

WHISTLE DOWN THE WIND

introduced by HAYLEY MILLS



RELEASE YEAR: 1961

RUNTIME: 99 mins

DIRECTOR: Bryan Forbes

SCREENPLAY:

Keith Waterhouse, Willis Hall

PRODUCER: Richard Attenborough

Welcome to our Easter Family Heritage Screening and a classic drama of post war cinema, *Whistle Down The Wind*. Directed by Bryan Forbes, the film stars Hayley Mills as a young girl, Kathy Bostock, who finds an escaped criminal (played by Alan Bates) on the family's remote, North Lancashire farm. Kathy believes him to be Jesus Christ and her dramatic discovery fast becomes an open secret amongst the children of the local community, threatening to blow his cover.

Whistle Down The Wind is an enduring family favourite, winning many awards,

including two BAFTA nominations for director Bryan Forbes. Based on the 1957 short story by Mary Hayley Bell (Hayley Mills' mother), screenwriters Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall also received BAFTA nominations for their adaptation, as did Hayley Mills for Best British Actress. As Kathy, Hayley Mills gives one of her greatest early performances (along with *Tiger Bay*, 1959, where she won Best Newcomer), appearing effortlessly natural and engaging. A multi-layered story about the power and limits of faith and the challenges we all face to our childhood innocence, *Whistle Down The Wind* is pure film making at its best.



10 Things You Might Not Know about *Whistle Down The Wind*...

- 1 Author Mary Hayley Bell used her own three children (Hayley, Juliet and Jonathan) as inspiration for the film's three main characters.
- 2 The story was originally set in Sussex but producer Richard Attenborough asked the two screenwriters to relocate the film in a Northern location.
- 3 The film is rich in allegory and parallels some events found in Christian literature.
- 4 Many of the children in the film were untrained actors from the local schools in Burnley and Clitheroe, Lancashire.
- 5 In the original soundtrack, the whistling is provided by Richard Attenborough.
- 6 Bryan Forbes' daughter, Emma Forbes, was the presenter of popular children's TV show *Live And Kicking* from 1993–96.
- 7 London born director Bryan Forbes formed a production company called Beaver Films with Richard Attenborough, where they collaborated on many award-winning films.
- 8 The escaped criminal was played by Alan Bates; this was one of his first feature film roles.
- 9 Hayley Mills frequently starred in films alongside her father, such as *The Chalk Garden* and *Tiger Bay*.
- 10 Arthur Ibbetson, the film's cinematographer, also shot children's classics *Willy Wonker And The Chocolate Factory* and *The Railway Children*.

BRYAN FORBES CBE

Bryan Forbes CBE was one of our greatest British film makers. Bryan began his career as an actor, then a screenwriter, then a director. He received BAFTA nominations for many of his films, including *The League Of Gentleman* (1960), *Whistle Down The Wind* (1961), *Only Two Can Play* (1962), *Séance On A Wet Afternoon* (1964), *King Rat* (1965); and he won a BAFTA for *The Angry Silence* (1960).

Whistle Down The Wind was Bryan's first film as a director and much of the emotional drama featured in the film is explored further in his later work. In his own words, "The vulnerability of my characters always fascinates me and perhaps what I do best is to inject emotion into my films. If I can move an audience, whether it be to laughter or tears, then I feel I have done my job."

In 1969 Bryan was made Head of Production and Managing Director of film studio EMI Films. After a difficult two years, Bryan left the studio but two classics of British children's cinema emerged from his time there, *The Railway Children* (1970) and *The Tales Of Beatrix Potter* (1971). Later successes in Hollywood included *King Rat* (1965) and the cult science fiction thriller *The Stepford Wives* (1975), about a community of women who are turned into robots by their husbands. In 2007 Bryan was the recipient of the BAFTA Special Award for a Career of Outstanding Achievement in film making. We here salute one of our greatest talents who sadly passed away last year.

HAYLEY MILLS

Hayley Mills was born in London, the youngest daughter of British actor Sir John Mills and actress/writer Mary Hayley Bell. Hayley first appeared in J. Lee Thompson's crime drama *Tiger Bay* (1959) when she was 12 years old, playing an orphaned tomboy Gillie. This won Hayley a BAFTA award for Most Promising Newcomer and catching the attention of Disney Studios who went on to cast her in the 1960 family classic *Pollyanna* (1960).

After winning an Academy Award for *Pollyanna*, Hayley became one of the world's best known child actresses, going on to star in many more Disney hit films such as *The Parent Trap* (1961) and *Summer Magic* (1963). As a teenage actress, Hayley Mills starred in two multiple BAFTA-winning films: *Whistle Down The Wind* and *The Chalk Garden* (1964), directed by British director Ronald Neame. Hayley Mills continues to be one of our best known actresses, notably in the television serial *The Flame Trees Of Thika* (1981) and on stage in *The King and I* (1988).

BAFTA HERITAGE SCREENINGS

BAFTA Heritage Screenings are a series of quarterly film screenings and on-stage interviews which celebrate British film and TV classics and the great film and TV professionals who made them.

