



DVD press release

Off the Beaten Track

The British Transport Films Collection Volume Five

Off the Beaten Track, the fifth release in the BFI's digitally re-mastered double-disc DVD series of British Transport Films takes a look on this occasion at the films that were not (with one exception) directly about railways.

The BTF unit was created to serve the Transport Commission as a whole and many of the fifteen films featured here promote the pleasure of both the natural world and the built environment around us. It didn't matter whether you travelled by train, tube, bus, coach or by sea – nationalised transport could take you there and home again afterwards.

As with all BTF's promotional films, the indirect message was that transport could serve as a means to an end. The end might be a medieval city or town, a slice of peaceful, picturesque countryside, the Highlands of Scotland or an endless coastline of undisturbed beaches and rock pools. If a change of scene was on the cards, then British transport could deal with it.

Films included on this release earned BTF some of its highest accolades, including an Oscar for *Wild Wings* (Best short live action subject in 1966) and Oscar nominations for *Journey into Spring* (1957) and *Between the Tides* (1958). Among the rare gems here are *The Scene from Melbury House* and *An Artist Looks At Churches*.

All these films are now preserved in the BFI National Archive. They have been digitally re-mastered for this collection, which will fascinate not only transport enthusiasts but also fans of historical British documentary filmmaking. A colour booklet containing an introduction and film notes by BTF historian Steven Foxon who programmes this series accompanies the discs. **NB. Steven Foxon is available for interview.**

Disc one

Ocean Terminal (1952)
Dodging the Column (1952)
Link Span (1956)
Every Valley (1957)
Journey into Spring (1957)
Between the Tides (1958)
Giant Load (1958)

Disc two

They Take the High Road (1960)
Wild Highlands (1961)
Wild Wings (1965)
An Artist Looks at Churches (1959)
Railways For Ever! (1970)
The Scene From Melbury House (1972)
Age of Invention (1975)
Seaspeed Express (1980)

Release date: 25 June 2007

RRP £19.99 / cat. no. BFIVD744 / cert E

UK / 1952-1980 / black and white, and colour / 304 mins / Ratio 1.33:1

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Notes to editors

About British Transport Films

British Transport Films are one of the largest and most impressive collections of documentary films in Britain and form one of the jewels of the BFI National Film Archive. These fascinating films entertain just as much as they inform and will appeal equally to film historians, transport enthusiasts and anyone wishing to catch a rare glimpse of a Britain rapidly vanishing from the present day.

Following the post-war thirst for visual teaching and educational entertainment and the nationalisation of transport in 1948, the British Transport Commission set up its own in-house film production and distribution unit in 1949. Over a period of 37 years, until its closure in 1986, it made over 700 films promoting travel on Britain's railways or providing technical instruction.

Edgar Anstey OBE, one of the pioneers of British documentary films, led the BTF unit for 25 years and it occupied a prestigious position alongside the Shell Film Unit and the National Coal Board Film Unit, winning over 200 film awards including an Oscar® in 1966.

Following the nationalisation of transport in 1948, the British Transport Commission set up its own in-house film production unit. Launched in 1949, and led for 25 years by Edgar Anstey – a founding father of the British documentary movement – it became one of the largest industrial film units in Britain.

About BFI DVDs

BFI DVDs are available from the Filmstore at BFI Southbank, all good DVD retailers, by mail order from 0845 458 9910 or online at www.bfi.org.uk/video

About the BFI

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archive, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you. To find out more go to www.bfi.org.uk