



CINEMA
THEATRE
ASSOCIATION

www.cta-uk.org

BULLETIN

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The Byron Hucknall getting ready to reopen as the four-screen Arc; photo taken 21 May 2020

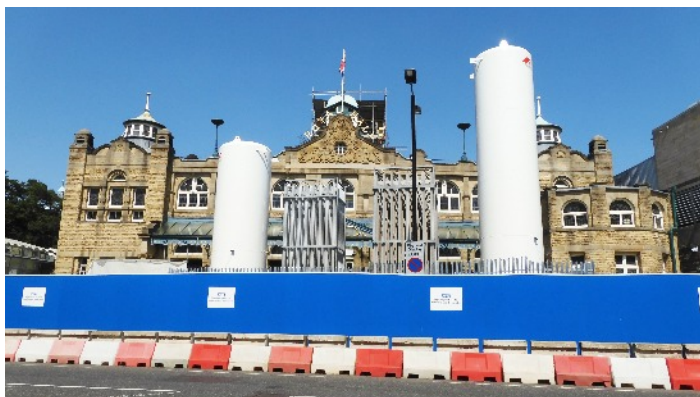


The former Palace at Wincobank, Sheffield, which is on the market; photo taken August 2005

FROM YOUR EDITOR

UK members will have already found a supplement with this Bulletin containing the Committee reports that would normally have been presented at the AGM. For reasons of economy of postage, we are not sending it to overseas members but it can be downloaded from the CTA website [www.cta-uk.org] – use the link **LATEST EVENTS >** on the left of the front page.

During the lockdown many cinemas have been taking the opportunity to do maintenance work or decorating; several examples are given in the newsreel section of this Bulletin. As all cinemas have been closed, it is obviously impossible to list what every cinema is doing and when every cinema plans to reopen, so if your cinema is not mentioned, I can only apologise. In any case, the facts change so quickly that a lot of the information printed will be out of date by the time you read it!



Here in Harrogate part of the exhibition centre has been turned into a Nightingale Hospital, which hasn't actually been used – yet! The picture above shows two oxygen tanks on the forecourt in front of Matcham's Royal Hall – at least it's reversible.

Harry Rigby, Editor CTA Bulletin

VISITS AND EVENTS

Unfortunately, as you all know, we are still in a 'lockdown' mode, despite what the government tells us. So all our visits and events are still on hold for the foreseeable future. If the situation changes we will announce our plans on the CTA website [www.cta-uk.org] or on the CTA e-News page for those members signed up to receive it, or by an updated message on the CTA Visits' Hotline (ansaphone) 020 8800 8393 otherwise hoping for better news in the next edition of the Bulletin.

Ken Roe



An advert for *Bwana Devil* in 3D – see p7

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE THURSDAY 20 AUGUST

CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

(Founded January 1967)

promoting serious interest in all aspects of cinema buildings

Company limited by guarantee. Reg. No. 04428776.

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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 state if you require items to be returned and enclose SAE, 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

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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	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; Committee's Choice; Gaumont Managers; Carlton Swansea.
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	Holophone lighting; Imitations of Odeon ; Cradley Records; 1909 Cinematograph Act; Kingston Showmanship.
No 36	£6.00	Leslie Kemp; Jeremy Perkins on Brighton; The Clifton Circuit; Circuit Releases of 1960.
No 37	£8.50	Special 92-page issue; saving the Electric Palace Harwich.
No 38	£6.00	Northern Morris Associated Cinemas; 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.
No 41	£6.00	CTA's 50 th Anniversary; Plaza Stockport; Majestic Leeds; Grosvenor Rayners Lane; Pascal J Stienlet.
No 42	£6.00	Odeon Elephant & Castle, Plaza Crosby; Depot Lewes; Cineworld Chelsea; Gaumont Sheffield Figures.
No 43	£6.00	Virgin Cinemas; Peter Jewett's ABC memories; Scala Kings Cross; Picture House Campbeltown; Beeston/Nottingham memories.
No 44	£6.00	Village Cinemas of NE Scotland; William Keys' career; Bernard Snowball's memories.

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 2018 are £4.00 per year (6 issues), individual issues are £1.00 each. Prices for issues in 2019 and 2020 are £5.00 per copy. All prices include postage. There are some issues available from earlier years – 1967 to 1986. Please send enquiries to the Sales Officer.

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.

Ordering details on 2.

Recently Published (reviewed in last Bulletin)

The Matcham Directory – £10.00 plus postage

Abandoned Cinemas of the World – £29.50 plus postage

Order from Sales Officer – address on p2.

Also Available (but not from the Sales Officer)

Sidmouth's Cinemas & Theatres by John Griffiths. 40 pages, A5 softback, illustrated, ISBN9781916213418. Price £3.00 (plus postage), available from Sidmouth Museum:

[www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk].

CTA member John Griffiths has written an attractive book about the entertainment attractions of this South Devon resort – the first time this has been attempted. Some 15 venues are described and illustrated, including an open-air bandstand and theatre, a private hotel cinema, early film shows in halls and purpose-built theatres and cinemas. Two of the venues have stood the test of time and are still active today – the **Manor Pavilion**, a theatre and occasional cinema for nearly 130 years and the **Radway Theatre/Cinema**, built in 1928, which still operates as a single-screen cinema – the CTA has visited on a couple of occasions. The book includes a map of the venues and a section about local photographer and cinema pioneer, Arthur W Ellis. Well recommended.

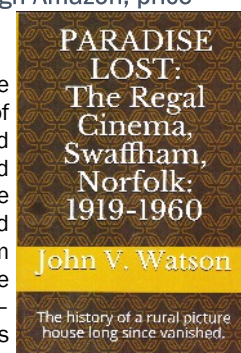
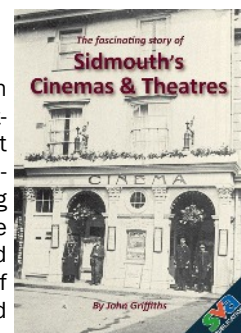
Paradise Lost: The Regal Cinema, Swaffham 1919-60

by John V Watson. 620 pages, softback, illustrated.

ISBN 9798640712827. Available through Amazon, price £32.98 but see below for special offer to CTA members.

This lengthy book tries to piece together the history of the **Regal** in the small Norfolk town of Swaffham. The author writes that he has found it a difficult task with few available sources and no photographs of the cinema when in use. The book begins with a history of the cinema and then continues with appendices explaining film distribution and exhibition and details of the films shown at the **Regal** from 1931 to 1960 – the years from 1953-54 are from the author's own film-going records. There are descriptions of each film and many are illustrated with stills and posters. There is also a history of the Bostock Cinema Circuit.

