



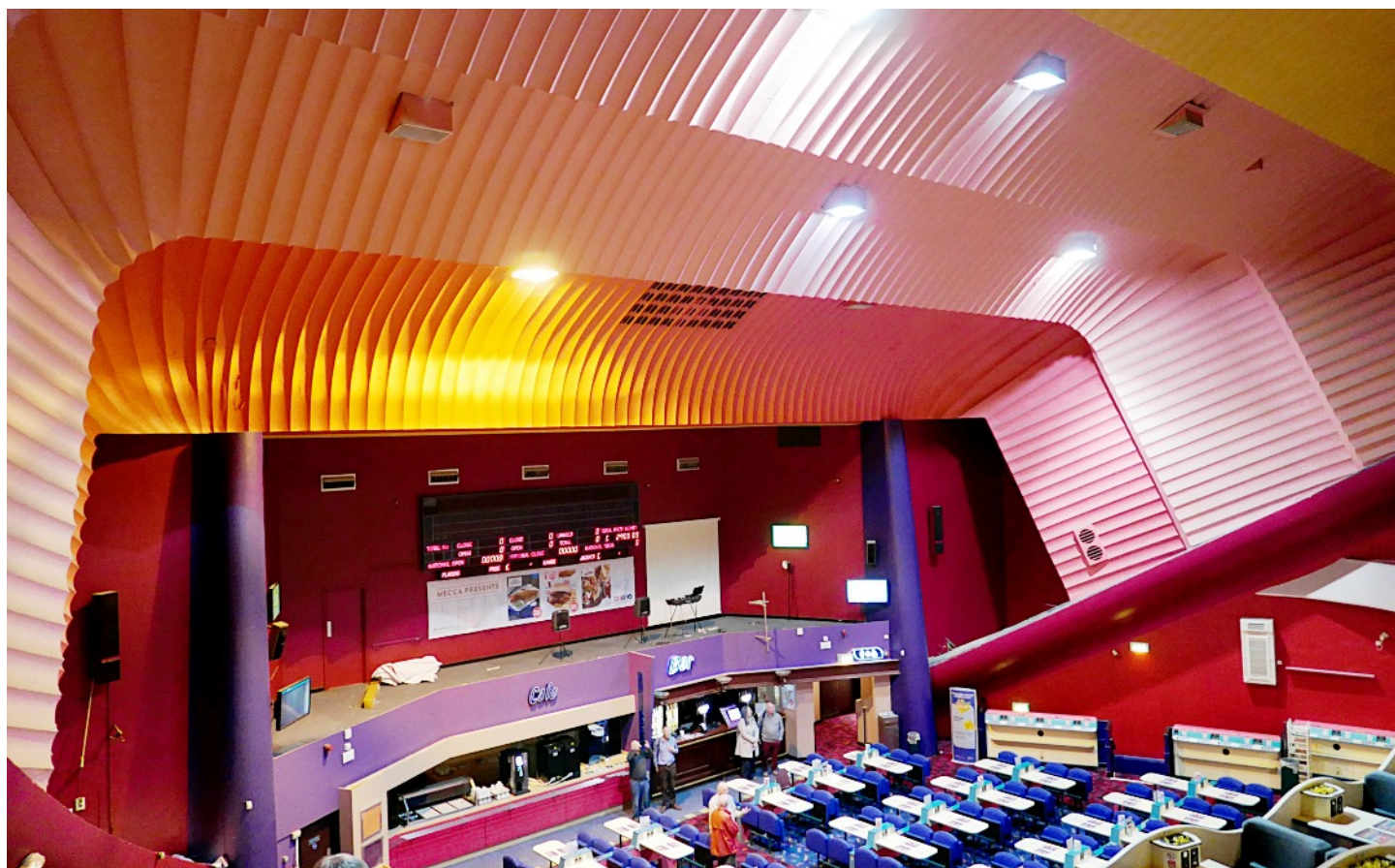
CINEMA  
THEATRE  
ASSOCIATION

[www.cta-uk.org](http://www.cta-uk.org)

# BULLETIN

Vol 53 No 6

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The exterior and interior of the former Gaumont Rose Hill, visited by the CTA on 7 September

## FROM YOUR EDITOR



Many thanks to all of you who wished us a good holiday and welcomed us back on our return. It was a delightful month in Germany and Austria – pretty much the same as last year so I won't bore you with the details. We visited Wagner's Festspielhaus [Opera House] in Bayreuth – quite spectacular but they wouldn't allow photographs inside. We came across a couple of operating cinemas. Above is the Stadtkino in Hallein, twelve miles south of Salzburg; we cycled there on the banks of the river Salzach.



Soon after we got back, we visited my sister in Morecambe. At the Midland Hotel they were having a Vintage Weekend. The Vintage Mobile Cinema was there doing good 'business' [for donations] with 10-minute short presentations. It was an experience to go inside and see the machine working, albeit digital and not the original 16mm. Apparently they have found the original trailer that went with this only surviving example and it is being restored.  
[www.vintagemobilecinema.co.uk]

*Harry Rigby, CTA Bulletin Editor*

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(Founded January 1967)

promoting serious interest in all aspects of cinema buildings

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## VISITS AND EVENTS

### The other BBC – a visit to Bromley, Bellingham & Catford

Organised by Kevin Gooding

For many years London's largest Borough was deprived of cinema screens. Not anymore. In the last year a new nine-screen luxury Vue has opened in St Mark's Square at Bromley South along with a major restoration to the former Empire in the High Street, originally a 1938 'George Coles' Odeon, now a Picturehouse.



Our first visit will start at 9:45 at the Vue [pictured above] located in St Mark's Square opposite Bromley South Station. Across the road from the station, walk down the side of the Richmal Crompton Wetherspoons and through a passage way, where you will see the entrance to the Vue. We will get a chance to see as many screens as possible before they commence their daily film program.

We then walk through Bromley town centre, taking in sites of former cinemas, arriving at the newly restored Picturehouse. It is now a six-screen complex with two brand new screens; one on the roof of the foyer block, the other on the roof of the new café bar. The original four screens have been carefully restored and enhanced with larger screens and new seats. After our tour refreshments will be available in the large café bar.

On leaving the Picturehouse we will take a local bus to Bellingham, where we will see the Bellingham Film Palace. This is a new 78-seat cinema located in the historic Fellowship Inn pub house. Finally, taking another short bus ride to Catford, we visit the Catford Mews cinema, a brand new independent three-screen complex located in the former Poundland store.

Unfortunately we have had to start the visit early as we are visiting two working cinemas. For people travelling from outside London there is a Premier Inn opposite the Vue in St Mark's square along with a Travelodge in Bromley Town Centre.

