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For the Term of his Natural Life : Original Release

Repository National Film and Sound Archive

Reference [231](#)

Date Range 1927 - 1927

Details

Based on Marcus Clarke's epic novel, film follows the fate of an English aristocrat, Rufus Dawes, transported for life to the convict settlement of Van Dieman's Land for a crime he did not commit, and his enduring love for Sylvia, the daughter of a prison governor. — General notes: Four of the principals in the cast, Eva Novak, George Fisher, Steve Murphy and Katherine Dawn were Americans, as was the director, Norman Dawn and the principle cameraman, Len Roos. Shot on location in New South Wales at Berrima, Wombeyan Caves and Sydney Harbour, as well as in Tasmania at the ruins of the convict settlement at Port Arthur, the film portrays some fine scenes of the convicts in the penal colony and also puts on screen some special effects such as 'glass shots' which enabled Dawn to 'restore' roofs to the derelict buildings at Port Arthur. Hundreds of extras were employed on the film. The use of Americans in the production was hoped to ensure American release. — There was public opposition to the film at the time it was made concerning its portrayal of this less favourable aspect of Australia's white history. — Originally 10 000 feet of 35mm, surviving substantially complete at 2448 feet of 16mm. The film has been restored as a tinted 35mm print with music. — Access copies: 35mm (restored, tinted, music), 16mm, video.??There is documentation associated with the production of the film held in the NFSA collection.

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