

## ENGLAND

All photographs by Harry Rigby (Editor - CTA Bulletin)

The financial press has speculated that the Gala Coral Group is planning to sell its bingo club operation, in preparation for which it is likely to dispose of its less profitable sites, many of which are noted to be in former cinemas. Other managements could clearly follow suit. This is disturbing news, as for fifty years bingo has afforded a lifeline to many buildings adjudged to be no longer viable for film exhibition. An uncertain future could thus ensue for many former cinemas, listed and unlisted, following withdrawal of this predominantly benevolent stewardship.

### Grade II\*

Concern has been registered regarding the reduction in volume, achieved by the application of somewhat makeshift drapery, of the auditorium of the **Carlton** in the Islington district of London; this significantly detracts from its spatial integrity. As an interim measure it is deemed acceptable, but a watching brief will be maintained prior to the expiration of temporary planning permission three years hence.

The C.T.A. was represented at a recent 'visioning day' held at the **Dreamland Cinema** in Margate. Encouragingly, interest has been expressed by several operators in reinstating film exhibition to the building, although at least one of these contemplates additional subdivision of the auditorium. This would prove of further detriment to the space, previously somewhat compromised by cleavage into two sections. The Sunshine Café may be adopted by a local catering college and re-opened to the public.

It has been confirmed that the artwork on the safety curtain of the **Stanford Hall Theatre** near Loughborough is safe. Concern had been expressed that the asbestos surface posed a hazard to health but it has been found to be inherently stable, with only the roll of fabric on its underside edge, which provides a smoke-seal, requiring removal and replacement with a modern substitute material. It is to be hoped that the outcome of this case will have a positive influence on the similar issue anent the safety curtain in the **Abbeylea** at Sheffield, previously detailed in this column.

### Grade II

It is understood that the proposed plans for the **Odeon** at Chester have been modified, and the C.T.A. awaits inspection of the revisions with interest. In a parallel development it is reported that the local council's own conservation officer has succeeded in preventing the upper foyer from being destroyed in the scheme.

The local council at Kingston-upon-Thames has been requested to implement a feasibility study into a 'single space option' for the **Regal**. In a complementary move, a petition to save the building has been launched, although the cinema's owner has recently presented his own development plans to the council.

### Unlisted

An attempt was made independently of the Association to list the **Odeon** (ex Regent) at Bournemouth; the application was rejected by English Heritage, which cited the survival of insufficient original internal features as its grounds for refusal. Meanwhile, attempts continue to secure the inclusion of the building in a nearby conservation area.



Odeon, Bournemouth

Encouragingly, latest redevelopment plans for the **Regal** at Colchester include retention and renovation of the entire frontage block.

It has been decided to take no action in the case of the surviving **Savoy** at Kettering, as it is an unexceptional building both within and without; moreover it suffered subdivision several decades ago.



*Regal, Woolwich*

A planning application has been submitted to demolish the **Regal** (ex Grand) in Woolwich. Its latter incarnation dates from a 1950's rebuild by ABC. Both the Theatres Trust and the C.T.A. are to submit objections.

A public enquiry is to be held concerning the tower block development threatening the **Shell Centre** cinema/theatre in London's Waterloo. A report suggests that the renowned mural by Osbert Lancaster was removed from the building some years ago, and may have been subsequently destroyed by fire whilst in storage.

As anticipated, a modified planning application for the site of the **Odeon** at Kensington is to be submitted, which will reflect the expansion of the scheme occasioned by the acquisition by the developer of the adjacent Post Office. As this technically constitutes a new application, all the Association's objections, comments, and requests must be reiterated; in addition, any new matters which may arise from the amended design will be broached.

Public opposition to plans to raze the **Leicester Square Theatre** and adjoining buildings is increasing, with much coverage in London's media afforded to the animosity; politicians are also raising concerns. Although antipathy is centred towards the destruction of a hostelry and not that of the theatre, the public censure doubtless constitutes unwelcome adverse publicity for the developer, particularly as it closely follows English Heritage's edict that rebuilding may not proceed as planned due to the unacceptable height of the proposal.

It seems likely that **Pyke's Cinematograph Theatre** in London's Shepherd Bush will be slated for demolition and redevelopment. Situated on a small site between two much larger entertainment buildings, both listed, it is a prime candidate for retention, particularly given its attractive exterior and the unusual incised sign on a flank wall. The local council will thus be requested to include it on a local list or in a conservation area.

The **King's Hall Cinema** in the Tooting area of London has been demolished. The C.T.A. attempted unsuccessfully to secure listed status for this early building some years ago.

An application for a Certificate of Immunity from Listing has been made to English Heritage pertaining to the **Point** at Milton Keynes; the Association has advocated refusal.