### Members' Slide Show & Social Evening

Organised by Richard Norman

Our usual members' slide show evening returns in January after last year's Christmas variation to the theme.

The programme will be prearranged to provide an evening of interesting (and entertaining!) members' slides and videos. Now that we're in the digital age, members are invited to show us anything of cinema-related interest. This can include personal items, press items, mementos or something that you've seen on the Internet.

### Coming Soon

After the Final Curtain 2: America's Abandoned Theaters – Illustrated talk by Matt Lambros

**Most Visits are for members only  
further details in the full Bulletin**

## CASEWORK

By Tim Hatcher

### Grade II\* Listed



A proposal for renovations to the Dome in Worthing includes provision of additional women's lavatorial facilities and re-seating of the auditorium. The CTA is to recommend that a number of the original seats be retained and displayed as heritage artefacts. A request is to be made of the local Council that enforcement measures be initiated swiftly to rectify the recent modifications to the arcade, which did not conform to the permissions obtained. *Photo taken March 2009.*

### Grade II Listed

The Conservation Officer within whose purview the Picturedrome in Holmfirth is situated recognises the merit of the cinema and is monitoring planning and listed building consent applications closely.

At the Ritz in Nuneaton a site meeting has been attended by representatives of the CTA to liaise with those involved in the renovation work to the building, including a local Council planner, the owners, the architect and the builder. A section of the venue is already in active use as a Nepalese community meeting space; future objectives include a restaurant situated in the lower foyer specialising in that nation's cuisine. Part of the construction work will be undertaken by volunteers from the aforementioned community under supervision from a professional building concern.

### Unlisted



A listing application for the Curzon in Eastbourne has been submitted by a third party. *Photo taken April 2008.*

**More Casework in the full Bulletin**

# PUBLICATIONS

## Back Numbers Available

### 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.

|   |       |  |
|---|-------|--|
| 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 | <b>Special Issue</b> 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; <b>Ideal</b> Lambeth; Dursley; Alister Macdonald; <b>Granada</b> Tooting.  |
| No 21   | £3.50 | 100 Years On; Travelling Shows; Reggie Rea; <b>Albert Hall</b> Sheffield; <b>Regal</b> Wells; West End Adverts; Scotland.  |
| all issues below have colour cover and inside pages |       |  |
| No 25   | £4.50 | Oldest Cinema (Brighton); FE Bromige; Committee's Choice; Gaumont Managers; <b>Carlton</b> Swansea.  |
| No 26   | £4.50 | <b>Paramount</b> Newcastle; Edward Stone; Granada Men; E de Wilde Holding; <b>Electric</b> Portobello Road.  |
| No 27   | £4.50 | New <b>Victoria/Apollo</b> ; <b>Whiteladies</b> Bristol; Clark & Fenn; Compton Organs; Tim Foster Associates.  |
| No 28   | £4.50 | James McKissack; WJ King; <b>Torbay Cinema</b> ; 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; <b>Apollo</b> Hammersmith Organ; Norwich Roadshows.   |
| No 31   | £7.50 | Special 84-page edition: <b>Essoldo</b> – A Family Business: Sol Sheckman and the <b>Essoldo</b> 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 <b>Victoria</b> Bradford.  |
| No 34   | £5.00 | <b>Beaufort</b> Birmingham; <b>Granada</b> Tooting in 1934; Rank in post-war Scotland; J Braddon's Cinema life.  |
| No 35   | £5.00 | Holophone lighting; Imitations of <b>Odeon</b> ; Cradley Records; 1909 Cinematograph Act; Kingston Showmanship.  |
| No 36   | £6.00 | Leslie Kemp; Jeremy Perkins on Brighton; The <b>Clifton</b> Circuit; Circuit Releases of 1960.   |
| No 37   | £8.50 | Special 92-page issue; saving the <b>Electric Palace</b> Harwich.  |
| No 38   | £6.00 | Northern Morris Associated Cinemas; Point Milton Keynes; Going to the Cinema in Birmingham; <b>Palace</b> Conwy; <b>Carlton</b> Haymarket; Military Cinemas; Cinema Murders. |
| No 39   | £6.00 | WWI and the Film Trade; Tale of Two <b>Regals</b> ; <b>Odeon</b> North Finchley; <b>Majestic</b> Oxford; Films at the <b>Royal Albert Hall</b> .                             |
| No 40   | £6.00 | <b>Tolmer</b> Euston; Michael Stringer memories; West End in the 1950s; Stafford Entertainments; Will Onda & James Atroy; Stephen Waddingham – a <b>Granada</b> man.         |
| No 41   | £6.00 | CTA's 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary; <b>Plaza</b> Stockport; <b>Majestic</b> Leeds; Grosvenor Rayners Lane; Pascal J Stienlet.  |
| No 42   | £6.00 | <b>Odeon</b> Elephant & Castle, <b>Plaza</b> Crosby; <b>Depot</b> Lewes; <b>Cineworld</b> Chelsea; Gaumont Sheffield Figures.  |
| No 43   | £6.00 | Virgin Cinemas; Peter Jewett's ABC memories; <b>Scala</b> Kings Cross; <b>Picture House</b> Campbelltown; Beeston/Nottingham memories.                                       |

### BINDERS FOR PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

These binders are to a new, revised design, which should allow easier storage for the more recent thicker copies of the magazine. The 'Wirex' system allows copies to be inserted easily and removed if required. There are twelve wires per binder, although the number of copies that can be inserted may vary depending on the thickness of the issue. The binders can also be used for the thinner, earlier copies of the magazine. Featuring a red leather-look finish and the magazine title on the spine in the current format.

**Price:** £6.00 per binder, supplied in a special postal carton. Please add £3.00 to your total order for post and packing.



There are also available a few second-hand copies of out-of-print issues of *Picture House* 9, 10, 14/15, 16, 20, 22, 23 & 24, priced £5.00 each, plus postage. A list of their contents was printed on p4 of Bulletin 52/2 or can be obtained by SAE or email from the Sales Officer or Bulletin Editor.

### BULLETINS

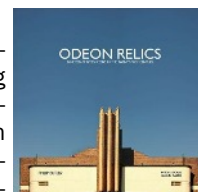
We can supply back numbers of most Bulletins from Volume 21 (1987) to date. Prices for issues from 1987 to 2017 are £4.00 per year (6 issues); individual issues are £1.00 each. Prices for issues in 2018 and 2019 are £4.00 per copy. All prices include postage. There are some issues available from earlier years, 1967 to 1986 – please send enquiries to the Sales Officer.

