



RE-RELEASES

'I Know Where I'm Going!'

'I Know Where I'm Going!'

Directed by: Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger
Production Company: Archers Film Productions
Produced by: Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger
Assistant Producer: George Busby
Assistant Director: John Tunstall
Written by: Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger
Photographed by: Erwin Hiller
Camera Operator: Cecil Cooney
Special Effects: Henry Harris
Edited by: John Seabourne
Production Designed by: Alfred Junge
Music Composed by: Allan Gray
Choir Principal: Sir Hugh Robertson
Music Conducted by: Walter Goehr
Song Sung by: The Glasgow Orpheus Choir
Recorded by: C.C. Stevens
Gaelic Adviser: Malcolm MacKellaig
Adviser C ilidh Sequences: John Laurie

uncredited

Production Companies: Independent Producers, J. Arthur Rank Film Productions
2nd Assistant Director: Bill Herlithy
3rd Assistant Director: Parry Jones
Continuity: Patricia Arnold
Assistant Continuity: Ainslie L'Evine
Focus Puller: Eric Besche
Clapper Loader: Harold Case
Stills: Max Roshier
Special Portraits: Fred Daniels
Additional Special Effects: George Blackwell
Back Projection: Charles Staffell
2nd Assistant Editors: Sidney Hayers, Jim Pople
Assistant Art Director: Ward Richards
Draughtsmen: Elliot Scott, Harry Hurdell, William Kellner, David Buxton
Sound Camera Operator: T. Bagley
Sound Maintenance: Roy Day
Music & Dubbing Sound Camera: Peter T. Davies
Boom Operator: Gordon K. McCallum
Boom Assistant: Fred Ryan

Cast:

Wendy Hiller (*Joan Webster*)
Roger Livesey (*Torquil MacNeil*)
Pamela Brown (*Catriona Potts*)
Finlay Currie (*Ruairidh Mh r*)
George Carney (*Mr Webster*)
Nancy Price (*Mrs Crozier*)
Catherine Lacey (*Mrs Robinson*)
Jean Cadell (*postmistress*)
John Laurie (*John Campbell*)
Valentine Dyal (*Mr Robinson*)
Norman Shelley (*Sir Robert Bellinger*)
Margot Fitzsimons (*Bridie*)
Murdo Morrison (*Kenny*)
C.W.R. Knight (*Colonel Barnstaple*)
Walter Hudd (*Hunter*)
Captain Duncan Mackechnie (*captain of 'Lochinvar'*)
Ian Sadler (*Iain*)
Donald Strachan (*shepherd*)
John Rae (*old shepherd*)
Duncan McIntyre (*old shepherd's son*)
Ivy Milton (*Peigi*)
Antony Eustrel (*Hooper*)
Petula Clark (*Cheril*)
Alec Faversham (*Martin*)
Herbert Lomas (*Mr Campbell*)
Kitty Kirwan (*Mrs Campbell*)
Graham Moffatt (*RAF sergeant*)
Boyd Steven, Maxwell Kennedy, Jean Houston (*singers in the C ilidh*)
Arthur Chesney (*harmonica player*)

'*I Know Where I'm Going!*' is a film of extraordinary beauty and emotional power. It means so much to many people – to those members of Powell and Pressburger's company The Archers who participated in its making in 1944, and to others, like myself, who have fallen under its spell more recently. Magically, it changes lives, inspires new directions in those who see it; a simple love story, it draws us into the dark, dangerous waters of sexual desire and death; like myth, it works on unconscious levels difficult to contain through rational analysis. To someone like me, who grew up in post-war Britain, with its egalitarian rhetoric and idealistic vision of a new, modern nation, '*I Know Where I'm Going!*' (affectionately known as *IKWIG*) carries additional resonances. The very title, with its tease in the tail, the emphatic exclamation mark that warns against taking such a confident assertion at face value, is tinged with irony.

This is a film about an interrupted journey, during which travelers are compelled to change direction and revise priorities. One can imagine the wry glint in the filmmakers' eyes: 'Ah, yes, you think you know, but...' Several of those involved in the production were European  migr s who had experienced enforced, and in some cases traumatic, digressions and delays in life's journey. For Emeric Pressburger, who wrote the script of *IKWIG* in a matter of days from an idea he had long cherished, the concept of life-shattering diversions from a planned route must have seemed particularly poignant. The film itself was a detour in The Archers' itinerary, an unscheduled stop between *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) and *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946). Its anti-materialist message – in effect, a critique of profiteering – partly reflected the context of wartime restrictions in which it was made: the unavailability of Technicolor stock had delayed the production of the ambitious propaganda piece *A Matter of Life and Death*, commissioned by Jack Beddington of the Ministry of Information in the interests of improving post-war Anglo-American relations. In 1944, the war may well have been over but the shouting, but the celebration of a post-war consumer boom at this stage seemed, to The Archers at least, premature and inappropriate.

