



A RICHARD WESTON FILM

THE BURYING PARTY

BASED ON THE LIFE OF WILFRED OWEN

2018

SINE WAVE MEDIA PRESENTS A FILM INSTINCT PRODUCTION 'THE BURYING PARTY' MATTHEW STAITE SID PHOENIX WILL BURREN
JOYCE BRANAGH HARRY OWENS AND BENJAMIN LONGTHORNE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MEURIG MARSHALL MUSIC BY MATTHEW DWIVEDI
WRITTEN BY LAURENCE THOMPSON AND RICHARD WESTON ASSISTANT DIRECTOR KEITH THOMPSON EXECUTIVE PRODUCER NEIL PERRIAM
DIRECTED BY RICHARD WESTON



SINE WAVE MEDIA PRESENTS

A FILM BY RICHARD WESTON

THE BURYING PARTY

BASED ON THE LIFE OF
WILFRED OWEN

WITH MATTHEW STAITE, SID PHOENIX,
JOYCE BRANAGH, BENJAMIN LONGTHORNE



@theburyingparty
theburyingparty.com

2018 / UNITED KINGDOM / 60 MINUTES

#wilfredowenfilm

Contact: Keith Thompson
info@sinewaveshowreels.com



SYNOPSIS

Wilfred Owen returns to the Somme against the advice of his mentor Siegfried Sassoon, determined to follow his subject 'The Pity of War' to the very end.

Richard Weston's 'The Burying Party' featuring Matthew Staite tells the fascinating story of the Wilfred Owen's final year on earth, 100 years after his tragic death in World War One.

Director Richard Weston and Writer Laurence Thompson's remarkable film follows the oneiric journey of the greatest war poet, beginning with the landmark literary meeting with Siegfried Sassoon, toward the devastating Battle of the Sambre.

This tremendous tale features the powerhouse on-screen debut of Matthew Staite, Sid Phoenix (Florence Foster Jenkins) as Siegfried Sassoon, Joyce Branagh (Othello) as Susan Owen and Benjamin Longthorne (The Young) as Corporal Thompson .

This true story tells of a milestone in world literature, of forbidden love and ultimate sacrifice, featuring timeless figures such as Robert Graves, Robbie Ross and Charles Scott Moncrieff.

With stunning cinematography from DOP Meurig Marshall, a captivating and defiant score from the award-winning Matthew Dwivedi and a tremendous ensemble cast, 'The Burying Party' pays special tribute to one of the most poignant figures of the 20th Century.





CASTING

Matthew Staite's film debut comes off the back of his tour with Idle Motion's *Shooting With Light*, where he played Robert Capa.

Sid Phoenix is known for his roles in Stephen Frears' films *Florence Foster Jenkins* and *The Program*. He was most recently nominated for **Best Actor** at the **Fan Film Awards**

Joyce Branagh is an actor and director, known for her work on Kenneth Branagh's *Othello* and winning an award at the **Manchester Theatre Awards** for *Boomtown Girls*.

Benjamin Longthorne made his onscreen debut with Richard Weston's *The Young*, before training at the illustrious **Rose Bruford Acting School**. This is their first collaboration in 7 years.



“What passing-bells
for these who die
as cattle?”

Only the monstrous
anger of the guns.”

- Wilfred Owen

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Why did you choose the subject of World War One?

It all started when Neil Perriam took us over to The Somme. I didn't know what story we wanted to tell about World War One, but it was only when we went to the cellar that Wilfred Owen wrote the final letter to his mother when something clicked. There was something remarkable about the tone of the letter, where he was doing his duty not just as a soldier but as a son as well. Down the line, we went to the canal where he passed away. It's so quiet there now. It's only when you read his poetry that you become part of the unforgiving landscape. Every word lifts off the page and draws you into what seems like a distant planet. The people around him coloured and magnified his experience. Siegfried Sassoon was so important in the nurture of Owen's poetry. So was Robert Graves, Charles Scott Moncrieff, Robbie Ross. They had a direct impact on his attitude toward war and his craft. I wanted to explore the reasons he went back, the reason he made such a sacrifice. I began writing with Laurence, having collaborated before.

Why is this story relevant 100 years on?

It's important to make a film about this very special artist, because he reported on something that is still happening. This war was a direct result of a lack of communication and a lack of understanding for other people. It's a reminder of what gross nationalism can lead to. Whether or not you've read Wilfred's poems, parts of them you already have. Attitudes towards war have shifted due to what he and his contemporaries were writing about. And we'd like to remind people again on what they saw and what they went through, as well as what people are going through in certain parts of the world today.

Were there any aspects of Wilfred's sexuality that were important in the making of the film?

Dominic Hibberd, whose biography of Wilfred's is the most in depth, said that his sexuality informed his subject and how he tackled it. Not only that, he was an outsider of society at a time he would have been punished for just being who he is. His sensitivity is a huge factor in his writing, and his relationships with Sassoon and Scott Moncrieff had a lot of influence on

modern literature. War has constantly been touted as this straight macho thing, but the best reporters on the subject of modern warfare were gay. For me it's not a war film, it's a love film, and it shows us what the lack of love can do to our world.

Do you feel poetry can translate to the screen?

Wilfred's poetry is incredibly visual, and we have to remember that at the time film was nowhere near as popular. Each writer is given their own moving mural. For Sassoon he writes in his office by the Old Huntsman painting, for Robert Graves it's a neoclassical pub, Moncrieff in a churchyard surrounded by swirling poppy petals. We wanted Owen's use of imagination to frame his friends, his loves, and create a landscape that was spawned from the words on the page. Lands "cratered like the moon with hollow woe". I think along with Meurig's beautiful photography and Matthew's haunting score, we have a highly poetic sensory experience to show people. One that is sad, terrifying, but ultimately defiant.