## Recently Published (reviewed in last edition)

### Odeon Relics by Phillip Butler

144 pages, hardback, fully illustrated, 225mm x 225mm. £25.00 plus postage.

Photographer Philip Butler has travelled the country capturing what remains of the ground-breaking **Odeon** empire in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The book showcases a collection of exterior photographs, each presented with summarised histories of the building in question. A 12-page introduction by architectural writer Jason Sayer introduces the series, looking into the birth of the chain and the cinemas and illustrated by the period images of John Maltby. There is a map of locations and a comprehensive list of **Odeon** cinemas built during the period and their subsequent fate.



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## Also Available (but not from the Sales Officer)

### Irish Cinemas:

#### A History in Photographs by Jim Keenan

144 pages, 240mm x 256mm, hardback with over 200 images in colour and monochrome of 139 old Irish cinemas. ISBN 978-0-9550683-9-3. Order online from [Blackwells.co.uk] or [bookdepository.com]



A **MUST** for your collection

## CINEMAS IN BRITAIN

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by Richard Gray

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

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# HOPE, FREEDOM AND A VUE

## A report of the CTA visit on 9 October

By Jeremy Buck

The CTA last visited Eltham in 2018, to see the former Odeon at Eltham Hill but since then a new Vue Multiplex has been built in the High Street. Thus a good excuse for a return visit, coupled with two other nearby venues.



The Vue cinema opened on 25 April 2019 and has six screens, with a total capacity of 871. After a welcome cup of coffee, the friendly manager showed us around and we could see inside five of the six screens, all located on the first and second floors of the building. The sixth was already showing films – at the early hour of 11am – so we just peeked in so as not to disturb the audience of one watching *Joker*. All of the cinemas feature the usual stadium layout with big, comfy seats, a VIP section in the middle and large screens. The cinema was built on the site of former shops and the ground floor is devoted to casual dining restaurants, whilst the glass-fronted 'Skybar' above the entrance seems to be still awaiting a tenant.

Leaving the cinema, the group walked along the High Street, pausing to admire the pedestrian crossing with unusual road and pavement markings, inspired by the Marian Dorn carpet in nearby Eltham Palace. Here was the site of the former Palace/ABC, which opened in 1922 and closed in 1972 before demolition for shops.

We soon reached the Bob Hope Theatre in Wythfield Road. The building started life as a parish hall in 1910 and has been in almost continuous use for entertainment ever since. In June 1911, a film of George V's Coronation was shown, believed to be the first time that moving pictures were shown in Eltham. A pantomime in 1938 featured Frankie Howerd in his first theatrical performance. During World War II, the building was requisitioned for furniture storage and then in 1943, Eltham Little Theatre – an amateur theatre company – was formed and started using the hall from 1946. The hall was still owned by the church, who in 1979 decided to sell the building and the Eltham Little Theatre had to raise the funds to purchase, or find a new home.

This is where Bob Hope enters the scene. The famous comedian was born in 1903 in nearby Craigton Road and his interest in his home town and the theatre resulted in proceeds from the Bob Hope Classic Golf tournaments in 1980 and 1981 being donated to Eltham Little Theatre to enable them to purchase the hall. The building was renamed in honour of the benefactor, who visited in 1980, 1982 and 1991. Proceeds from a London Palladium show in 1991 enabled further expansion of the building. Until his death in 2003 he still maintained a keen interest in the theatre, as his family still do financially.

After another welcome cup of coffee, we were shown around by two of the leading lights of the theatre company. The foyer spaces have been considerably expanded in recent years, although the theatre was denied permission to build above the ground floor. There are comfortable seating areas and a bar, with panels describing the building's history arranged around the walls and an attractive display of historic posters and programmes. The auditorium is fairly plain, with around 192 seats. There is a large backstage area that can be used as a 'studio' theatre. Jude Law is another actor who started his career at Eltham. The theatre is still entirely operated by volunteers.



There was now a break for lunch with many going to the Top Deck Café nearby. Then it was all aboard the B15 bus, a small single-deck vehicle, which soon filled up with schoolchildren who for some reason were going home at 2pm that day. We passed the site of Eltham's first cinema, the Eltham Cinema, opened in 1913 and demolished in 1968 and were soon at Welling, alighting outside the former Odeon. This opened in October 1934, designed by George Coles with seats for 928 in the stalls and 450 in the circle. Coles also designed Welling's other super-cinema, the Granada, on the main road around the corner, which opened in 1937. The Odeon showed its last film in October 1960 – whereas the Granada was tripled and lasted until 1983. It's Wurlitzer organ – there until the last day – lives on at Woking Leisure Centre.

The Odeon was converted to a Top Rank Bingo Club in 1961 – one of the earliest cinema-to-bingo conversions – and at some time an adjacent shop unit was acquired to expand the entrance. It later became a Mecca Club before closing in 2007. The present occupier since 2009, Freedom Centre International Church, has retained this area as its main entrance, with the original cinema entrance occupied by a storeroom and an emergency exit.

On entering the foyer, we were supplied with yet more tea, coffee and biscuits before commencing our tour. The foyer layout is pretty much unchanged since bingo days but with more muted colours and of course no gaming machines! The Church has retained an old Mecca "Book Sales" sign as a link to the building's past.



Entering the stalls area, the Church has removed the flat floor installed for Bingo and re-instated a raked floor. Very comfortable-looking seats have been installed, with much more legroom than cinema days. All the decorative art-deco swirls and features on the walls and ceilings have been well picked out in gold and the auditorium is a generally cream colour, much different from the vivid hues of its Bingo days. Where the Bingo scoreboard once was is a gallery for live music performers. Upstairs in the balcony, the same seats are installed, with facilities for video presentations and broadcasting. The circle foyer retains the old Bingo carpet and has a good decorative ceiling. A film about the refurbishment of the building can be seen at: [youtu.be/pCoMR-SyWxE].

So ended our day's visits and thanks must be given to Marion Kennett who arranged and led the trip, with help from husband John. We also thank the management and staff of the Vue Cinema, Bob Hope Theatre and Freedom Centre International Church for their help in the arrangements.

Photos:

Vue: Kevin Gooding; Bob Hope Theatre: Harry Rigby; FCI: David Anstiss (cc-by-sa/2.0)

# A SUNNY SATURDAY IN SURREY

## A report of the CTA visit on Saturday 7 September By Mike Wood

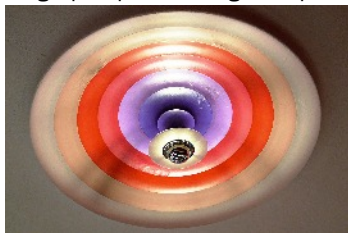
It was Saturday and up before the alarm and whistling a happy tune before tea and toast: sorry... correction. Woke at six by the annoying din of the alarm clock and I shivered and stumbled to turn on the heating. Once out of the house, the day started to get a lot better. The slightly awkward journey by public transport from Sussex to Sutton was easier by car and no problem parking in the multi-storey car park above the twelve-screen Empire, originally a six-screen UCI of 1992.



