

50
years

CINEMA
THEATRE
ASSOCIATION

www.cta-uk.org

BULLETIN

Vol 51 No 1

ISSN 1479-0882

January / February 2017

CTA is 50



The interior of the Granada Tooting in 1967, the first ever CTA visit, which we will be repeating in February; see p3
photo courtesy John Sharp, taken 27 November 1967

FROM YOUR EDITOR

You can't fail to have noticed that the CTA celebrates 50 years of its existence this year. You should already have received the celebratory issue of *Picture House* and seen the many special articles therein from Committee members and others. We will also be including anniversary material in the Bulletin throughout the year. Your responses to any feature in either magazine are welcomed and encouraged. If you send them to me, I will print them in the Bulletin during the year. I have booked my tickets for the 30 January event so, unless there's a rail strike or heavy snow, I look forward to meeting some of you.

I would like to personally thank all the previous Bulletin editors; Anthony Slide, Marcus Eavis, Allen Eyles and Les Bull; there are details and a history of our publications in *Picture House*. I have been editor since late 1998 but I would like to retire at some stage soon, so if you feel like taking over the reins, please let me know.

One of the things we will feature throughout the year are cinematic events that took place in 1967. I must apologise for the poor quality of some of the photos used to illustrate these events – but they are 50 years old! I would like to thank Ken Roe for his help in compiling these lists. If anyone knows the dates of any of the unknown entries, please let me know. There is so much material in this issue that, even at a record-equalling 36 pages, I have only a little room for holiday snaps. I have also had to hold over a couple of articles. If you have sent in material, please accept my thanks and rest assured that I will print it eventually.

When sending in material, please don't forget to include the source and date of the information. If you send in a physical press cutting or Internet printout, please include the bit with the newspaper or page name and date on, or simply write it in the margin. At the risk of repeating myself, please ensure any images you send are of sufficient quality. Aim for 300dpi; as a guide, if the file size is less than 100kb, it's probably too small.

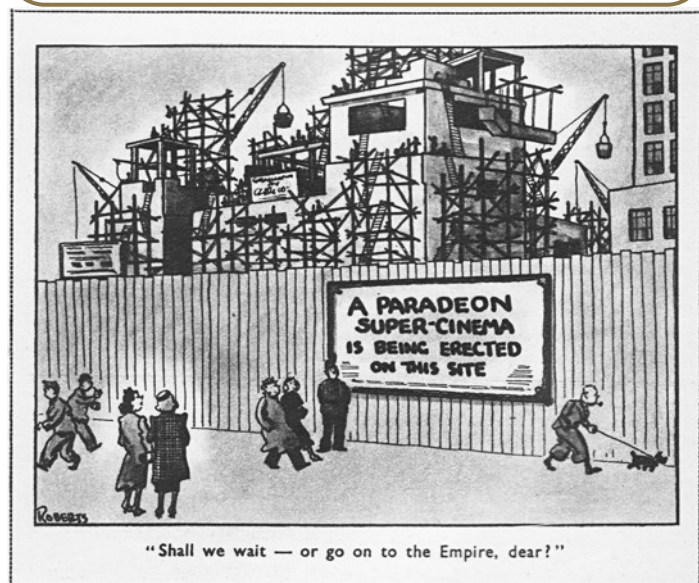
A reminder what the numbers in curly brackets eg {14666} mean. They are the reference to the cinema's page on the Cinema Treasures website. Go to [\[cinematreasures.org/theaters/nnnnn\]](http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/nnnnn) where {nnnnn} is the number in curly brackets.

Finally, one item of errata from the last edition. In the necrology on p31 I mistyped the name of the *Sound of Music* actress [not accretes]; of course her name is Charmian Carr. I must get a new keyboard!

A Happy New Year to you all.

Harry Rigby, CTA Bulletin Editor

CARTOON CORNER



from the Joyce Braddon collection of *Film Weekly*, 1938-1939

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE
MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY

CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

(founded January 1967)

promoting serious interest in all aspects of cinema buildings

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CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

BULLETIN: Members are invited to submit items for possible publication to the Bulletin Editor. However, it is stressed that the publication of an item does not necessarily imply that it reflects the views of the Cinema Theatre Association, its Committee or its Bulletin Editor.

It is assumed that submissions are for publication, unless stated otherwise; items may be shortened or edited at the discretion of the Editor.

Please enclose SAE and state if you require items to be returned, otherwise everything will be passed on to the CTA Archive.

VISITS: Members and non-members are reminded that they attend visits entirely at their own risk and no responsibility can be accepted by the Cinema Theatre Association or the owners of the buildings for any accidents or injury sustained during the course of any visit.

PRODUCTS: The Cinema Theatre Association does not necessarily recommend or endorse any products or services advertised in the Bulletin or in any flyer or document included in any mailings to members.

Typeset in Franklin Gothic Book by Harry Rigby

Printed by The Ludo Press Ltd, 18 Wimbledon Stadium Business Centre,
Riverside Road, London, SW17 0BA [www.ludo.co.uk]

CTA 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

A CTA 50th Anniversary Visit – Return to the Tooting **Granada** (Gala Bingo)

Sunday 26 February ; organised by Ken Roe

To continue our 50th Anniversary celebrations, members and associate members are invited to join us at the **Granada Theatre**, Tooting (now **Gala Bingo & Grade I Listed**). The reason we choose Tooting is that 'day & date' it also celebrates the first ever CTA visit, which was to the **Granada Tooting** on Sunday 26 February 1967.



The hall of mirrors at the **Granada Tooting**

This was the third **Granada Theatre** to be built (after **Dover & Walthamstow**) and was opened on Monday 7 September 1931 with the **Paramount Picture** *Monte Carlo* starring **Jeanette McDonald & Jack Buchanan** and *Two Crowded Hours*, a British short film directed by **Michael Powell**. The **Wurlitzer organ** was opened by organist **Alex Taylor**. With all 3,104 seats filled to capacity, over 2,000 were waiting outside, unable to gain entry! It was designed by architect **Cecil Aubrey Masey** with a splendid **Gothic style interior** the work of Russian born theatre set designer **Theodore Komisarjevsky**. The **Granada Tooting** became the flagship of the circuit.

Coming Soon

After the Final Curtain

Date to be confirmed; organised by Richard Norman

An illustrated talk by **Matt Lambros**, who recently launched his book *After the Final Curtain* in the USA. **Matt** is a professional photographer with an interest in theatrical architecture. His book contains stunning images of movie palaces showing how they appeared shortly after their final closure. The event will be held at **The Gallery, Farringdon**. Further details will be published in the next issue of the **Bulletin**.

North by North East

26-29 April

CTA North is planning a four-day event to revisit some favourite **Cinemas and Theatres** in the beautiful **North East** and include new venues in the **Scottish Borders** during 26 to 29 April 2017. Still very much in the planning stage, we hope to include a visit to **Darlington** and the 'under restoration' **Civic Theatre** along with the best remaining buildings in **Durham** with a visit to the famous **Beamish Museum** to hear of their plans to build a 1950s village and relocate a **Cinema** on the site. We plan to travel via **Newcastle** to **Alnwick, Berwick** and the **Borders** returning via the romantic **Northumberland Coast** to **Darlington**. The visit will be designed to allow members to travel from the **South of the UK** and return home within the dates selected. Hotel accommodation will be in three different locations and therefore it is only practical to travel on the coach, leaving any personal vehicles in **Darlington** at a safe car park. The hotels earmarked will have character and therefore some rooms will be different in size and non-standard. There will be a single supplement applied where needed but members should enjoy the locality of where we stay and evening meals will be included in the package. To register your interest please send a stamped addressed envelope to:

David Eve, CTA North, 3 Barberry Bank, Egerton, Bolton, BL7 9UJ.

