



DVD press release

The Open Road

Claude Friese-Greene

A cinematic postcard of Britain in the 1920s

In the summer of 1924 Claude Friese-Greene, a pioneer of colour cinematography, set out from Cornwall with the aim of recording life on the road between Land's End and John O'Groats. Entitled *The Open Road*, his remarkable ground-breaking travelogue was conceived as a series of shorts, 26 episodes in all, to be shown weekly at the cinema.

Although creating an initial impact when it was first exhibited at trade shows in 1925, Claude's experimental colour process failed to reach a large audience owing to heavy flicker and colour fringing. The original negatives were deposited with the BFI for preservation in the late 1950s.

Great enthusiasm for the film was created by the documentary series *The Lost World of Friese-Greene*, a co-production with the BBC that was televised in April 2006 and released by the BFI on DVD. Now the BFI National Archive has restored a special compilation of highlights from the journey, using digital intermediate technology (the Archive's first such project) to remove the technical defects of the original.

The Open Road is important both as a landmark in the development of colour on film but also as a fascinating social record of inter-war Britain. The journey, from Land's End to John O'Groats and back to London, was made in a Vauxhall D type. The travelogue format provided the ideal way to profile the colour process because the natural world was more of a challenge than the contrived studio set. Iconic landmarks would be instantly recognisable to the audience, and today the audience has the opportunity to revisit those locations and assess similarities and changes that have taken place.

The film is presented here with a new score by Neil Brand – world-renowned composer and silent film accompanist on piano – and equally renowned violinist and silent film accompanist Günter Buchwald. The restoration was generously supported by the Eric Anker-Petersen Charity.

Extras

- *Across England in an Aeroplane* (UK, 1919-20, silent) – A short aerial tour of the West Country

The DVD also contains a fully illustrated 17-page booklet with background notes, details on the digital reconstruction of the film and musician biographies.

Release date: 24 September 2007

RRP £15.99 / cat. no. BFIVD739 / cert E

UK / original film 1925, new version 2006 / colour / silent with music /
64 mins / ratio 1.33:1

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