



CINEMA
THEATRE
ASSOCIATION

www.cta-uk.org

BULLETIN

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The building that is to house the new three-screen Curzon in Pitfield Street, Hoxton, London. See Newsreel p26; photo taken March 2019



The Grade B listed façade of the former La Scala / Gaumont / Vogue Bingo in Hamilton (South Lanark), which will be restored and used as the entrance to apartments to be built behind, where the auditorium once was. See Newsreel p24; photo taken August 2009.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

In mid-December my personal email [harry.rigby@ntlworld.com] was hacked, along with my Facebook and several other accounts. Luckily my bank details don't appear to have been compromised. It took me several days to sort out the problem. I have changed all my passwords. If you emailed me at that address on 17/18 December I almost certainly won't have got it. If you received a strange email purporting to come from me, please simply delete it and ignore it. Please can you all use the Bulletin account [address opposite] in future – it comes through a different server to my private one. It's a pity these nerds haven't got anything better to do.

Again, things are moving so fast that some of the information here may be out of date by the time you read this. Some cinemas have reopened, closed, reopened and closed again. Let's hope that the promised 'light at the end of the tunnel' isn't too far away. It's ironic that the only place in England that is in tier 1, where cinemas may be allowed to open, is the Isles of Scilly – and they don't have any cinemas!

On the back page of the last Bulletin, amongst the holiday snaps, was a photo I took in Moscow in 1973. I should have checked Cinema Treasures as it is listed there. {27271}. It is the Октябрь [October] Cinema, built in 1967 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the October Revolution. The photo on Cinema Treasures [R] of the 2,450-seat auditorium looks magnificent but sadly it was subdivided in 2005 into eleven screens, although screen ① has 1,518 seats.



Please can you check that you have put the correct postage on anything you send me? In particular, be careful of slightly oversized items that need a 'large' stamp. If they are bigger than A5 (half the size of a Bulletin page) they need more postage.

I have again been sent some photos that are obviously copyright. The ones in question were photocopies from the *Daily Telegraph*. I certainly can't print such pictures but they will be passed on to the Archive.

Can I please make another request? When sending in press cuttings, make sure the date is available. If you have to cut it off, please write it in the margin. It makes collating items much easier.

Thanks to all those who responded to my request in the last Bulletin for some more Holiday Snaps; I have printed some on the back page. I have also been sent some historic [well, 1970s and 1980s] photos of cinemas in the UK, some of which have been demolished. I'll try and include a few of these next time. I also have a couple of articles sent in that I'll print next time. This is a big 36 page edition and I simply ran out of space. At least with most of us being in tier 3 or 4 where our movement is restricted, you'll have lots to read!



Frame courtesy Kevin Wheelan

Harry Rigby, CTA Bulletin Editor



The 2020 edition of *Picture House* is in the final stage of production after delays mostly the result of Covid-19. This issue is the largest ever with 100 pages. We are quietly confident that it will reach you around the end of January if not before and thank members for their patience.

Allen Eyles

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE
SATURDAY 20 FEBRUARY**

CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

(Founded January 1967)

promoting serious interest in all aspects of cinema buildings

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MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Ray Ritmeester [subs@cta-uk.org]

66 Woodside Road, High Wycombe, HP13 7JB

Items for possible inclusion in the Bulletin should be sent to

BULLETIN EDITOR: Harry Rigby [bulletin@cta-uk.org]

65 Tennyson Avenue, Harrogate, North Yorks, HG1 3LE

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN: David Trevor-Jones + [chairman@cta-uk.org]

47 The Street, Old Basing, Basingstoke, RG24 7BX

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Ian Meyrick +

11 Tarrant Avenue, Witney, OX28 1EE

SECRETARY: Adam Unger + [honsec@cta-uk.org]

59 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, TW11 0DJ

TREASURER: Neville C Taylor + [accounts@cta-uk.org]

