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Dublin Core

Title

The Hollywood of Pembrokeshire | Hollywood Sir Benfro

Subject

Pembroke Dock

Doc Penfro

Early cinema

Sinema gynnar

Film history

Hanes ffilm

Creator

Rita Singer

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

https://perma.cc/7GBV-QPYJ

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

51.69422239545548, -4.938427015411089

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

Pembroke Dock served as film set in several of early British cinema's most successful films thanks to enthusiastic film pioneer William Haggar and his family.

Lede (Welsh)

Bu Doc Penfro yn set ffilm a ddefnyddiwyd mewn sawl un o ffilmiau sinema cynnar mwyaf llwyddiannus Prydain, diolch i'r arloeswr brwdfrydig ym maes ffilmiau, William Haggar a'i deulu.

Story

William Haggar (1851-1925) was a travelling showman with a large family and a vision. Following his marriage to Sarah Walton in 1870, the newlyweds established a travelling theatre company and toured extensively across England and Wales. Eight of their children survived into adulthood and would perform in their parents' theatre productions. In 1898, William Haggar acquired a Bioscope projector, showing early films across the fairgrounds of the south Wales valleys.

Since the 1890s, the Haggar family toured almost exclusively across south Wales and frequently pitched up their winter camp in Aberdare. It was in nearby Maesteg that Haggar produced his first scripted film, *The Maid of Cefn Ydfa* (1902) and exhibited it at the next Swansea fair to great popular acclaim. Over the following years, Haggar would produce at least another thirty films, including *Desperate Poaching Affray* (1903), *The Sheepstealer*, *A Message from the Sea* and *The Life of Charles Peace* (all 1905). The latter two were filmed in Pembroke Dock and its surroundings.

Today*, The Life of Charles Peace* is the oldest surviving British story film. In this box office hit, William's and Sarah's fifth child, 22-year old Walter Haggar (1880-1953) performed the energetic lead role of the titular villain, the infamous Victorian burglar and murderer. In addition to the rest of the Haggar family filling almost all other roles, members of the public from Pembroke Dock performed as extras. Despite its brevity, this single-reel film includes burglaries, fist and gun fights, a daring escape attempt from a moving train and the final hanging of Charles Peace.

About half of the film was shot on location around Pembroke Dock during the summer of 1905. Filming locations include Hawkstone Road, Birdcage Walk and the Railway Station. William Haggar also received permission from a local lady to use her house for a burglary scene and the Station Master loaned a train for several scenes. While a dummy was used for Peace's daring escape from a moving train, Walter provided his own stunt work and only narrowly survived filming the execution scene.

With a more elaborate remake of his earlier success, *The Maid of Cefn Ydfa*, William Haggar's film making career came to an end in 1914. He opened several permanent cinemas between Llanelli and Aberdare. Further west in Pembrokeshire, his sons upheld the family tradition. Walter, the former star of *Charles Peace*, operated Haggar's Electric Coliseum in Neyland from 1915 to 1919 and William Haggar Jnr. (1871-1935) established Haggar's Cinema in Pembroke in the early 1930s. Out of all the family's owned theatres, this was the longest one in operation. The final curtain fell for Haggar's in 1984 when the cinema no longer provided a viable income for the family.

Story (Welsh)

Roedd William Haggar (1851-1925) yn ddyn sioe teithiol gyda theulu mawr a gweledigaeth. Ar ôl iddo briodi Sarah Walton ym 1870, sefydlodd y pâr ifanc gwmni theatr teithiol, gan deithio'n helaeth ar draws Cymru a Lloegr. Bu fyw wyth o'u plant nes oeddent yn oedolion, ac arferent berfformio yng nghynyrchiadau theatr eu rhieni. Ym 1898, cafodd William Haggar daflunydd, a bu'n dangos ffilmiau cynnar ar draws ffeiri cymoedd de Cymru.

