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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Railways of the Great War with Michael Portillo



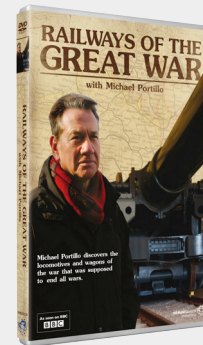
Michael Portillo is back in this new BBC Two TV series to mark the centenary of the First World War

On DVD from 11th August and iTunes from 12th August 2014.

Michael Portillo is back, taking to the tracks in this new BBC Two documentary TV series to mark the centenary of the First World War. "Railways of the Great War with Michael Portillo" will be broadcast from 4th August 2014 and will be released on DVD by FremantleMedia International on 11th August 2014.

In this five part series Michael Portillo discovers the central role the railways played in securing victory, repatriating the dead and wounded, and feeding the insatiable appetite for weaponry and supplies that the theatre of war demanded. This is a story of how a British invention that brought trade, travel and prosperity in peacetime became an engine of war.

Michael will track down the fascinating, emotional and sometimes tragic stories of the wartime railways that crisscrossed Britain and Europe. The railways were then widely considered the new arm in modern warfare as it was a time where motorised transport and roads were in their infancy.



FREMANTLEMEDIA
INTERNATIONAL



RELEASE INFORMATION

Distributor	FremantleMedia International
Release date	11th August, 2014
Running time	145 mins
Price	DVD £14.99 iTunes HD episode £1.99 HD series £8.99 iTunes SD episode £1.49 SD series £6.99
Hashtag	#GreatWarRailways

KEY TALENT INFORMATION

Stars Michael Portillo

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Over the five episodes Michael will travel to the key railway locations across Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Britain that would become synonymous with the victories, defeats, battles and campaigns of the First World War, showing how they were intrinsic to our success and how they resulted in the Europe we know today.

Episode Synopses:

Episode 1

Michael begins his quest in Metz on European tracks built with war in mind, charts the birth of the railway war at a small station in Luxembourg and discovers how Britain's railways coped with the challenge of sending thousands of troops to join the conflict from Southampton. Finally, he returns to France to learn how the early war of movement gave way to the stalemate of the trenches.

Episode 2

Michael travels to the north east to find out about the brave railwaymen who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Then it's on to Banbury where the railways' manufacturing expertise turned a crisis into a victory. In Hampshire, Michael meets the proud son of a railwayman who, as a Royal Engineer, taught soldiers to be railwaymen and trained railwaymen to be soldiers. Finally, on the south coast he meets the big guns that turned the tide of war.

Episode 3

Michael gets hands on experience of the miniature tracks and trains that kept supplies flowing to the front line and visits North Eastern Railway Headquarters in York to find out about the Great War's forgotten railway leader. He hears the story of the Bath railway poet and pays homage at the site of Britain's deadliest train crash in Quintinshill. Finally, Michael crosses the Channel to discover how the railways fed millions of men in the trenches from a depot in Abancourt.

Episode 4

Michael travels to Bristol Temple Meads to hear a first-hand account from the front line, then in Yorkshire he discovers how women took over railwaymen's roles and began literally to wear the trousers. He finds out about the extraordinary exploits of Belgian trainspotters who spied on enemy rail movements and hears how the end of the war also marked the decline of the railways.

Episode 5

Michael explores the aftermath of this earth-shattering conflict. For four years, the railways had fed the front line with vast numbers of men, munitions and supplies. But even after the Armistice had been signed in a railway carriage, the work of the railways was not done. As Britain continued to mourn its dead the railways played an important part in their remembrance. Michael hears stories of the railways' war heroes and meets a remarkable railway wagon, used to honour them. He hears how the railways helped give birth to battlefield tourism and in the cemeteries of Ypres he meets the great grandchildren of some of the fallen.

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