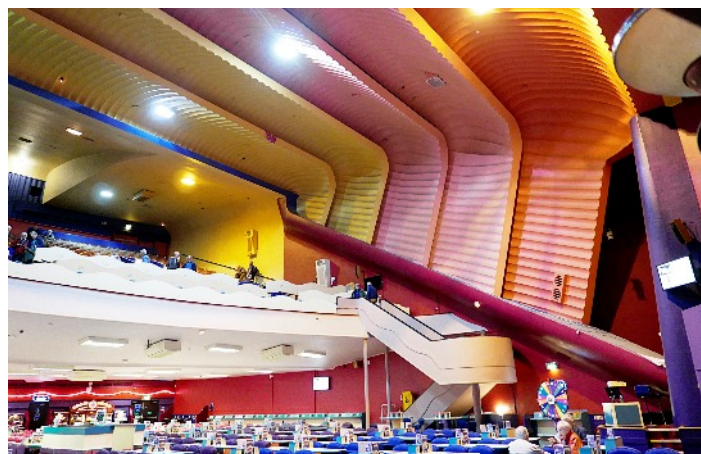
The exterior and foyer of the Empire Sutton

Your correspondent is not a fan of car parks as cinemas; the Brighton Marina Cineworld always comes to mind, surely the most unexciting start to a night out. However, Empire Cinemas took on the Sutton UCI in 2006, closing it in 2017 for refurbishment and enlargement by UNICK architects, re-opening it in 2018. It now has a significant street presence facing the St Nicholas shopping mall and once through the doors the foyer is smart, bright and welcoming, as was the manager and with coffee on the go. There are plenty of seats and a small separate lounge overlooking the space with a wall of back-lit movie posters. About twenty of us were on the visit with a chance to view the theatres, two of which were big Impact screens and all with a selection of sofas, leather recliners, etc.

Little remains in Sutton of the Gaumont (façade) and the Curzon/Studio/Cannon (latterly a nightclub) and shamefully, no trace of the big Plaza/Granada, so we took the bus the short ride to the Rose Hill district towards Morden for the Gaumont (1937 - Harry Weston with Mollo & Egan interior - listed Grade II) now on Mecca Bingo. Thankfully, apart from the bingo paraphernalia, garish paint scheme and floodlighting, Mecca has kept the building well-maintained and the auditorium still has a wow factor. It is regrettable that so few of Mollo & Egan's cinema interiors remain. The scarily unlisted but complete, Bridlington Regal comes to mind but hopefully our casework team have this on a watch list.



A light fitting at the  
Gaumont Rose Hill



The interior of the Gaumont Rose Hill



The exterior and interior of the New Wimbledon Theatre

Again we boarded a London Omnibus and journeyed onwards to Wimbledon town centre for a lunch break and then to re-assemble at the New Wimbledon Theatre (1910 - Cecil Masey with Roy Young - Listed Grade II). To me, being of the Frank Matcham inclination, its exterior resembles the earlier Southsea Kings with its prominent corner entrance tower but Wimbledon was also always my childhood family Christmas pantomime outing. We got a very full tour on our visit with our knowledgeable guide, the only stipulation being no 'tripods' but your correspondent only takes snaps and hopes for the best. The 'New' tag onto its name comes from a late reworking of some interior and exterior spaces and Ambassador Theatre Group taking over its management but essentially what you see is as built. The theatre has been a popular and busy venue most of its working life and it now has a Studio stage adapted from a ballroom to the rear. It is tempting to surmise that this might have been an adaptation of the existing earlier Kings Palace theatre and cinema but that became a skating rink and is now most probably the car park.

## MISCELLANY

### NEVER TOO OLD

A woman aged 103 went to the *Downton Abbey* film at the Century Cinema in Letterkenny, Co Donegal (Ireland). It was the first film she had attended in 80 years.

*Sent in by Bob Bradshaw*

### MI5 AND ODEON

Newly released Top Secret files dated 1940 show that MI5 thought that Odeon was a cover for Russian spies. They discovered that Arnold Deutsch, who recruited the Cambridge spy ring, was a cousin of Odeon founder Oscar Deutsch. A number of suspected Russian spies gave Oscar as a reference when they came to Britain. Further memos, released by the National Archive at Kew, show that Oscar had sought permission to employ his cousin as an industrial psychologist at a salary of £250 a year. The Home Office rejected the application on the grounds that there should be "no difficulty" in obtaining a qualified British psychologist for the post and questioned what an industrial psychologist would do in a cinema. Another memo reveals that the Ministry of Information had Oscar Deutsch circulate a questionnaire to his managers asking how they felt about aliens and fifth columnists.

*Daily Mail - 24 September; sent in by John R Forster & Tom Laughlan*

### CALL OFF THE MODS

A plaque commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Who's classic mod film *Quadrophenia* was stolen from the Brighton Music Walk of Fame on the Palace Pier. The theft happened shortly after the plaque was unveiled during the Brighton Mod Weekender; CCTV footage showed a group making off with it. However, the thief returned it soon after, with a note just saying "sorry". He/she claimed they were drunk and the plaque was only attached with a cable tie. They said they were getting threats on social media.

*The Argus, Brighton - 30, 31 August; sent in by Barry Quinton*



### WARNER'S LATEST STAR

Warner Bros has bought the London Film Museum in Covent Garden despite it making a net loss of £92,000 in the year to 31 January 2018. It opened in 2012 and is home to the world's biggest collection of cars from James Bond movies.

*Sunday Express - 22 September; sent in by Margaret Burgoine & Barry Quinton*

### CINEMAS 'TWEAK' START TIMES

Cinema bosses have been accused of making cinema-goers watch around 30 minutes of adverts by publishing misleading start times. A Cineworld in Bristol and an Odeon in Leeds/Bradford made customers sit through 27 minutes of ads before *Downton Abbey* started. At Birmingham's Star City it was 28 minutes after the advertised start time before the opening credits.

*Daily Mail - 12 October; sent in by John R Forster & Tom Laughlan*

### PC WC

London's Old Vic has been criticised for making all its 44 toilets "self-selection" or gender neutral. The move comes just months after a fundraising campaign to double the number of women's loos. Theatre-goers now see labels signposting which blocks contain urinals and which contain cubicles; one said, "You've got a ton of urinals for men but women have to share what's left of the facilities with men."

