



SHOWROOM
WORKSTATION
SHEFFIELD

Wings of Mystery

Director: Gilbert Gunn
Production Company: Rayant Pictures
Sponsor: Children's Film Foundation
Producer: Anthony Gikison
Screenplay: Gilbert Gunn
Original story: H.K. Lewenhak
Director of Photography: David Holmes
Editor: Terence Twigg
Art Director: Wilfred Arnold
Music: Derek New
Sound Recording: Francis Flynn
Cast:
Judy Geeson (*Jane*)
Hennie Scott (*Don*)
Patrick Jordan (*McCarthy*)
Richard Carpenter (*Ted*)
Anthony Jacobs (*foreign agent*)
Walter Horsbrugh (*research chief*)
Arnold Ridley (*Mr Bell*)
Francesca Bertorelli (*Yvette*)
Graham Aza (*Antoine*)
John Gabriel (*their father*)
Peter Bennett
UK 1942
55 mins

River of Steel

Director: Peter Sachs
Produced by: W.M. Larkins Studio
In co-operation with:
The British Iron & Steel Federation
Script: Roger MacDougall
Art Direction: Oscar Dominguez
Special Effects:
Jean Image Studios (Paris)
Backgrounds and Animation:
Claude Lipscombe, Hugh Gladwish, Walter
Vickers, Vera Linnecar,
Bob Godfrey
Music: Hans Ward
Colour by: Technicolor
Sound System: Western Electric
UK 1951
9 mins

Steel is the final strand of This Working Life, a three-part project from BFI National Archive, which launched with King Coal and was followed by Tales from the Shipyard.

The BFI 2-DVD collection Steel: A Century of Steelmaking on Film, along with other This Working Life collections, is available now.

*This Working Life: Steel is supported by:
The Eric Anker-Petersen Charity
British Council
Community Union*

This Working Life: Steel

Wings of Mystery + River of Steel

Don and Jane help Mr Bell look after his racing pigeons. They live near the steel works where their elder brother Ted is a research worker on a new secret alloy. A small piece of it is stolen from the factory to be sold to a foreign agent. Suspicion falls on Ted, but Don and Jane work out how the alloy was stolen...

International pigeon racing and the theft of a valuable secret alloy form the background to the exciting film *Wings of Mystery* which is set in the fictitious steel town of Stalford.

Most of the film was photographed in Sheffield where pigeon racing is very popular; the [Children's Film] Foundation acknowledges with grateful thanks the co-operation of the English Steel Corporation for providing facilities for shooting in their works. The employees showed much interest in the details of the story, and many asked searching questions on the details of the plot and the manner in which it was being filmed. The thrilling chase at the end of the film was photographed in the main Machine Shop.

The film unit was given advice and instruction on all aspects of producing high grade steels and also practical demonstrations of analysis on high grade steel in the laboratory.

The airfields at both fictitious towns in the story were filmed at the Elstree Flying Club, using a Beagle Terrier. The Comet sequences were shot at the London Airport by arrangement with the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

Exteriors on the moors of Sheffield were shot silent and skilfully reproduced by art director Wilfred Arnold in the Studios at Bushey for the dialogue scenes. Interiors of houses in the Sheffield area were also reproduced in the studios.

The Belgian scenes were shot at Pouchen End, near Hemel Hempstead, on the Grand Union Canal. Wilfred Arnold transformed the exterior of the Three Horseshoes Inn there, to resemble the café where much of the exterior action takes place. The empty house used for the chase is at Kings Langley, Herts.

The four child artistes, Francesca Bertorelli, Graham Aza, Hennie Scott and Judy Geeson came from the Corona Stage School.

Paddy [Patrick] Jordan who plays McCarthy the villain, appeared in the film *The Longest Day* and the play *The Amorous Prawn*. Arnold Ridley, who plays Mr Bell, has appeared in several feature films, but is best known as the author of *The Ghost Train*. Richard Carpenter, who plays Ted, the children's brother, has appeared in plays, film and television series.

Gilbert Gunn wrote the screenplay and directed the film, which was made by Rayant Pictures for the Foundation. His feature films include writer, director and producer of *The Elstree Story*, director of *Valley of Song*, *Good Beginning*, *My Wife's Family*, *Operation Bullshine* and *What a Whopper*.

Production notes

Showroom is one of the largest independent cinemas in Europe and the place to be for anyone with a passion for film. Located in the heart of Sheffield's cultural quarter, a stone's throw away from the city's main station and shopping centre, we are open 364 days a year showing the latest film releases, classic cinema, family films and the best cinema from around the world. Festivals, Special Screenings & Events add to the rich cultural mix of the city and our Education activities engage learners of all ages. Showroom is also one of Sheffield's most vibrant meeting places with a café/bar serving fresh food and refreshments daily as well as a free Wi-Fi service. We welcome you to join us.

River of Steel

The driving force behind Larkins Studio in the post-war period was the German-born Peter Sachs. Sachs staffed the studio with a group of artists who had talent and potential but little animation experience for the express purpose of pushing boundaries. Added to the creative mix on *River of Steel* was the Spanish surrealist painter Oscar Dominguez, seemingly on a whim as the collaboration was a one-off.

The resulting film has two distinct halves. The first part mixes instruction and abstraction in equal parts to represent the production of steel from iron ore. The design features heavy notes of cubism, toying creatively with perspective to send lines and colours pinging off in all directions – no frame would look out of place on a gallery wall. Hans Ward's music dramatically adds to the mix and there is a sense that the film is a piece of visual music, an 'animated ballet' like Halas & Batchelor's *Magic Canvas* (1948), but in an industrial context.

The second-half of the film is less successful, but also less ambitious. The gimmick of 'imagining a world without steel' has probably been over-parodied to make it successful for audiences today; in fact the whole film is probably too modernist for post-modern tastes. But the stylised character design and animation is clever and in keeping with the visual tone of the film. All in all the film represents the Larkins Studio and Peter Sachs at the peak of their powers; a summit that both unfortunately failed to reach again due to changing times and circumstances.

Jez Stewart, BFI DVD booklet *This Working Life: Steel*