



BFI National Archive collections awarded UN Status

The Peter Worden Mitchell & Kenyon Collection and GPO Film Unit listed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register

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Two exceptional collections from the BFI National Archive have been awarded United Nations status and will be listed on the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Register. They are the Peter Worden Collection of Mitchell and Kenyon films and the GPO Film Unit films. The GPO films are a joint project and were nominated with The British Postal Museum & Archive and BT Heritage.

The register is part of a UNESCO programme to support and raise awareness of archives and the BFI nominations were among 20 items and collections selected from libraries, archives and museums to represent the UK's outstanding yet 'lesser-known' heritage. This year's inscriptions join the ten items and collections currently on the UK Register.

The Mitchell and Kenyon collection is generally recognised as the most exciting film discovery of recent times in Britain and was painstakingly restored by the BFI National Archive to produce images of great quality. It offers a vivid and unparalleled social record of early 20th-century British life showing ordinary people in everyday situations. The collection has 826 films made by photographers-turned-showmen Sagar Mitchell and James Kenyon who screened their films at fairgrounds to excited audiences. From factory gates to seaside excursions the films offer a unique record of Britain at the beginning of the 20th century. The entire collection has over 28 hours of film, of which only a few hours has yet been widely seen.

The pioneering GPO Film Unit produced one of the finest British collections of documentary, public information, animation and industrial film ever to come from a single UK source. The unit lasted for just seven years yet its films set the trend for generations that followed and its impact spread the world over.

Heather Stewart, Creative Director, BFI said, "Mitchell & Kenyon's films are transforming our knowledge of early 20th century Britain and of early cinema. The film-makers never intended their films to last but they have become the single most important source for modern British history. The GPO Film Unit represents a defining moment in the history of British documentary with films which are both an extraordinary record and also

boldly innovative in terms of their film-making technique. These films deserve their place on the UNESCO Memory of the World register.”

‘We were incredibly impressed by the diversity and richness of these nominations to the register,’ said David Dawson, Chair of the UK Memory of the World Committee. ‘These are some of the UK’s exceptional, but lesser-known documentary riches. By awarding them with the globally recognised UNESCO Memory of the World status we hope to elevate them to the world stage.’

The 20 items and collections will be recognised at a meeting of the programme’s International Advisory Committee, convening in Manchester this week. The meeting will bring over 50 leading professionals from across the world to assess the progress of the programme and challenges faced by the sector.

For more information, visit www.unesco.org.uk/ukregister

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Notes to Editors

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:

- Growing the next generation of filmmakers and audiences.
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- 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.

On 1 April 2011, the BFI took on many of the strategic and Lottery funding activities of the UK Film Council to create a single body for film and bring greater coherence across the whole of the UK film sector. Our activities now range from supporting new and established filmmakers, developing career skills and education, to providing people with the widest possible choice and access to film, caring for the national collections and making them available to all, and, crucially, working with the industry to promote British film and talent to the world.

The BFI has the largest and most culturally valuable film and television archive in the world and is a world leader in film preservation and conservation. Founded in 1935, the BFI National Archive contains 900,000 films and television programmes; millions of stills; and thousands of posters, scripts, designs and other items. The collections are made available through a huge range of public programmes and online channels for the enjoyment of millions of people.

For more information, visit www.bfi.org.uk



The British Postal Museum & Archive is the leading resource for all aspects of British postal history. It is a combined museum and archive, bringing together The Royal Mail Archive and a Museum Store. With collections ranging from staff records to stamps, poster design to photography and from transport to telegrams, it cares for the visual, written and physical records from over 400 years of innovation and service, illuminating the fascinating story of British communications. Records in The Royal Mail Archive are designated as being of outstanding national importance. For more information see www.postalheritage.org.uk

About BT Heritage

BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services, operating in more than 170 countries. BT's commitment to its heritage is published in its Heritage Policy (www.bt.com/heritage) adopted in 2004. BT is the only major company to have made such a public commitment to safeguarding its past and future heritage. The key features of our approach are to maintain historical documents and records within the company, under the management of BT Archives (www.bt.com/archives), and to promote access to our physical artefacts online and at museums across the UK through BT's Connected Earth initiative (www.connected-earth.com).

Descriptions of BT's archives can be searched at www.bt.com/archivesonline