Special Offer: the author has kindly offered CTA members a reduced price on a limited edition of 10 copies, numbered and signed by him. A dedication can be added if requested. To order, please send a cheque for £28.00 (including postage) payable to John V Watson to: Flat 9, Wellington Court, 8 Auckland Close, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 2FH. Email: great.classic.movies@gmail.com. Make sure you include your name, address, email, phone number and wording for any dedication.



THE HISTORY OF THE FORUM CINEMA EALING

By Robert Gurd

Forum Cinema (1934): designed by JS Beard in classical style as a reaction to the then fashionable art deco style.

Closed in 2008 (as Empire Cinema).

The early Twentieth Century was very much the golden age of cinema building and Ealing had two good examples. The first was the **Walpole Picture Theatre** in Bond Street, which was built in 1912 in an old skating hall to designs by John Stanley Beard and was demolished in 1981, although the façade arch still remains near to the site just off Mattock Lane. The former **Empire** cinema was built as the **Forum**, also designed by Beard with John Clare, in classical style as a reaction to the then very fashionable art deco style. There is a contemporary film showing its construction [youtu.be/Lfjsn7hu8o4] and it alludes to this point. The cinema was opened in 1934 and the Gracie Fields film *Love, Life and Laughter* – made at Ealing Studios down the road – was the first to be shown. It was one of two near identical cinemas built for the developer Herbert Yapp (the other was in Kentish Town and survives – now Grade II listed – to this day). Each cinema seated 2,175 on two levels and each had a large stage with fully equipped fly tower.

Herbert Yapp assured its patrons on the opening night that great pains had been taken to ensure that their “every desire and every need would be more than adequately catered for in the new building: the **Forum** is the last word in cinema construction and is the result of the best combination of British capital, British material and British labour!” The colour scheme of the theatre was restrained, carried out in green and gold with seating in three colours. Over the entrance there was a tea lounge and dance hall (with a sprung dance floor) in which patrons could enjoy tea dances and be served with teas and light refreshments. Behind the tea lounge was a foyer giving access to the grand circle, providing settees and comfortable chairs for the use of patrons. The owner chose the latest sound equipment produced by Western Electric, “the pioneers of ‘talkie’ equipment in this country”. The seating was upholstered with Dunlopillo cushioning “which repelled germs, moths and vermin”. Heating was provided by oil fired boilers (very advanced for its time) with thermostatic control of the temperature and ventilation.

Over the years the cinema had various owners and changes of name and was tripled in 1975. The original ‘Forum Wonder Organ’ was removed in the 1960s, rebuilt by its original makers (John Compton of Acton) as a classical organ and survives in regular use in the chapel of Wormwood Scrubs prison! When it was briefly owned by Virgin (1996-2000) the cinema was refurbished and some original features reinstated. When subsequently owned by **Cineworld** it was part of a forced sale to **Empire Cinemas**, the new UK subsidiary of a successful Irish cinema operator and there were great hopes that money would be invested in the site to improve the cinema. Instead, **Empire** decided to demolish the building to redevelop the site jointly with an Irish development partner. A revised planning application for a new cinema with sixteen screens behind the existing retained locally-listed façade, based on an earlier unexecuted scheme, was eventually approved in 2008.



The rear of the façade, supported by scaffolding in May 2016

The cinema finally closed in September 2008, by which time it had become very run down and was demolished shortly afterwards. Some plasterwork, light fittings and stained-glass windows were salvaged

and placed in store. Some original wooden doors were saved, to be installed in the **Forum Kentish Town**, replacing ones lost in that building over the years. There is a film [youtu.be/rXCX5K41jg] about the cinema made shortly after its closure recording its evolution over time and some of its interior features.

Unfortunately, the ambitious redevelopment plans became the casualty of the 2007/8 financial crisis when **Empire's** developer went bust leaving the site in limbo for many years despite various attempts, including by Ealing Council, local people and the Ealing Civic Society, to get building work to start. **Empire** gave many assurances that “work would start shortly” but successive deadlines set by the Council for work to start expired. Eventually, the Council lost patience with **Empire** and, together with a development partner (Land Securities) instituted compulsory purchase order (CPO) proceedings against them. In the meantime, the Council forced **Empire** to erect a temporary scaffolding structure to safeguard the stability of the retained façade. This turned out to be a prudent measure since the façade would remain standing in isolation for over ten years.

The CPO hearing took place in April/May 2015 by which time Land Securities had received consent to revised plans for redevelopment of the wider site, which included acquisition of buildings in Bond Street (**YMCA** and **Walpole House** – site of the former **Walpole Picture Theatre**). The revised plans – incorporating around 150 flats above commercial ground floor uses – envisaged a new eight-screen cinema block behind Bond Street rather than behind the restored façade, which would instead be incorporated into residential flats with retail on the ground floor. The Council was granted the CPO later in the year and the land passed to Land Securities, together with the stored artefacts. Land Securities announced that the cinema would be operated by **Picturehouse** but sold the site to **St George** in 2017. Further delays ensued whilst **St George** sought permission to revise the plans resulting in less commercial floor space and even more residential units, including affordable homes. These changes resulted in further increases in the height of the development, which would now soar up to nine storeys behind the retained façade. A regrettable loss brought by the scheme was demolition of the **YMCA** building (dating from around 1900) but the important foundation stones which included early inscriptions by the famous artist and sculptor **Eric Gill** were salvaged and placed on permanent loan to the **Ditchling Museum of Arts & Crafts** in Sussex.



The façade uncovered

St George was granted consent for the revised scheme in 2018 and preparatory demolition (including of the **YMCA** building) was started later that year. Construction of the residential elements continued in 2019 and 2020 although the Covid-19 crisis has delayed work. The original cinema façade has recently been uncovered, as its incorporation into the new-build behind progressed. **Picturehouse** indicated at the end of 2019 that they would not gain possession of the shell of the new building on Bond Street housing the new cinema until the middle of 2020 and that fit-out was unlikely to be completed until 2021 – twelve years after the original cinema was demolished.

The author is a former Chairman of the Ealing Civic Society

IMPRESSION OF THE FORUM EALING

from the *West Middlesex Gazette* 21 April 1934



The new Forum Cinema, Ealing, will be officially opened by Mr Jack Buchanan, the stage and screen star, on Monday afternoon. Below a *West Middlesex Gazette* representative gives his impression of the new cinema.