Flat One, 128 Gloucester Terrace, London, W2 6HP

CASEWORK COMMITTEE – Chairman: Richard Gray +

45 Arnold Road, Bow, London, E3 4NU [casework@cta-uk.org]

Members: as main committee plus Rob Chesterfield, Tim Hatcher,

Jane Jephcote, Mark Price, Vicky Simon & Peter Wyld

ARCHIVIST: Clive Polden [archive@cta-uk.org]

14 Ivychurch Gardens, Cliftonville, Margate, CT9 3YG

ASSISTANT ARCHIVIST: David Simpson

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Gerald Glover [publicity@cta-uk.org]

228 Malpas Road, Brockley, London, SE4 1DH

PUBLICATIONS & SALES OFFICER: Jeremy Buck +

34 Pelham Road, London, N22 6LN [sales@cta-uk.org]

WEBMASTER: Rachel Woodforde

69A Mill Street, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 2EE [web@cta-uk.org]

VISITS CO-ORDINATOR: Ray Ritmeester [visits@cta-uk.org]

66 Woodside Road, High Wycombe, HP13 7JB

PICTURE HOUSE EDITOR: Allen Eyles [picture.house@cta-uk.org]

13 Tennyson Court, Paddockhall Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 1EZ

CTA SCOTLAND: Gordon Barr, Gary Painter [scotland@cta-uk.org]

11 Merker Terrace, Linlithgow, EH49 6DD

CTA CYMRU/WALES: John Skinner, Jon Williams [wales@cta-uk.org]

3 Swan Lane, Ystalyfera, Swansea, SA9 2JB

CTA NORTH: vacancy

CTA WESSEX: David Eve, Gary Trinder [wessex@cta-uk.org]

Far Ends, 28 Courtenay Road, Lower Parkstone, Poole, BH14 0HD

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Emma Beeston, Kevin Gooding, Lynda Hillman,

Rachel Marks, Tim McCullen, Ken Roe.

Please use [info@cta-uk.org] if uncertain to whom to address an e-mail enquiry; this address will be monitored and e-mails redirected if necessary.

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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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Visits' registration hotline ansaphone : 020 8800 8393

CTA on Facebook – [www.facebook.com/cinematheatreorguk]

CTA on Twitter – [twitter.com/Ctheatreassoc]

CTA VIRTUAL TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

Don't Miss Out!

At the end of last year, the CTA launched its on-going series of Zoom talks and presentations. During these difficult times these events will be as varied and interesting as attending our 'real' meetings with the added benefit that we are now able to share the programme of talks far and wide, delivering them into members' homes using their PC, laptop or tablet. Following the talk, for those who would like to participate, there will be an 'open-channel' for members to discuss and comment on the talk and any other cinema-related topic of interest!

We are trying to establish a regular monthly Zoom meeting date and time and for the next phase we have decided on the first Saturday of every month at 5:30pm (note this has changed from the previous time of 6:30pm). Of course, it's difficult to satisfy everybody's preferred time but please let us have your feedback.

We hope that as many members as possible (and their families and friends too) will find time to participate in the new world of on-line virtual meetings. Simply follow the registration method below – it's **FREE!**

Members may wish to contribute by way of a donation to support this new way of involving a wider audience. A donation may be sent using PayPal with your computer or smartphone to [accounts@cta-uk.org] or by cheque or credit/debit card directly to the Membership Secretary, address on p2.

Zoom talks will also be promoted using the CTA e-news service seven days in advance of the talk, with a reminder on the day before it takes place.

The Zoom channel will open 15 minutes prior to the advertised time of the meeting to allow members to settle in, during which time a series of CTA information slides will be displayed.

WE'LL BE GUIDED BY YOU

We'd like to receive your suggestions for topics to present and if you would perhaps be willing give a presentation from home (either live or pre-recorded) this can be easily arranged by us on-line. Talks based on a previous PowerPoint presentation or video can be adapted for showing to our audience.

