

THIS WORKING LIFE: KING COAL

A century of British coalmining on screen

*“With Coal we have light, strength, power, wealth, and civilisation;
without Coal we have darkness, weakness, poverty and barbarism.”*

‘Coal Catechism’ by William Jasper Nicolls, 1906.

The BFI presents an ambitious project which will explore and celebrate Britain’s 20th century industrial heritage and its impact on our social, economic and political life. Launching in 8 September 2009 **This Working Life: King Coal**, features a special presentation by **Lee Hall** (award-winning writer of **Billy Elliot**) one of a number of special guests who will bring to life the fascinating film record of British coalmining. The project will continue with further explorations of our industrial heritage on screen focusing on the shipbuilding and steel industries in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

Through a wide range of engaging film screenings and related activities, **This Working Life** aims to reach a broad audience of all ages and across the UK, from those whose lives were directly affected by the subject matter, to those who are unaware of the significant role these major industries have played in Britain’s recent history.

This Working Life: King Coal, September

The first strand of this three-year project will focus upon coal and the immense effect it has had on Britain for centuries, covering a wide range of topics and themes including working conditions, domestic life, the myth of the miner, mining communities, and the 1984 miners’ strike. Central to **King Coal** will be a season of newly preserved and rarely-seen films from the remarkable film and television material held by the BFI National Archive, including the National Coal Board Film Unit collection (1947-1987) which ranges through fiction, documentary and animation. Most of these films have not been seen since their original release and offer a fascinating picture of British life.

The **King Coal** film season launches on 8 September 2009 at BFI Southbank and will also be shown in September at our partner venue for this project, the Sheffield Showroom, an independent four screen cinema situated in the heart of Sheffield’s Cultural Industries Quarter.

Screening notes and special education and community activities featuring directors and leading specialists will be used to extend audiences’ enjoyment and appreciation of these films.

BFI Southbank special exhibition

At BFI Southbank a special two month exhibition (6 August – 4 October) will feature posters, photographs and related materials offering further insights into the rich history of this little known area of British documentary film-making.

King Coal on tour

To further extend the project's reach nationally, a touring version of the film season will be available for booking by community groups across the UK, including local film societies and working men's clubs in former mining areas

BFI DVD

On 21 September the BFI releases **Portrait of a Miner (£24.99)**, an expansive 2-disc DVD collection of films from the National Coal Board Film Unit exploring a century of coalmining on screen, and featuring an illustrated booklet with new essays and film notes.

Online

The BFI's website will also be used to extend engagement with this project, including a feature on the home page and extensive additional resources in our dedicated online education zone, BFI Screenonline, which is accessed for free by millions of schoolchildren and students across the UK every year. BFI members will receive a free film download from the **King Coal** collection.

BFI Mediatheques

King Coal at the BFI Mediatheques (BFI Southbank and QUAD, Derby) will feature a collection of 40 titles, including a selection not available in any other part of the project.

The BFI National Archive holds the world's most significant collection of film and television material and information, with around 60,000 fiction titles, 120,000 non-fiction titles and over 675,000 television programmes. Additionally this national collection contains the recorded proceedings of both Houses of Parliament, 45,000 books on film and television related topics, 25,000 scripts, 4 million stills, 15,000 posters, thousands of press books, set designs and extensive collections of the personal papers of filmmakers

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BFI DVD RELEASE (21 September, £24.99)

Portrait of a Miner: the films of the National Coal Board Film Unit

DISC ONE

Mining Review 1st Year No 1 (1947)
Issue comprising stories entitled Cutter Loader, Five Day Week?, The Miner's Song,

King Coal (1948)

Nines Was Standing (1950)

'Miners Health Centre'
From Mining Review 2nd Year No 3 (1948)

Mining Review 2nd Year No 10 (1949)

DISC TWO

Songs of the Coalfields (1964)

Big Job (1965)

Portrait of a Miner (1966)

Nobody's Face (1966)

The First Adventures of 'Thud and Blunder' (1964)

Mining Review 20th Year No 9 (1967)
Issue comprising stories entitled Marilyn, Out of

Issue entitled Replanning a Coalfield

Mining Review 2nd Year No 12 (1949)

Issue comprising stories entitled Holiday Camp, Beside the Sea, Up River, Pitmen's Derby

Plan for Coal (1952)

The Shovel (1953)

'Time Out'

From Mining Review 7th Year No 8 (1954)

'Balletmines'

From Mining Review 7th Year No 12 (1954)

'Hungarians in Britain'

From Mining Review 10th Year No 8 (1957)