Full of novel features is the new Forum, which is now undergoing the finishing touches. The first is revealed in the entrance foyer, where semi-circle counters have been let in from the two shops on either side, thus serving patrons as well as the general public. At these counters there will be confectionery and cigarettes on one side and flowers on the other. There are 1,339 seats in the stalls and 836 in the circle. Patrons will be able to see the programme downstairs for 9d, 1s, or 1s/10d and upstairs for 1s/10d and 2s/6d. The afternoon prices up to three-o'clock will be 7d, 1s. and 1s/4d, Saturday until 2. The rubber seating, I am informed, gives the Forum the distinction of being the first cinema theatre in the world to have this feature.

Designed in three different shades of rose, the plush coverings on the seats blend with the carpets. As befits the cinema's name, the frescoes are in gold relief depicting Roman characters reminiscent of the Forum in Rome. I was impressed with the concealed lighting under the circle. This gives a diffused effect very pleasing to the eye. Patrons should find, as I did, the seats exceptionally comfortable with ample legroom. Each seat provides an uninterrupted view of the screen.

The theatre will have floor ventilation operated by subterranean channels. Heating chambers are also fixed in the floor. On either side of the proscenium are small balconies, which will contain playing fountains. They will be fitted with interchangeable lighting. The café and dance hall over the entrance foyer is splendidly appointed and will be served by two kitchens. Patrons and members of the general public will be able to dance on a sprung floor. Standing at the top of the circle, I was struck by the great height and width of the building. The circle, incidentally, is divided into two sections, the front being 'fed' by two entrances on either side and the back by one main entrance.

The projection room proved one of the most interesting parts of the building. A Western Electric Wide Range Sound System is to be employed and two of the latest type water-cooled projectors have been installed. There will be microphones on the stage for the artistes and the organist will also have a microphone. In addition special speakers will play music whilst the safety curtain is down. Nearby is the rewinding room where the films are kept in fireproof receptacles and a workroom for the operators.

On the way to the stage I caught a glimpse of the free car park, which can accommodate 300 cars. The great feature of the stage is that everything can be flown, including the two screens. The main screen is of the latest Westone type and by means of the Wide Range System the sound will be evenly distributed throughout the house without distortion. I understand that although the second is also a talkie

screen it will mainly be used for showing slides whilst the stage is being set. The main screen is perforated and of a special texture. Completing the stage equipment are a scene dock at the side, a safety curtain and tableau curtains for stage and screen.

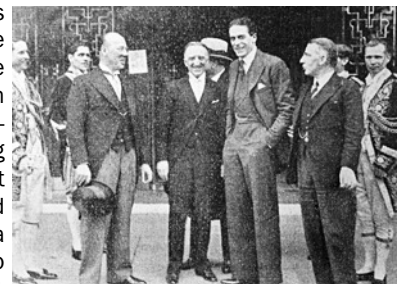
That the directors have the musical entertainment of their future patrons at heart is evidenced by the installation of a Compton Organ, fitted with the latest model illuminated console, one of the first of its kind to be installed in a London theatre. This instrument embodies all the tone colour of a symphony orchestra, all the majesty of a grand organ and all the verve and rhythm of a modern dance band. In addition it has a new feature, a string toned stop controlling a solo cello, which stands apart from the rest of the organ yet blends unobtrusively with the general tonal scheme of the instrument. This new solo cello is the newest and one of the most remarkable achievements of the Compton designers and will serve to make the organ more than ever a leading feature of the entertainment. The illuminated console with its continual change of beautiful colours is of a novel and ingenious design.

Before leaving the theatre I was able to have a chat with Mr Herbert A Yapp, the managing director. "The sorbo rubber underlying the carpet," he said, "is more costly than the carpet itself, which is the best that money can buy. My policy will be to show, after the first week, two of the latest film releases with stage presentations and organ interludes." Children will be admitted to any part of the house during matinées, if accompanied by an adult. No seats can be reserved. After the opening day, the performances will be continuous from 1pm. In the afternoon patrons, paying no more than 7d will be able to see a programme of over three hours duration with the additional benefits of a free car park and free cloakroom.

The café will be open daily from 11am to 10:30pm. Mr Victor Collingridge is the general manager and Mr L Pepper the resident manager. What should prove another popular appointment is that of Mr RR Holcrow as solo organist. He resumes his association with Mr Yapp, having been solo pianist for him at the Wandsworth Palace, afterwards taking up the position of orchestral organist when a Compton Organ was installed.

OPENING PROGRAMME.

When Mr Buchanan performs the opening ceremony at the Forum on Monday he will be heralded by a fanfare from four trumpeter of HM Grenadier Guards, who are coming from Windsor Castle. The visit of the famous stage and screen star will form part of a very full day, for in addition to appearing in Mr Whittington at the London Hippodrome, he is at present busy on a new film



Dignitaries at the opening ceremony; Jack Buchanan is second from right

production. Mr Robert Naylor, the celebrated English tenor, will render the National Anthem at the ceremony. He will soon be seen again at the Forum as the management are presenting him together with Miss Sylvia Cecil, as a stage attraction in the near future. Ranging in characterisation from the hostess of a homely little inn *Down Chelsea Way* to the glitter of a society debutante, Gracie Fields' latest picture *Love, Life and Laughter*, which will be shown all the week, affords the imitable comedienne unprecedented opportunity of which she takes full advantage.

Debroy Somers and his band will be appearing throughout the opening week on the stage and those who have had the pleasure of hearing this famous band, either on the wireless, on records or in British Screen Productions, will welcome the opportunity of seeing them in person. Pattman, one of the pioneers of present day organists will be at the organ on the opening day. He will appear by permission of Morden Cinema.

Sent in by David A Ellis



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]

ASHBOURNE (Derbys)



Plans have been unveiled to restore the former **Elite**. The current blueprint would involve extending each of the existing tiers to accommodate larger, more luxurious seats and extending the seating area out to create 144 seats overall. The downstairs is a shopping arcade. {29267}

Derby Telegraph – 4 June; photo taken July 2011

ASHFORD (Kent)

The Covid-19 pandemic has left a £4.5m gap in the Council's finances. This means a number of projects are on hold, including plans to demolish the former **Odeon**. Whilst the delay in demolishing the former cinema may offer a glimmer of light for local campaigners against the redevelopment, the pause seems temporary. Listing was refused in 2019. {14785}

Bingo Daily – 29 May

AYR

Plans have been unveiled to convert the abandoned **Darlington** church into Ayr's answer to the GFT in Glasgow. The director of the Iris arts venue has secured £20,000 from South Ayrshire Council for the project. The 1860 building is on the Buildings At Risk register for Scotland.

Daily Record – 15 May

BACUP (Lancs)



The former **Regal** is to be restored and repurposed following the town being granted over £1m in funding. It opened in September 1931 with 960 seats and films ceased in the late 1960s in favour of bingo, which closed in the early 2000s.