*Metro - 4 October; sent in by Margaret Burgoine*

### NOISES OFF

After visiting the Vue in Fulham to see *The Joker*, Hugh Grant tweeted "Am I too old or is the cinema much too loud? Unendurable. Pointless." Several movie-goers agreed with him. The cinema defended its volume levels saying they were regularly checked to ensure they complied with Health and Safety standards. Most cinemas set the volume level at around 85 decibels, similar to the noise of a vacuum cleaner. But the British Tinnitus Association said that 80 decibels would be a safer level over the duration of a film.

*Daily Mail - 14 October; sent in by Carl Chesworth*

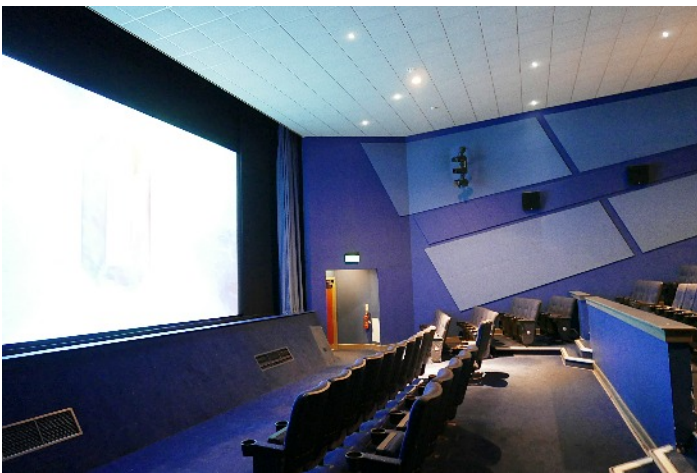


Looking through the proscenium at the New Wimbledon Theatre



A screen at the Curzon Wimbledon

A quick switch of venues to coincide with programme breaks took us next to the HMV Curzon (2009) which was a joint venture with Curzon Artificial Eye and HMV stores, utilising empty space above the shop, which has since closed but the three-screen cinema upstairs is still a popular art-house venue with a nice big bar. We were able to get a quick look inside one of the screens, which is a simple plain box, perhaps awaiting a UNICK refurbishment.



A screen at the Odeon Wimbledon

Retracing our steps back along Wimbledon Broadway, the twelve-screen Odeon (2002) sits across a modern 'piazza' from Morrisons supermarket with all screens upstairs, including a recently added IMAX. The friendly duty manager kindly let us view one such, which was empty on a break in shows. This is in the current house style and it was good to see the lobby busy on a Saturday afternoon. For most members of the Cinema Theatre Association, we would probably have preferred the now demolished Regal/Odeon (1933 - Robert Cromie for County) back down the road, with another fine lost Mollo & Egan interior; can you detect a theme here?

Our thanks go to Ray Ritmeester and all the managers and staff of the venues on this day out in South London, for the organisation, visit notes and friendly welcome by our hosts.

*Photos by the author*

Links for more: [[www.unick.com](http://www.unick.com)]  
[[www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/WimbledonTheatre.htm](http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/WimbledonTheatre.htm)]

## MAJESTIC SAFE

By Bob Massey

As I write this article in May [2019] the old Majestic Cinema building in Mapperley [Nottingham] has just been granted [local?] listed status, so it is now safe from the demolition that was being proposed. The building is well cared for by the present users and happily will now be with us for many years to come. The building was built by Alfred Thraves, one of the country's leading cinema designers, so the building itself is important to the area as is the business it now houses. It is great news that the Majestic is safe; however this is not the "safe" referred to in the title.

In December 1949, the Majestic was still a working cinema but on that date, the *Nottingham Journal* reported that it experienced destruction of a different type. GA Steight, the manager of the Majestic, came to open up the cinema on Friday morning 16 December 1949. He was there to get the cinema ready for the first showing of the day, the film *Superman*. Steight came upon a scene of destruction that could have come from the film itself! The office safe was now situated on the auditorium floor in one of the aisles. It was smashed open and the takings, "quite a large sum of money", had been removed. It would appear that the thieves had manhandled the solid steel safe, weighing some 3cwt, down a flight of stone steps from the office at the top of the cinema to the foyer. They then moved it through this area to the circle, where they rolled or pushed it, using a ladder that had been left at the rear of the circle, to the balcony rail. After bending back a section of the safety rail they pushed the safe over the edge. It fell 17ft to the stalls below.

People living in the immediate area did hear a crash about 4am but considering the weather at the time, thought it to be thunder. The thieves then forced the damaged safe open and took the takings, which was mainly in silver. Their intention had been to take the safe away through the rear doors of the cinema, where they had originally forced their entry to the building. A large four-wheeled trolley had been abandoned outside these doors for the purpose of wheeling the safe away. However, the fall from the balcony caused enough damage to crack the safe open, saving the thieves the time and effort of moving it somewhere else to finish the crime.

Mr J Stables, the owner of the Majestic, told the *Nottingham Journal* that "they made a good job of it. Carpets had been ripped up from the circle and used to deaden the sound as the safe was taken downstairs across the foyer and into the circle. As well as breaking into the safe, both the booking office and the paybox had been forced and even the telephone wires had been cut." The amount of time and effort this must have taken suggests that they were supermen in strength although not in deed. As we don't know how much was taken, we can only speculate whether the criminals thought all their work was worth the effort. There is no record of any of those involved ever being brought to justice.

Reprinted from NG3 magazine – July/August by kind permission of the author  
Permission arranged by Terry Hanstock, who adds further information in the next column:



The Majestic Mapperley in May 2006

## MAJESTIC POSTSCRIPT

By Terry Hanstock

The Majestic Cinema (robbed of £155 on the night of 14-15 December 1949) was not the only local cinema to be targeted.

The following month thieves struck at the Ritz Cinema in nearby Langley Mill, sawing through the hinges of a safe (seven locks offering little protection) and removing its door. £50 in cash, two pairs of gloves and some nuts were stolen along with ice cream from the Ritz's refrigerator.

On the morning of 20 February 1950, Frank Croson, the assistant manager of the **Metropole Cinema**, Mansfield Road, Sherwood (just under a mile away from the Majestic Cinema) noticed that a side window had been removed and a bar forced from the metal grid on the inside. The manager's office had been ransacked and the safe door completely removed



The Metropole Sherwood in July 2004 [demolished 2006]

after being sawn through at the hinges. Four jemmies and some hacksaw blades were found behind a radiator. A leather bag valued at 10 shillings and £316 in cash had been taken.