New Power In Their Hands (1959)

Mining Review 13th Year No 4 (1959)

Issue comprising stories entitled The Art of Mining, Speaking through Coal, Mounted Minors, Record Pit

'Stormy Genius'

From Mining Review 13th Year No 8 (1960)

Arthur Clears the Air (1961)

'Whitehaven Whippets'

From Mining Review 15th Year No 7 (1962)

Mining Review 16th Year No 6 (1963)

Issue entitled A story from South Wales

Darkness, North Star

Hands, Knees and Bumps a Daisy (1969)

Mining Review 22nd Year No 5 (1969)

Issue entitled She

What About That Job? (Case Studies for

Management No 1) (1970)

The Bother Breeder (Case Studies for Management No 4) (1970)

Man Failure (1971)

I'll See You (Too Late Now No 2) (1976)

A Beautiful Memory (Too Late Now No 3) (1976)

You Pick the Moment (Too Late Now No 4) (1976)

Miners (1976)

Review 32nd Year No 1 (1978)

Issue entitled Band Fever

40 Years On (1978)

Full programme of This Working Life: King Coal

On the Face of It: A Century of Coalmining on Screen

Spanning fact and fiction, controversy and humour, we celebrate a century of British coalmining on film with a screening of some extraordinary films about the power of coal with guest presenter Lee Hall, writer of **Billy Elliot** and **The Pitmen Painters** (now revived at the National Theatre). The programme also includes the vivid 1910 depiction of **A Day in the Life of a Coalminer** with a newly-commissioned score by Vector Lovers.

Tue 8 Sept 18:30 NFT1

The Price of Coal: Meet the People, BBC 1977. Dir Ken Loach. 75min

Loach was here reunited with playwright Barry Hines and producer Tony Garnett for the first time since they worked together on *Kes*. *Meet the People* is a television play about the comic consequences of the announcement of a royal visit to Milton Colliery in Yorkshire. Filmed on location at the disused Thorpe Hesley pit, it stars four northern comics, Jackie Shinn, Duggie Brown, Stan Richards and Bobby Knutt, as working men with a lot on their plates.

Sun 13 Sept 18:40 NFT2

Mon 21 Sept 18:10 NFT2

Both screenings introduced by producer Tony Garnett

Gala Day & Songs and Galas

After some ballads from around the UK sung by Ewan MacColl and Isla Cameron in **Songs of the Coalfields** (UK 1964, 15min), there's Ken Russell's classic **Monitor** film **The Miners' Picnic** (BBC 1960, 16min) portraying a brass band carnival at Bedlington, Northumberland. The wistful **Gala Day** (UK 1963, Dir John Irvin, 26min) shows the Durham Miners' Gala in another light, and we conclude with Russell's return to the North East 45 years later, **The Miners' Picnic with Ken Russell** (BBC 2006, Dir Dan Farthing, 30min).

Sat 12 Sept 16:00 NFT2

Wed 23 Sept 18:30 NFT2*

***Introduction by John Irvin**

The Stars Look Down UK 1939. Dir Carol Reed.

With Michael Redgrave, Margaret Lockwood. 104min. PG

Drama set in a mining village with Michael Redgrave as an idealistic miner's son from the north east of England, who is distracted by Margaret Lockwood's Jenny. Co-scripted by AJ Cronin from his novel, the film is a stirring tale of politics, ethics and romance. Plus an issue of the cine-magazine Mining Review, from 1959, including a story on the Ashington Group, as featured in Lee Hall's play The Pitmen Painters.

Tue 15 Sept 14:00 NFT2*

Fri 18 Sept 18:20 NFT2

Sat 26 Sept 18:20 NFT2

***Seniors' matinee; introduction by Dylan Cave (BFI National Archive)**

Portrait of a Miner

The 60s: A Portrait in Coal

Very different perspectives on life and work in the 1960s – in Wales, the Midlands and Yorkshire, incorporating some wonderfully moving and inventive film-making. **A Wedding on Saturday** (Granada 1964, 40min) is a Yorkshire pit-village documentary portrait by Denis Mitchell and Norman Swallow. The rousing and tragic **Master Singers: Two Choirs and a Valley** (UK 1965, dir Robert Vas, 46min) fits in some slyly witty moments. **Portrait of a Miner** (UK 1965, 30min) is a touching and humorous look at the working day of Pat Leigh, a miner at Thoresby, Notts, and is filled with unexpected delights.

