



## **The Near Shore: A Scottish and Irish Cine-Concert**

**Running time: 1h 10m approx. | N/C U**

**Performing live: Paul Smyth (piano)**

**8pm on Thursday 20 March 2025**

Screening material courtesy of the IFI Irish Film Archive and National Library of Scotland  
Moving Image Archive

A collection of short silent films from the IFI Irish Film Archive and National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive presenting alternating perspectives on Scotland and Ireland. For generations Irish and Scottish communities have enjoyed strong social, economic and cultural connections. This programme includes a series of non-professional, but nonetheless finely crafted, films made by Irish people about Scotland and vice versa.

The programme is accompanied by renowned avant-garde free-improvisational pianist Paul G. Smyth.

### **1. ROYAL CLYDE YACHT CLUB REGATTA (1899)**

DR ROBERT A MITCHELL

In 1996 a copy of this film was acquired by the IFI Irish Film Archive from the National Film And Television Archive (now BFI National Archive) under the title Bangor Yacht Race (1898). The film, made by a Belfast chemist Dr Robert A. Mitchell, was thought to be the first film made by an Irish filmmaker in an Irish location (on Belfast Lough). However, when we proudly presented the film for inspection to maritime historian Iain McAllister, he suspected that the film had not in fact been made in Irish waters. His research confirmed that the magnificent yachts appearing in the film - Rainbow, and Bona (and another Gleniffer which does not appear) - had raced together not in Bangor but at the Royal Clyde Yacht Club Regatta at Hunter's Quay, in Scotland's Firth of Clyde on July 8<sup>th</sup> in 1899. The race was one by Bona.

This film records the start of the race, gently panning to foreground a small rowing boat which creates scale and a note of drama as the magnificent yachts, both designed by Scottish naval architect George Lennox Watson, sail close by with a "club steamer"



(probably the Caledonian Steam Ship) moving off in eth distance. This languorous, light-filled painterly work is believed to be the first film made by an Irish filmmaker (albeit in a foreign location) and it may also be the only film clip of yachts racing in the 19th century.

## 2. *TO IRELAND BY AIR* (1933)

This film, made by Mr Dick is preserved by the Moving Image Archive of the National Library of Scotland. The film is an exciting record of a flight from Renfrew Airport in Scotland to Belfast in Northern Ireland with aerial shots of the Scottish island of Arran, Campbeltown and the Scottish and Irish coastlines.

The film opens with scenes at Renfrew airport where aviation pioneer, Miss Winnie Drinkwater, and a male pilot are seen preparing for the flight. Scotswoman Winnie Drinkwater, then just 20 years old, was already the world's first woman commercial airline pilot and Scotland's first female licensed aircraft engineer. She worked with Midland and Scottish Air Ferries, where she requested and secured equal pay with her male counterparts.

While in Ireland Mr Dick, an amateur cinematographer, films in the busy city of Galway and in the less photographed smaller towns of Dundalk, Westport, Ballina, Sligo and Londonderry. The images are infused with a visitor's admiration for the grandeur of the towns' architecture and curiosity about the ordinary folks who populate their streets. The homeward journey captures scenes along the Clyde filmed aboard the Lairdsmoor of ships and shipyards including Yarrows, John Brown's and Fairfield's.

## 3. *RUSH HOUR* (1949)

Filmmaker John Tomkins was born in the United Kingdom but came to Ireland as a child. In the late 1940s he established JET Film Services and made and screened films of local interest throughout Ireland until the early 1950s. He returned to the United Kingdom in the late 1950s, where he produced wildlife films and worked for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. He later worked at Border Television. He retired to the fishing village of Portwilliam in Scotland with his Irish wife Nora and died in Dumfries in 2014, aged 88.

Several of his own non-fiction films, all 16mm silent B/W, were part of a series he called Country Magazine which documented stories of interest around the country. He screened the films to the communities which featured, thereby guaranteeing good audiences for his shows.

Tomkins was a keen scouting enthusiast and a Scoutmaster of a Dublin scout troop and he regularly recorded their activities.

Rush Hour is a clever little story film, made with the Dublin Scout Film Group, in the backstreets of Dublin and on the Bray to Dublin railway, designed to entice viewers to a club fundraiser.



#### 4. BUTLINS HOLIDAY CAMP MOVIE NEWS (1950s)

John Tomkins

During the 1950s John Tomkins was a camp photographer for Butlins Holiday Camp at Mosney, Co. Meath. Each week he filmed the campers' activities, processing and projecting the short films entitled "Movienews" before they departed for home. In this delightful film, Tomkins conjures a comedy caper where the holidaymaking children take control of the camp.

Butlins camp in Mosney, County Louth, was the first Butlins camp outside the UK and Ireland's first custom-built family holiday camp. The **concept of affordable camp holidays was new to Irish consumers.** Multiple complaints appeared in the Catholic Standard, warning that holiday camps were an English idea that was not desirable in Ireland. Like the other camps, Mosney was designed to have a church and reassurances were given that it would be a Catholic chapel with a resident priest. The camp was opened in July 1948 and operated successfully as a holiday camp until 2000. Since then Mosney has been used as a direct provision centre for up to 900 residents seeking asylum in Ireland.

#### 5. THE FARM BELOW THE MOUNTAIN (1958)

This joyous amateur film documents the honeymoon journey in 1958 of amateur filmmaker Ernest Tiernan and his young wife Kathleen (née Durkin) from Scotland to a small farm in Cornamuckla, Co. Leitrim, home of her Irish relations.

These family films were deposited in the IFI Irish film Archive in 2007. Though made in the 1950s for family consumption, the films resonate in a contemporary public sphere with their vivid 16mm Kodachrome imagery documenting long-forgotten rural practices and the survival of family ties across temporal and geographic boundaries.

Musician Patrick Carayannis visited Ernest and Kathleen before they passed away (in 2010 and 2011 respectively) and recorded their recollections of the films.

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