The crime wave came to an end on 11 May when Stanley Bernard Benson, a 38 year old lorry driver and Frederick Ernest Hawkins, a 35 year old welder, were interrupted whilst trying to break into the safe of the Rio Cinema, Oakdale Road, Sneinton. (This was the cinema's third robbery since the end of the war.) In the early hours of that morning PC Lancaster had been trying the doors of the cinema and noticed Hawkins throwing an attaché case over a wall and into the yard of the neighbouring Oakdale Hotel. He then climbed over the wall himself. The constable got on his bicycle, rode around the corner and saw Hawkins running along Swains Road with Benson in front of him. Hawkins was eventually apprehended in the front garden of Bleak House. "There he showed fight. There was a struggle which continued for some minutes." This ended after the householder eventually emerged and assisted the constable in restraining him. Back at the cinema it was discovered that the exit door at the rear of the building had been forced open, as had the door of the manager's office. The hinges of the safe were sawn through but it was still securely locked, the intruders only having time to make off with sugar, tea, chocolate, sweets and the attaché case (valued at £4). The office had been ransacked and red ink spilt over papers and documents. Two jemmies and a pair of hacksaw blades were found on the floor of the office. Hawkins confessed that he had made these and other housebreaking implements at the engineering firm where he and Benson worked. The two men were remanded in custody the following day, Hawkins asking to see his wife and Benson asking to see a psychiatrist. Both admitted to having earlier visited one of the burgled cinemas to see *The Third Man*. At a hearing in front of magistrates on 19 May they were committed for trial at Nottingham Assizes.

On 20 June 1950 both Benson and Hawkins pleaded guilty and asked for seven other offences – including robbing cinemas in Beeston and Stapleford – to be taken into consideration. Benson was jailed for five years and Hawkins for three. Both had been imprisoned before, Benson's criminal career starting at the age of fourteen. Their defence counsel pointed out that the proceeds of their crimes had been spent on their families and not on "drink or gambling." Benson's wife suffered from "nervous trouble", an after-effect of being bombed during the war. His share of the money had been spent on aiding her recovery. For his part, Hawkins said that towards the end of 1949 "...we were short of money and decided to get some... We shared the cash and sometimes we used my motorcycle combination."

PS: The *Nottingham Journal* (12 May 1950) noted that *Lust for Gold* (1949) was advertised as a forthcoming attraction at the Rio Cinema on the night of the robbery.

Ripley and Heanor News and Ilkeston Division Free Press – 27 January 1950;  
The Nottingham Evening Post – 11, 12, 19 May 1950;  
The Nottingham Journal – 12, 13, 20 May 1950, 21 June 1950.

# LETTERS

## MORE TRAILERS

I read with great interest the article on Movie Trailers in the July / August Bulletin and it brought back memories of how we used to splice all of these – and some adverts – together to make up a show! There was always a challenge if you had just one scope trailer in what my old chief call a ‘flat show’ all widescreen programme. It was quite a common experience – especially back in the 60s with the ‘roadshow style’ of films to get a trailer out to the audience in plenty of time. The art was to have a long “also full supporting” day title tail on the outgoing machine (projector) which would be set at widescreen with lots of blanking to avoid the possibility of a ‘white screen’ so the scope trailer would be set up – all two minutes of it – on the incoming machine. You wait for the “also full supporting” end title, bring in the non-sync, up the footlights, open the masking, motor up the incoming machine, change over to the day title for the scope film, focus, fade non-sync and footlights, bring up sound on trailer! Then over to outgoing machine to lace up incoming programme feature, keeping an eye on the scope trailer for the tab dot – normally closing the tabs on another “also full supporting programme” title, reset everything, masking etc to then open up with certificate on the incoming widescreen feature!



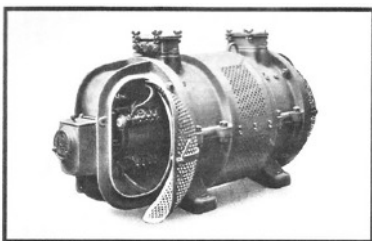
Quite a few minutes of ‘run around’ just to show a scope trailer – all two minutes of it. With two or three shows a day this routine had to be repeated – but it was important to get the publicity out there in the patron domain! This was in the day – as Mike put it – “the good old days of 35mm” when presentation and timing was a projectionist’s art and pride, so sadly lost in today’s cinema experience. No sense of presentation – just stops and starts with blank screens and no non sync – almost a projectionist’s ‘mortal sin’ back in the 35mm days. Patrons were oblivious as to what was going on behind them and the effort being put in to get the show across – but projectionists just took all of this in their stride! Just as an aside – I do like the trailers but not the way Odeon have “dumbed” it down in such a patronising title shown at the beginning of their programmes!

David Reeves

## ROTARY CONVERTER

I spotted this picture in a newsletter from the Mather & Platt Long Service Association. The unit is probably a rotary convertor changing 220v AC from the local supply to either a three phase 415v supply or higher voltage DC supply for projector arc lamps.

The full text reads: “In 1910 Governments throughout the world introduced a special Act in the interests of public safety to shut down cinemas. The danger within these cinemas showing these incredible silent moving pictures was the close proximity to the highly flammable celluloid films and the arc light needed to illuminate the high voltage town supply. Mather & Platt rose to the occasion by designing a patented Graph Convertor. It safely converted the towns’ electricity supply to a safe level without damaging or impairing the brilliance of the arc light. Only cinemas fitted with this Mather & Platt convertor were granted a Government Licence to operate. You won’t be surprised to learn that these convertors were installed in cinemas throughout the world and Hollywood went on to develop the worldwide Movie Industry that still dominates the film industry today.”



The Mather & Platt Cinematograph Converter

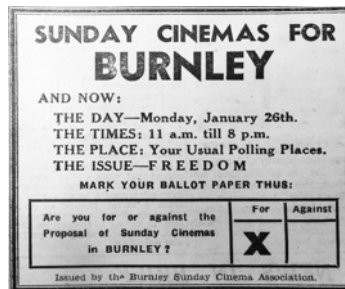
Despite the inaccuracies in the piece this is an interesting and perhaps forgotten piece of apparatus, which must have been widely installed. I’d love to see photos of this or similar kit in situ and hear any memories of operators who recall it.

Alexander S Kidd

## SUNDAY CINEMA IN BURNLEY

I was doing some local history research at the library and saw this advert, which I thought might interest you. It ties in with Settle Sunday Cinema story I sent in a while ago. Note the Burnley Sunday Cinema Association.