Lancashire Live – 15 June; *Lancashire Telegraph* – 19 June; sent in by Philip Crompton; photo taken June 2005

BARNESLEY (South Yorks)

Like others, operator Rob Younger has been using the time whilst the Parkway is closed to do repairs and maintenance. Screen ① has been upgraded to Dolby 7.1 sound. Handrails that were painted over in Odeon days have been stripped and stained. Toilets have been reconditioned and the foyer and other areas have been repainted. Rob has been keeping a diary on the cinema's Facebook pages and says he will be glad when the cinema reopens so he can have a rest. {6208}

Parkway Cinema Facebook Pages

BARNSTAPLE (DEVON)

Scott Cinemas has submitted an application to convert the upper floors of the former BHS store inside the Green Lanes Shopping Centre into a seven-screen cinema. This would replace their existing four-screen operation (ex Gaumont/Odeon/Classic) in Boutport Street.

North Devon Journal – 23 April

BASILDON (Essex)

The former ABC/Robins cinema has been bought by the Council for £2.75m as part of a town centre transformation plan. It opened in September 1971 with two screens, seating 644 and 455 and closed in December 1999, unable to compete with a new UCI (now Cineworld) multiplex. The site stands next to the East Square development, which will include a ten-screen cinema. {24134}

Basildon Echo – 7 April; photo taken July 2007

BLACKPOOL (Lancs)

The **Empire Bingo Club** in Hawes Side Lane has announced that after closing due to the coronavirus lockdown it will not be reopening and an application to demolish the building has now been made. It is claimed the age of the building would make it too difficult to introduce the social distancing measures required while keeping the business viable. Two years ago planning permission was given to build 14 flats on the site.



The **Empire** opened as a cinema on 5 August 1929. It was then a small suburban cinema seating 840 but was later enlarged and upgraded by Blackpool architect Halstead Best. He extended the building to accommodate a new foyer with a new projection room above it. It reopened on 5 August 1939 with an increased seating capacity of 1,094 and a café on the first floor. It closed on 10 October 1959 and became the Sands Casino and Theatre Club with starring appearances by Tom Jones, Shirley Bassey, Freddie Starr and Bernard Manning among others. Jayne Mansfield played a week's cabaret there shortly before her death in 1967. It was converted into a bingo club by local operator Talbot Bingo opening in August 1974. The firm was run by John Bottomley but was taken over by his wife Elaine after he died in June 1990. {6547}

Sent in by Ray Dolling & Ken Roe; photo taken June 2009

Planning permission is being sought to redevelop part of the building that once housed the **Princess** cinema. The Electric Sunshine Project, set up in 2016 by Artistic Director Melanie Whitehead, wants to use the space for its workshops and projects aimed at providing opportunities for people currently least likely to connect with the arts. While community work would be central to the project, it is also hoped to generate income through ticketed shows and operating outlets selling food and merchandise. Since closing as a cinema in 1981 the premises has had a variety of uses, most recently a Bavarian Bier Keller and a nightclub 'Club Domain' together with partially completed high-end holiday apartments. {6550}

Blackpool Gazette – 7 May; sent in by Ray Dolling



BOURNEMOUTH

Plans to convert the former Odeon into 64 flats can go ahead after two previous applications failed. Previous plans for blocks containing 101 and then 84 flats had been rejected over concerns about their scale. But Council planning officers granted outline planning permission using delegated powers. They said the scheme was now “an acceptable intervention”.

Daily Echo, Bournemouth – 3 June; sent in by John R Forster

BRIDGWATER (Somerset)

Planning permission has been granted for a seven-screen cinema at Northgate. It will be operated by Scott Cinemas, who will vacate their current premises, the former Odeon. It is hoped construction will start soon and the new facilities will be in operation in 2021. See p 15 last Bulletin.

Bridgwater Mercury – 13 June

BRIDPORT (Dorset)

Permission is being asked for renovations and changes to the **Electric Palace** building, although the work is already underway. The work includes the restoration of the large roof lights, which have been reduced in size over the years. Also planned is a new roof covering on the leaking flat roof and rebuilding parts of the parapet wall on the roof. {22418}

Bridport & Lyme Regis News – 16 April

BRIERLEY HILL (Dudley)

A planning application has been submitted to convert the former **Danilo** into a church. On p15 of the last Bulletin we reported it had been put on the market. {37851}

Express & Star – 1 May; sent in by Ivan Harris

BRIGHTON

A grant of £7,000 has been awarded to Brighton Hippodrome Community Investment Company to support legal advice to formalise a partnership and support fundraising advice. It has plans to restore the grade II* listed theatre. {36884}

The Argus, Brighton – 21 May; sent in by Barry Quinton

BURTON-ON-TRENT (Staffs)



The ground floor of the Ritz is now up for let for £35,000 a year after remaining unoccupied since Purrociuous Cat Café closed down before Christmas. The first floor of the building remains as a successful events venue, which holds events including music nights and wedding receptions. The cinema opened in March 1935 and became a Gaumont in February 1957. It was renamed Odeon in November 1966 and was tripled in April 1974. It was leased to Robins cinemas in 1996 and closed in December 1999. It lay empty for fourteen years. {22126}

Derbyshire Live – 23 June; photo taken May 2004

BURY ST EDMUNDS (Suffolk)

Renovation works have been continuing during the lockdown at the **Abbeygate** cinema. The former bingo area is being converted into a new auditorium. The new screen frame is already in place and a 4K projection system will soon be installed. {24294}

East Anglian Daily Times – 24 April

CAMBRIDGE



Plans to redevelop the former Tivoli have been put on hold due to the Covid-19 crisis. The building suffered a major fire in March 2015. It opened in March 1925 with 570 seats and closed in November 1956. It was a warehouse for many years but became a pub in 2004, closed in 2008 and was taken over by Wetherspoons in 2010. {36849}

Cambridgeshire Live – 5 June; photo taken July 2004

CAVERSHAM (Reading)

Planning permission is being applied for to convert a gym into a three-screen cinema. One screen would seat 94 and the other two 77 each and would be above the Waitrose store and at the rear.

Henley Standard – 22 June

CHESTER

The **Storyhouse** (ex Odeon) is to convert its main 485-seat theatre into a cinema to run alongside its existing 100-seat cinema. Both will run at only 25% capacity with social distancing and one-way systems in place. A spokesman said there is “a very real threat it could be out of business by Christmas” due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. {2514}

BBC News website – 19 June

CHRISTCHURCH (Dorset)



While virtually every cinema and theatre has been mothballed over the last few months the **Regent** has been preparing for an overdue makeover. Luckily this well-supported and much-loved venue had built up enough reserves to schedule a major redecoration, re-seating and carpeting investment. Chairman Gary Trinder, who had overseen the transformation of The **Plaza Super Cinema** in Stockport when living in the north, is again getting to grips with the smaller but equally successful 1930s **Regent** on the South Coast.

