

THE ADAPTATION of Michael Morpurgo's much-loved First World War novel *Private Peaceful* will receive its network film premiere on BBC One, it was announced today.

The film will be screened at 11.30pm on Sunday 24 January, 2016, with Morpurgo urging parents and young people to set their recorders or catch up on iPlayer. The author says: "We are delighted that the BBC is screening the film on the same weekend as *War Horse*. Like the book, the film of *Private Peaceful* is suitable for family viewing."

The film features a host of British talent, old and new including fast-rising British and Hollywood star Jack O'Connell who plays Charlie Peaceful opposite George MacKay – another young homegrown actor with a bright future.

Private Peaceful proved to be the last film role for the incomparable Richard Griffiths. Other stars include Alexandra Roach, Maxine Peake, Francis de la Tour, John Lynch, Stephen Kennedy and Anna Cartarat. It was directed by veteran Irish director Pat O'Connor, with a screenplay by Simon Reade and the music by Oscar-winning British composer Rachel Portman.

Private Peaceful is a moving story of brotherhood, comradeship and the impact of war, recounting the story of brothers Tommo & Charlie Peaceful from their rural childhood in the fields of Devon to the battlefields of Flanders, where one of the brothers is accused of cowardice in the face of the enemy.

Michael Morpurgo's *Private Peaceful* is the multi award-winning book published by Harper Collins that remains one of the most popular books in schools teaching WW1. The film has been praised by teachers for its accuracy and its closeness to the spirit of the book. It remains one of the few films suitable for family viewing about the First World War.

Michael Morpurgo adds: "The story deals with one of the darkest aspects of a terrible war; the execution of soldiers on our own side. I wrote it wanting to highlight what I believed to be the injustice of those shot at dawn, but also to show the impact of the war, of any war, on family and friends and loved ones.

"This heartfelt and moving film brings vividly to life the simple fact that soldiers are people, usually young people, barely out of school, with families and homes. For many young people now, *Private Peaceful* has become their unknown soldier."

Director Pat O'Connor says: "The shoot in the trenches was an emotional time for cast & crew. Seeing young men in uniform scrabbling out of the trenches into smoke and explosions had a huge impact on all of us."

The film was made by Westcountry-based independent production company Fluidity Films and shot entirely on location in England and financed by British investors.

Producer Guy de Beaujeu says: "It is fitting that *Private Peaceful* is a truly independent British film, made by inspiring British talent behind and in front of the camera. It is a quintessentially British tale told by one of our greatest storytellers and read by parents and their children in their millions, all over the world.

“In this centenary of WW1 we believe it is essential that families experience events together, whether it is film, theatre, books, poetry or art, to enable them to discuss the First World War, taking it out of the classroom and into their lives. There’s no doubt that film is a potent way of grabbing young people’s attention, even with difficult subjects like WW1.”

Screenwriter and adapter Simon Reade adds: “Michael’s original story for Private Peaceful is hugely powerful. The fact that it is a book that has been adapted into a one man show, a play, a BBC radio play and now a film is testament to its enduring brilliance.

“Private Peaceful has become one of the most iconic stories associated with the First World War. We are thrilled that it will be premiered on the BBC and think it fitting that it will be shown the night after Steven Spielberg’s version of War Horse, as part of a Morpurgo weekend.”

Ends

For more information, screeners and stills:

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Notes:

Private Peaceful will be available on iPlayer for 30 days from broadcast. The DVD is available online and at HMV and supermarkets.

Screenwriter Simon Reade and producer Guy de Beaujeu are available for interview. Certain cast members may also be available.

Production notes and further information including a more detailed explanation from Michael Morpurgo on the origins of the book can be downloaded from www.privatepeaceful.co.uk