YOUR TECHNICAL HELP REQUESTED

It is evident that our virtual talks programmes are an expanding operation and to cope with the new technology we would be pleased to hear from any member with a familiarity of the following skills – Audio-Visual, programming creation and digital editing, the Internet and virtual presentations (e.g. Zoom). Please email Richard Norman to find out how you can help us – email: [RichardNorman@aol.com]

THE CTA'S ZOOM LAUNCH

On 5 December last, we started our programme of virtual talks with 'A Passage to India' when Elaine Harwood gave her photographic presentation of the CTA's tour there in 2005. This was followed on 19 December with the Christmas 'Members' Own' virtual show, maintaining the tradition for members to show to other members a short show of their personal interest on a cinema topic. This included a visual tour of examples from the CTA's new exhibition of artefacts displayed at the CTA's Archive (Clive Polden); Multiplex Miscellany (David Simpson); Cinemas of yesteryear around Paddington (Neville Taylor) and Egyptian-themed cinema buildings, Part 1 (Richard Gray). These talks were followed by an open channel for members discussions. We were very encouraged as at this early stage the Zoom registrations had reached 120.

At the time of writing, we wait with eagerness for our first transatlantic illustrated talk on 9 January 2021, 'After the Final Curtain' by Matt Lambros (from Boston USA), a reprise of his talk about what happens to the interiors of Movie Palaces when they have finally closed. Originally given to the CTA in London in 2018.

TO REGISTER FOR THE ZOOM TALKS:

Please register individually for each talk that you would like to see. Simply send an email with the talk number or title entered in the subject line to: [visits@cta-org.uk] You will receive an invitation to join the Zoom talk the day before the advertised talk date.

Forthcoming Virtual Talks and Presentations

Talk 4: Saturday 6 February at 5:30pm Cinema Magazine Programme

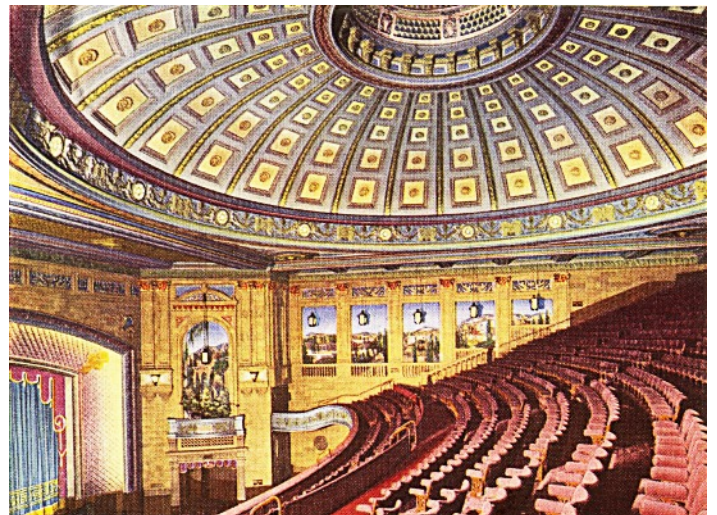
A new feature bringing members a variety of topics of interest, intrigue and reminiscences. This will include:

EGYPTIAN-THEMED CINEMA BUILDINGS (PART 2)

Examples of this style of architecture in the UK and other countries. Talk by Richard Gray.

THE WONDERS OF THE WARNER

American movie studios established flagship cinemas in the UK during the 1930s. A brief history in pictures of the former Warner cinema, Leicester Square is presented by Adam Unger.



A discovery of hidden architecture by Urban Explorers

URBAN EXPLORERS

A new breed of person with an interest in cinema buildings – Urban Explorers reveal the hidden treasure of concealed architecture of a famous cinema theatre, now closed for ever, built to provide entertainment to holidaymakers on the South coast. Talk by Richard Norman.

QUIZ OF CINEMA EXTERIORS SITUATED THROUGHOUT THE UK

Members can participate at the end of the talks when we open the chat room for members to offer their answers. This will be followed by members' open channel to chat about any cinema-related topic that they wish to share with others.

