



PRESS INFORMATION

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Severn Valley basks in the glow of new 'Sherlock Holmes' film hit

THE SEVERN VALLEY Railway is basking in the glow of the Christmas cinema box-office hit 'Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows', part of which was filmed on the popular Kidderminster-to-Bridgnorth steam heritage line.

The Warner Bros film starring Robert Downey Jr. as Sherlock Holmes and Jude Law as Dr. Watson was first released in Britain, the United States and Canada on December 16th, but is said to have already grossed more than £216 million in worldwide box office receipts, setting new records.

One of the most breathtaking moments of a fast-moving drama rich in pyrotechnics and special effects, focuses - as many other films have done in the past - on the Severn Valley Railway's best-known landmark, Victoria Bridge, over the River Severn near Arley.

Cinema audiences see Sherlock Holmes push Dr. Watson's new wife Mary (Kelly Reilly) from a steam train as it thunders across the 200ft iron span, in an effort to save her from the clutches of the evil despot Professor James Moriarty. She plunges into the river, where Holmes' brother Mycroft (Stephen Fry) is waiting to fish her out. Or so it appears.

In fact, when the sequence was filmed during three days back in October 2010, there wasn't even a steam train on the bridge, and nobody - not even a stunt double or a dummy - was pushed from the bridge. The 'drama' was contrived - albeit entirely convincingly - by digital manipulation on a computer screen.

Explains Dewi Jones, the SVR's former Traffic Manager responsible for liaison with the film company 'Elementary Productions': "They simply attached a camera to the gib of a crane which was mounted on one of the railway's 'flat truck' goods wagons, and we pushed it across the bridge with a diesel.

"As the crane came onto Victoria Bridge, the gib was swung outwards over the river, and the camera was able to record the desired angles of the bridge from a 'mid-air' position. Everything else, including the steam train and the 'lady plunging into the river' sequence, was created digitally in the studio. It's quite incredible what they've done."

Despite the absence of a steam train or any of the all-star cast on location at Arley, the filming was a nevertheless lucrative and welcome contract for the Severn Valley Railway, which has benefited on numerous occasions in the past from the filming potential of Sir John Fowler's Victoria famous bridge, which, when built in 1861, was the largest 'clear' cast-iron span in the world.

Other box-office hits which have homed-in on Victoria Bridge include 'The Seven Per Cent Solution' (1976) – another 'Sherlock Holmes plot' with Laurence Olivier in the role of Professor Moriarty, Vanessa Redgrave as Lola Deveraux, and Robert Duvall as Dr. John Watson, and the 1978 re-make of the John Buchan classic 'The Thirty-Nine Steps', in which the fugitive Richard Hannay (Robert Powell) is portrayed hanging by his arms from the giant span, as he attempts to evade the police.

It is exactly five years ago this month that the Severn Valley Railway was delivered into the consciousness of cinema audiences right across the country in quite spectacular fashion, with the opening sequences of another Christmas blockbuster, 'The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe', which was filmed at the railway's Highley station, strongly featuring the former Great Western Railway locomotive No.7802 *Bradley Manor*.

For months afterwards, the railway was bombarded with enquiries from prospective visitors who wanted to 'come and see the engine from Narnia', and the SVR's locomotive department was urged by senior management to run No.7802 'as often as possible'.

On the small screen, the Severn Valley Railway has featured in episodes of many TV dramas and documentaries including the BBC productions of 'Gods Wonderful Railway' (1980), 'The District Nurse' (1984), 'Box of Delights' (1984), and Agatha Christie's Miss Marple novel, 'The 4.50 from Paddington' (1987).

The SVR's showpiece country station at Arley was also the location of the BBC television comedy series 'Oh, Doctor Beeching'(1996-1997), starring Su Pollard and Paul Shane, in which Arley station appeared as 'Hatley'.

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