

News Release: 14th June 2007

TELEVISION DOCUMENTARIES SET TO REVEAL UNSEEN FILM FOOTAGE FROM EMPIRE MUSEUM'S ARCHIVES

Rare film and photography from the image archives of the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum in Bristol will be revealed to the public for the first time in two major television documentaries. The archives, which shed light on the private lives of British colonial families in the former Empire, contribute almost all of the footage used in the 'Lost World of the Raj' starting on BBC2 on Friday 15th June and significant content for 'Empire's Children', to be screened by Channel Four in early July.

The Museum's collections contain a wealth of amateur film and photography, including material taken –during the traumatic period of decolonisation. Researchers at the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum have spent almost seven years cataloguing around 600 hours of film footage and over one million still images. The Museum's online resource www.imagesofempire.com , launched last year, is already the largest dedicated digital resource of still and moving images on the British colonial period despite representing a tiny proportion of the Museum's image archive.

Jo Hopkins, head of the Museum's image archive, is delighted that unseen material from the Museum's collections will be broadcast. "These leading documentary film-makers could have used many other historic archives around the UK but chose to work with our extraordinary amateur collections." The majority of the material supplied by the Museum was donated by families across the UK and can be likened to the 'home-movies' and family photo albums made today.

The six-part series 'Empire's Children', due to be transmitted from July, will look at the end of empire and how its legacies impact on today's Britain. The programme will trace

the family histories of several household names and celebrities, piecing together their past lives using authentic film footage. Following the success of 'Who Do You Think You Are?' the show's producers are also launching a website to accompany the series, which also utilises the Museum's extensive collections. Project Manager Paul McCormick explains how the Museum played a crucial role in this project:

"The Empire Museum was an invaluable resource for Illumina Digital, providing the bulk of the archive content used on the Empire's Children website. Being able to go to a single, helpful and expert source for archive video, audio and still images from a wide range of countries was of huge benefit to the project and greatly enhanced the text material on the site."

The forthcoming BBC series 'Lost World of the Raj' will uncover experiences of the empire's decline in India between the 1920s and the 1940s. Ninety per cent of the film footage in the series is from the Museum's archive. Jan Vaughan, BBC researcher for the series, explains how the collections show an entirely new perspective on this period of history:

"A lot came from affluent families who had enough money to afford what was a relatively expensive hobby, and enough leisure to pursue it. The film shows people going about their everyday lives: family events like weddings and christenings; walking the dog; riding, playing tennis and golf; all spiced up with grand social occasions and ceremony, and the quite amazing journeys undertaken in the workaday world of the Raj".

The three-part documentary is due to be broadcast on 15th, 22nd and 29th June on BBC2.

The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum's image and film archive is continuing to expand as further collections become available. Individual's interested in donating or loaning items can contact the Museum on 0117 925 4980 or visit:
www.empiremuseum.co.uk.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Images and film extracts used in the documentaries are available to view at:

<http://www.empiremuseum.co.uk/downloads/ioematerials.zip>

For more information, broadcast quality film and high-resolution images, please contact the Museum press office:

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Lost World of the Raj

Three one-hour programmes due to be broadcast at 9pm on 15th, 22nd and 29th June on BBC2. For further information visit:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctwo/listings/programme.shtml?day=friday&service_id=4284&filename=20070615/20070615_2100_4284_7294_60

Empire's Children

Six one-hour programmes due to be broadcast throughout July and August on Channel Four. For further information visit:

<http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/E/empireschildren/index.html>
http://www.walltowall.co.uk/catalogue_detail.aspx?w2wprogram=165

British Empire & Commonwealth Museum

www.empiremuseum.co.uk
www.imagesofempire.com

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