

= Rescued by Rover =

Rescued by Rover is a 1905 British short silent drama film , directed by Lewin Fitzhamon , about a dog who leads its master to his kidnapped baby , which was the first to feature the Hepworth 's family dog Blair in a starring role ; following the release , the dog became a household name and he is considered to be the first dog film star . The film , which according to Michael Brooke of BFI Screenonline , " marks a key stage in the medium 's development from an amusing novelty to the seventh art , " and , " possibly the only point in film history when British cinema unquestionably led the world , " was an advance in filming techniques , editing , production and story telling .

Four hundred prints were sold , so many that the negatives wore out twice , requiring the film to be re @-@ shot each time . Two professional actors were paid to appear , and the film is cited as the first film to have used paid actors . The style of shooting and editing would bridge the gap between the styles of directors Edwin Stanton Porter and D. W. Griffith , and prints have been preserved in both the United States and the United Kingdom .

= = Plot = =

The film opens with Rover , a collie playing with a child in front of a fireplace . Later that day , the baby is taken out in a pram by her nurse . The nurse refuses to aid a beggar woman , and is then distracted upon meeting a soldier . While talking to the soldier , she pays no attention to the baby , and the beggar woman approaches from behind and snatches the sleeping child .

In the next scene , the nurse confesses to the mother that the child has been lost . Rover , also sitting in the room , listens before jumping through the window and racing down the street , going around a corner and across a river . The dog makes its way to a slum and barges through each and every door ; he finds the right one and enters . In an attic , the beggar woman is removing the clothing from the child ; the dog enters and is driven off by the beggar .

The dog leaves the house and swims back across the river , down the street and into its master and mistress 's home . In a study , the child 's father is sitting ; Rover enters and pleads with him to follow . They leave , with the man following the dog across the river in a boat to the slums . They enter the room where the child is hidden , and the father quickly takes the child from the beggar woman and leaves with the dog . Upon their return home , the child is placed in the arms of the mother , while Rover prances happily around them .

= = Production = =

Rescued by Rover was predominantly a family affair ? Cecil Hepworth 's wife , Margaret , wrote the scenario and played the role of the mother on screen . Hepworth himself directed , painted the scenery and acted as the father . Their child was the baby on screen , and the part of Rover was played by the family dog , Blair . Two professional actors were paid to appear , Sebastian Smith as the soldier , and his wife as the old woman who stole the baby . The two actors were paid half a guinea each ; Hepworth would recall " We couldn 't get them for less " . The film is often cited as the first film to have used paid actors . Completing the cast was Mabel Clark , who had previously played Alice in Hepworth 's version of Alice in Wonderland , as the child 's nurse . Clark was also the cutting room assistant .

The movie was so successful that Hepworth had to re @-@ shoot the entire film twice . The first two negatives wore out in meeting the demand for prints .

= = Release = =

Rescued by Rover is often considered to be the United Kingdom 's first major fiction film . Some four hundred prints were sold at a price of £ 8 each , and they circulated for at least four or five years . The character of Rover the dog , played by Hepworth 's family dog Blair , became a household name and is considered the world 's first canine film star . This first appearance of a dog

in a narrative based film caused the uncommon name of Rover to become popular for dogs .

= = = Legacy = = =

Previous films by Hepworth and his company had been considered a continuation of the cinema of attractions . The first few years of the 20th century were a period in which many film @-@ makers began placing a higher emphasis on portraying a narrative story , and lesser so more on the image and the ability to show something . The film is considered a step forward in both film grammar and structure . Contemporary audiences may find it rather hoary , although one scholar has noted the format would be familiar to fans of the dog character Lassie .

It gave rise to a number of other chase films centred on animals , including Lewin Fitzhamon 's later film Dumb Sagacity (1907) . Rescued by Rover has parallels with D. W. Griffith 's debut film The Adventures of Dollie (1908) .

Rescued by Rover contains more than twenty shots ; this is a considerable advance when compared with Hepworth 's own How it Feels to be Run Over (1900) , which contains a single shot . This not only made the film longer , but demonstrated that advances in film language could be made in editing as well as shooting . Additionally , the editing of Rescued by Rover is notable in its use of time contractions , which made Rover 's journeys take considerably less time by portrayal than they would have in reality .

In linking these shots together , Hepworth attempted to avoid the confusion of earlier multi @-@ shot films such as Edwin S. Porter 's The Great Train Robbery (1903) . Three shots are used to set up the plot , that of the baby being stolen by a beggar woman . Nearly all of the following shots show Rover tracking down the child . When the dog returns home , the shots ' settings are repeated in reverse as the dog travels them ; they are shown again in the original order , for a third time , when the dog brings the father . A fourth repetition is , rather radically for its time , spared by showing the kidnapper 's return to her room followed by a shot of the reunited family .

With its form and structure in consideration , Rescued by Rover shows a growing understanding among directors of how stories can be told on film ; that is , the belief that the audience does not need to see the family return to their home , but will instead assume this occurred while the beggar woman was returning to her hovel . While the duration of the shot does not correspond with the time necessary for the father and the family dog to travel back , it also does not affect the sense of realistic on @-@ screen representation .

Also , cinematographic improvements that modern viewers would find relatively minor were noted in their day . In the attic scenes , for instance , Hepworth 's use of arc lights was celebrated for being an early use of harsh lighting conditions to create ambiance and indicate a dangerous setting . Prints have been saved both in the Library of Congress film archive , and the National Film and Television Archive of the British Film Institute .