*Northern Daily Telegraph – January 1948; sent in by Philip Crompton*



## MORE CARRY ON

Sep/Oct 2019 Page 21 *Carry on, Carry On...* The text states that the *Carry On* franchise ran from 1958 to 1978. As is generally known, the *Carry Ons* were created and produced by Gerald Thomas, who had the rights to the films. To the best of my knowledge, he never licensed them and thus there was never a franchise. The films were a series and not a franchise.

Michael Jones

## A FISHY STORY

The Newsreel item in the September/October Bulletin about the one-time Regal Norwich erroneously stated that it was damaged in World War II and a performing sea lion was a casualty. In fact the building concerned was the Norwich Hippodrome in St Giles Street. It is best remembered as one of one of FJ Butterworth’s chain of variety theatres but also staged repertory seasons and in the thirties was run as a cinema by ABC. It was showing films again when it suddenly closed on 27 April 1960. The bomb damage occurred on the night of 29/30 April 1942. The Hippodrome received a direct hit, resulting in the deaths of the manager and his wife, as well as sea lion trainer Bill Pedersen and his wife Dagmar – a member of the Sanger circus family. Their sea lion Buddy did in fact survive and was found a new home at Chessington Zoo but sadly died some months later owing to the impossibility of obtaining sufficient quantities of fresh fish for him.

Ray Dolling

## 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.

Price – £25.00 + £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.

# 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 added 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]

## ABERDEEN



Plans have been submitted to add a 409-seat IMAX screen to the nine-screen Cineworld at Queen's Links. It would be housed in a two-storey extension. 86 parking spaces would be lost as a result of the development at the complex. This would take the total seating capacity to about 2,500 across ten screens, one of which is already a 4DX screen. The cinema opened as the Virgin in July 1997. {26961}

*Evening Express, Aberdeen – 25 October; photo taken September 2008*

## ALNWICK (Northumberland)

Two final planning applications for “finishing touches” at the Playhouse have been given the nod. The venue closed last summer for a £3.3m refurbishment. A 50-year lease has been granted to the Alnwick District Playhouse Trust. The trust will operate the main auditorium, the ground-floor studio theatre, the bar and an expanded café facility. The Council will use the rest of the ground floor for the library, tourist information and customer services. After slight delays, reopening is now scheduled for November. See photo front cover Bulletin 52/1. {47495}

*BBC News website – 10 August; Chronicle Live – 22 October; sent in by Terry Hanstock*

## ANNAN (Dumfries & Galloway)

Plans for a third screen at the Lonsdale have been approved. The new seats have been ordered. Opening has been delayed slightly to early 2020. The bingo operation has closed for the new screen. See p17 Bulletin 53/4. {17440}

*Annandale Observer – 4 October*

## BANBRIDGE (Co Down)



Not previously shown in the Bulletin is the eight-screen Omniplex at the Boulevard Outlet Mall, which occupies some units in the Mall. It opened in June 2016. There is a 200-seat MAXX screen. {60424}

*Sent in & photo by Bob Bradshaw; photo taken September 2019*

## BASINGSTOKE (Hants)



Slough Borough Council has bought the ten-screen Odeon at Basingstoke Leisure Park for £8.43m. It said it plans to reinvest money generated through rental income on the Borough's frontline services. The cinema opened in September 1990 as a Warner Village; it later became a Vue and the Odeon in 2007. {24135}

*Slough Express – 27 September; sent in by R David Simpson; photo taken May 2006*

## BATH (North Somerset)

Plans have been announced for the redevelopment of the former Scala at Oldfield Park, currently used as a Co-op convenience store. The major changes will be to the 1960s extension, to provide residential accommodation for a nearby college, a dance school, affordable housing and parking. A new Co-op store will be incorporated. The façade will be restored and retained. The cinema opened around 1919 and closed in the early 1960s. Because of Rank's dispute with Fox, it was the first cinema in the area to show CinemaScope. {28722}

*Batch Chronicle – 3, 17, 19 September; sent in by Michael Crowle*

## BIDEFORD (Devon)

Plans have been revealed for a four-screen 180-seat cinema at the Affinity Shopping Centre. No planning application for the proposals has yet been submitted but the developers say they hope the project could be complete by the summer of 2021. No operator has been named.

*Devon Live – 29 August*

## BODMIN (Cornwall)

Further to the Newsreel item in the last Bulletin, the fourth screen at the Capitol opened on 6 September. Work had been held up by the presence of a stone arch at what was to become the screen end. And the seating capacities are rather more generous than initially thought: Screen ①:146, Screen ②:71; Screen ③:42 and Screen ④:39. {60297}

*Sent in by David Simpson*

## BOGNOR REGIS (West Sussex)

Proposed changes to the Picturedrome have been submitted by its Town Council owners. The works would include internal alterations to the lobby and front desk area as well as an extra door to the left of the main entrance. The proposed changes are described as “minor and less than substantial”. {14782}

*Bognor Regis Observer – 29 August*

## BOURNEMOUTH

Plans have been submitted to turn the Grade II listed former Grand in Westbourne into a gym. A mezzanine would be built in the auditorium. Previous plans for a Wetherspoons pub came to naught. The cinema opened in December 1922 and films ceased in October 1977. It became a bingo hall, which closed in January 2018. Photos at [tinyurl.com/y49kun9m]. {22430}

*Daily Echo – 18 October; sent in by Philip Stevens*

The Shelley Theatre in Boscombe is presenting a season of films on 35mm called *Dirt in the Gate*. The first was Doris Day's *The Pyjama Game*. [shelleytheatre.co.uk]

*Sent in by John R Forster & Philip Stevens*

### BOVEY TRACEY (Devon)

New plans have been proposed to convert the 16<sup>th</sup> Century former *King of Prussia* pub into a new 118-seat cinema/theatre with a café, bar and a restaurant. The group behind the project completed the purchase of the Grade II listed building back in November 2018. But following the initial demolition work, further survey work became necessary as the original measured survey was found to be inaccurate and, at the same time, additional historic fabric was revealed during removal of modern interior fittings and decorations.

*Devon Live* – 21 August

### BRADFORD (West Yorks)

The five-year contract between the National Science and Media Museum and Picturehouse was due to end on 31 October. The three cinemas will now return to being fully independent and be programmed by the INDY Cinema Group. The Pictureville name will be retained. The 306-seat cinema in the former Library Theatre is the only cinema outside the USA that can show 3-strip Cinerama as well as 35mm and 70mm. The annual Widescreen Weekend was recently held there. {3673}

*Yorkshire Post* – 10 October

*BradfordLive* has published a picture of the shell of the former New Victoria / Gaumont / Odeon, now all the internal subdivisions have been removed. It is being converted into a 4,000 capacity music venue. Visit [www.bradfordlive.co.uk] and click on <Updates>.

