann Jones in Dewar Cup Tie* (South West Film and Television Archive, 1970).

### List of collection highlights:

1. ***The Wimbledon Story* (BFI, 1956):** Tennis great Fred Perry guides viewers from the beginnings of lawn tennis and Wimbledon in the 1870s through some of the great finals and up to the preparations for the 1956 championship.
2. ***Colourful Wimbledon* (BFI, 1954):** This colour film follows the cast of thousands that contributed to the experience of the 1954 Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships - from the groundsmen preparing the courts to the spectators soaking up the atmosphere off the courts as well as enjoying the tennis.
3. ***Wimbledon's Jubilee Topical Budget 774-1* (BFI, 1926):** The celebration of 50 years of the Lawn Tennis Championships at Wimbledon. King George V and Queen Mary present commemorative medals to former Champions including Jean Borotra, Maud Watson, and Suzanne Lenglen.
4. ***Festival Wimbledon* (BFI, 1951):** This lovely Slazenger sponsored highlights package from the 1951 Wimbledon championships has its fair share of memorable moments, most notably the first appearance at Wimbledon by a black player, future champion Althea Gibson.
5. ***Duke Beaten at Wimbledon Gaumont Graphic No. 1593* (BFI, 1926):** The Duke of York, the future King George VI, attempts to rule the courts at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships. Not surprisingly, the cameraman has little interest in subjects other than the Duke - and the Duchess of York watching from the stands.
6. ***Tennis World Championships Open at Wimbledon* (BFI, 1921):** Worple Road staged the first Wimbledon open championships in 1878, but by 1921 the ground was proving too small and the tournament moved to its present site in 1922. This film shows that final tournament at the old ground.
7. ***Sue Barker plays Evonne Goolagong* (South West Film & Television Archive, 1971):** Sue Barker and Evonne Goolagong compete in a Dewar Cup tie in Torquay. Including interviews with a fifteen-year old Sue Barker as she takes on the Wimbledon Champion.
8. ***Short Tennis for Children* (East Anglian Film Archive, 1979):** Sports journalist Steve Rider reports for Anglia Television in Norwich where young sports enthusiasts are playing short tennis, a new scaled down version of the game, using a lighter plastic tennis racket and a sponge ball.
9. ***How to Improve Your Play* (BFI, 1947):** Patrick 'Pat' Hughes shows how to become a better tennis player - the film shows Pat in action in the 1933 Davis Cup final against the French, where he teamed up with Fred Perry, Bunny Austin and Harry Lee to form a winning side.
10. ***Detachable Dress for Sportswomen Topical Budget 760-2* (BFI, 1926):** This Topical Budget newsreel item puts the new kit - really just baggy shorts with extra fabric attached - through its paces, with models showing off the full range of motion it allows.

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Images are available via – [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) | BFI > Britain on Film > Tennis 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. 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 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 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>