Talk No 5: Saturday 6 March at 5:30pm Robert W Paul – Origins of the British Cinema by Professor Ian Christie, Broadcaster and Author

Presenting the Animatograph:

Robert W Paul not only made Britain's first films, in partnership with Birt Acres but was also a pioneer exhibitor. He worked a circuit of London's music halls early in 1896 before branching out into shows in Brighton, Cheltenham and other regional towns. But why has he not been long celebrated as our equivalent to Edison or Lumière? Why did he cease his activity of film exhibition in what was becoming a competitive showman's market? Ian Christie will offer some suggestions, based on research for his new book, *Robert Paul and the Origins of British Cinema* (Chicago, 2020). Ian Christie is Professor of Film and Media History at Birkbeck University, London.



Please note that this talk was originally to be held at on 16 May 2020 at Farringdon but had to be cancelled due to government restrictions.

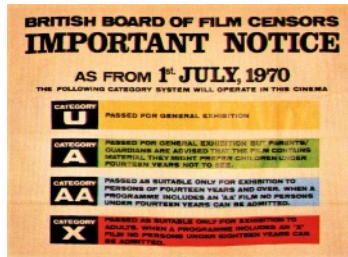
REWINDING BACK

Sent in by Ben Doman

CENSOR'S NEW YEAR CHANGES

In August 1969 a report in *Kiné Weekly* announced that the existing film certificates, which had been in place since 1950, were to be overhauled to better suit modern audiences. John Trevelyan, secretary of the British Board of Film Censors, confirmed this week that changes are likely but would make no comment on the proposals; he expects to make a statement next month. It is understood that the [U], [A] and [X] classifications are to be replaced by numbers (1, 2, 3 and 4) to suggest their audience suitability. No 4 will bar people under 18 from seeing certain films. No 3 will mean that anybody from 14 upwards may see the film unaccompanied by an adult and No 2 will be roughly equivalent to the present [A] but will make it necessary for children under 14 to be accompanied by an adult. In the *Kiné Weekly* of October 1969 Walter Maguire Jr commented, "Heaven help the managers if this goes through. It's hard enough to decide if the kids are over 16. If they've also got to guess if they're 14 or 16 or 18..." Whilst in November the Association of Independent Cinemas suggested that the [U], [A] and [X] certificates should be retained, with the addition of an [R] certificate, barring anyone under the age of 18. In the end, new [U] (general exhibition), [A] (under 14s must be accompanied), [AA] (no one under 14) and [X] (over 18s only) came in to force on 1 July 1970.

Kiné Weekly – August 1969



ESSOLDO MODERNISING 3...



The Essoldo Cannock as the Picture House in May 2004 {35018}

On 7 September, the Essoldo circuit opens its latest luxury cinema in Cannock. Formerly the Picture House it was acquired by Essoldo last year and has been closed since early June, during which time it has been completely restyled. The 403 seats are all on one level and in common with the group's other modernised cinemas one seat price will operate throughout.

A week later, the Playhouse Gerrards Cross, closes and will reopen in mid-November. It will be the first cinema to be equipped with the new single pedestal seat, the Sejour, marketed by Essoldo (Furniture) Ltd. Plans have now been prepared for a similar scheme at Kilburn.

Kiné Weekly – 30 August 1969

...CINECENTA OPENING 4

Four more cinemas are to be opened by Cinecenta next month. Three are in a new complex in Abbey Street, Leicester, which opens on 4 September and Cinéclub 24 in Tottenham Court Road, London, on 11 September. The Leicester complex consists of two cinemas, seating 280 and 198 respectively and one Penthouse Cinéclub, seating 136. The London Cinéclub 24 seats 250 people. Membership will cost 6/- a year and is open to everyone over the age of 18.

Kiné Weekly – 30 August 1969

HUTCHINSON BUYS TWO ODEONS



The Odeon Rhyl as Apollo Bingo in June 2011 {22968}

Two Odeon cinemas in North Wales have been taken over by Hutchinson Cinemas Ltd of Burnley. They are the Odeon Rhyl and the Odeon Llandudno. Alan R Hutchinson, of Hutchinson Cinemas Ltd and associated companies, says the two theatres will be renamed Astra and will continue to be operated as cinemas. The Rhyl cinema seats 1,200 people and the Llandudno cinema 1,700. AR Wakeham, formerly assistant manager at the Odeon Rhyl, has been appointed manager and Roy Bentley continues as manager at Llandudno. The Hutchinson Cinemas group comprises 14 halls, four of which are cinemas and the others bingo halls. Three years ago they took over the Odeon Colwyn Bay, which had been closed for some years and after considerable alterations reopened it as the Astra Entertainment Centre with cinema entertainment and bingo.