Sent in by John West

### BRANDON (Suffolk)



The former Avenue cinema will be demolished after plans were approved for an eight home development. It opened in late 1934 with 512 seats, having taken only twelve weeks to build. In 1966 it was operating split cinema/bingo but bingo had taken over by the 1970s. This closed around 2007 and the building has been empty since. View the proposals at [planning.westsuffolk.gov.uk] and search: DC/19/1008/OUT. {27169}

*Bury Free Press* – 13 September; photo taken August 2004

### BRIGHTON

The Grade II listed Duke of York's is undergoing six weeks of work to the exterior. Workmen stripping back the paint have discovered original sculpture work on the building. Coincidentally, the works began on September 22, the exact date the cinema opened in 1910. {2433}

*The Argus, Brighton* – 1 October; sent in by Barry Quinton

Further details have been released re plans for the site of the Astoria, as mentioned on p23 of the last Bulletin. A six-storey development called 'Rox Brighton' will contain apartments and shops and reflect the former Astoria's style and glamour. There will be vertical fins in white on the front of the building. Ornate metal grilles on top of the ground floor have been replicated from those discovered inside the cinema. The letters from the **ASTORIA** sign have been kept and will be set up in the leafy central courtyard. Twelve of the original cinema seats are being restored and reupholstered and will be moved to a community space. Prices start at £199,000 for a 'studio' apartment. [rox-brighton.com]

*Metro* – 1 October; sent in by Margaret Burgoine, Tom Laughlan & Barry Stevenson

### BURGESS HILL (West Sussex)

Plans have been submitted to demolish the Martlets Shopping Centre and build a £65m development, incorporating a ten-screen Cineworld. No time scale has been given.

*The Argus, Brighton* – 1 October; sent in by Barry Quinton

### BURNLEY (Lancs)

Plans to revive the former Empire have been set back by the finding of asbestos in the circle, upper circle and across the main auditorium. The deadly dust was discovered in the main seating area after vandalism to panels at the back of 'the gods' forced the cancellation of Heritage Open Day tours. {36755}

*Lancashire Telegraph* – 18 September

### CHATHAM (Kent)

A new IMAX screen opened at the nine-screen Odeon on 2 September. It measures 8m tall and 15m wide. It appears to be a conversion of screen 5 and has 122 hand-made reclining seats. {24449}

*Sittingbourne News Extra* – 25 August; sent in by Ray Dolling

### CHINEHAM (Hants)

Plans to build a cinema in Chineham have been scrapped after the developer claimed the residents did not want one.

*Basingstoke Gazette* – 5 September

### CLEVEDON (North Somerset)

The Grade II listed Curzon has been awarded £239,900 in Lottery funding to replace its 1920s roof tiles, which had become very fragile and caused leaks throughout the building. The venue opened in April 1912. {846}

*North Somerset Times* – 14 September

### COALVILLE (Leics)

The Council is hoping for a six to eight-screen cinema in the Belvoir Centre, now that its ownership has changed. It is understood that discussions with a "credible operator" are taking place. Coalville has two former cinema buildings still standing.

*Ashby Times* – 27 September

### CORK (Ireland)

After 25 years of operation, the cinema in the suburb of Douglas closed on 10 October. It is to be replaced by an Aldi store. CinemaWorld opened in August 1994 but attendances have fallen due to stiff competition.

*Evening Echo, Cork* – 1, 7 October; sent in by Bob Bradshaw

### CUMBERNAULD (North Lanark)

Plans have been approved for a new cinema to be built in the eastern car park of Cumbernauld Town Centre's phase 4. There will be eight screens, each with 146 seats. No operator or time scale has been given.

*The Scotsman* – 27 Sept; *Cumbernauld News* – 25 September, 2 October

### DAVENTRY (Northants)

Arc Cinemas has been named as the operator of the new four-screen cinema on the former library site. Opening is scheduled for spring 2021.

*Daventry District Council website*; sent in by Terry Hanstock

### DERBY

In spring 2013 the former Gaumont/Odeon/Cannon was converted into a pan-Asian restaurant called Cosmo. It has recently had its frontage refurbished and the BFI 'Centenary of Cinema' plaque (pictured) is missing. {14897}

Sent in by Robert Taylor



### DONCASTER (South Yorks)

Work has started on a six-screen cinema next door to the CAST theatre. The venue's structure is almost complete with bricklayers and scaffolders expected on the site in late September. Completion is said to be on target for spring 2020. It will be operated by Savoy Cinemas.

*Doncaster Free Press* – 5 September

### DUBLIN (Ireland)

Everyman has submitted plans for its first venture in Ireland. A two-screen cinema with 51 and 72 seats is planned for Dawson Street.

*Sunday Business Post* – 1 September

**Four more pages of newsreel  
in the full Bulletin**

# THE SMALLEST MUSEUM IN DORSET



The smallest museum in Dorset has just doubled in size! On Friday 27 September, the Mayor of Christchurch, Lesley Dedman, together with some fellow town councillors, formally opened the newly extended Cinema Museum, situated in the projection box, situated high up on top of the roof of the Regent Centre theatre and cinema. Led by the Regent's Chairman, Gary Trinder, the Cinema Museum has been expanded to include the office attached to the back of the projection box, so the Museum now consists of two rooms. This expansion has allowed for many more historic cinema artefacts to be displayed, including the Regent's Automatic ticket machine, which for a long time, cinema-goers at the Regent will recall, was originally based in the Centre's Foyer Box Office, where it mechanically issued tiny, coloured paper tickets. The colour coding signified Adult, Child and Concessions tickets and whether the seats were in the stalls or circle.



The Mayor cuts the opening ribbon of film



Regent Volunteer and CTA member Barry Sinclair issues a ticket

There are also new displays dedicated to other historic cinemas of yesteryear that were dotted across the BCP Council conurbation, most of which are now lost to redevelopment but have never been forgotten. The Cinema Museum's existing collection of vintage 35mm celluloid projectors, lenses and sound equipment remains in place in the projection box right next to the Regent's state of the art digital projector. There are regular Cinema Museum Tours at the Regent, which allow an unrivalled insight into the golden era of the silver screen and the equipment that made this ever-popular entertainment medium. This behind-the-scenes tour includes a live demonstration of one of the vintage 35mm projectors in action and the guidance of the dedicated group of volunteers who maintain the Museum.



Regent Chairman Gary Trinder explains the box to local Mayors



Regent Volunteer and CTA Member John Thornley stands by to demonstrate the Simplex E7 35mm projector

