

CASEWORK REPORT: September 2014 *Compiled by Tim Hatcher*

Most photographs by Harry Rigby (Editor - CTA Bulletin)

Grade II* Listed

At its planning meeting in July, Waltham Forest Council voted to use its Compulsory Purchase powers, if pursuit of a negotiated settlement fails, in order to return the **Granada** at Walthamstow to use as an entertainment venue. This decision is subject to the proposed occupier, the Soho Theatre Company, delivering to the Authority a business plan such as to ensure viability of the project.

Despite a recent launch party of a promotional exhibition mounted in support of renovation of the Dreamland Amusement Park in Margate, little progress appears to have been made in advancing plans for re-opening of the eponymous cinema on the site.



Granada, Walthamstow (in 2004 as EMD Cinemas)

Grade II Listed

Despite objections to the proposals by Everyman Cinemas for the **Whiteladies** in Bristol, the City Council has acceded to the scheme submitted. It has been reported that a local campaign group is intending to mount a legal challenge.

Proposals for the drastic alteration of the **Odeon** at Chester have not been substantially modified, despite lobbying from the Association amongst other parties. The local council is to be reminded that, as owner of the premises, it is not entitled to grant itself planning consent for the project, due to the clear conflict of interest.

The Minister for Planning and the Environment is intending to list the **Odeon** at St. Helier on Jersey in Grade I category; Jersey Heritage is currently in the process of reassessing the building's merits.

The architects responsible for proposals for the **Regal** at Kingston-upon-Thames have indicated that a report addressing the concerns of the C.T.A. will be forthcoming. Meanwhile English Heritage has instructed Kingston Council to ensure that the destroyed fabric of the interior be reconstituted.

Unlisted



New Victoria/Odeon, Bradford in April 2013

Following rejection of the bid of Halliday Clark Architects by Bradford Council, the Bradford Live submission for re-use of the **New Victoria** remains the only contender for final consideration in November. The Bradford Live consortium is headed by Tim Ronalds Architects in conjunction with Lee Craven; its intention is to utilise the venue as a four thousand seat performance space.



Clifton, Leominster in March 2008



Sepia postcard of Regent c1929/30.

Despite objections to its demolition, the sole section of the **Regent** at Hinckley to remain comprises the entrance rotunda and adjoining row of shops. The remainder of the site has become a supermarket car park.

Somewhat worryingly, bingo operation at the **Clifton** in Leominster ceased in May. Herefordshire County Council had attempted to secure listed status for the former cinema but this solicitation was rejected.

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Conversion to housing of Alhambra House, an office block at the rear of the Odeon in London's Leicester Square, has been disallowed by Westminster City Council. Objections from cinema and theatre organisations centred around possible future noise and nuisance complaints from occupants arising from use of the cinema's stage facilities.

JD Wetherspoon has been granted permission to convert the Ritz at Wallsend into another of its hostelries.

SCOTTISH CASEWORK

by Gary Painter, CTA Scotland

PLAYHOUSE, PERTH: ALEX CATTENACH Jnr, 1933 – CAT B-LISTED

This handsome landmark in Perth's Murray Street became the flag-ship cinema for Scotland's Caledonian Associated Cinemas chain a few years after opening and originally sat 1,657. Construction apparently took a mere nine weeks, a supposed record at the time!

It was tripled in the 1970s, with Screen ① in the former balcony and two minis underneath. Two further screens were subsequently add-ed in the front stalls and former café area and another two in a new extension to the rear, bringing the total to seven.



It was taken over a few years ago by Glasgow-based G1 Group, who run a large number of pubs and nightclubs, mostly in the west of Scotland. They had been running the two-screen Grosvenor cinema in Glasgow since around 2003 and clearly saw opportunities for growth in the cinema market. Earlier this year, they announced that the Perth Playhouse would be installing an IMAX screen.

