



DVD press release

The Art of Travel

The British Transport Films Collection Volume Six

The Art of Travel, the new volume of British Transport Films digitally re-mastered and released on double-disc DVD – over 3½ hours of footage – looks at the travel documentaries produced to entice and encourage the audience into taking a trip to one of Britain’s greatest beauty spots.

Back in the 1950s and 1960s it was still a rare thing for British families to venture very far a field. The foreign package holiday and even the family motoring holiday had not yet caught on, so it was quite usual to begin planning your holiday by calling at your local railway station.

Not only could the Transport Commission convey you and your family – they could also collect your luggage in advance, send it to your holiday destination and arrange for its safe return, allowing you a stress-free, relaxing holiday from the minute you closed your front door!

The secret behind this marvellous form of travel promotion was that British Transport Films had its own film library to distribute travel films to clubs, societies and individuals far and wide. Many of the titles on this release were in constant demand.

Among the films on Volume Six is *The Land of Robert Burns* (1956), an evocative account of the poet’s life set among contemporary scenes of the people of south-west Scotland as they grow from childhood to manhood, with songs sung by the Saltire Singers. *Journey into History* (1952) chooses the England of Hogarth, Gainsborough, Robert Adam and Captain Cook. As the camera moves across outstanding monuments of their work and relics of their achievements from Syon House to Greenwich, members of the Old Vic Company read related passages from the literature of the mid eighteenth century, set to music. There’s also the amusing *A Desperate Case* (1958), a cautionary tale of a typical holiday suitcase – crammed beyond its capacity, imperfectly fastened, inadequately and confusingly labelled – designed to tackle the problem of stray luggage that was increasingly afflicting British Railways in the 1950s.

Now preserved in the BFI National Archive, these films 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.

So sit back, relax and enjoy a visit to some of the finest destinations Britain has to offer – portrayed by one of the finest documentary units the world had ever seen.

Disc One:

North to the Dales (1962)
Yorkshire Sands (1955)
Down to Sussex (1964)
The Land of Robert Burns (1956)
Journey into History (1952)
Midland Country (1974)
The Travolators (1961)

Disc two:

Journey to the Sea (1952)
London for a Day (1962)
The Beacons and Beyond (1979)
A Desperate Case (1958)
Lancashire Coast (1957)
Golfers in a Scottish Landscape (1971)

Release date: 19 November 2007

RRP £19.99 / cat. no. BFIVD745 / cert E
UK / 1952-1979 / black and white, and colour / 212 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.

Where to buy BFI DVDs

BFI DVDs are available from all good DVD shops, from the Filmstore at BFI Southbank, London SE1, by mail order from the Filmstore on 0207 815 1350 or online at www.bfi.org.uk/filmstore

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