

6 December 2012



This Working Life: Steel
Screenings of rarely seen films from around the UK
Rediscovery of Jack Cardiff's *Steel* (1945)
Special guest introductions by Professor Mark Miodownik,
Mason Cardiff and Penny Woolcock

'Steel... the brace and girder and strut and stay of every industrial economy on earth'
(from *Today in Britain*, 1964)

In **February 2013** the BFI National Archive will present **This Working Life: Steel**, showcasing rarely seen films of our industrial heritage through a major cinema screening programme in London and nationwide, a new DVD box set and a BFI Mediatheque programme.

Launching at **BFI Southbank, London, on 5 February**, film screenings and events will also take place at **Sheffield Showroom, Glasgow Film Theatre, Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle** and **Chapter Cinema, Cardiff**. *Steel* is the final strand of *This Working Life*, a three-part BFI project comprising *King Coal* (September 2009) and *Tales from the Shipyard* (February 2011).

Drawn from the BFI National Archive and those of partner archives including Scottish Screen Archive and the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, *Steel* is a remarkable record of this once-major British industry, with films from across the UK, spanning almost a century. As a reminder of a time when Britain could rightly claim to be the largest and most important steel producer in the world, it brings its recent sad decline into even sharper focus.

Ros Cranston, BFI National Archive Curator (Non-Fiction), said, "*Rare documentaries, big studio features and independently produced films bring alive the stories of the communities shaped by their steelworks, and offer a richly fascinating and often surprising*

view of a largely vanished way of life. For millions of people this isn't just Britain's 'industrial heritage', it's their family history."

All of the films will offer revelations about steelmaking, its highly skilled workforce and some of the breath-taking feats which the industry routinely achieved.

One of the highlights is a great rediscovery; a remarkable Technicolor film entitled **Steel** (1945) directed by Ronald Riley with cinematography by Oscar-winning cameraman Jack Cardiff. The film was commissioned by the British Council as a guide to the British steel industry for audiences overseas. It will be screened in a BFI National Archive digital restoration, newly available for the first time in a generation.

Other gems include **Men of Consett** (1959), a wonderfully odd film directed by explorer, cameraman and food writer Tom Stobart, who ventures into the steel community in Consett, County Durham and **Women of Steel** (dir Jenny Woodley, 1984) which gives a rare insight into women's role in the steel industry in wartime Sheffield.

Scientist and TV presenter **Professor Mark Miodownik** will present the launch event at BFI Southbank on 5 February. Other special guests introducing films include **Mason Cardiff**, son of Jack Cardiff, and award-winning filmmaker **Penny Woolcock**.

Full details of the programme at BFI Southbank are below.

This Working Life: Steel is supported by The British Council, Community Union and The Erik Anker-Petersen Charity. The media partner is New Statesman.

Steel: A Century of Steelmaking on Film – 2-DVD box set

Release date: 18 February 2013, RRP £24.99

This comprehensive double DVD BFI box set features 21 rare documentaries, short films and animation, bringing alive the story of steel which spans the twentieth century. Among the material is footage of the intrepid construction of the New Tyne Bridge in 1928 and the rare 1945 film *Steel*, shot in Technicolor by award-winning cameraman Jack Cardiff, which chronicles the visually spectacular process of making steel, from the iron ore to the steelworks. The set includes a comprehensive illustrated booklet of film notes and essays by BFI curators.

Steel: BFI Mediatheque programme

With BFI Mediatheques in Cambridge, Newcastle, Wrexham, Derby and London there's a chance for visitors to delve a little deeper into this revolutionary material and the history of the industry which inspired it. While steelmaking may not have acquired the popular mythology of coalmining or shipbuilding, its pivotal role at the heart of British industry is unrivalled, and provided some evocative and poetic subject matter for filmmakers throughout the 20th century.

This collection highlights steel as a metaphor for national strength in times of crisis (**Steel Goes to Sea**, 1941), as a political tool (**Common Sense About Steel**, 1948), as an industry which bound communities together (**Steel Town**, 1958), and its role

in the creation of national iconography (the sculpture **Angel of the North**). Not forgetting steelmaking's potential for highly visual, visceral beauty on screen (the restored 1945 short **Steel**, photographed by Jack Cardiff).

This Working Life: Steel – Film Programme at BFI Southbank, London

Launch Event: A Century of Steelmaking on Screen

The stunning cinematography of Jack Cardiff in **Steel** (1945, dir Ronald Riley, 35min), forms our centrepiece. Now benefiting from pioneering digital restoration techniques, **Steel** is a dazzling Technicolor spotlight on skilled craftsmen who devoted their working lives to steel, shot in locations including Sheffield, Ebbw Vale and Glasgow. The programme also features early footage of steelworkers at **Parkgate Iron and Steel Co, Rotherham** (1901) in feisty form; and the hair-raising **Building of the New Tyne Bridge** (1928, extract). The witty animation **River of Steel** (1951, dir Peter Sachs, extract) shows how we all depend on steel.

Presented by Professor Mark Miodownik with an introduction by Mason Cardiff, son of Jack Cardiff

Tue 5 Feb 18.20 NFT1

Men of Steel

UK 1932. Dir George King. With John Stuart, Benita Hume. 71min. **PG**

This steelworks melodrama 'embraces industrial drama, sex situation, Cockney comicalities and repressed romance' according to a contemporary reviewer. It stars John Stuart as an ambitious young man who invents a new steelmaking process, takes elocution lessons and makes good. Acklam Iron and Steel Works in Middlesbrough provide a stunning backdrop. Plus **Mrs Worth Goes to Westminster** (1949, dir Nigel Byass, 25min) in which the purposeful and quick-witted Mrs Worth discovers the limitless merits of steel.

