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MAN OF ARAN

Great Britain 1934

70 mins b&w 16mm

Credits as seen on the film: Gaumont British Pictures Corporation presents MAN OF ARAN recorded on British Acoustic Film at Gainsborough Studios, Islington. Collaborators John Goldman - Frances Flaherty. Assistant director Pat Mullin (John) of Aran. Field laboratory John Taylor. Editor and scenarist John Coleman. Recording H. Hand. Specially composed score based on the original Irish folk songs of the Aran Islands. Musical score by John Greenwood under the direction of Louis Levy. A Gainsborough picture controlled throughout the United Kingdom and the Irish Free State.

COLEMAN (TIGER) KING - a man of Aran MAGGIE DIRRAINE - his wife
MICHAEL DILLAINE - their son
Pat Mullin - John

Patch Ruad (Red Beard))
Patcheen Flaherty) the shark hunting crew
Tommy O'Rourke)

"Big Patcheen" Conesly of the West - Stephen Dirraine
Pat McDonough - canoeman

MAN OF ARAN is beyond doubt the most influential documentary film ever made. Its making came at a time in Robert Flaherty's life when it seemed that he was almost about to be squeezed out of film-making entirely. After NANOOK OF THE NORTH and his films in the south Pacific he was not seeing eye to eye with Hollywood and so he accepted an invitation to make a film for an English production company. After three years of living and working with the people on Aran this film was the result. EDGE OF THE WORLD, which launched Michael Powell into the world of film-making, was directly inspired by MAN OF ARAN.

Robert Flaherty was born in Michigan. In the course of doing geological exploration in northern Canada he conceived the idea of filming what he had seen and so purchased a camera to do that. It was his practice to develop the footage in the field, a most difficult thing to do. When he had finished shooting he returned to Toronto and while editing, set the film on fire, thus destroying it all. Later he re-shot everything and NANOOK OF THE NORTH was the result.

This same method, of going to the location and living the life of the people there, became Robert Flaherty's rule to the end of his career. It was just as true of his last film LOUISIANA STORY as it was of his first.

Note that Flaherty continued to develop the film in the field and that John Taylor is given credit for it. Today such a thing is simply unheard of. Yet in spite of the technological revolution that makes the world so small that film is simply sent home for processing within a few hours, it is still true that Robert Flaherty's basic method of living with the people in the way they have to live remains the sensible way to arrive at the truth and get it on to film.

The Frances H. Flaherty in the credits above is of course the same lady who is so graciously a patron of Toronto Film Society.

O. C. Burritt