



THE FILMS OF SAINT ETIENNE

Asunder

Introduced by Esther Johnson and Bob Stanley

Esther Johnson's *Asunder* is a unique and very special film. Instead of concentrating on military operations, the artist has researched and selected footage from the First World War to show how the lives of ordinary people of the North East were irrevocably affected by the conflict. Among many of the delightful surprises in the film is the way that women performed in traditionally male domains, even playing football to huge crowds. The footage is expertly threaded together and is complemented by Bob Stanley's evocative and poetic words that are beautifully voiced by Kate Adie. The world of the past is brought into the present through an original score by Field Music and Warm Digits consummately performed with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, and culminates with a kind of joyous pathos in a traditional folk song performed by The Cornshed Sisters. *Asunder* is a warm film about hard times that pays tribute to the people of Tyne and Wear who were so vital to the war effort, and also to a community spirit that overcame great adversity. It is a tribute to the human spirit.

Helen de Witt, BFI London Film Festival

Asunder tells the story of what happened to an English town during the First World War, with almost all of its men abroad fighting and its women and children left behind. The North East was in the front line, thanks to its shipyards and munitions factories.

Using archive and contemporary footage and audio, *Asunder* collages the stories of people from Tyneside and Wearside to uncover what life was like on the home front, with bombs falling on Britain for the first time, conscientious objectors sentenced to death, and women working as doctors, tram conductors and footballers. The narrative moves from an Edwardian golden era, in which sport grew in popularity and aircraft and cars pointed to a bright new future, to a war that horrifically reversed this progress. In the Battle of the Somme, commencing on 1 July 1916, British, French and German armies fought one of the most traumatic battles in military history. Over the course of just four months, more than one million soldiers were captured, wounded or killed in a confrontation of unimaginable horror.

The narration for the film is voiced by journalist Kate Adie, with the actor Alun Armstrong as the voice of the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*.

A film by Esther Johnson, with a soundtrack composed by Sunderland's Mercury-nominated Field Music and Newcastle's Warm Digits, performed with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and The Cornshed Sisters.

To commemorate the Battle of the Somme centenary, the premiere of *Asunder* took place on 10 July 2016 at the Sunderland Empire, one of the largest remaining music halls in the UK, opened in 1 July 1907 by Vesta Tilley, known as Britain's best recruiting sergeant in WW1. The premiere had a live soundtrack performed by Field Music, Warm Digits, Royal Northern Sinfonia and The Cornshed Sisters.

asunder1916.uk

ASUNDER

Director: Esther Johnson

Producers: Esther Johnson, Bob Stanley

Text: Bob Stanley

Cinematography: Mary Farbrother

Additional Camera: Esther Johnson

Editor: Graham Taylor

Music: Field Music, Warm Digits

Performed with: Royal Northern Sinfonia,
The Cornshed Sisters

Sound Design: Chu-Li Shewring

Narrators: Kate Adie, Alun Armstrong

UK 2016

72 mins

THE FILMS OF SAINT ETIENNE

**Finisterre + Q&A with Bob Stanley
and Pete Wiggs**

Sat 4 Sep 15:00

How We Used to Live + Q&A with Pete Wiggs and Travis Elborough

Sat 4 Sep 17:20

**Saint Etienne: Shorts Programme + intro by Paul Kelly and Pete
Wiggs**

Sun 5 Sep 13:00

Lawrence of Belgravia + Q&A with Paul Kelly and Lawrence

Sun 5 Sep 15:30

**What Have You Done Today Mervyn Day? + Q&A with Pete Wiggs and
Paul Kelly**

Sun 5 Sep 18:30

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