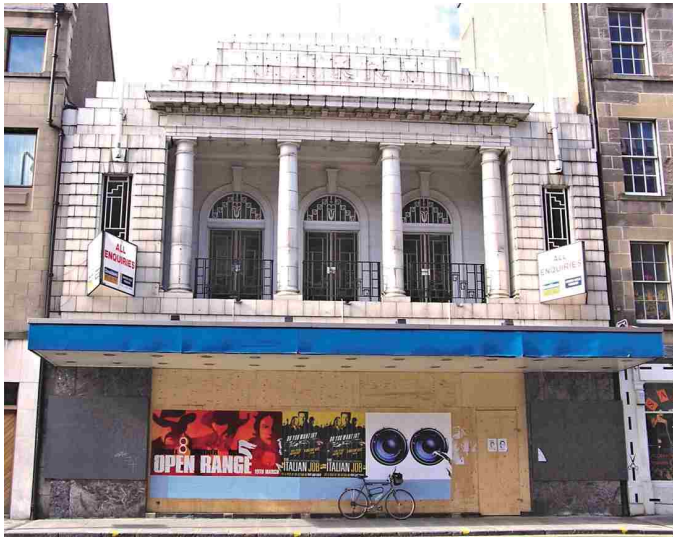
We kept an eye on the planning portal for Perth & Kinross Council but work started in spring this year without any application appearing. The screen being converted was Screen ①, which we knew to have many original features from a photo survey we carried out in 2006, when that auditorium was threatened with conversion to a dining area. The work is now complete and applications for planning and listed building consent did finally appear on the Council's web-site in July – but only appeared to cover alterations to the façade signage and foyer alterations. Photographs of the completed IMAX auditorium appear to show that the IMAX screen is mounted on a frame in front of the original proscenium and that new plain,

curved sidewalls are built in front of the flat originals. Overall, the alterations do appear to be reversible, with original features hidden rather than removed but we are still surprised that no LBC was deemed necessary in this case.

NEW VICTORIA / ODEON, EDINBURGH: WE TRENT / J JORDAN, 1930 – CAT A-LISTED

The saga continues....

Glasses were cautiously raised last year when the long-running campaign by ourselves and others to find a use for this cinema appeared to bear fruit. The owners, Duddingston House Properties (DHP), had signed a lease with an operator who wanted to open the building for cabaret/cinema/showbar use within the current five-screen configuration. The caution was because we had seen several perfectly sensible and viable plans dismissed by DHP over the years as unworkable, only for them to go with a cabaret venue/champagne bar – an odd choice for an area surrounded by charity shops and a large student population.



The New Victoria / Odeon Edinburgh in March 2004

The operator in question was Gerry Boyle – brother of Susan. Gerry's track record in the rather ambitious business ideas listed on his website were, at best, unproven but we tried to remain hopeful that this one would come good. The venue opened in September 2013 and swiftly closed before Christmas, with various parties reporting to us that it was rarely open at advertised times. Newspaper reports later told of a dispute between Mr Boyle and his catering company, with tales of money owed and each blaming the other. The cinema has been closed ever since.

Meanwhile, DHP had permission to demolish the stage house and flytower for student accommodation, dependent upon them finding a tenant for the rest of the building. This condition was signed off as being satisfied by the Council and work to clear the site took place in June with the demolition of the former queue shelter to the rear of the building. Local campaigners immediately tried to halt this process, claiming that the current situation with the rest of the building could hardly be described as complying with the spirit of re-use intended in the planning condition. As far as we are aware, demolition of the stage house has not yet started. With the current tenancy looking like it may come to nothing, the lack of stage and fly-tower would obviously greatly limit alternative uses for the building and we shall be watching developments closely.

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CALEY, EDINBURGH: RICHARDSON & MACKAY, 1923. ENLARGED BY JAMES MCKISSACK, 1928 – CAT B-LISTED



As previously reported, the relatively short-lived use of this cinema as the HMV Picture House music venue ended on Hogmanay 2013, after the building was purchased by JD Wetherspoon. Much of the resultant public clamour was over the loss of the only medium-sized gig venue in Edinburgh City centre.

In architectural terms, the planning application and listed building consent for conversion into a pub were submitted in July. In its music venue incarnation, the proscenium and part of the ceiling were heavily masked by drapes and lighting rigs and modern bars cluttered up much of the auditorium space. In this regard, the pub conversion offers much improvement, with easier public access for longer periods of time and more of the interior being on display. Slightly more contentious are the windows to be inserted into the sidewall and a skylight in the ceiling. The windows are currently blocked but it isn't clear from the planning and heritage statement if they were ever open and there is no information in any of the documentation as to how the skylights will affect the decorative vents currently in the ceiling. We broadly support the application in terms of public access and the removal

of some modern obstructions but feel the planning and heritage statements are lacking in detail for a B-listed building in a World Heritage Site.

LA SCALA / ELECTRIC, EDINBURGH: DAVID MACGIBBON, ORIGINAL 1862 THEATRE. CINEMA CONVERSION IN 1912, ARCHITECT UNKNOWN. NOT LISTED

As previously reported, this former theatre and cinema in Edinburgh's south side has been purchased by JD Wetherspoon, and a planning application has now been lodged for the conversion to a pub.

