



Media Release

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For immediate release

## Welsh Cinemas to Explore the History of Slate and Slavery on Screen

*A new film season from Film Hub Wales' Made in Wales strand called 'A Roof of Slate for Every House' is coming to cinemas in 2022.*

*The tour will celebrate the UNESCO world heritage status of the North West Wales slate landscape, giving Welsh audiences an opportunity to learn more about Wales' lesser-known connections to the Atlantic Slave Trade.*

Together with the Screen and Sound Archive at the National Library of Wales, Film Hub Wales (FHW) have developed a touring programme of Welsh archive shorts and feature films highlighting the history of slate mining in Wales, its impact on local communities and connections to wider colonial projects led by the British empire. The package includes a range of films from *Slate Quarrying* (1946) which depicts working life in the 1200 ft deep Penrhyn Slate Quarry, Bethesda, to *Cut Me Loose* (1998), a personal film which was written and presented by the rap poet and historian David Brown, of mixed Black Jamaican and White Welsh descent.

To launch the conversation, FHW also brought together a panel of specialist speakers, Yvonne Connikie (film curator), Abu-Bakr Madden Al Shabazz (historian and cultural anthropologist), Charlotte Williams (author of *Sugar and Slate*) and Emlyn Roberts (former miner). Audiences can access the conversation via participating cinemas.

### **AbuBakr explains the importance of addressing Welsh history on screen:**

*"Seeing Welsh history documented on screen, actually shows the richness this nation's past has on its social and political development of the 21st century. Wales as a nation, and Welsh history as a subject matter, has an old multicultural society due to its links to trade and commerce before and during industrialisation. Depicting the multicultural dimension of Welsh society will maintain the accuracy in recording our historical past, showing the inclusivity of our modern nation and what all groups have contributed over time."*

The project was developed following the announcement in July 2021 that UNESCO World Heritage Site status was given to the slate landscape of North West Wales. The season reflects on the traditional rural environments, mountains and valleys of North-West Wales where quarries, mines and railways were created during the Industrial Revolution. As slate was transported to countries all over the world, the agricultural landscape of Wales was transformed alongside communities who lived there – schools, shops and entire towns were built, establishing livelihoods for those who worked in the quarry mines, for over 200 years.

The slate mines of North Wales are also connected to a more violent history as much of the wealth generated by slave owners, such as Lord Penrhyn, was used to expand the mines and even build some Welsh towns and cities. The season is designed to explore Wales' complicated position as a colonial subject and beneficiary of the wealth generated by the British Empire through slate production.

**Hana Lewis, Film Hub Wales' Strategic Manager, explains:**

*"The UNESCO World heritage announcement is significant for Wales. It gives us an extraordinary opportunity to celebrate our proud history of slate mining on screen, through a fascinating collection of films. It's also essential that we look deeper and give context to lesser-known stories around working class labour and the Atlantic Slave Trade. The tour gives audiences a chance to discover elements of Welsh culture that are fundamental to who we are."*

Cinema across Wales are planning themed activities across the year. In Blaenau Ffestiniog, home to Llechwedd Slate Caverns, Cellb are planning a Quarry Film Festival with 2 weekends of slate themed activities. They will connect audiences to quarry men who worked in the slate mines and explore conversations about the Penryn and Pennant families and their connections to slavery.

**Iola Baines, National Library of Wales Screen and Sound Archive' adds:**

*"The Archive works hard to ensure that Welsh audiences of all ages can access their screen heritage. We're excited to work with Film Hub Wales to bring 'A Roof of Slate for Every House' to life - from the archival shorts showcasing the lives of quarry workers, to 'The Quarryman' (the first ever Welsh talkie) and the documentaries linking slate and colonialism. These films highlight important Welsh people, places and events that must never be forgotten. Welsh archival film is our future as well as our past - it's how generations to come will be able to access their culture and history. It's crucial that our work remains well-resourced and accessible to the public through cinemas."*

Audiences can keep up to date with news of the upcoming releases on the Made in Wales section of Film Hub Wales' website or by following @Filmhubwales on social media.

Made in Wales is made possible thanks to funding from Creative Wales along with National Lottery funding through the UK-wide BFI Film Audience Network (FAN). As part of FAN, Film Hub Wales develops audiences for British independent and international film year-round, funds in Wales are administered by FHW via Chapter as the Film Hub Lead Organisation.

More than £30M is raised each week for good causes across the UK by the National Lottery.

**-ENDS-**

Confirmed screenings (further events to be announced throughout 2022).

**[Cellb, Blaenau Festiniog](#)**

**10-12 and 17-19 June 2022 (TBC)**

The Quarry Film Fest will include two weekends of quarry / slate themed activities including film screenings, discussions, and slate craft workshops for young creatives (such as slate splitting). There will be a historical society discussion panel with the Club Cline youth group and a panel talk with quarry men who worked in the slate mines. Themes will include the Penryn and Pennant families and their connections to slavery, along with the question of 'who is missing' when we think about people and places connected to slate mining.

