

CAMPAIGNING TO SAVE YOUR HISTORIC CINEMAS

By Tim Hatcher

Grade I Listed

Scaffolding has been erected around applicable sections of the **Granada** in Tooting in order to facilitate removal of the greenery that has established itself upon its façade. Somewhat ignominiously, this gracious theatre has recently been accorded the new undignified appellation of 'Buzz Bingo'. It is reported that the Wurlitzer organ will next year again undergo restoration, necessitated by the effects of flooding following immediately upon its last renovation.

Grade II Listed



The Royalty Harborne in June 2008

Regrettably the long-running case of the **Royalty** at Harborne [Birmingham] has seemingly been terminated by a conflagration, which has destroyed the auditorium. Information concerning any possible rehabilitation of the property is to be sought from local planners.

Following the previously reported cessation of bingo at the **Ritz** in Ilkeston, the freehold of the building is now for sale at a price of £600,000. Allegedly the annual rental potential was £47,000; however, the town centre appears to have fallen into a distinctly depressed state, with many premises currently vacant, which reduces the attractiveness of the cinema to future business aspirants.

The recent listing of the **Carlton** in London's Haymarket is indeed gratifying to note. Whilst the Listing Report notes several features specific to the building that qualify this cinema-theatre for its new-found status, it is to be hoped that in future submissions Historic England will look more favourably upon other cinemas which have suffered varying degrees of alteration. It is of interest to note that H.E. now admits that its previous estimate of the number of cinemas built in the two decades of the 1920s and 1930s was overstated by a multiple of approximately 2.7. It is thus decidedly concerning to discover a mistake of this magnitude arising in such a body and leads one to question the extent to which this fundamental error may have adversely influenced consideration of past rejected applications.



The Granada Kingston in April 2006

An objection has been forwarded to plans submitted for alterations to the nightclub operating within the **Granada** at Kingston-upon-Thames. These would impact inappropriately not only upon the circle lounge but also, more fundamentally, upon the integrity of the auditorium ceiling.

Although rumours were rife that the owners of the remains and plot of the **Regent** in Lyme Regis were intending to dispose of the site, it is now reported that plans are progressing to reinstate a cinema, despite suggestions of a substantial shortfall in the proceeds arising from the insurance claim relating to the damaged structure.

The Conservation Officer of the council local to the **Odeon** in York has been contacted concerning deterioration of the cinema's external brickwork. Photographs of the affected areas have accompanied the communication.



The Odeon Ashford in April 2004

Ashford Council's website now states its intent for the **Odeon** to become a multi-use performance space; the Theatres Trust is currently preparing a report on its potential for theatrical usage. Meanwhile, unsurprisingly considering its era of construction, asbestos has been found within.

In similar circumstance, the discovery of asbestos in the **Odeon** in Leicester Square – again surely not entirely unexpected – has delayed its scheduled re-opening. The renovation includes utilisation of the partitioned former rear stalls as a café, with the first-floor foyer featuring a cocktail bar. More significantly, the finely painted safety curtain will be permanently fixed in the 'out' position, thus preventing appreciation of the accomplished brushmanship.

The Conservation Officer in whose purview the extant elements of the **Regent** at Hinckley lie has expressed his objective of including them in the local list and extending a conservation area to encompass them. This will prove beneficial if anticipated plans to demolish the rotunda are tabled.

The **Byron** at Hucknall is currently offered for sale but has also been granted Asset of Community Value status.



The London IMAX showing the mural now covered with advertising

Planning permission has been sought to replace the **IMAX** at London's Waterloo with a tower block. The current building features a mural by Howard Hodgkin, presently obscured by advertisements; fees for this publicity site are amongst the highest in the capital because of the prominence of the display and the volume of passing traffic. Artistic and commercial pressures may thus combine in defence of the current structure.