

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
NEW YORK

84  
11 WEST 53rd STREET  
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900  
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

SARAH NEWMAYER, PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

May 14, 1941.

TO Motion Picture Editors

Dear Sirs:

I realize this is very short notice, but as we have had several requests for a preview of the Britain At War films, we have arranged two. You and any other members of your department will be welcome at either or both. The previews will be

Thursday, May 15: 11 A.M. to 1 P.M.  
Museum Auditorium

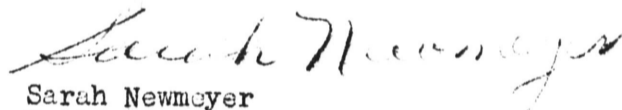
Monday, May 19: 2 to 4 P.M.  
Projection Room of the Museum, 4th floor.

As you will note in the release sent you earlier this week, the Britain At War film series comprises three programs of several films each. A selection composed of about two-thirds of these films will be shown at each preview.

You may, of course, attend any of the public showings of these films, which start Tuesday, May 20, at 4 P.M.

As the public will not be able to see the films until Tuesday, May 20, we request that the film reviews do not appear before that date.

Sincerely yours,

  
Sarah Newmeyer  
Publicity Director

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FOR RELEASE SATURDAY AFTERNOON or  
SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 17 or 18, 1941.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART WILL SHOW FIFTEEN DOCUMENTARY FILMS  
OF WARTIME BRITAIN

Tuesday, May 20, the Museum of Modern Art Film Library will present the first of three programs of British documentary films of England in war time. The second and third programs of the series will follow on Wednesday and Thursday, May 21 and 22. The three programs will then be run successively through June 29 as part of the Museum's exhibition of Britain At War, which opens to the public Friday, May 23.

The films will be shown in the auditorium of the Museum, 11 West 53 Street, every afternoon including Saturdays at 4 P.M. and on Sundays at 2 and 4 P.M. The new programs will open three days in advance of the rest of the exhibition of Britain At War.

Fifteen recent documentary films from England compose these three programs and provide a vivid and detailed study of the daily life of the citizen-soldiers of Great Britain. The films, directed and produced by some of the best motion picture talent in England, cover a wide range of subject matter.

Iris Barry, Curator of the Museum's Film Library, has arranged the programs and comments on them as follows:

"Excellent in themselves as well as for their intended purposes, these films were designed for domestic rather than for foreign exhibition and express, as probably no other medium could, the flavor and spirit of their country of origin in time of duress. The day to day activities of a wide variety of Britishers are featured--housewives and balloon barrage crews, farmers reclaiming arable land and pilots reporting combat flights, village schoolmistresses and city police faced alike with new problems, Ernest Bevin in a factory and bombed-out East Enders in a shelter....

"The calm tenor and underemphasis of these films may appear exaggerated to American audiences: but understatement is a device so seldom used in motion pictures that it seems refreshing and even arresting here, while a remarkable absence of hysteria or of boasting confers on these films a rare sincerity and conviction.

"Though the emergencies of war lent a new impetus to the making of documentary films like these--they should be called propaganda films had the word not been so much abused--it is remarkable that, both in technical quality and

in emotional drive, so high a standard has been maintained. But these film-makers (many of them famous directors like Anthony Asquith and Alberto Cavalcanti aided by a constant infiltration of new talent) regard themselves as soldiers in the line of duty. Given the task of carrying messages to bolster up the morale of their fellow-countrymen, they have sustained high levels of proficiency and of creative vitality. Films like Channel Incident, which re-stages with curious tension and reticence a small incident of the Dunkirk evacuation, like Yesterday is Over Your Shoulder, which makes immediate and personal the feelings of an elderly clerk being trained as a munitions mechanic, or Musical Poster, where abstract design in color lends impact to a caution against the passing on of information--all these explore the capacities of the motion picture in fresh and effective ways."

After the series closes at the Museum, it will be available for showing in other museums, colleges, schools and motion picture groups throughout the country. The programs are as follows:

PROGRAM 1.

May 20,23,26,29; June 1,4,7,10,13,16,19,22,25,28

- CHANNEL INCIDENT. A new type of narrative documentary which dramatizes the role played by small motor-boats and their civilian owners in the evacuation of the Allied Forces from Dunkirk--a restrained and sensitive treatment of an epic theme.
- SQUADRON 992. An intimate account of the training and organization of a balloon barrage crew and of its journey to take up active service in Scotland.
- A JOB TO BE DONE. The British government has evolved a scheme for making effective use of civilian manpower in wartime. Its operation is depicted here in terms of the actual people it affects.
- SPRING OFFENSIVE. English farmers are reclaiming land on which to grow food. The film shows local government organizing this work, and focusses on the rehabilitation of one farm as seen through the eyes of a small boy evacuated from the city.

PROGRAM 2.

May 21,24,27,30; June 2,5,8,11,14,17,20,23,26,29

- WAR AND ORDER. A first-hand account of the day-to-day duties of the police force in wartime Britain and of the training of recruits drawn from all walks of civilian life to meet new emergencies.
- WELFARE OF THE WORKER. How the Ministry of Labor enforces high standards in working conditions in England today. Ventilation and light, food, hours, recreation and safety for the factory workers are studied and the film concludes with a speech by Ernest Bevin to workers in a factory canteen.
- AIR SCREW. The manufacture of all-metal aeroplane propellers from raw material to finished article made comprehensible and even dramatic.
- YESTERDAY IS OVER YOUR SHOULDER. An unusually human and humorous documentary showing how a middle-aged business man registers for war work, is trained as an engineer under a government scheme and is finally transferred to a munitions factory as expert mechanic.

VILLAGE SCHOOL. A straightforward and sympathetic account of a day in the life of a schoolmistress faced with special problems in caring for evacuated as well as local children.

PROGRAM 3.

May 22, 25, 28, 31; June 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 27

NEIGHBOURS UNDER FIRE. A characteristically laconic report on the work of volunteers in improvising shelter and food for London's homeless during the first weeks of the blitzkrieg.

HEALTH IN WAR. Notes on the system of casualty stations, emergency hospitals and convalescent homes established in concentric districts in and around London for maintaining the fight against sickness despite present conditions.

DOVER FRONT LINE. Reminiscent in style of Housing Problems, this film interviews typical residents of the coastal town of Dover on their experiences and impressions under bombing.

AIR COMMUNIQUE. How are "scores" reckoned in air fights? Here pilots returning from combat duty report to an intelligence officer their sure hits, probables or doubtfuls and the results are worked out according to Air Ministry ruling.

THEY ALSO SERVE. The heroine of this simple and affecting film is the average housewife of England, whose dawn to dusk activities provide backlog for the duties of soldiers and defense workers.

MUSICAL POSTER NO. 1. An abstract film in color which gives an unusual sort of caution, not easily forgotten, against the passing of information which might be helpful to the enemy.