

A Bear named Wojtek to air on BBC Alba

This week to mark the anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) BBC Alba is airing the animated film, A Bear named Wojtek, in a special Gaelic broadcast.

On Wednesday 8 May on BBC Alba and BBC iPlayer for the first time this will allow UK audiences the chance to get to know the story of the bear who is depicted in a statue in Princes Street Gardens.

Producer Iain Harvey said: “This is an emotional story, not just because it is true – though the film makes no pretence of being a documentary – but through the extraordinary parallels of recent events: the Covid pandemic restricting movement, and then the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The agony of losing loved ones and the plight of refugees is symbolised by the history of Wojtek the Bear.

“Coupled with the beautiful artwork and the haunting music by Normand Roger, it is a film that will never lose its appeal.”

The story begins with a platoon of Polish soldiers trading rations for a small orphaned Syrian bear cub that Piotr Prendys, a member of the 22nd Artillery Corps of the 2nd Polish Army, names Wojtek – ‘happy warrior’. To Piotr, the bear comes to represent his lost homeland, needing protection and care to become strong and independent again. To Wojtek, Piotr and the soldiers become his only family.

Tragically, the realpolitik of the war's outcome ultimately force Piotr and Wojtek to become refugees in Scotland, with Wojtek confined in Edinburgh Zoo.

The half hour long film has English subtitles.

iPlayer on VE Day, Wednesday 8 May, at 7pm (in Gaelic with English subtitles). Watch live or on demand: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001z24r.



MATHAN LEIS AN AINM
WOJTEK