Kiné Weekly – 20 September 1969

CLASSIC INCREASES THE TAKINGS AT ST AUSTELL

Complete confidence in the future of cinemas was expressed by EA Rhodes, managing director and chairman of Classic cinemas, when he paid a 'flying visit' to the Classic cinema at St Austell, Cornwall, last Saturday. The cinema was taken over from the Rank organisation in a package deal of 47 about two years ago. On a tour of cinemas throughout the country, Rhodes was welcomed to St Austell by the new manager, David Walker, who had been with the Rank organisation for 12 years and moved to Cornwall from Buckinghamshire. Expressing his confidence in the cinema industry of the future, Rhodes said that in the past three-quarters of a year, there had been a 14% increase in the admissions. "With television having become as much a part of nearly every home as the refrigerator, people are once more seeking entertainment en-masse," he said. "They find that they are able to enjoy a drama or a comedy much more by the atmosphere that is created in the cinema."

Kiné Weekly – 22 November 1969

RANK TAKES OVER TWO KEY CINEMAS FROM CINECENTA

In a deal involving "a very considerable amount of money," Rank Leisure Services will be taking over two Cinecenta halls, the Scala Superama at Birmingham and the Superama Derby. The deal, subject the exchange of contracts, is planned to take effect from midnight Saturday. Alan Kean, a director of Cinecenta, told *Today's Cinema* last night that the takeover follows a growing difficulty in obtaining product. "And with the position deteriorating every day our ability to sustain these halls on a first-run level and get a reasonable return for our capital, was becoming increasingly difficult. With Rank, of course, it is a very different story; and with these two halls we feel they have got two very fine cinemas which will be an asset to their circuit." The Birmingham Superama (previously a Compton house), seats 650 and was opened in 1965. Cinecenta will retain control of their cinema club that adjoins the property. The Superama Derby opened in 1966. It seats 600 and adjoins the Rank Pennine Hotel. It is expected that an announcement will be made jointly by Rank and Cinecenta about the cinemas later this week.

Today's Cinema – 17 February 1970

PUBLICATIONS

Back Numbers Available

PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

Listed below are the back numbers of *Picture House* that are still available:

- Nos 6, 8 – £1.50 each
- Nos 16, 17, 18 – £3.00 each
- Nos 19, 21, 22 – £3.50 each
- Nos 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 – £4.50 each
- No 30 – £5.00
- No 31 – £7.50
- Nos 32, 33, 34, 35 – £5.00 each
- No 36 – £6.00
- No 37 – £8.50
- Nos 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 – £6.00 each.

For details of contents, see Bulletin 54/6, or online at [\[www.cta-uk.org/publishing/picture-house\]](http://www.cta-uk.org/publishing/picture-house)

There are also available a few second-hand copies of out-of-print issues of *Picture House* 9, 10, 14/15, 20 & 23, 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 2019 are £4.00 per year (6 issues), individual copies are £1.00 each. Prices for issues in 2020 and 2021 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.

Recently Published

(reviewed in recent Bulletins)

The Matcham Directory – £10.00 plus postage

Abandoned Cinemas of the World – £29.50 plus postage

January Sales

We are pleased to offer reductions on these titles to warm up your reading during the winter months!

Basingstoke Entertained by Mervyn Gould (2007)
Cover price £8.95 – Sale Price £3.50

Cinemas of Essex by Bob Grimwood (1996)
Cover Price £13.50 – Sale Price £6.00

Enter the Dream House ed O'Brien & Eyles (1991)
Cover Price £11.95 – Sale Price £5.00
Memories of Cinemas in South London from the 20s to the 60s

How Belfast Saw the Light by Tom Hughes (2014)
Cover Price £20.00 – Sale Price £12.00
A Cinematic History in 720 pages.
(Please note postage on this book is £6.40 and it cannot be sent overseas.)

