



PRESS RELEASE FEBRUARY 2012

12/11

The Cinematic Race to the South Pole At BFI Southbank in March 2012



2012 marks the centenary of the death of famed Antarctic explorer **Captain Scott**. In commemoration, **BFI Southbank** presents three specially curated programmes of archive material that presents the cinematic record of the race for the South Pole. Audiences will be offered another opportunity to see the **BFI National Archive's** critically acclaimed major restoration of **The Great White Silence** (1924) that charts **Captain Robert Scott's** fateful last expedition that will be packaged with a selection of rarely seen news footage of the expedition from **1912-13**.

The programme also focuses on two other of the important figures in Antarctic exploration of the era, **Ernest Shackleton** and **Roald Amundsen**. Frank Hurley's extraordinary **South** (1919) documents Shackleton's final expedition that will be screened alongside rare footage of the expedition and the huge crowds that gathered for his lying in state in Uruguay, whilst the National Library of Norway's restoration of the almost unknown expedition footage of the man who first reached the Pole, **Roald Amundsen**, will be presented alongside a further selection of archive material from the less-well-known expeditions of the Scots, the Australians and the Japanese that will offer an unrivalled insight into many of the trials and triumphs of Antarctic exploration in the early 20th Century.

The 'heroic era' of Antarctic exploration – from the 1890s to the death of Shackleton in 1922 – coincided with the development of filmmaking practice and the rise of commercial cinema. Many polar explorers saw potential in using this new technology and their sponsors saw the huge entertainment value of such a record. The story of these films has as much to tell us about the development of the film business as it does about the extraordinary achievements of the first polar explorers and their pioneering cameramen.

On the release of **The Great White Silence** in 1924 The Times wrote: *'One of the greatest achievements of the Kinematograph to-date has been to make Captain Scott's expedition imperishable. The story of Scott's death will, of course, be told as long as the English language is spoken, but it is wonderful to think also that 100 or*

500 years hence future generations will be able to see this pictorial record and gaze upon Scott and his comrades trudging over the ice to glorious death. It is to be hoped that Mr Ponting's own share in obtaining this record for posterity will not be overlooked'. The restoration of Ponting's silent film goes a long way to achieving that wish; appropriately, just as his original camera negatives head back to sub-zero temperatures in the BFI's new vaults.

- Ends -

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Programme One: Amundsen and the Others

Our first programme focuses on Roald Amundsen and the little-seen film **Roald Amundsens Sydpolsferd** (1910-12), restored by the Norwegian Film Institute and here playing in context with a selection of surviving fragments from films of the expeditions of William Speirs Bruce in 1902-4 (**The Scottish Antarctic Expedition**), Shackleton in 1908-9 (**Departure of the British Antarctic Expedition from Lyttelton, NZ 1st Jan 1908**), the Japanese Shirase in 1911 (**Nihon Nankyoku Tanken**), and a work in progress to recreate cinematographer Frank Hurley's original lecture on the Mawson Australian Antarctic Expedition 1910-12.

With introduction by Bryony Dixon and live piano accompaniment

Wed 14 March 18:20 NFT3

Programme Two: Scott

Memorial Service at St. Paul's Cathedral to the Antarctic Heroes (Pathé Animated Gazette, UK 1913, 1min) + **Captain Scott and Dr Wilson with 'Nobby' the Pony** (Gaumont Graphic, UK 1912, 1min) + **Cardiff: The Ship 'Terra Nova' Leaving Harbour Towards the South Pole** (Pathé Animated Gazette, UK 1912, 1min) + **The Great White Silence** (UK 1924, dir Herbert Ponting, 106min. Digital) To commemorate the centenary of the death of Scott and his companions we present Herbert Ponting's moving tribute **The Great White Silence** (1924), together with newsreels of the time showing how contemporary audiences followed the momentous news from the planet's last unexplored continent.

Introduced by Bryony Dixon

Wed 21 March 18:30 NFT1

Programme Three: Shackleton

South – Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic (UK 1919, dir Frank Hurley, 72min) + **El Homenaje del Uruguay a los Restos de Sir Ernest Shackleton** (Uruguay 1922, dir Henry Maurice, 10min, Spanish intertitles) + **Southward on the 'Quest'** (UK 1922, extract, c5min). Live piano accompaniment

Of all the heroic age Antarctic explorers, Shackleton seems to have the most enduring popular appeal. Almost nothing of the film from the Nimrod expedition which inspired Scott and Amundsen seems to survive, but we do have Frank Hurley's extraordinary document **South** (1919) which we will be showing with rare footage of Shackleton's last expedition and the huge crowds gathered for his lying in state in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Introduced by Bryony Dixon

Thu 22 March 20:40 NFT2

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 Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £9.50, concs £6.75 Members pay £1.50 less on any ticket. Website www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

BFI Filmstore

The BFI Filmstore is stocked and staffed by BFI experts with over 1,200 book titles and 1,000 DVDs to choose from, including hundreds of acclaimed books and DVDs produced by the BFI.

The benugo bar & kitchen

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI Southbank /