Highly regarded seating specialists Kirwin and Simpson have been commissioned to make 502 traditional cinema-style seats with posturepedic foam for added comfort with a bespoke fabric. The seats standards will be of cast iron construction and made in the Midlands, as they would have been in 1931 when the **Regent** opened. A new Axminster carpet has been manufactured by Brinton's who were also around in the hey-day of cinema construction.

A huge scaffolding structure is under construction in the auditorium to allow the team of painters from BCP [Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole] Council, who tendered for the contract for the decoration. There will be a sympathetic colour scheme in metallic colours, a contrast from the present fifteen colour ways, most members will recall from the Mecca bingo palette. Careful management should bring the whole refurbishment in at a net cost under £300,000.

Although privately conceived, the Regent spent most of its life owned by Portsmouth Town Cinemas, before a brief spell under Shipman and King. When films ended in 1973, a near decade on bingo followed under Mecca. The current Board of Directors of the Regent and the enthusiastic new manager Mathew Vass-White, are carefully checking the Government guidelines and working on a plan to re-open the Regent at the best possible time for a relaunch. Certainly the Regent should be looking her best when inviting people back in her approaching ninetieth year. {24540}

Sent in by Philip Stevens & David Eve

CLEVEDON (North Somerset)



After having been stopped because of the pandemic, work has now restarted on repairing the roof of the Curzon. The work involves renewing the decaying timber on the top floor and all 12,380 terracotta tiles will be replaced. A further £30,000 needs to be raised to cover the costs. {846}

Bristol Post – 20 May; photo taken August 2003

COLCHESTER (Essex)

Light is to be the operator of a new multiplex to be built at the Tollgate Village Park. Work is set to begin later this year and opening is scheduled for the end of 2021. A rival Cineworld at the Northern Gateway development is due to be open by 2023. This will mean Colchester will have four cinemas, including the Odeon and Curzon in the town centre.

Daily Gazette – 10 March

We reported on p16 of the last Bulletin about a petition to save the former Odeon in Crouch Street. Now owner Blumarble has unveiled fresh proposals for 55 apartments and two retail units. Under these new plans, the existing building would be demolished completely with a replica of the foyer section reconstructed with “long lost features”. An artist’s impression can be seen on the newspaper website at [tinyurl.com/yb68eczr]. Objections to the plans are “flooding in” including from the Theatres Trust. {17575}

Daily Gazette – 8, 26 May, 8 June; sent in by Terry Hanstock

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.

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DAVENTRY (Northants)

The Council has granted an operating licence for the new four-screen Arc cinema, allowing it to open between 8am and 2am. Construction is continuing at the former library site as the contractor has implemented social distancing measures. It is too early to say whether the scheduled opening date of Easter 2021 will have to be put back.

Daventry Express – 30 April

EASTBOURNE (East Sussex)

The former Curzon, which closed last January, has been boarded-up by the Council to prevent anti-social behaviour. {24677}

Eastbourne Herald – 16 April

GIRVAN (Ayrshire)



The Council plans to buy the former Vogue for £80,000 and then demolish it. The cinema opened around 1933 with 1,070 seats. Films ceased in the late 1970s in favour of bingo, which had closed by the time this photo was taken in August 2009. The building has been empty since and is in a poor state of repair. {50825}

Daily Record – 30 April; photo taken August 2009

GLASGOW (Central)

The former ABC looks set to be demolished with the final objections against the proposal being removed. It was severely damaged in the second School of Art fire in 2018 and is now said to be overrun with vermin and sewage. {38564}

Glasgow Evening Times – 5 May

GLASGOW (Gorbals)

Plans, announced on p18 of Bulletin 54/2, for a seven-screen 600-seat cinema on Crown Street Retail Park have been approved by the Council. It will be made by amalgamating two former retail units. No operator or time-scale has been given.

Glasgow Evening Times – 14 May

GLASGOW (Govan)

Plans have been submitted to renovate the category B listed former Lyceum. The plans include a 500-seat cinema on the first floor and a concert hall and events space on the ground floor, together with a restaurant. The cinema opened in December 1938 and closed on bingo in October 2006. See p23 Bulletin 54/1. {15565}

Glasgow Evening Times – 1 May

GUILDFORD (Surrey)

Odeon has resubmitted revised plans to extend their nine-screen cinema into an adjacent restaurant building and add two additional 74-seat screens. Plans had originally been submitted in February but were later temporarily withdrawn in early April so that amendments could be made to the proposals.

The new application has reduced the number of Odeon signs on the outside of the building from three to two, as well as slightly altering the patterning to the proposed new front of the Old Orleans site. There will also be added LED lighting and the inclusion of illuminated poster cases to the outside of the building. There would also be additional toilets, disabled facilities and emergency routes to cater for the extended section of the cinema, while all of its current screens and facilities would be retained. See p 17 last Bulletin and p18 Bulletin 54/2.

Surrey Live – 7 May

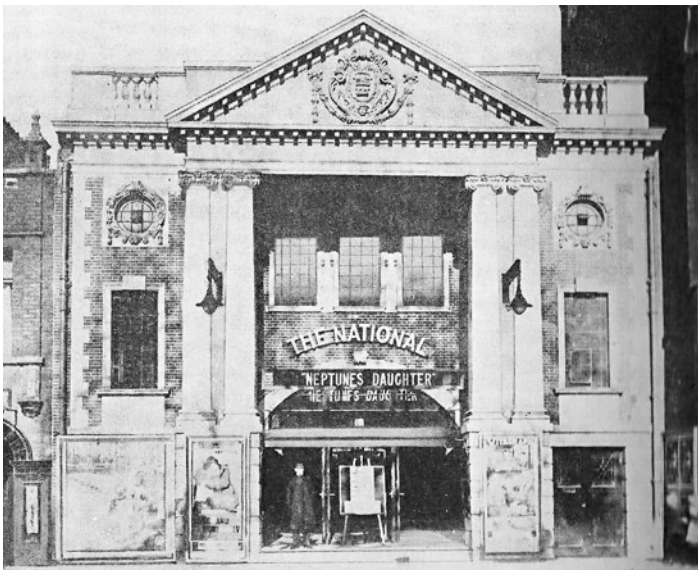
HUCKNALL (Notts)