Both screenings introduced by Jonathan Croall, son & biographer of John Stuart

Wed 6 Feb 18:20 NFT2, Sat 9 Feb 20:30 NFT2

Hard Steel

UK 1942. Dir Norman Walker. With Wilfrid Lawson, Betty Stockfeld, John Stuart. 86min. **PG**

'The film smells of Sheffield, and how right that is!' wrote one contemporary critic. Steelworker Walter (Lawson) rises through the ranks until he becomes manager of three steel mills, but ruthless ambition overwhelms him. He antagonises his fellow workers and alienates his smart-witted and compassionate wife Ginger (Stockfeld), who is drawn to the cultured Alan (Stuart). Plus **The Ten Year Plan** (1945, dir Lewis Gilbert, 17min): Charles Hawtrey on the utilitarian wonder of the steel-built 'prefab'.

Both screenings introduced by Jonathan Croall, son & biographer of John Stuart

Thu 7 Feb 18:20 NFT2, Mon 11 Feb 20:30 NFT2

Wings of Mystery

UK 1963. Dir Gilbert Gunn. With Judy Geeson, Hennie Scott, Richard Carpenter. 55min. **U**

Starring a precocious Judy Geeson, this action-packed production from the Children's Film Foundation features the theft of a secret steel alloy and some top-flight homing pigeons coming to the rescue. The heart-stopping drama takes place in beautifully photographed Sheffield. Plus **Women of Steel** (1984, dir Jenny Woodley, 27min): a rare insight into women's role in the steel industry in wartime Sheffield.

Introduced by an Archive curator

Sat 23 Feb 14:40 NFT3

The Joy of Steel

Stone into Steel (1961, dir Paul Dickson, 37min) uses spectacular images shot by the legendary Wolfgang Suschitzky with a specially commissioned score to show a perspective on Scunthorpe rarely seen. **British Steel** (1939, 10 min) was made to promote Britain overseas, while **Teeth of Steel** (1942, dir Ronald Riley, 10min) shows, with commentary from *Dad's Army's* John Laurie, that wartime Britain was ready for action. Plus **The Big Mill** (1963,

dir Laurence Henson, 25min), an award-winning film of Colville's giant new steel strip mill at Ravenscraig in Scotland.

Introduced by an Archive curator

Tue 26 Feb 20:30 NFT2

Ships, Planes and Automobiles

Transport marvels on display include **Fair Oriana** (1961, dir Bill Mason, 28min), the largest passenger ship then built in England. **Workers' Weekend** (1943, dir Ralph Elton, 13min) shows a Wellington Bomber assembled in record time by mainly women workers. **Mastery of Steel** (c1933, 18min) is an atmospherically photographed demonstration of how steel panels are made for Morris Motors. Plus **Steel** (c1933 10min), an enthusiastic short which shows an array of uses of steel and how it's made; and the animated **River of Steel** (1951, dir Peter Sachs, 11min) demonstrates the wondrous benefits that steel brings to our lives.

Introduced by an Archive curator

Wed 20 Feb 18:20 NFT3

North by North East

An intrepid visual delight spanning the River Tyne: **The Building of the New Tyne Bridge** (1928, extract) documents the perilous construction of the Tyne Bridge. **Men of Consett** (1959, 28min) is a wonderfully odd film directed by explorer, cameraman and food writer Tom Stobart, who ventures into the steel community in Consett, County Durham. Plus an item from **Northern Newsreel No 7** (1987, dir Penny Woolcock, 10min) looking at the effects of unemployment in Consett since the closure of the steelworks. Woolcock revisits the town in **When the Dog Bites** (1988, 50min) and reveals some imaginative attempts to make a living there.

Both screenings introduced by Penny Woolcock

Wed 13 Feb 20:40 NFT2, Mon 18 Feb 18:20 NFT2

Strength of Argument

Ken Loach worked with Barry Hines (after their partnership on *Kes*) to give voice to steelworkers after the steel strike of 1980 in **A Question of Leadership** (1981, dir Ken Loach, 52min). The programme was pulled from its national transmission and later shown in the Midlands area only, after much dispute. Plus **Men of Corby** (1961, dir Philip Donnellan, 30min), a vivid insight into the Scottish steelmakers who followed their livelihoods to settle in Corby.

Both screenings introduced by an Archive curator

Fri 22 Feb 18:10 NFT3, Thu 28 Feb 20:40 NFT2

Seniors' Free Illustrated Talk:

Corby – Steel Town

The story of Corby is one of steel. In the 1930s, when Stewarts & Lloyds developed their ironworks into an integrated iron and steel mill, the rural village emerged as a significant industrial settlement, designated a New Town in 1950. The steelworks attracted large numbers of Scottish workers to Corby and their culture and heritage made a 'Little Scotland' in the English Midlands. In 1980 British Steel closed the steelworks and the town experienced major redevelopment. Archive curator Dylan Cave tells the story of Corby as revealed by the film archives, from boom to bust and back again.

This event is free to over-60s; otherwise tickets available at normal matinee price

Fri 15 Feb NFT3 11.00

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the BFI

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:

- 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
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

BFI DVDs are available from all good DVD retailers and from the BFI Shop Tel: 020 7815 1350 or online at www.bfi.org.uk/shop

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use from *This Working Life: Steel* is available at www.image.net under BFI / BFI National Archive/ Steel

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