A Trip Down Memory Lane

To mark the CTA's 50th Anniversary
Saturday 11 March at 5:30pm;
organised by Richard Norman

PROGRAMME

A special **Members' Slide Show and Social event** has been arranged to reflect a varied selection of our past national and international CTA visits and tours from edited movies taken by members themselves. An opportunity to relive some memorable experiences and see some members' participation.

We hope also to include short presentations of some members' slides.

Doors Open: 5:00pm for a start at 5:30pm

Venue: The Gallery at **Alan Baxter's**,
75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon,
London EC1M 6EL.

Admission on the door:

Members and Guests: £8 each
(Members presenting a show: no charge.)
Admission includes entry to a raffle and light refreshments and drinks.

The CTA Bookstall will be available.

CTA Film Nites

If you haven't already done so, do join the mailing list for future CTA Film Nites. It's a way to link up with other members to visit a traditional cinema and watch a film together – and, of course, there's an opportunity to socialise over a drink or a meal afterwards. We're fixing up dates about once a month, so far just in London, to see interesting films at a cinema that's just the kind of venue CTA members should be supporting.

All you have to do to find out what's coming up and when is to join the email list. Send an email (headed CTA FILM NITES) to **David Vinnels** at [deco77@btinternet.com] and your name will be added to the mailing list. About a week before each Film Nite, an email will be sent out to everyone on the list with all the details: selected film, venue and how to get there. We look forward to lots more members coming along to the shows – and, of course, do bring a friend if you wish.

Help Wanted

The CTA events committee would love to hear from members of any ideas for visits or events they may have. We can offer support and guidance for anyone who would like to organise a visit or event.

Please send your thoughts to the CTA events committee, c/o **Ray Ritmeester**, 66 Woodside Road, High Wycombe, HP13 7JB or drop me an email to [visits@cta-uk.com].

Most visits are for members only
details in the full Bulletin

CASEWORK

By Tim Hatcher

Grade II Listed

The owner of the *Royalty* in Harborne [Birmingham] has formulated a scheme that would replace the majority of the structure with sheltered housing. However, a trust formed with the objective of assuring retention of the cinema as an entertainment venue has now submitted its own scheme to the local Council; it reportedly has a commercial partner and additionally is applying to the National Lottery for funding.



Following revisions to the proposal to replace the Astoria in Brighton with a housing scheme, the Council has dropped its objections thereto. Demolition thus appears to be imminent, as local objections are unfortunately centred upon disruption during redevelopment, not upon loss of a local amenity.

Photo above taken March 2009.

Despite representations from the Association, Leeds Council's Planning Panel enthusiastically passed plans for the proposed renovation of the *Majestic*, currently derelict following major damage from a conflagration.

Agreement has reportedly been reached between the cinema operator and the developer of the premises above the Curzon in London's Mayfair apropos installation of sound insulation therein.

An enquiry has been received from a curator at the Black Country Museum concerning the private cinema at Wordsley Hall near Stourbridge. Information has been forwarded, including details of a local contact.

Unlisted



The custodian of panels from the frieze originally located on the façade of the Gaumont Palace in Doncaster has enquired if the CTA might express interest in their acquisition. Efforts are to be made to liaise with various parties in an attempt to secure a suitable position for their relocation and display on a site accessible to the public, in manner akin to the reliefs from the frontage of the Gaumont Palace in Cheltenham.

Photo above taken September 2009, just after the cladding was removed.

Despite extant planning permission for redevelopment of the derelict *Regal* at Lichfield for housing, which would entail retention only of the façade, a local group wishes to revive the building as a cinema. It is to be advised of several successful projects that it may find helpful to consider and compare.

More Casework in the full Bulletin

MISCELLANY

HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS FILM GUILD



A group of academics at Glasgow University is recording people's memories of the "heroic" film projectionists of the Highlands and Islands Film Guild and the screenings they put on in makeshift venues across the region. The Guild was set up after World War Two to take cinema to remote locations, giving many people their first experience of seeing the world depicted on the screen. Screenings of 16mm films were held in village halls, schools and even army huts. There was often no electricity supply and the projectionists had to cope with various technical challenges as well as the difficulties of travelling to remote locations with all their equipment. The service was publicly funded, showing films that were both educational and entertaining but the service folded due to financial difficulties in 1971.

There are tales of films being lost overboard on journeys to locations like North Ronaldsay in Orkney. There were all kinds of tales about agriculture intruding on the shows such as livestock chewing through power cables. There is evidence to suggest that certain families were resistant to it and prevented their children from attending. We also understand that there was opposition from certain areas of the church. There is mention of a minister in Scalpay on Harris walking along the queue of people waiting to get into a film show trying to persuade them out of going in to watch the films.

A special film program was held on Friday 11 November 2016 at the Eden Court in Inverness using a 16mm projector and 16mm film. The organisers hoped to recreate as close as they could a Highlands and Islands Film Guild programme from the late 1940s.

If you have any memories or can help with this research, further information and contact details are at [hifilmguild.gla.ac.uk].

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-37907036],

[www.facebook.com/hifilmguild]; sent in by Carl Chesworth

LONDON HAPPENINGS

A new 30-seat "highbrow" sex cinema called *Erotic Paradiso* has opened at the Ditto Gallery in Islington (London) showing films exploring sex and sexuality. Tickets are £10 and the cinema even has its own sex shop. Evidently this appears to have been a pop-up for 3 days only according to the *Huffington Post*.

Evening Standard (London) – 26 October; sent in by Gavin McGrath

Interactive cinema is coming to London with the audience being able to control what happens on the screen via their smartphones, with several possible endings to films. Vue is considering plans to roll out the CtrlMovie concept for the public in 2017. [tinyurl.com/zv39xy9]

Time Out – 13 December; sent in by Gavin McGrath

PERUVIAN FIRE

At least five people have died after a fire inside a cinema at a shopping centre in Peru's capital, Lima. The blaze, at a screening for journalists, was apparently caused by a short circuit. The interior minister said that the soundproof walls in the theatre appeared to be flammable, allowing the fire to spread.

Source unknown; sent in by Gavin McGrath

UNIVERSALLY UNACKNOWLEDGED

Pride and Prejudice and *Zombies* became a best seller around the world but a film adaptation performed so poorly that it has been named as one of the biggest flops of the year. It made \$16.4m [£13.2m] at the box-office worldwide against a budget of \$28m.

The Times – 23 November; sent in by Ian W Mitchell

PUBLICATIONS

Back Numbers Available

BULLETINS

We can supply back numbers of most Bulletins from Volume 21 (1987) to date. Prices for issues from 1987 to 2015 are £4.00 per year (6 issues); individual issues are £1.00 each. Prices for issues in 2016 and 2017 are £4.00 per copy. All prices include postage. There are some issues available from earlier years, 1970 to 1986 – please send enquiries to the Sales Officer.

PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

Listed below are the back numbers of Picture House that are still available, along with the main articles the particular issue contains. There are also available a few second-hand copies of out-of-print issues 9, 10, 14/15, 16, 20, 22, 23 & 24, priced £5.00 each, plus postage.

No 6	£1.50	Television in the Cinema; Atherley Southampton; Hippodrome, Blackpool.
No 8	£1.50	Sol Levy; Reginald Cooper; ABC in NW London.
No 17	£3.00	Special Issue featuring the Cinemas of George Coles with 26 original photographs reproduced in sepia.
No 18	£3.00	Sydney Colwyn Foulkes; United Picture Theatres; Tivoli Wimborne.
No 19	£3.50	Co-operative Cinemas; Ideal Lambeth; Dursley; Alister Macdonald; Granada Tooting.
No 21	£3.50	100 Years On; Travelling Shows; Reggie Rea; Albert Hall Sheffield; Regal Wells; West End Adverts; Scotland.
all issues below have colour cover and inside pages		
No 25	£4.50	Oldest Cinema (Brighton); FE Bromige; Gaumont Managers; Carlton Swansea; Committee's Choice.
No 26	£4.50	Paramount Newcastle; Edward Stone; Granada Men; E de Wilde Holding; Electric Portobello Road.
No 27	£4.50	New Victoria/Apollo; Whiteladies Bristol; Clark & Fenn; Compton Organs; Tim Foster Associates.
No 28	£4.50	James McKissack; WJ King; Torbay Cinema; Tabs.
No 29	£4.50	Cinerama in Britain; Braziers the Builders; John Fernée; Waller Jeffs; John Duffin's paintings.
No 30	£5.00	The Davis Family, Croydon; Apollo Hammersmith Organ; Norwich Roadshows.
No 31	£7.50	Special 84-page edition: Essoldo – A Family Business: Sol Sheckman and the Essoldo Circuit.
No 32	£5.00	Harry Myers Photographs; Cinemas at the Coalface; Shaws of Darwen; Edward A Stone.
No 33	£5.00	Theodore Komisarjevsky; Circuit & other releases of 1956; The case for saving the New Victoria Bradford.
No 34	£5.00	Beaufort Birmingham; Granada Tooting in 1934; Rank in post-war Scotland; J Braddon's Cinema life.
No 35	£5.00	Holophane lighting; Imitations of Odeon ; Cradley Records; 1909 Cinematograph Act; Kingston Showmanship.
No 36	£6.00	Leslie Kemp; The Clifton Circuit; Jeremy Perkins on Brighton; Circuit Releases of 1960.
No 37	£8.50	Special 92-page issue; saving the Electric Palace Harwich.
No 38	£6.00	Northern Morris Associated; Point Milton Keynes; Going to the Cinema in Birmingham; Palace Conwy; Carlton Haymarket; Military Cinemas; Cinema Murders.
No 39	£6.00	WWI and the Film Trade; Tale of Two Regals ; Odeon North Finchley; Majestic Oxford; Films at the Royal Albert Hall .
No 40	£6.00	Tolmer Euston; Michael Stringer memories; West End in the 1950s; Stafford Entertainments; Will Onda & James Atroy; Stephen Waddingham – a Granada man.

AND WHERE TO KEEP THOSE PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINES?

'Cordex' binders, in red leather-look effect with the magazine name embossed on the spine, are available for £4.30 + £3.00 postage; they are sent in a special postal carton. Each binder holds twelve copies and will not harm or mark your magazines, which may be taken out later if desired.



Still Available (reviewed in previous issues)

Haunted Cinemas and their Uninvited Guests

by Martin Tapsell. £7.50 plus postage.

The Golden Age of Folkestone's Cinemas

by Ricky Hart. £12.50 plus postage.

Ordering

For books and other items except DVDs, please add £3.00 for post and packing for orders up to £20.00 in value, £6.00 for orders from £20.01 to £40.00 and £11.00 for orders above £40.01. For DVDs, please add £3.00 for up to 3 DVDs and £6.00 for more than 3 DVDs.

Orders to Jeremy Buck, CTA Sales, 34, Pelham Road, London, N22 6LN. Cheques/POs payable to Cinema Theatre Association, or send credit/debit card number with expiry date and security code. A complete sales list is available by sending an SAE or can be seen on the CTA website [www.cta-uk.org] where you can also place your order. using PayPal. A sales list is sent with every order.

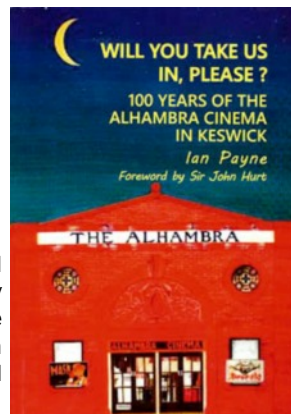
Also Available (but not from the Sales Officer)

Will You Take Us In, Please?

100 years of the Alhambra Cinema in Keswick

by Ian Payne. 208 pages. A5 paperback, fully illustrated. £10.00 from: Bookcase, 17-18 Castle Street, Carlisle, CA3 8SY or: [www.bookscumbria.com]

Published in 2016 but not mentioned here before, this comprehensive history relates the story of the Alhambra in the Lake District town of Keswick, which opened in January 1914 and is still operating today.

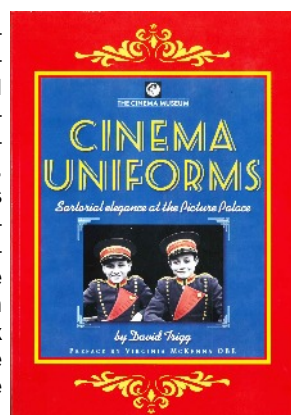


Cinema Uniforms

Sartorial Elegance at the Picture Palace

by David Trigg. 200 pages, A4 paperback, fully illustrated. £20.00. Available from the Cinema Museum, 2 Dugard Way, London, SE11 4TH.

First published in 2014 but not mentioned here before, this is a well-produced and thoroughly researched survey of this important aspect of cinema history. There is a wealth of illustrations in colour and black and white, showing both items from the Museum's collection and also period advertisements and trade catalogues of the varied uniforms. There is a comprehensive appendix of over 250 news items from the trade press and a further appendix listing over 100 companies who were active in cinema uniform manufacture from 1908 to 1958.



CIRCUIT HISTORIES AVAILABLE

by Allen Eyles – all fully illustrated with gazetteers
ODEON 1 – Oscar Deutsch Entertains Our Nation – £19.99
ODEON 2 – From J Arthur Rank to the Multiplex – £19.99
THE GRANADA THEATRES – £18.99

All available from the Sales Officer – address above.
please add £3.00 for postage.

WHEN THE CTA WAS FOUNDED IN 1967...