Originally the rather clumsily-named New Royal Alhambra Theatre, this was converted to a cinema in 1912. We have only a few grainy photos of the current interior, so cannot tell with any certainty which era it largely dates from. The auditorium is reached through a corridor under a tenement and has a single balcony with a shallow curve. The projection box appears to be intact and is situated in the rear stalls – although, again, this may date from a later incarnation of the cinema as the Classic or Metro, when only the stalls area was in use.

Currently still trading as a bingo hall, the main local objections seem to be centred around the provision of a pub in an area of Edinburgh with anti-social behaviour issues. From our point of view, the plans are fairly uncontroversial. A new stair in the centre of the balcony will give public access to that area, whilst a blocked roof light will be reinstated.

SAVOY, CAMBUSLANG: JOHN FAIRWEATHER, 1929 – CAT C-LISTED



The third JD Wetherspoon cinema conversion currently on the go in Scotland – and, since work has now started, likely to be the first of these to be completed. We reported on the original plans in 2008, which were acceptable bar a few details to the main façade – the non-original canopy was to be removed but not replaced and the two small shop units at either side of the entrance were to be remodelled to provide a loading bay and disabled access.

Although passed, the pub chain subsequently dropped these plans and put the building back on the market but no buyer was found. In 2013, they reconsidered and applied for an extension to the 2008 approval, followed by a new application for planning and listed building consent this year. Nothing much was changed in the plans – the wall behind the

screen will have a glazed opening looking over an outdoor seating area, the balcony will be off-limits to the public and blocked windows in the sidewalls will be re-opened and enlarged slightly but not to the detriment of any decorative elements inside.

Slightly more contentious is the replacement of the original wood-framed glazed main doors with DDA-compliant modern ones.

We have taken a slightly more pragmatic view of these alterations than we did in 2008, as interior photographs show that the building has deteriorated in the interim with water ingress in several areas of the main auditorium. Pleasingly, the pub will be named the John Fairweather, after the cinema's architect. Fairweather was responsible for most of the gargantuan Green's Playhouse cinemas – including Glasgow (4,368 seats) and Dundee (4,114 seats).

The above three JD Wetherspoon conversions go against previous Scottish cinema conversions by the chain – existing cinemas that they operate from (such as in Saltcoats, Leith and Falkirk) have been converted in such a way as to give no clue to the original purpose of the building once inside.

PICTURE HOUSE, CAMPBELTOWN: A V GARDNER, 1913. ATMOSPHERIC INTERIOR INSERTED BY SAME, 1935 – CAT A-LISTED.

It was with some surprise that the Campbeltown Picture House announced on 18 August that it was to close on the 27th of that month. The cinema (run as a community business venture) had recently been subjected to a change of management and programming, with more as-live shows taking advantage of the digital projector installed recently. They were also at an advanced stage with Lottery and other funding applications for the refurbishment of the current building and the erection of a small second screen on spare ground to the rear of the cinema. A statement available on their Facebook page stated that, although the live events were selling well and ticket sales were generally

healthier than they had been for years, the current set-up was unsustainable and that the cinema would have to close until the refurbishment was complete – currently forecast to be sometime in 2016.

The short-notice of this unexpected decision gives us some concern for this important cinema. Any build-up of audience in the last year, especially for live events, could well be lost with such a lengthy closure but we will monitor this development carefully with the hope that it is all to a long-term and happier future goal.



The interior of the Campbeltown Picture House in July 2009

WELSH CASEWORK

by John Skinner, CTA Cymru

PORTH (RHONDDA CYNON TAF): CENTRAL CINEMA



The cinema remains boarded up and neglected with a “For Sale by Auction” notice on the frontage but with no precise date shown. It most recently functioned as Top Ten Bingo, which ceased 2/3 years ago.

Photo left by John Skinner, August 2014

CONWY: PALACE CINEMA

The Conservation Officer of Conwy Borough Council is taking legal advice to secure enforced entry to inspect the interior of the former cinema as a result of the owners, Parker Leisure Holdings of Rhyl, continually ignoring communication requesting entry.



Palace, Conwy in June 2011



The Palace Theatre Swansea in August 2014

SWANSEA: PALACE THEATRE

At last some good news on the fate of this building – the City and County of Swansea have earmarked £75,000 for emergency repairs to be carried out to the building. Priority will be given to the removal of vegetation growing on the exterior of the building (see photos) and repairs to the roof to make it water tight. To date, nothing has happened and I understand that the delay is due to the serious illness of the owner, a businessman based in Kent. Hopefully, the delay to carrying out repairs will not be too long as further deterioration to the fabric of the building will inevitably occur, in particular during the winter.