Mon 14 Sept 20:40 NFT2 Introduction by Ros Cranston (BFI National Archive)

Thu 24 Sept 18:00 NFT2 Introduction by Patrick Russell (BFI National Archive)

The Brave Don't Cry UK 1952. Dir Philip Leacock.

With John Gregson, Meg Buchanan, John Rae, Fulton Mackay. 90min. U

This drama-documentary about a Scottish mining rescue team is based on the 1950 Knockshinnoch Castle Colliery disaster. It was produced by the short-lived Group 3, which included John Grierson, and features a cast drawn largely from Glasgow's Citizen's Theatre. Plus an issue of the cine-magazine Mining Review, from 1952, including the story On Set about the making of **The Brave Don't Cry**, featuring an interview with John Gregson.

Wed 16 Sept 14:30 NFT2

Sun 20 Sept 18:40 NFT2

Thu 24 Sept 20:45 NFT3

Blue Scar UK 1949. Dir Jill Craigie.

With Emrys Jones, Gwyneth Vaughan. 102 min. U

Olwen Williams leaves her Welsh village and sweetheart Tom to take up a singing scholarship. Tom's ambitions remain closer to home. Jill Craigie's first feature film has a keen eye for the details of life of the villagers of South Wales, playing football and struggling against poverty. Olwen's city life in London, in contrast, appears brittle and artificial. Plus a lyrical issue of the cine-magazine **Mining Review**, from 1962, about the transfer of miners from Aberaman Colliery, which is to be closed, to Deep Duffryn Colliery.

Sun 27 Sept 16:00 NFT2

Wed 30 Sept 18:20 NFT2

At the Coal Face: Working for the National Coal Board Film Unit

Director Peter Pickering is interviewed by Patrick Russell (BFI National Archive) and relives some of the rewards and challenges of filming underground and on the surface for the prolific NCB Film Unit. Films on screen tonight include **Nobody's Face** (1966, 21min), a fictionalised account of an inefficient colliery in which everything goes wrong, and **Miners** (1976, 25min) about how miners live and work, as recounted in their own words and in the opinions of their wives, filmed in Bagworth, Leicestershire.

Thu 17 Sept 18:30 NFT2

Which Side Are You On? LWT 1984. Dir Ken Loach. 52min

Featuring songs, poems and performances by miners' families during the strike, Ken Loach's film was deemed 'highly partial' by London Weekend Television, and was not transmitted in the South Bank Show series as planned.

+ The Miners' Film UK 1975. Dir Cinema Action. 45min

The miners' struggles and way of life are celebrated as a vital part of Britain's trade union movement. The film proved to be just as relevant ten years after its making and needed only a new prologue and epilogue when shown on Channel 4 during the Miners' Strike of 1984-85.

Mon 21 Sept 20:40 NFT2 Introduction by Steve Sprung, Cinema Action

Tues 29 Sept 18.20 NFT2

Black Diamonds + The Romance of a Lump of Coal: Coal Curiosities

Jan Faulk (BFI National Archive) presents a focus on the 1930s, featuring **Black Diamonds** (UK 1932, Dir Charles Hanmer, 53min), a highly ambitious amateur feature film produced by a miner driven by an urge to place the dangers of a miner's life before the public.

Plus two newly preserved films, unseen for decades, showing some of the bizarre and unknown aspects of the BFI National Archive's collection – including **Coal** (UK 1936, Dir JB Holmes, 5min), favoured by some contemporary viewers over the more celebrated **Coal Face**. And who could resist **The Romance of a Lump of Coal** (1935, 5min)?

Fri 25 Sept 18:00 NFT3

Opening the Archives on the Miners' Strike

Simon Pople from the University of Leeds screens and discusses coverage of the Strike of 1984-5, drawn from a joint project of the BBC and Arts and Humanities Research Council. As part of the groundbreaking work, those involved in the strike from both mining and police communities produced a series of short personal films which respond to the original archive materials held by the BBC. This evening's event will present selections drawn from both sources.

Wed 16 Sept 18:10 NFT3

The Battle of Orgreave UK 2001. Dir Mike Figgis. 63min

A film of the re-enactment, conceived by artist Jeremy Deller, of one of the most violent clashes between striking miners and police during the Miners' Strike in the streets and fields of Orgreave, South Yorkshire. Figgis' hour-long film relives this important day, which made social and political history, and combines the re-enactment with live footage of the event. Plus **The Lie Machine** (UK 1984, 12min), offering miners' perspectives on media coverage of the strike.

Mon 28 Sep 18:10 NFT3

Introduction by Julian Petley, Brunel University

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Notes to Editors

For more information on the BFI visit www.bfi.org.uk

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