Some Historical Highlights

- Harold Wilson was Prime Minister.
- Lyndon B Johnson was President of the USA.
- The first North Sea Gas was pumped ashore.
- The Eurovision Song Contest is won by Sandie Shaw with *Puppet on a String* – the first English Language song to win.
- The Liverpool RC Cathedral was consecrated.
- Tottenham Hotspur won the FA Cup, beating Chelsea 2-1.
- Barclays Bank installed the first ATM at its Enfield Branch.
- We still had pounds, shillings and pence [£/s/d]; decimal currency didn't come in until February 1971.
- You could buy 4 gallons of petrol for £1.
- The average price of a UK Cinema Ticket was 4s/4½d [21¾p].
- Parliament decriminalised homosexuality in England & Wales.
- Most of the British Steel industry was nationalised.
- The breathalyser was introduced.
- Playwright Joe Orton was murdered.
- Elvis Presley married Priscilla Beaulieu.
- The Beatles released the album *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.
- *The Prisoner*, *The Forsythe Saga* and *The Monkees* were on TV.
- Britain devalued the pound by lowering the exchange rate from \$2.80 to \$2.40.
- The World's first heart transplant is performed in South Africa.
- *A Man for all Seasons* wins the Oscar for Best Picture.
- The liner *QE2* was launched by The Queen at Clydebank and the liner *Queen Mary* was retired.
- St Pancras Railway Station was made a grade I listed building.
- Radio 1 begins broadcasting.
- The first colour TV broadcasts began on BBC2.
- The Concorde was unveiled in Toulouse, France.
- Ed Balls, Vin Diesel, Paul Gascoigne, Stelios Haji-Ioannou, Paul Ince, Nicole Kidman, Julia Roberts [and others] were born.
- Clement Atlee, Donald Campbell, Vivien Leigh, Derek McCulloch [Uncle Mac], Arthur Ransome, Basil Rathbone, Malcolm Sargent [and others] died.

A Selection of Films Released

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| • A Countess from Hong Kong | • Risky Business |
| • A Guide for the Married Man | • Rough Night in Jericho |
| • Barefoot in the Park | • The Collector |
| • Bedazzled | • The Comedians |
| • Belle de Jour | • The Dirty Dozen |
| • Billion Dollar Brain | • The Fearless Vampire Killers |
| • Bonnie and Clyde | • The Gnome-Mobile |
| • Camelot | • The Graduate |
| • Carry on Doctor | • The Happiest Millionaire |
| • Carry On... Follow That Camel | • The Honey Pot |
| • Casino Royale | • The Jokers |
| • Cool Hand Luke | • The Jungle Book |
| • Custer of the West | • The Mummy's Shroud |
| • Death Rides a Horse | • The Night of the Generals |
| • Doctor Dolittle | • The Peking Medallion |
| • Far from the Madding Crowd | • The Plank |
| • Guess Who's Coming to Dinner | • The Producers |
| • Half a Sixpence | • The Sorcerers |
| • Hombre | • The Taming of the Shrew |
| • How I Won the War | • The Way West |
| • How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying | • Thoroughly Modern Millie |
| • In Cold Blood | • To Sir, With Love |
| • In Like Flint | • Tobruk |
| • In the Heat of the Night | • Two for the Road |
| • Maroc 7 | • Up the Down Staircase |
| • Our Mother's House | • Valley of the Dolls |
| • Playtime | • Wait Until Dark |
| • Point Blank | • You Only Live Twice |
| • Quatermass and the Pit | |
| • Reflections in a Golden Eye | |

These are only some of the more popular ones; IMDb lists 2,907!

Lists compiled by Harry Rigby & Ken Roe

January

- 2nd The Charity Première of *Hawaii* is held at the Astoria Charing Cross Road. {2499}
- 7th The 1,380-seat **Regal** in Belfast closes and was eventually demolished. {43775}
- 9th The 556-seat **Pavilion** in Abergavenny [Monmouth] closes and becomes a bingo club. It is currently a church. {44562}
- 10th The Royal World Première of *The Countess from Hong Kong* is held at the **Carlton** Haymarket. {1838}
- 12th Films cease at the 840-seat **Plaza** in Wombwell [South Yorks] and bingo takes over. It had previously had a period on bingo for a few months in 1963. It is now used for snooker. {25845}
- 14th Films cease at the **Essoldo** in Low Fell, Gateshead and bingo takes over. It had been the first cinema to be equipped with Projectomatic in 1953. It had a further period of cinema use from 1973 to 1987 before being demolished. {52463}
- 17th The 1,203-seat **Victory** in Loughborough [Leics] closes with *The Exterminator*. It was demolished two years later. {40270}
- 21st The **Essoldo** [ex **Belmont**] in Kenton, North London closes with *A Touch of Mink*. It became a bingo club but that didn't last long before the building was demolished. {17999}
- 21st The 1,006-seat **Essoldo** at Barnet [Middlesex] closes with *My Fair Lady* and is demolished. {27529}
- 24th The Gala Première of *Murderers' Row* is held at the **Leicester Square Theatre**. {910}
- 27th The World Première of *The Night of the Generals* is held at the **Odeon Leicester Square**. {841}
- 28th The **Royal Wallasey** closes with *Day of the Triffids* and *King Kong versus Godzilla*. It became a bingo club, then snooker. {44942}
- 28th The 1,250-seat **Forum** on the Crumlin Road in Belfast closes. It was later used as a social club. {43773}
- 30th The **Regent Bishops Stortford** was renovated and renamed the **Granada** after being taken over in 1965. It eventually closed in 1977 in favour of bingo; this lasted until 1982 and the building was demolished soon after. {54351}
- 30th The **Regal Wadebridge** was taken over by WTW Cinemas; coincidentally Dr Beeching closed the Wadebridge to Padstow railway line on the same day {25803}

February

- 2nd The **Odeon Marble Arch** [London] opens with a giant curved screen, equipped for D-150 presentations, although the first film is *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* in 35mm. {1830}



THE CTA'S GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

By Les Bull, a former *Bulletin* Editor

It's fifty years since Eric George, concerned at the way the picture houses of Britain were disappearing, advertised for people who felt the same to get in touch with a view to forming a group that would campaign for the protection of the buildings. Even then, of course, their time had passed and long before 1967 the writing had been on the wall for many cinemas: their best days had already gone. The huge picture palaces were suffering a lack of audiences to fill their sometimes two-thousand seats. In the mid-1960s a number of City centre cinemas had been subdivided; this was a continuing trend across the country that alarmed Eric and so, when his call for like-minded people brought in several replies, the Cinema Theatre Association was formed.

The beginnings were modest – a news sheet called the *Bulletin* was issued, typewritten and photocopied. The membership was small but keen and gradually more were attracted to the cause. Of course it was obvious that a tiny group of people could not halt the inevitable closures that were increasingly happening but what it could do – and has done – was begin a detailed history and photographic record of the country's cinemas.

When I took on the task of *Bulletin* Editor in 1984 there were fewer than 500 members and little did I realise that I would be doing the job for fourteen years! The Association's finances were tight at that time and the *Bulletin* consisted of just eight pages. Cheap paper was used; the print was confined to black, computer typesetting equipment was in its early stages and prone to crashing before the text had been written to disc. The committee's general meetings were always lively affairs and held in a variety of places: the Services Club near Marble Arch; rooms above the Leicester Square Theatre (Odeon West End); at the BFI in Piccadilly – anywhere that would have us.

As the membership increased and finances improved we were able to increase the number of pages in the *Bulletin* and (wow!) introduce spot colour and, later, photographs. Then a yearly publication, *Picture House*, was introduced that included higher quality photographs of cinema buildings as well as histories of them. Improved printing techniques meant that the Association's publications are now unrecognisable compared to the humble beginnings. The intensive research carried out by Allen Eyles led to the publication of the Odeon, Gaumont, ABC and Granada histories. His work on them makes them invaluable historical volumes. Without his thorough investigation I am sure such documentation would not exist.