Work has restarted at the ARC Byron. The cinema was a week away from completion when the order to close down came. It is planned that all works will be completed to allow the cinema to open on or after 4 July, government advice permitting. The building was gutted internally with two screens now in the former stalls and two in the circle, side by side. A new sales and ticket area has been built at the rear of the former stalls as the original entrance foyer is very small. The screens stop short of the old stage, which was a triangle shape to allow for the road to cut in on the right and this has been utilized as a fire exit. Sadly all former decorative plaster work had to be removed as it contained asbestos but the wooden forms of the original proscenium arch are still in place around the stage. When the flooring in the original foyer was pulled up it revealed the cinema name **BYRON** set out in the terrazzo flooring. Safety features have been put in place to ensure social distancing requirements. See p 17 last Bulletin. {13428}



Nottinghamshire Live – 11 June; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo on front cover; also sent in and additional material & photos by Ben Doman

HULL (East Yorks)



The Council has been given the green light to bid for almost £290,000 in Lottery funding to restore the National Picture Theatre and turn it into a memorial and museum covering the impact of war on civilian life. The deadline for the bid is September, with a National Lottery decision due by December. If approved, work will begin next spring. {40893}

Hull Daily Mail – 17 June; sent in by David Alexander

HUNTLY (Aberdeen)

Huntly's new community hub could include a café, cinema, bookshop and community gallery. The facilities will be housed in 30 The Square but extensive renovation work is required at the empty property before plans can progress. The Huntly and District Development Trust is applying for permission to restore both the outside and inside of the building, while preserving as much of its history as possible. For generations No 30 was an important business to the town and served as a hardware store under the family business Cruickshanks.

Press & Journal, Aberdeen – 21 May

KIRKBY-IN-ASHFIELD (Notts)

Plans to open a "state-of-the-art" leisure centre have taken a major step forward after the Council launched a bid to find a construction firm. Work is already underway to clear part of the Festival Hall site, which will eventually make way for the £14 million centre boasting swimming pools, a cinema, a gym and cafe. A full planning application was submitted in March.

Nottinghamshire Live – 4 June

LEAMINGTON SPA (Warks)

Plans for a cinema and gym in the building once occupied by House of Fraser in Leamington have been shelved by developers.

Coventry Live – 19 May

LIVERPOOL (Crosby)

The Plaza community cinema has raised almost £11,000 to help it reopen after being closed due to the pandemic. They aim to reopen on 17 July with safety measures in place. The two smaller screens are going to go from seating 92 to 44 and the big screen will go from 596 to 235. During the closure the seats in the big screen have been cleaned. {6527}

The Guide, Liverpool – 19 June

Sent in by Ken Roe

LONDON (Bethnal Green)



Demolition of the former Rex/Essoldo has begun. It opened as Smart's Picture House in April 1913 with 865 seats on a single floor. It was remodelled in 1938 by George Coles and reopened as the Rex. It became the Essoldo in December 1949 and films ceased in August 1964. It was converted into a bingo club, which operated until about 1990. The building was taken over by Frankle Trimmings, who renovated the façade. They vacated the building around 2015, after which the interior was gutted. In 2017 plans were announced to convert it into a hotel with a cinema but this never happened. It is not known what will happen to the site. {16512}

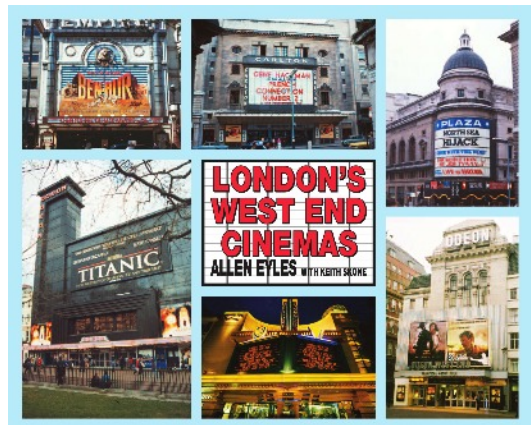
Sent in & photo by Andrew Woodyatt

Three more pages of Newsreel in the full Bulletin

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.

LETTERS

PALAIS/ASTOR BROMLEY



On p21 of the last Bulletin, Charles Morris mentions the Astor Bromley. This opened in 1911 as the Palais de Luxe. It closed in 1940 and became a Ministry of Food store for butter and margarine and was later used by CMA in connection with large screen television experiments. In 1949 it was acquired by the former manager of the Gaumont Bromley, Albert Watts and had a civic welcome when it opened on 11 April that year. The theatre was modernised under the direction of Harry G Payne LIRBA of Bromley, the general contractors were Collings Ltd of Peckham. The interior walls were sprayed in warm tones and there were 730 seats fitted by WW Turner. It was renamed the Pullman in November 1954, modernised again in 1963 and reopened as the Astor. It closed on 24 September 1977 and was converted to bingo, which closed in April 1985. The auditorium was demolished that year and the façade in 1988. I have enclosed a copy of a rare handbill from the Palais.

David Jones

16MM

Enjoyed the latest edition of the Bulletin but was particularly interested in the excellent article by Mr Charles Morris about 16mm cinema. During my career as a projectionist, I worked for eleven years part-time for the Merseyside Film Institute Society in Bluecoat Chambers Art Centre, Liverpool. This was the oldest film society outside of London, opening in 1934 and ran for sixty years. It was a full-time operation over six days with film shows twice nightly. The programmes covered current offerings of the day, classics, documentaries and special educational shows. The equipment we used was Elf Lite pedestal machines EX5000 and EX6000, although before my time it was Bell and Howell. The cinema held 100 persons in comfortable surroundings and had a membership of 2,500. I was sorry to see it close, which only came about because a local independent cinema opted to show similar material to that of the Institute but on 35mm, the trade insisting that 16mm give way to 35mm. Incidentally Liverpool also had another 16mm cinema in the headquarters of the North Western Gas Board. This was a lecture and boardroom but was also used to screen the Annual Ten Best Amateur films, organised by the Institute of Amateur Photographers.

Mike Taylor

THE MAN WITH THE TRAY

Lovely to read about the Rex Elland but for the health of Mr Morris (pictured serving ices) I recount my first experience on sales service. When my manager realised the 14-year-old lad he had taken on could actually lift the tray, being several decades younger than the rest of the staff, tray sales became one of my jobs when business warranted it. With a fully loaded tray slung on me as in the picture, a colleague shouted at me, "take that off now before you break your b***** neck!" I was then shown how to wear the tray correctly, over one shoulder and under the other. With your back taking the weight you could stand quite comfortably, staring at the swirling colours of the projection beam cutting through cigarette smoke and leaving hands free to serve the rapidly defrosting goodies.

Ben Doman

BLACKPOOL

Philip Mayer in his letter on p21 of the last Bulletin says that he had not heard it said the Royal Pavilion Blackpool was a purpose-built cinema until I mentioned it in Bulletin 54/2.

