

## Didcot Railway Centre as a location for filming

Over the years, Didcot Railway Centre (DRC) has been used for the making of various scenes for many main stream films, the making of documentaries, and the shooting of scenes for well known television dramas, as well as commercials.

The reasons for this are as follows:-

1. Original Great Western Railway (GWR) buildings and structures. The main such building, the original four track 1932-built engine shed, being adaptable to many purposes. The shed has been used in filming such as *The Incredible Sarah*, *Rowntrees Secret* TV commercial and an episode of *Inspector Morse*. It has been disguised as main line train termini



representing several different countries.

[Glenda Jackson during filming of \*The Incredible Sarah\*.](#)

Equally, the Transfer Shed at the end of the branch line is a wooden structure used to tranship goods from standard to broad gauge in the early days of steam. The station has an island platform with both standard gauge and the broad gauge track that Isambard Kingdom Brunel designed for the original Great Western Railway in the 1830s. A (working) reproduction of the broad gauge locomotive Fire

Fly dating from 1840 is available, hence, train travel as it was over 150 years ago, can be recreated!

The location was used in the filming of the Channel 4 series *The Camomile Lawn* and more recently *Carrie's War* and *The Elephant Man*. The station is ideal for platform shots and period settings and has been used on many occasions as Paddington Station.

[Dan Cruickshank being filmed in the Transfer Shed for his documentary series \*Great Railway Adventures\*.](#)

2. Other non-original GWR buildings, notably, the carriage and wagon shed, which is a large, very adaptable building, for film purposes. There is also a working turntable, should there be a requirement for one.



Keira Knightley at Didcot during filming of *Anna Karenina*.



3. The availability of a large selection of GWR steam locomotives, ranging from small branch line locomotives to main line express passenger locomotives.
4. The availability of a large selection of original GWR carriages (in correct GWR liveries) and wagons to use.
5. The ability to stage industrial scenes, using the locomotive shed, coal stage, or lifting shop. For example, as used in shooting scenes for *Sherlock Holmes: AA Game of Shadows*.
6. A wealth of GWR knowledge, and small relics which can be used to bolster any GWR film image. Including, a collection of luggage, trolleys and other props which can be hired for film and TV shoots. The Trust collection is also available for programme researchers to use. The Centre's Great Western Trust Museum houses thousands of artefacts once used by the GWR. The collection contains glass and silverware from hotels and on train dining, children's jigsaws and Hornby tinplate train-sets as well as a typical Station Master's Office. BBC *Collecting Now* and *Disney Time* have filmed in the Museum. The Trust collection is also available for programme researchers to use.

Filming in the workshop of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, a Peter Brook directed film.

7. The close proximity of Didcot Railway Centre to London, where many of the main film studios are based. The centre is adjacent to Didcot Parkway main line station situated about halfway between London and Bristol. Access is via the railway subway and a short flight of steps. Arrangements are made for parking and assistance with the delivery of equipment. On site both rail and footpath vehicles are available for use.



Michael Portillo learns how mail pick up used to occur on the move, for his travel series, *Great Railway Journeys*.

Other aspects of Didcot Railway Centre which make it an attractive film location, include:-

The main running line, which is half a mile long with a station platform at either end. The platform at the entrance to the Centre is an austere concrete platform, which was originally erected by the GWR at Eynsham in World War II. It has a typical branch line waiting room with an open coal fire. This platform has been used by the Royal Mail to launch a set of 'Steam Stamps' and by weather girl Louise Lear broadcasting live for BBC Breakfast.

Waldemar Januszczak being filmed for his series, *Waldemar Januszczak on the Impressionists*.



The other line is a typical branch line recreated using buildings and structures from around the Great Western Railway network. The line won a first class award for its authenticity and has been used to film Beverley Craven's *Promise Me* video and British Home Stores stockings promotional advertisement.



Shooting a scene for the film, *The Film-Maker's Son*.

The two signal boxes at the Centre show exactly how the signalman worked and spent his leisure time. Radstock Box is at the end of the branch line platform and is set with level crossing gates and cobblestones. From North Signal Cabin is set in the broad gauge period.

The Staff Refreshment Room is available to crews to use as a base. It has a washroom and toilets, hanging space for wardrobe, power points and is suitable for makeup and wardrobe departments to use. The Public Restaurant can be used for breakfast, lunch, snacks, tea and coffee and we would be happy to quote to cater for your production.

For further information, or to make a site visit, please contact Didcot Railway Centre, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 7NJ. Telephone 01235 817200 or email [info@didcotrailwaycentre.org.uk](mailto:info@didcotrailwaycentre.org.uk)

Could we be one of your next locations?

It has also been known in the past, for locomotives and/or rolling stock from the centre to be taken to other locations for the shooting of scenes. Here, a scene being shot in Wales for *Young Winston*, involving one of the DRC tank locomotives, made to look like an armoured locomotive.





Two photos of the 64 X 20 metres shed: empty, after being cleaned, following scene shooting for *Anna Karenina*.



Not a film shoot, but, an image to show a timeless shot, to demonstrate another possible location at the centre.

**Below is a small selection of credits, from the list of more than 100 times Didcot Railway Centre has been used for film, television or advert making purposes. It also includes being used for pop videos, record sleeves, and the launch of Royal Mail stamps, as well as featuring in well known programmes, such as Blue Peter, Songs of Praise, and Treasure Hunt. The full list is available on request.**

November 2011: scenes for *Anna Karenina*, starring Jude Law and Keira Knightly.

Summer 2011: Michael Portillo, filming scenes for his travel series, *Great Railway Journeys*.

November 2010: scenes for *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, starring Jude Law and Robert Downey Jr.

February 2010: *Great Railway Adventures* by Dan Cruickshank. Three part TV documentary series.

There are several scenes in various locations around the Centre in the BBC television documentary *Beyond Narnia*, the life of C.S.Lewis, shown in January 2006.

February 2003: TV series *Carrie's War*, starring Keeley Fawcett, Alun Armstrong, & Geraldine McEwan.

August 1987 As itself, DRC in an episode for the TV series, *Morse*, starring John Thaw.

1984: TV series, *The Camomile Lawn*, starring Felicity Kendall, Paul Eddington & Jennifer Ehle.

1980: *The Elephant Man*, starring John Hurt, Anthony Hopkins & Ann Bancroft, among others.

1976: *The Incredible Sarah*, starring Glenda Jackson.