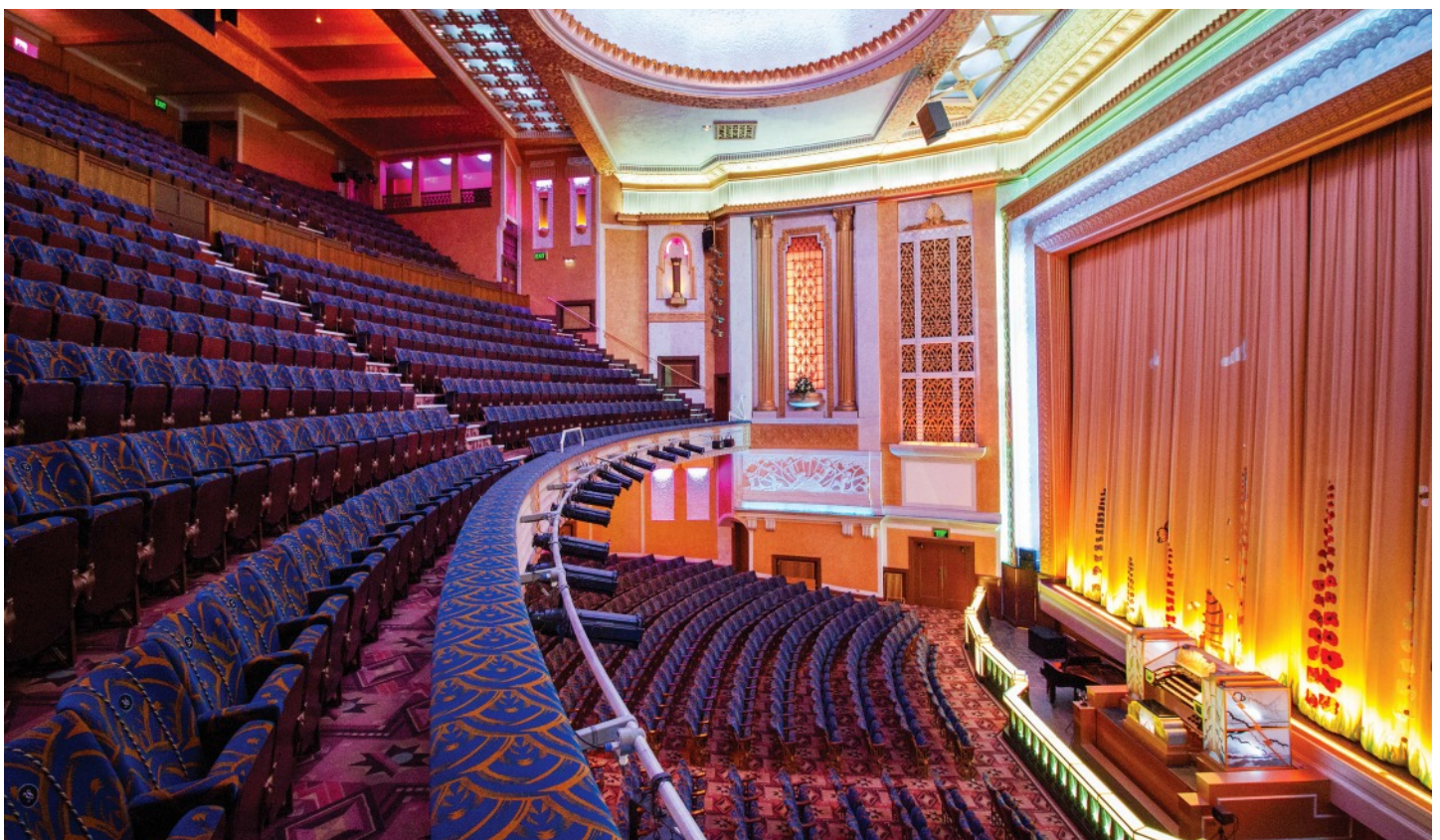
My own interest was in the traditional cinemas I had grown up with. I loved them all and was genuinely sad when, as Editor, each week brought news of another marvellous building being demolished or gutted for some other use. Depressing but the photographic record compiled by the CTA ensured that images of their original state were preserved.

For those who have no memory of those traditional picture houses it is impossible to convey the atmosphere they offered. So what have we lost? Those huge auditoria with drapes, festoon curtains, footlights, chandeliers; and the smaller ones with more modest interiors. Then there were the fleapits with their cheap admission prices, often-broken seating and almost non-existent heating. All in their way having a certain particular appeal. And all, with very few exceptions, long gone.

What else, apart from the actual buildings, did we lose? Well, we lost the tightly spaced seating, the poorly maintained and draughty auditoria. But we also lost continuous performances; programmes with a second feature; cinemas with stage facilities that enabled pop shows to come to urban areas at a modest price; cinemas with balconies; staff whose faces were familiar at every visit and of course a full evening of cheaply priced entertainment.

What have we swapped them for? The multiplexes have perfect picture quality, more comfortable seating, bigger screens and louder sound. They provide a large indoor waiting area. No longer do we have to queue in the street. We don't have to wait for movies to come round as they open everywhere mostly on the same day (can't call them films nowadays). Instead of two features we have half an hour of advertisements and trailers, warnings not to take photographs and to turn off our phones. But it would be churlish to deride what is now on offer as a vast amount of money has been spent building these multiplexes – and the rise in admissions proves that the majority of the public love them. But they are expensive: cinema-going is no longer the cheap night out it once was.

To me the CTA is my connection with those vanished times and hopefully the *Bulletin* and *Picture House* will continue to provide the nostalgia I feel for those disappeared buildings and the pleasure they gave. They had their day and now it's gone but the CTA has made sure they are not forgotten.



The interior of the Plaza Stockport – just the sort of cinema the author is talking about; now thankfully preserved; photo courtesy Plaza

THE CINEMAS OF HALTWHISTLE

By Charles Morris

The Northumbrian town of Haltwhistle, which claims to be at the centre of Britain, will be known to travellers between Carlisle and Newcastle, either by rail or road; also to visitors to Hadrian's Wall, which runs close by. The town probably originated in Roman times and its church dates back to the thirteenth century. Coal mining in the 18th and 19th Centuries is, however, responsible for the town developing to its present size of approximately 4,000 people. The Gem, one of its two former cinemas, would have been seen by motorists as the A69, once the 1950s bypass had been created, went right past it; and any rail passenger who alighted at Haltwhistle station would have seen the cinema directly opposite in Boat Lane. The cinema trade's annual publication, the *Kinematograph Year Book*, nevertheless overlooked the Gem's existence until it had been operating for some twenty years. It ignored the town's other cinema, the *Westgate*, for its entire 25 year existence.

It was once claimed that the Gem was originally built to accommodate soldiers during the First World War and that it later became a music hall. However there is clear evidence that it was built as a cinema and that a licence was applied for and granted on behalf of its owner, Mr Dryden, in June 1911. Superintendent Appleby reported to the police court that the building in his opinion was a very suitable place for film exhibitions; it would scarcely burn as it was constructed of steel and brick and the cinematograph lamp [sic] was outside the building altogether.