There's an element of romantic nostalgia in this – an unwillingness, perhaps, to leave the war behind and to look confidently towards the future. Nostalgia for the war, and the clear-cut ideals for which it was fought, is not so surprising at this point in The Archers' career. After a string of box-office successes, *A Canterbury Tale* had been met by a cool reception from audiences and critics – mostly, it seems, because of the perversity of the peculiar glue-pouring Culpepper, but also because of its complicated, meandering plot. Powell and Pressburger were unsure what direction to take next. The temporary shelving of *A Matter of Life and Death* created a hiatus; this celebrated black-and-white and Technicolor fantasy made way for an apparently simple, straightforward narrative, an intense love story that would link the idealism of their previous film with the life-and-death romance of the one that was to follow.

On the face of it, the storyline is reassuringly transparent. The theme of star-crossed lovers with its 'love conquers all' moral is not so far removed from previous productions such as *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) and *A Canterbury Tale*. It was also the mainspring of the delayed extravaganza *A Matter of Life and Death*. However, *IKWIG* was heralded as a more conventional enterprise than The Archers' other films, and it could be seen as a bridging exercise – an attempt to regain lost ground with critics and audiences, and to mark time until the more complex project could go into production. As it turned out, *IKWIG* was a critical and commercial success, though many still found parts of the story confusing, despite its more classical structure. However, it is far from being a minor transition piece bracketed between two

Mr Ramshaw (*Torquil, the Eagle*)
UK 1945
92 mins
Digital

A BFI release

Restored by the BFI National Archive and
The Film Foundation in association with ITV.
Restoration funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas
Family Foundation. Additional support provided by
Matt Spick.

RE-RELEASES

I Know Where I'm Going!

From Thu 19 Oct

Pressure

From Fri 3 Nov

NEW RELEASES

The Old Oak

Continues from 29 Sep

How to Have Sex

From Fri 3 Nov

Is There Anybody Out There?

From Fri 17 Nov

The Eternal Daughter

From Fri 24 Nov

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including
priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI
Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**,
the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine.
Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK
only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk

**SIGHT
AND
SOUND**

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you
can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on
demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British
and independent titles, films are available to watch
in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free
to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

Join the BFI mailing list for regular programme
updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account
at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

wayward masterpieces. This is a film that encapsulates the memories, working
ethos and artistic aspirations of a remarkable group of film-makers at a unique
moment in British cultural history.

IKWIG's happy ending leaves many questions unanswered. Indeed, it is less
clear at this point where our travelers are going than it was at the beginning. As
in the case of *Brigadoon*, the protagonists make a choice to remain in an
imaginary past rather than embrace the future, seeking a recovery of lost
innocence. With its affirmation of simple human values of love and loyalty, and
its evocation of an enchanted realm of impossible beauty, the film deploys
legend, myth and fairytale to invite us to lose our modern, cynical selves and
rediscover a childlike naïveté. It celebrates the magical possibilities of cinema to
transport us to places beyond our imagination where good overcomes evil and
monsters are annihilated. At the same time, its ironic patchwork of familiar
images reinforces a sense of loss, reminding us that new identities and
solutions do not appear from nowhere – they are fabricated from fragments of
the old. This is perhaps why *IKWIG*'s bright and breezy conclusion is tainted by
a faint aura of melancholy, deriving from a feeling that it is too good to be true.

Since its release in 1945, *IKWIG* has continued to touch different audiences
over the decades, inspiring some to follow Joan's route in search of the
Scotland portrayed in the film, and to relive her journey of self-discovery. This is
a tribute to the power of cinema to engage us on profound levels, even when
we are aware of the fact that the truth we seek behind images will always elude
us. Apart from a wish to experience 'the real thing', what may attract *IKWIG*
fans to follow in Joan's footsteps is the sense the film conveys of perpetual
motion, as though it embodies the rhythms of restless desire. It could be that
Joan Webster's fellow-travellers are compelled to act out the dilemmas of
modern existence by choosing to cast themselves as characters embarking on
a heroic quest, in a bid to escape the humdrum routine of urban life. This
suggests an empathetic response to the film's epic dimension, whereby the
protagonists are propelled by unseen forces to discover their fate, as in classic
tragedy. Such imaginative encounters lead us somewhere outside time and
place, where conventional social boundaries no longer hold sway.

This is not to imply that *IKWIG* operates on the level of the universal and the
transcendental. The Archers' film emerged from specific historical, cultural and
industrial circumstances, which profoundly affected its conception and making
– yet it reaches beyond that context, drawing on a rich treasury of mixed
cultural resources, including the memories and experiences of its makers. It
manages to be both of its time, and timeless. It conjures up a particular region
in Scotland, which is also nowhere in particular, a hybrid concoction of
miscellaneous images from various sources. By adopting this dual focus, and
by playing off the authentic reconstruction of place against its recreation via
pastiche, The Archers mobilised a powerful emotion which lies at the heart of
the diasporic experience, provoking a longing for the lost homeland which
simultaneously recognises that it is gone for ever. In turn, this yearning for
something lost and irrecoverable appeals to audiences beyond those for whom
the film was originally intended, making connections between people from
different social and cultural contexts. No doubt this was part of a deliberate
strategy to ensure that *IKWIG* could be successfully marketed to as many
audiences as possible. But it is also the key to the film's enduring freshness
and vitality, and one of the reasons it continues to exert a spellbinding effect on
successive generations of viewers.

Extract from *I Know Where I'm Going!* by Pam Cook (BFI, 2021). Reproduced by kind permission
of Bloomsbury Publishing ©Pam Cook