**[TAPE Community Music and Film, Colwyn Bay](#)**

**9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (TBC)**

Archival shorts will screen alongside the Whole Story panel discussion and a post screening talk with Dr Marian Gwyn - a heritage consultant specialising in the slave trade and colonialism. Using the Roof of Slate resource pack, TAPE will look at the idea of 'Who is Missing?' from

screen stories around slate, before leading workshops where participants will produce slate artwork, in response to the issues raised. Work will be exhibited in the TAPE gallery from the 27th May, alongside a short film of the finished pieces.

### [Aberystwyth Arts Centre](#)

#### **June / July (TBC)**

Through conversations and film screenings, including archive shorts from the National Library of Wales' Screen and Sound Archive, Aberystwyth Arts Centre will highlight aspects of Welsh slate mining that have been traditionally absent from narratives surrounding slate history in Wales.

### [Off Y Grid](#)

#### **Date TBC**

Off Y Grid is a network of 7 venues across North Wales that collaborates on affordable, year round, activities designed to promote independent films and global culture to rural audiences at their local independent cinema. They will collaborate on a joint event, bringing in a local historian to give context to the collection of films.

### [Dragon Theatre, Barmouth](#)

#### **Sunday 26th June 2022 (TBC)**

The Theatre will screen Y Chwarelwr (The Quarryman), the first ever talkie in Welsh, following the quarryman's life in Blaenau Ffestiniog. The feature will be accompanied by documentary short 'O'r Graig' about the slate industry in North Wales and Q&A with a special guest speaker.

#### **A Roof of Slate for Every House Assets:**

- *Film stills,*
- *Season trailer,*
- *Digital programme with film list,*
- *Conversation with Welsh historians and local experts (full length and bite size videos available)*

#### **Hashtag:**

#ARoofofSlate.

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#### **About Film Hub Wales**

Film Hub Wales (FHW) celebrates cinema. We support organisations that screen film, from film festivals, to societies and mixed arts centres. Working with over [315 Welsh exhibitors](#), we aim to bring the best British and international film to all audiences across Wales and the UK. Since Film Hub Wales set up in 2013, we've supported over 250 exciting cinema projects, reaching over 480,000 audience members.

We're part of a UK wide network of eight hubs funded by the British Film Institute (BFI) which form the [Film Audience Network \(FAN\)](#), with [Chapter](#) appointed as the 'Film Hub Lead Organisation' (FHLO) in Wales We are also proud to lead on the UK [inclusive cinema](#) strategy on behalf of BFI FAN.

[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

### **About the BFI Film Audience Network**

Supported by National Lottery funding, the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), is central to the BFI's aim to ensure the greatest choice of film is available for everyone. Established in 2012 to build wider and more diverse UK cinema audiences for British and international film, FAN is a unique, UK-wide collaboration made up of eight Hubs managed by leading film organisations and venues strategically placed around the country. FAN also supports talent development with BFI NETWORK Talent Executives in each of the English Hubs, with a mission to discover and support talented writers, directors and producers at the start of their careers.

BFI FAN Film Hubs are:

- Film Hub Midlands is led by Broadway, Nottingham working in partnership with the Birmingham-based Flatpack
- Film Hub North is led collectively by Showroom Workstation, Sheffield and HOME Manchester
- Film Hub South East is led by the Independent Cinema Office
- Film Hub South West is led by Watershed in Bristol
- Film Hub Scotland is led by Glasgow Film Theatre
- Film Hub Northern Ireland is led by Queen's University Belfast
- Film Hub Wales is led by Chapter in Cardiff
- Film Hub London is led by Film London

[Website](#)

### **About the BFI**

We are a cultural charity, a National Lottery distributor, and the UK's lead organisation for film and the moving image. Our mission is:

- To support creativity and actively seek out the next generation of UK storytellers
- To grow and care for the BFI National Archive, the world's largest film and television archive
- To offer the widest range of UK and international moving image culture through our programmes and festivals - delivered online and in venue
- To use our knowledge to educate and deepen public appreciation and understanding
- To work with Government and industry to ensure the continued growth of the UK's screen industries
- Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Tim Richards.

### **About Chapter**

Chapter is one of Europe's largest and most dynamic arts centres with cinemas, theatres, exhibition spaces, studios, a café, award-winning bars, over 60 cultural workspaces and more. Chapter has an international reputation for excellence, innovation and collaboration. It offers an ever-changing programme of the best performance, films and exhibitions from Wales and from around the world.

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### **About Creative Wales**

Creative Wales is a Welsh Government internal agency that supports the development of the fast-growing creative industry in Wales. We focus on developing and promoting growth across the Screen, Digital, Music and Publishing sectors, positioning Wales as one of the best places in the world for creative businesses to thrive.

[Website](#), [Twitter](#)