The Gem/Cinema in the 1960s

The Gem was in fact a very basic structure. The frontage was of brick, cement rendered, with a central abutment containing the small stage. The auditorium was steel framed with a few courses of brick for the walls and the upper part, plus the roof, tongue-and-groove timber overlaid with corrugated steel sheet. A pair of wooden doors at the left hand side of the frontage served as the main entrance and a similar door on the right was an emergency exit. The front door led into a short passage of the same width, containing the paybox on the right. The passage continued into the auditorium at the screen end and almost immediately there was a straight wooden staircase leading to the front edge of the balcony. The stalls were raked, utilising the natural slope of the land and at the far right hand corner there was another staircase to the balcony, which contained the bulk of the 500 seats (once listed as 600), from which there was also an emergency exit to the higher ground at the back of the building. There was no ceiling, just the timber roof with exposed steel trusses. The office, boiler room and sweet store were beneath the stage. The first manager was believed to be Mr E Lawrence Rushton; Leo Martin and his understudy Bella Ashurst played the upright piano at the corner of the stage for the silent films. The Gem was later equipped with Filmophone sound. This was a very short-lived sound-on-disc system, which must, of necessity, have been replaced within a couple of years. Artefacts found in the cinema suggest that Western Electric sound was later fitted.

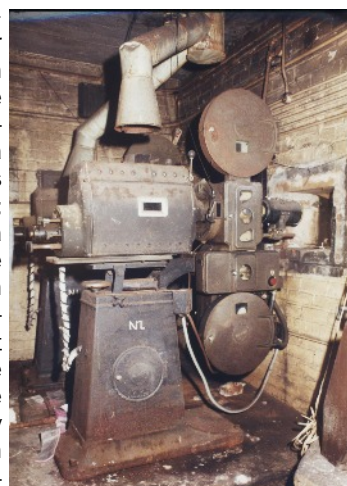
In 1947 the Gem was taken over by MBC cinemas, an organisation based in Workington with a circuit of about twenty cinemas spread across Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland and Durham with offshoots into Yorkshire (Whitby) and Selkirk in Scotland. Other than Workington and Carlisle and Penrith, the cinemas were nearly all in small towns, thus the Gem fitted into the portfolio quite well. MBC wasted no time in equipping the Gem with the latest Westar projectors



Two views of the interior of the Gem/Cinema in 1994, after closure

and Westrex sound system, as indeed they did with several of their cinemas at about the same time. For unknown reasons they re-named the Gem as simply The Cinema; perhaps to indicate that their opposition, the Westgate, was not worthy of being called such!

Perhaps, though unlikely, the new equipment did not bring forth consistently satisfactory results; or maybe the downstairs projection room resulted in the Haltwhistle audience being unusually inquisitive; or it may simply have been a case of people sticking their hands up in front of the projection beam; but MBC felt obliged to produce a special filmlet, which ran: "Anyone found entering the projection room with the intention of interfering with the projection equipment or the work of the operators will be prosecuted." When CinemaScope arrived, a new screen was duly fitted and the screen curtains, with their sunburst pattern in the middle, were widened by having pieces of cloth, of different colour to the original, stitched to each side.



The frontage and the projection room in 1994, after closure

The 1940s Gem experience is recalled as one of "somewhat faded upholstery, disturbing springs, wooden floor, misty smoke-ridden smells and the sound of heavy rain drumming on the tin roof." Nevertheless it was generally considered to be superior to the Westgate. This was named after the street in which it was located and functioned in the dance hall of the Mechanics Institute, whose trustees rented the building to Messrs Greaves and Stoddart from the end of 1935 for the

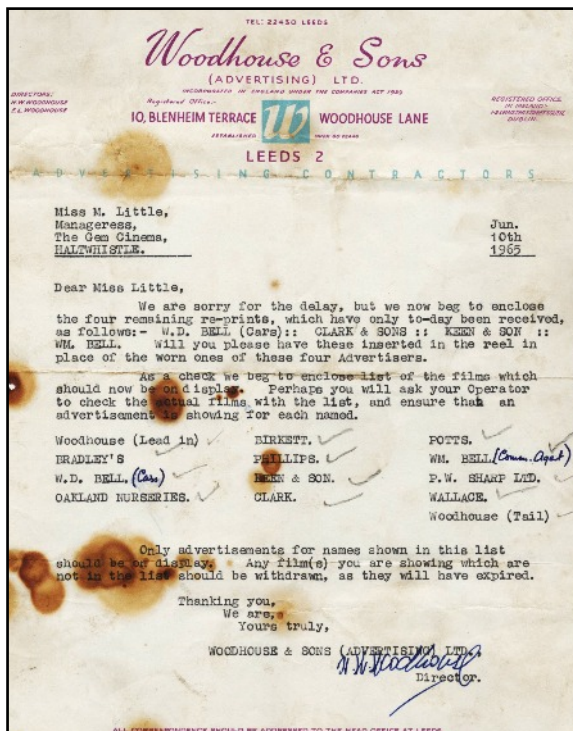
sum of £3/10s per week, once the difficulties of obtaining a cinematograph licence had been overcome. The seats were on one level on a flat floor, with a capacity only half that of the Gem. The projection box was the former reading room and, although we don't know what equipment was fitted, we are informed that the projection standards were less than sophisticated with reels running off, shown out of order and sometimes back to front! There was a projectionist named Benny who wore a scarf in all weathers. When a breakdown occurred, the audience would shout "Benny's got his scarf caught in the projector again!"

Both cinemas ran together for twenty five years, usually running continuous shows. On Saturday there were two houses and it was customary for people to congregate near the station, some having arrived from the nearby villages and towns and to set off in groups to either the Gem or the Westgate. Some would then see the first house at one cinema and then dash to the other for its second. Each having three changes of programme per week, the problem of finding enough films was overcome, in the Westgate's case, by showing a modern film at the weekend but older films, sometimes more than ten years old, in the earlier part of the week. At one stage the Gem had the pick of the Rank, MGM, Columbia, United Artists, Warner Bros, Disney and Republic films. This left the Westgate with Twentieth Century Fox and Paramount, which did at least lead to the Westgate being equipped with CinemaScope first. The Gem had the Gaumont newsreel, with bespoke titles saying "The Cinema presents Gaumont British News" (it being called The Cinema by then), while the Westgate had Pathé. Both were about ten days old. It was evident that The Cinema showed no trailers; not in later years anyway.

In December 1960 Jack Stoddart, managing director of George Stoddart Entertainments Ltd, announced the closure of the Westgate,



The Westgate cinema today



apparently to nobody's surprise. "No-one is coming to the cinema these days," he said. "This is not only happening in Haltwhistle. Cinemas have been closing in bigger places than Haltwhistle. The fact is that there is not enough business in Haltwhistle for two cinemas. We have been hanging on to see if things would pick up but now we can't keep it going any longer. The cinema will open for the

Sunday night performance, as advertised but after that it will be closed." (Sunday opening had only been allowed in Haltwhistle that year). The last film, on Sunday 11 December, was *The Man From Colorado*, starring Glenn Ford and William Holden, which had been released in Britain in 1948. The seats and equipment were to be shared between the company's remaining cinemas at Whickham and Rothbury (the latter being another cinema totally overlooked by the *Kinematograph Year Books*) and Annan. The building still stands and now houses the public library.