Er y 1890au, teithiodd teulu Haggar ar draws de Cymru bron yn gyfan gwbl, ac roeddent yn aml yn codi eu gwersyll dros y gaeaf yn Aberdâr. Ym Maesteg gerllaw, cynhyrchodd Haggar ei ffilm gyntaf wedi'i sgriptio, *The Maid of Cefn Ydfa* (1902) ac fe'i dangosodd yn ffair nesaf Abertawe, a bu cryn ganmoliaeth iddi ymhlith y cyhoedd. Dros y blynyddoedd dilynol, byddai Haggar yn cynhyrchu o leiaf ddeg ar hugain o ffilmiau eraill, gan gynnwys *Desperate Poaching Affray* (1903), *The Sheepstealer*, *A Message from the Sea* a *The Life of Charles Peace* (i gyd ym 1905). Ffilmiwyd y ddwy olaf yn Noc Penfro a'r cyffiniau.

Heddiw, *The Life of Charles Peace* yw'r ffilm stori Brydeinig hynaf sydd wedi goroesi. Yn y ffilm hon a fu'n llwyddiant ysgubol, mae pumed plentyn William a Sarah, Walter Haggar (1880-1953), 22 oed, yn perfformio rhan egnïol dihiryn teitlog y prif gymeriad, y llofrudd a'r lleidr ysgeler o oes Fictoria. Yn ogystal â gweddill teulu Haggar a gyflawnodd bron pob rôl arall, bu aelodau'r cyhoedd o Ddoc Penfro yn perfformio fel ecstras. Er ei bod yn fyr, mae'r ffilm un rholyn ffilm hon yn cynnwys lladrata, gornestau ymladd gyda dyrnau a gynnau, ymgais fentrus i ddianc oddi ar drên a oedd yn symud, a'r weithred olaf o grogi Charles Peace.

Ffilmiwyd tua hanner y ffilm ar leoliad o gwmpas Doc Penfro yn ystod yr haf 1905. Roedd y lleoliadau ffilmio yn cynnwys Ffordd Hawkstone, Birdcage Walk a'r Orsaf Rheilffordd. Yn ogystal, cafodd William Haggar ganiatâd gan fenyw leol i ddefnyddio ei thŷ er mwyn ffilmio golygfa lladrad ac roedd Meistr yr Orsaf wedi benthyca trên iddynt ar gyfer sawl golygfa. Er y defnyddiwyd dymi ar gyfer dihangfa fentrus Peace oddi ar drên a oedd yn symud, bu Walter yn gwneud ei waith styntio ei hun, a bu ond y dim iddo gael ei ladd wrth ffilmio golygfa'r dienyddio.

Gyda fersiwn newydd mwy cymhleth o'i lwyddiant cynharach, *The Maid of Cefn Ydfa*, daeth gyrfa William Haggar ym myd cynhyrchu ffilmiau i ben ym 1914. Agorodd sawl sinema barhaol rhwng Llanelli ac Aberdâr. Ymhellach i'r gorllewin yn Sir Benfro, gwelwyd ei feibion yn parhau'r traddodiad teuluol. Bu Walter, seren *Charles Peace*, yn rhedeg Colisëwm Trydan Haggar yn Neyland rhwng 1915 a 1919 a sefydlodd William Haggar Jnr. (1871-1935) Sinema Haggar ym Mhenfro yn gynnar yn y 1930au. O blith yr holl theatrau y bu'r teulu yn berchen arnynt, hon oedd yr un a fu ar agor yr hiraf. Caeodd y llenni am y tro olaf i deulu Haggar ym 1984, gan nad oedd y sinema yn cynnig incwm hyfyw i'r teulu mwyach.

Factoid

Related Resources

Vicki Haggar, *From Mummer's Booth to Silver Screen: the Life and Times of the Haggar Family* (Pembroke, 2016)

Ffilmiau Haggar Films, 'The Life of Charles Peace', *People's Collection Wales*, https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/499197

Ffilmiau Haggar Films, 'A Message from the Sea', People's Collection Wales, https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/499195

'Love Story of Ann Thomas the Maid of Cefn Ydfa', *BFI Player*, British Film Institute, https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-love-story-of-ann-thomas-the-maid-of-cefn-ydfa-1914-online

'Haggar, William (1851-1925)', *Screen Online*, BFI, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/449862/index.html, archived at https://perma.cc/JUR4-YZ2A

Official Website