However in 1917 an item in the *Blackpool Gazette* refuted the idea that it was a converted garage. Part 14 of a series, looking back over the previous 50 years, reviewed the Blackpool cinemas that had been established by then and on 27 July 1917, page 3, referring to the origins of the Royal Pavilion it stated "It was *specially built* (my italics) for the purpose in 1909. Previous to that time Mr W Blacker had been presenting pictures at the Colosseum but as that curious building was required for other purposes, the land in Rigby Road was purchased and in three months Mr Robert Fenton, not unknown as the present proprietor of the Hippodrome, built the Royal Pavilion from plans prepared by Mr J Barraclough".

The Colosseum stood on the other side of the road and was actually Blackpool's first permanent cinema (films had otherwise only been shown in the local theatres). It was an octagonal prefabricated timber building originally sited in a pleasure ground, the Raikes Hall Gardens, until 1901 when it was dismantled and re-erected in Tyldesley Road Blackpool. There it housed various shows including the *Royal Italian Circus* and the spectacle *Savage South Africa* before turning to films as the Picturedrome in 1906. It was a primitive operation, heated by coke stoves with the audience seated on wooden benches, which obviously would not meet the requirements of the proposed Cinematograph Act. Plans were duly laid for its replacement – a purpose-built cinema to be erected nearby – which would conform to the forthcoming legislation.

This opened on 23 July 1909 as the *New Royal Pavilion* with a reported capacity of nearly 1,000 on the ground floor and 50 in the small balcony. It was an immediate success and encouraged the builder Fenton and architect Barraclough to buy the Hippodrome in Church Street a year later and convert it into a cinema with a raked floor and a balcony. The manager and, from 1919, the owner of the Royal Pavilion was WA Blacker, who had previously run the Colosseum/Picturedrome. This then became a roller skating rink and eventually a garage and bus park (and is possibly why the *Royal Pavilion* is thought to have once been a garage) In 1936 the old structure was finally demolished and replaced by the Coliseum [sic] Coach Station, which served as Blackpool's main coach station for the next fifty years. The site has now been swallowed up by the Foxhall Village regeneration project.

Ray Dolling

Re the debate in CTA Bulletin 54/3. There's a brief paragraph in *The Bioscope* dated 15 July 1909, which refers to the newly opened *New Royal Pavilion* as having to turn hundreds of people away, such was its initial success. No mention of it being a garage conversion. James Alfred Barraclough – "an expert in designing picture palaces" – is reported as being the architect.

Terry Hanstock

Regarding confusion in the Bulletin and on the Cinema Treasures page for the *Royal Pavilion Theatre*, Blackpool opening. A newspaper clipping from 8 March 1909 sent by Phillip Mayer from Liverpool says the building was formerly the *King's Hall*, then became the King's Hall Garage. An application for change of use was turned down and went to appeal on 26 April 1909. Apparently the appeal was successful as the *Royal Pavilion* was opened on 26 June 1909. There would not be sufficient time from April to June to demolish the garage and build the 'purpose built' cinema. It would however be possible to convert the building in that time (add a balcony and projection box and raise the roof?)

Ken Roe

Without checking, I don't think I'd ever seen the newspaper cutting mentioning the name *Kings Hall*. This solves the conundrum of a building tall enough to have a balcony being an early purpose-built cinema. It is more likely that a late Victorian or Edwardian public hall would have a balcony than an early purpose-built cinema. I imagine that the line of development is that of 'Kings Hall with balcony', 'conversion to garage', then 'conversion to cinema'. I think it less likely for the balcony to have been added for intended cinema use.

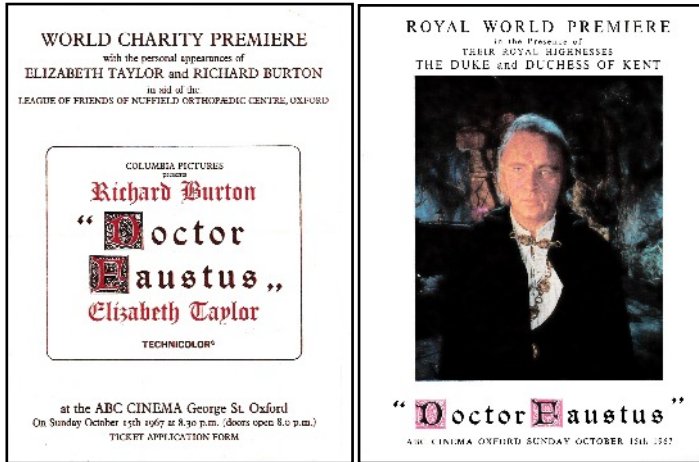
Richard Gray

OXFORD CITY CENTRE CINEMAS

Thanks for this interesting article. I missed a reference to the Scala in Walton Street, now closed but for many years considered the most interesting cinema in Oxford with all the latest art-house releases. Is there a plaque on the site? I should have checked on my recent visit.

The writer mentions the ABC première of the film of *Dr Faustus*, attended by its stars Burton and Taylor. Could I add that the reason the couple attended was that they had earlier starred in a theatre production of the play (in the nearby Playhouse). Burton had studied briefly at Oxford during the war and donated generously to various undergraduate causes.

Caroline Behr



The première of *Doctor Faustus* at the ABC George Street was originally announced as a 'World Charity Premiere' but became a 'Royal World Premiere' when the Duke and Duchess of Kent agreed to attend.

Dave Jones

I much enjoyed Mike Whitcombe's canter round Oxford's City centre cinemas. I can add a couple of footnotes to his coverage of the Super/ABC/Odeon Magdalen Street. The cinema was designed by FGM Chancellor, who took over Frank Matcham's architectural practice following Matcham's death in 1920. JC Leed was the local architect, who probably supervised the building works. According to Ian Meyrick's excellent book *Oxfordshire Cinemas*, the builders were local firm Hinkins & Frewin. Interestingly, the Oxford Cinematograph Company, for whom the cinema was built, is still listed as being in business by Companies House and may still own it.

The three floors above the entrance (which Mike correctly suggests: "didn't suggest a grand cinema") were never part of the cinema property. The space may well have provided above-the-shop living accommodation for the bookseller who previously occupied the ground floor and later it provided extra bedrooms for an adjoining hotel. When the hotel was demolished, the connecting passageways were simply bricked up. In recent times there has been an attempt to discover who actually owns this part of the building, following an enquiry which came in on the Frank Matcham Society website (yes, this is a plug for FMS!) but so far as I am aware the mystery remains unsolved.