By 1968 The Cinema (former Gem) was reduced to showing films on Monday and Tuesday with a different programme for Thursday and Friday, with bingo on Saturday and Sunday. In June 1971 MBC Cinemas abruptly withdrew from the cinema business, whereupon some of the cinemas closed and others fairly quickly found new proprietors. The Cinema was one of the closures but the new owners, the Stanhope Cinema Circuit (actually a bingo firm) was persuaded via a petition to keep it open. It carried on by showing films for

three nights with bingo on others but films eventually finished at the end of February 1975. The admission prices by this time were 40p in the balcony (half price 25p), stalls 25p & 20p, pit 20p for all. It seems the seat booking facility once available for the balcony and stalls had ended some time previously. Cinemagoers were then faced with a 22 mile journey West to Carlisle or a 34 mile trek East to Newcastle upon Tyne. The Forum at Hexham, 14 miles away, had closed the previous year (though it was to reopen in 1982) and the once nearest cinemas, at Haydon Bridge (Town Hall) and Alston, had shut in about 1961.

PUBLIC NOTICES

THE CINEMA
HALTWHISTLE

WEEK COMMENCING 19th AUGUST, 1968

MONDAY, TUESDAY, Continuous from 5.45 p.m. —
ROSSANA PODESTA in
SEVEN GOLDEN MEN (U)
Also FIVE GOLDEN DRAGONS (A)
(In CinemaScope & Colour).

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, Continuous from 5.45 p.m. —
JOHN WAYNE, KIRK DOUGLAS, HOWARD KEEL in
THE WAR WAGGON (U)
(In CinemaScope & Colour).

SATURDAY —
BINGO & PRIZE BINGO, 8 p.m.

SUNDAY —
BINGO & PRIZE BINGO, 7 & 7.30 p.m.

JACKPOT £50 IN 54 NUMBERS. £50 ON 48 NUMBERS.

Press advert from 1968

The Cinema's redoubtable manageress, Mrs Moira Little, continued to run the bingo and the projectionist Dennis Bowerbank carried on in a different rôle. The projection equipment's amplifier also had a new rôle as part of the public address system. Certainly by this time the building had reverted to its original name of Gem. Later the front stairs to the balcony were removed and a false ceiling fitted from the edge of the balcony to the stage.

By 1994 all activity had ceased; vandals had been in and started a fire and the place was in a sorry state. The projectors, items of film and other memorabilia remained but were removed by myself soon afterwards. The building was demolished in 1995 and two semi-detached houses now stand on the site.

Almost twenty years later the Haltwhistle Film Project, an organisation that involved local children and teenagers in the making of short films, produced an engaging documentary in which memories of older inhabitants were combined with a re-enactment by the children and some adults of the life and times of the Gem. It is on YouTube and by entering [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWldFHjOK_4] or if you simply enter Gem Haltwhistle you should find it.

All images supplied by the author

THE CINEMA
HALTWHISTLE.

WELCOME HOME FUND.
A GRAND

CONCERT
ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1st

ARTHUR THOMPSON'S CONCERT PARTY
THE B.B.C. MALE QUARTETTE
(Haltwhistle Vocal Union)
Mrs. TEASDALE Mrs. BROOME
Soprano Contralto
Mr. T. KELLY Northern Baritone
Miss JOAN GALE Elocutionist
Mr. T. NANCARROW Mr. J. HUNTER
Accompanist: Mrs. BENNETT.
CHAIRMAN: **REV. R. W. WATSON**

Admission: Balcony (Booked Seats) 2/- 1st 1/6 2nd 1/-
Doors open at 7.30 p.m. Concert to commence at 8 p.m. prompt.
TICKET HOLDERS ONLY ADMITTED UNDER 16s. only.
Profits will be donated to the following: T. Nelson, G. Galt, T. Lister & F. Potts.

COME AND SUPPORT A WORTHY EFFORT.

WESTGATE CINEMA
HALTWHISTLE

Commencing Monday, Oct. 27th

MONDAY and TUESDAY FOR TWO DAYS
Priscilla Lane, Dennis Morgan, Thomas Mitchell
THREE CHEERS FOR THE IRISH
also "Angel from Texas"

WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY FOR TWO DAYS
Jeff Chandler in
ABANDONED
William Bendix in "Life with Riley"

FRIDAY and SATURDAY FOR TWO DAYS
Dana Andrews, Dorothy McGuire in
I WANT YOU

Mon., Wed., Fri. Continuous 5-15. Tues., Thurs. Once Nightly 7
Saturday - Matinee 2-50



The site of the Gem/Cinema in 1994 and today

Adverts for the Gem/Cinema and the Westgate

NEWSREEL

The items in this section are taken mainly from press cuttings from local newspapers. Although their factual accuracy has been checked by Allen Eyles, there may be minor errors in reporting dates or other detail. Allen has also provided additional comments, where indicated. Photos by Harry Rigby within entry, except where stated. A number in curly brackets {nnnnn} is the reference for the Cinema Treasures website. Go to: [\[cinematreasures.org/theaters/nnnnn\]](http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/nnnnn)

ACCRINGTON (Lancs)

Plans have been submitted to turn the former Ritz into shops and apartments. It opened in January 1922 and closed in August 1958. It was converted into a furniture store, which closed in 2005. The vacant building was damaged by fire in 2011; see p17 Bulletin 48/3. {44964}

Lancashire Telegraph – 28 November; sent in by Philip Crompton

ASHFORD (Kent)

Plans to extend the Cineworld at Eureka Park have been approved.

Kent News – 26 October

BANGOR (Gwynedd)

The new Pontio centre has been open a year. Up to 31 October, over 30,000 tickets were sold for the 450-seat theatre and 120-seat studio and a further 33,130 tickets for the 200-seat cinema. {52011}

Daily Post (Wales) – 14 November

Brexit has been blamed for delays to a new development at Bryn Cegin, which could possibly include a multiplex cinema.

North Wales Chronicle – 24 November

BASILDON (Essex)

Plans to bring a cinema to the Eastgate Shopping Centre have been abandoned as the developers were unable to find an operator. The Council is still hoping that a town centre cinema will be provided in due course.

Basildon Echo – 21 October

BEESTON (Notts)

Plans for a multiplex have been shelved as major operators wanted exclusive parking for 400 cars, which was unacceptable to the Council. Instead they are looking at smaller “niche” operators to provide a seven to eight screen cinema. It is hoped construction would start in October 2018 with completion expected for December 2019.

Nottingham Post – 21 November

BELFAST

White's Tavern has obtained a cinema licence and will show films every Sunday. The dine-in cinema offers a meal and movie for £9.95.

News Letter (Northern Ireland) – 9 November



The ten-screen Movie House on Dublin Road could be demolished for an office block. The developers may look at putting some sort of cinema into the new building. The scheme is due to go out for public consultation in January. {26684}

Belfast Telegraph – 13 December; photo taken September 2014

BELPER (Derbys)

The Ritz has celebrated its 10th anniversary. It reopened on 3 November 2006 with 100 luxury seats in the former circle area. The building was originally a Town Hall and Law Court but was converted into a full-time cinema around 1939. In 1971 it was split with two cinemas upstairs and bingo downstairs; the cinemas closed in October 1991. {19827}

Belper News – 9 November

BIRMINGHAM (Digbeth)

The Mockingbird Bar at the Custard Factory opened a 100-seat cinema in November. It has had occasional screenings for about a year but now offers four screenings a day, seven days a week, showing latest releases.