INTERVIEW WITH SID PHOENIX

So, Sid, tell us a little bit about Siegfried Sassoon and his role in the film.

Sassoon, by the time we meet him is already a fairly well established poet, and has a reputation both as a writer and a soldier. He represents someone that Wilfred Owen looks up to and wants to engage with, but he has a different set of beliefs on the nature of war and specifically the war that they are engaged in. A lot of the story we're telling is how those ideals come to influence Owen's view on war and other young men's roles in it.

Is there anything in particular that enticed you about the film and compelled you to take part?

I don't think another World War One is about to happen but I think that it's worth re-examining what happened a hundred years ago and looking at what the people who lived through it had to say about it. And really going over that again and seeing if there's more to be gleaned. Whether we take what they intended us to take from it or whether it's been bastardised or lost in translation, and exploring those elements again. The reason that these specific characters and people are so important in doing that is because they are all

exceptionally eloquent masters of language. As someone who adores language itself and thinks very verbally and very linguistically – in case you couldn't tell! – I felt immediately drawn to that and the script for the film is adept at showing people who love language and are trying to find a way to express their feelings on a subject, and imbuing them with humanity and the reality.

When I see an indisputable rise in misguided nationalism (the main driver for war) on the global political stage, I can't help but feel that all story-tellers, and all artists have a responsibility to ask as many questions of that as possible, because it's all we do at this point. It's all we really have. Stories.

“Have you forgotten yet?”

Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.”

- Siegfried Sassoon





DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This film documents the extraordinary life of Wilfred Owen, the greatest war poet. The story is about outsiders, protestors, those who use their talents in order to defy their times, their seemingly hopeless situation.

From Sassoon's magnum opus 'Aftermath' the words "Have you forgotten yet?" rang out in my mind throughout the process. This eternal question exists in print, and will exist to the end of time. Owen was his student, his love, his friend, his companion, and the most powerful emblem to rise up against War's bloody game. Our film asks the world whether it has forgotten what a lack of compassion and intolerance can lead to.

The Burying Party is a film about remembrance, but for those who changed the subject. We are no longer remembering people for their deaths, but for their lives, their artistry that expertly documented an otherworldly landscape. It's a film about sexuality, about young love, about the dread of losing your soul mate due to matters beyond your control.

What Sassoon, Owen and Graves did was take back control, through the means of the universal language of empathy. We wanted to reiterate their extraordinary message by taking those images and famous lines on to screen, so that we can swear by the slain that we might never forget again.

SOUNDTRACK

Music plays a vital part in the cinematic language of the film. Each element, from photography to music, from costume to sound design has been carefully woven together to encapsulate Owen's world. Matthew Dwivedi's awe-inspiring soundtrack grows from the blood-curdling engines of War, trumpets sound from the distance of a sunrise that the poets share for the first time in their defiance. Rosie Raven's final piece sums up the film in a waltz, and former MD of the RSC, Richard Brown, plays a glorious original rag time piece, organically chiming from the emotions and actions of the poets.

THE DIRECTOR

RICHARD WESTON

His first feature film *The Young* earned him Best Director and Best Feature Film at the Wirral International Film Festival, before an Honorable Mention at the Los Angeles Movie Awards and Best Feature Film with the Latina Film Commission.

While training as an actor at East 15 Acting School, Weston learned from directors such as Mike Alfreds and Tim Sandifer. In collaboration with Pelague-May Green, his docudrama study of body language, *Sanctimonia*, was exhibited at Histories of Thought in Ghent, 2013.

His previous credits include *The Young*, *Precipice Hours* and *Sadly Now*. *The Burying Party* is his fourth feature film, and based on the life of fellow Wirralite Wilfred Owen.



CINEMATOGRAPHER
MEURIG MARSHALL

Meurig Marshall is the Director of Photography for *The Burying Party*, which is his second collaboration with Richard Weston after the award-winning tragicomedy *Sadly Now*. His work includes *Amante* with the Oscar-nominated director Stephen Daldry.

SCREENWRITER
LAURENCE THOMPSON

Laurence Thompson is a screenwriter, essayist, author and performance poet. His first film writing credit was received in 2017 for *Sadly Now*, for which he collaborated with playwrights Pelagie-May Green and Luke Francis.





CREW

Director	RICHARD WESTON
Written by	LAURENCE THOMPSON RICHARD WESTON
Production Manager	EOLANDE DIAZ
Producer	RICHARD WESTON
Executive Producer	NEIL PERRIAM
Co-Producer	CHARLIE BURT
Co-Producer	OMAR PARKER
Co-Producer	LES HIGHTON
Music by	MATTHEW DWIVEDI
Director of Photography	MEURIG MARSHALL
Hair and Make-Up	LAURA MARIA VALLEJO
Costume Designer	GEORGIE STUART
Assistant Director	KEITH THOMPSON
2nd Assistant Director	FRANCIS QUIGLEY
Sound Editor	MARK McMILLAN
Military Supervisor	BAGS SIMMONS

CAST

Wilfred Owen

Siegfried Sassoon

Susan Owen

Corporal Thompson

Charles Scott Moncrieff

Robert Graves

Nancy Nicholson

Lieutenant Welham

Robbie Ross

MATTHEW STAITE

SID PHOENIX

JOYCE BRANAGH

BENJAMIN LONGTHORNE

HARRY OWENS

WILL BURREN

SALLY PAFFETT

HOWARD CORLETT

ANDREW CALEY