Mirrors in the foyer of the Odeon Magdalen Street, Oxford

Mike mentions the Costa coffee shop installed in the long, narrow entrance foyer. Large, floor-to-ceiling mirrors were originally installed in this area to make the space look wider – as was often the case in American cinemas in similar situations. These were boarded-up and forgotten about for many decades but when their existence was pointed out to Costa's architect the mirrors were immediately unearthed and restored (see picture bottom previous column). Wouldn't it be great if every big company willingly went to such trouble and extra expense when a bit of conservation work was suggested to them?

Giles Woodforde

I read Mike Whitcombe's article on the rich cinema heritage of central Oxford with interest and can add a few points. With regard to the Super (Odeon Magdalen Street) I can confirm that the builder was Hinkins and Frewin, not the architectural practice of Frank Matcham and Co, which worked with the local architect JC Leed. The rooms at the front have always been inaccessible from the cinema except via a window in the former café and then across the foyer roof. This route is still available after unscrewing a wall panel in Odeon 2 to uncover the window.



With regard to the Ritz (Odeon George Street) Mike says that sources are wrong in saying that the Cinematograph Theatre / George Street Cinema was demolished to make way for the Ritz. In fact, both this cinema and St George the Martyr were demolished; the auditorium is on the site of the church building and the foyer, a new road cut through in front of the cinema and a shop on the other side replaced the old cinema. So everyone is right, hurrah! The photograph shows the old cinema, with the church building to the left. The tower of the Old Fire Station, which became a theatre, can be seen beyond.

Definitions of city centre can vary but I would include the North Oxford Kinema / Scala / Phoenix, which still operates in Walton Street and, at 107 years old, is the oldest in the central area.

Ian Meyrick, *Author Oxfordshire Cinemas*; photo courtesy Jeremy Buck

PALACE LISTING?

Regarding the piece reprinted from the Liverpool Echo on page 18 of the last Bulletin about the former Palace cinema, Kemble Street in Prescot, Greater Liverpool, Peter Wyld and myself have looked into it and as far as we can see this is not statutorily listed, although it is possible that it may be locally listed. The Historic England involvement in its regeneration may well be part of a Heritage area action initiative as a joint venture with the local authority.

Richard Gray

CURZON CLARIFICATIONS

The Curzon/Classic Bexhill was twinned but for bingo downstairs and cinema upstairs. It never had two screens. The Curzon had several operators until it finally closed in 2008 (anyone got exact date?) and is now a JD Wetherspoons pub.

The Curzon Folkestone became a Classic, later Cannon again under a different management and was closed 18 February 1988 due to structural problems.

The Curzon St Leonards was never twinned and closed as a cinema on 23 January 1977. There may have been plans to twin (Bulletin 8/6 p49) but these never happened. Wonder how they would have achieved that – we will never know. It became a builders' merchants until that closed and it reopened as a Boutique Arts Centre called the Teatr Kino on 9 July 2015 including films, albeit the 1930s façade had long gone.

Tim McCullen

THE FIRST 'LUXURY LOUNGE'

Following on from the newsreel mention here is an article on the reopening of the ABC Lancaster with the new Luxury Lounge concept from the ABC News January 1967.

"I can tell you this," said manager Allan Kilpatrick to the local press, "there are not many cinemas as luxurious 'as this one.'" Manager Kilpatrick's remark was a neat summing-up of everything that had gone into the £25,000 facelift of the ABC Palace. Lancaster prior to its reopening on Boxing Day, 26 December, 1966.



A leaflet that was sent to every household in Lancaster



The final result

The **Palace** is unique among Britain's Cinemas for it introduces an entirely new concept in cinema-going. Until now we have been accustomed to the better and more expensive seats being in the circle but this traditional pattern is reversed at Lancaster. The old stalls area has been replaced by a luxury lounge fitted with the most up-to-date seating and completely unobscured sight lines to the screen. No more will a **Palace** patron dread a tall person with a big head sitting in front of him, for the patron will still be able to see perfectly without having to shift his head this way and that in an effort to maintain his view of the screen.

The **Palace** is the first of ABC's 269 theatres to have a luxury lounge area; the idea is completely new to Britain although it is in extensive use overseas where it has been warmly welcomed by patrons. Not the least of its advantages is that it enables cinema-goers to enjoy the best seats in the house without having to climb stairs to the circle, since the lounge area is at ground floor level.

For those who might hesitate to sit in the front row because of the psychological inhibitions against sitting too near the screen for eye comfort, it should be stated that the seating of the **Palace** is so designed that the angle of vision in front is identical with that at the back of the cinema downstairs. In addition the screen is curved and this adds to visual ease.

More leg room has been provided between the rows by sacrificing 300 seats, the lounge area now providing ultra-comfortable seating for 446 people. The transformation of the theatre did not require major structural alterations apart from the new seating, a brand new system of air conditioning and excellent personal facilities.

The circle has not been altered structurally but the Company's decorators have transformed its appearance into luxurious elegance. A pleasing subdued effect has been achieved by the use of a dark coffee décor with gilt embellishments. But it is, of course, in the lounge area where

they have really gone to town. In line with modern furnishing trends the walls are covered with fabric, deep blue felt for the back of the area and the rear part of the side walls. Contrasting with the blue is the regal gold draping framing the screen. The lounge area is lighted by elegant gilt chandeliers with drop pearl candle-type bulbs. Another new feature is the setting of colour spotlights at the front of the circle, playing down on the screen draping for various colour effects.

Architect and designer of the lounge area was Mr CJ Foster assisted by Mr D Ryan and a press preview was held a few days before the reopening when the details of the experimental project were explained to the Journalists present. The local press was extremely enthusiastic and came out with such headlines as "Lancaster **Palace** chosen for luxury seating project" and "Sheer luxury to woo back cinema-goers." Attending the reopening on behalf of ABC were Mr FC Cockerill, Circuit Supervisor and Mr GE Evans, North West District Manager.



Dignitaries at the reopening

The film chosen for the re-opening had to match the importance of the occasion, so what could be better than the 17-million dollar (and worth every cent) production of *My Fair Lady*. Business since the reopening has been outstanding and it hasn't taken the cinema-going public of Lancaster long to go for their new luxury lounge in a big way. One couple walked out of the theatre because the lounge area was full, although seats were available in the circle!

The **Palace's** manager is 27-year-old Allan Kilpatrick, a live-wire in



The frontage of the ABC/Palace Lancaster in June 2008

show business and a hundred per cent enthusiastic about his new responsibility. This is the second ABC theatre where Allan has been in charge at its re-opening, for he was manager of the **Regal** Bracknell, when it reopened after renovation. A luxurious theatre offering a new concept in cinema-going, a go-ahead manager and an enthusiastic staff eager to give the public the service it wants, augurs extremely well for the future of ABC in the country town of Lancaster.

Sent in by Ben Doman

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