Solihull News – 4 November

BLACKWOOD (Ceredigion)

The Maxime was due to hold a special show of *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* for homeless people on 9 January. {28064}

Wales Online – 5 December

BLAENAVON/BLAENAFON (Torfaen)



Further to the information provided on page 19 of the September/October 2016 issue of the Bulletin, I can confirm that the original auditorium on the first floor of the Workmen's Hall is still intact with the original proscenium and impressive curved balcony frontage. The stalls floor has been levelled with the addition of removable seats allowing multiple use of the auditorium, which originally had 927 seats according to the *Kine Year Book* 1955.

Sent in by John Skinner (photo)

BLYTH (Northumberland)



The former Wallaw cinema, now a Wetherspoon pub [above] appropriately called The Wallaw, was the venue for a charity Halloween fundraiser – a ticket-only paranormal special investigation didn't discover an unhappy spirit (no pun intended) of a lady that is meant to haunt the former projection box but it did raise £125 for ClicSargent. The grade II listed four-storey building originally opened in November 1937. It was subdivided in 1987 and showed its final film in 2004. The building then stood empty for nine years until it reopened as a Wetherspoon. {1826}

Wetherspoon News – winter 2016/17; sent in by Mike Whitcombe

8 more pages of cinema news and letters in the full Bulletin

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

A regular column celebrating our wonderful listed cinemas.
All images come from the CTA Archive.

80 Years



Rex – 10 Argyle Street, Stonehouse, Scotland.
Opened 22 January 1937. Architect unknown. Grade B listed.



Odeon (Reel) – Blossom Street, York. Opened 1 February 1937.
Architects: Robert Bullivant/Harry Weedon. Grade II listed.

A *MUST* for your collection

CINEMAS IN BRITAIN

A History of Cinema Architecture

by Richard Gray

First published in 1996 to celebrate the centenary of cinema in the UK. In this fully revised edition, the text has been completely rewritten and expanded and there are extra photographs, 10 in full colour. Of particular interest is the 24-page gazetteer of cinema buildings, telling the reader what there is to see in most places in the UK. There are useful appendices about listed cinemas, a glossary of architectural terms and a comprehensive bibliography.

Hardback, 180 pages, fully illustrated in b/w & colour.

Special price for CTA members

£29.50 + £6.00 postage from

Jeremy Buck, CTA Sales Officer

34 Pelham Road, Wood Green, London, N22 6LN

SMALL ADS

The rate for small ads from members is £3 for 25 words with name and address free, plus 15p for each extra word. Non-members rates: £5 & 25p respectively.

Please send cheque or postal order (payable to the Cinema Theatre Association) to the Bulletin Editor, address on p2. Please quote membership number.

Advertisers are requested to reply to all respondents who supply SAE for that purpose.

Display rates: eighth page – £15; quarter page – £25;

half page (horizontal or vertical) – £45; full page – £80

ARCHIVE

ARCHIVE ENQUIRIES

The Archive is in temporary accommodation and this makes it hard to receive visitors and to deal with enquiries quickly. We cannot access all of the material as some remains boxed up. Please make enquiries in the normal way via the enquiry form on the website or by emailing [archive@cta-uk.org] and we will do our best to deal with these as soon as we can.

To arrange to visit the Archive, first complete the enquiry form detailing your interest and why you would like to visit. If the material you want to see is accessible we will then book you a visit and help you find your way to us in Bow, East London. You will need to have a mobile phone to contact us on arrival, to be let into the building or agree a set time of arrival to then be collected from the reception area.

ARCHIVE OPPORTUNITIES

The CTA Archive can offer members an excellent opportunity to contribute towards preserving our cinema heritage. Whether it be putting your particular skills to good use or just giving some of your spare time, there are plenty of opportunities within our friendly environment and you might learn something new along the way!

Please email [archive@cta-uk.org].

HELP THE ARCHIVE IDENTIFY CINEMAS

Brian Hall posts regular weekly sets of unidentified cinema photographs on the CTA-UK Yahoo! Group. Please consider joining this group [movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/cta-uk] and help us to identify cinemas. It's great fun!

SENDING DONATIONS BY POST OR EMAIL

We are always keen to receive donated material and can accept this in different formats. Of course, we always prefer to have originals. If however you cannot part with the material, then we are happy to accept scanned material or copies of your digital photographs.

Please let me know before sending donations by post and do not send them directly to the archive as there is no facility to accept post securely. Please send items c/o 14 Ivychurch Gardens, Cliftonville, Margate, CT9 3YG. Small quantities of scanned material or digital photographs can be emailed to [archive@cta-uk.org].

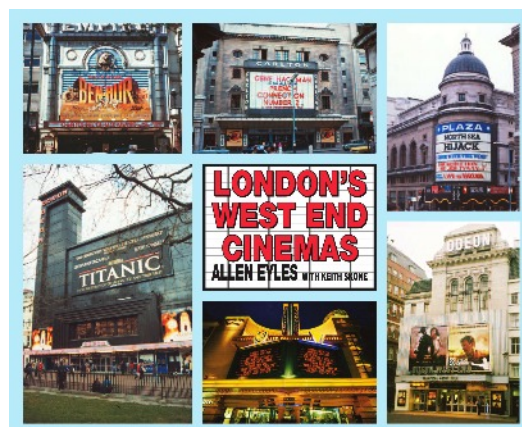
Clive Polden, CTA Archivist

London's West End Cinemas

by Allen Eyles with Keith Skone.

Large format paperback, 210 pages, fully illustrated with over 400 pictures, including 71 in colour.

Special price to members – £20.00 + £3 postage.



This is a redesigned and much enlarged third edition of a book not available for more than 20 years, fully updated by its original author, Allen Eyles. It is a complete record of all the cinemas that have entertained picture-goers in the West End from 1906 to 2013. There are maps, appendices of club cinemas and theatres as temporary cinemas as well as a name index.

Published in collaboration with English Heritage.

FAREWELL TO THE ABC BOURNEMOUTH

By Adrian Cox

My brother David and I put on the special film screening of the 1980 sci-fi film *Flash Gordon* on Wednesday 13 October 2016 at the ABC cinema Bournemouth. Our screening included a selection of THORN-EMI era day titles and some old film trailers from the 1960s and 1970s. We also screened our own very short film *The Last ABC*, which is an affectionate salute to the ABC/Westover cinema. All of these were converted by David to DCP (Digital Cinema Package) to enable ease of projection using the ABC cinema's computerised 2k projector. We also compiled our own quad film poster and programme with details of the Bournemouth ABC cinema's history and notes on the film *Flash Gordon* for the occasion. The film was hired by Odeon from Park Circus Films and included in the £2,000 cinema hire costs. It was a successful and enjoyable occasion made even more memorable by the reinstatement of the screen tabs and tab warmers in ABC ☺ especially for this event. The ABC team even repainted the walls of the upper foyer to ensure that the ABC was going out in style!

The ABC finally closed on 4 January – see Newsreel p[Ref].

All photos by the author



In 1969 the ABC as the Westover was now called, closed for nine months for a £250,000 modernisation scheme that remodelled the interior of the building. The art deco front was hidden from view and the giant auditorium was divided. Warren Mitchell opened the ABC Film Centre now under the ownership of EMI on the 13th June 1970.

ABC