The Big Picture – Cinemas in Dundee by Jack Searle & Craig Muir (2012) Cover Price £11.99 – Sale Price £9.00

Ribbon of Dreams – Remembering Cardiff Cinemas
by Gary Wharton (1998) Cover Price £8.85 – Sale Price £4.00

From Grand to Grove by Eddie Grabham (2007)
Cover Price £16.00 – Sale Price £7.50
Theatres & cinemas in Luton, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Toddington.

Long-Gone Cinemas of Swale (Kent) by John Clancy (2003)
Cover price £4.50 – Sale Price £2.50
Sittingbourne – Faversham – Isle of Sheppey

Cinemas of North Tyneside by Frank Manders (2009)
Cover Price £12.95 – Sale Price £6.00

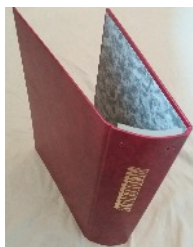
West Yorkshire Cinemas & Theatres by Peter Tuffrey (2015)
Cover Price £14.99 – Sale Price £9.50

York Cinemas by Mervyn Gould (2006)
Cover price £14.50 – Sale Price £5.00

Please add £3.40 to your order for postage
(except Belfast – £6.40) – ordering details on p5.

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.

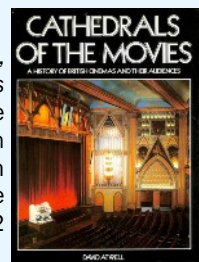


Price: £6.00 per binder, supplied in a special postal carton. Please add £3.00 to your total order for post and packing.

Ordering details below.

Second-Hand Book Sale

There are still some books available in this sale, including rare titles such as *Odeon*, *Cathedrals of the Movies*, *The Picture Palace*, etc. To receive a full list with around 50 titles, please send an email to the Sales Officer [sales@cta-uk.org] with 'Second Hand Book List' as the subject. Or write to Sales Officer, 34 Pelham Road, London, N22 6LN (SAE appreciated).



Ordering

For post and packing: total order value up to £20.00 please add £3.40, total order value from £20.01 to £40.00 please add £4.40, total order value from £40.01 to £60.00 please add £6.40. For larger orders and overseas, please contact the Sales Officer, email: [sales@cta-uk.org]. Orders to Jeremy Buck, CTA Sales, 34, Pelham Road, London, N22 6LN. Cheques/POs payable to Cinema Theatre Association, or send credit/debit card number with expiry date and security code. A complete sales list is available by sending an SAE and all the books can be seen on the CTA website [www.cta-uk.org] where you can also place your order using PayPal. A sales list is sent with every order.

Also Available (but not from the Sales Officer)

Warner Bros at Teddington Studios from 1931 - 1944

By John V Watson. Paperback, 350 pages, £32.98.

ISBN 979-8553737160. Available via Amazon etc.

In 1931, Warner Bros and its sister company, First National, decided to make their own British films, rather than 'farm' their British-made film requirements to British film producers. This operation was to be done at Teddington Studios, which they at first rented and then bought the facility outright. This book then is the story of the Warner Bros First National Productions film-making operation at Teddington Studios between 1932 and 1944. It contains a complete and extensively detailed filmography of the 144 films they made at the studio, including one co-production. Uniquely, most of this detailed information has never been published in book form. This is the Second Edition of this book as further information has become available.



Popular Music at Manchester's Free Trade Hall – 1951 to 1996

By Richard Lysons. Hardback, 288 pages, £20,

ISBN 978-1909360815. Available from

Amazon or post free from the publisher at [www.empire-uk.com/FTH.html].

The Free Trade Hall opened in the 1850s but was bombed during the war. A new hall was constructed between the remaining walls and opened in 1951 as the home for the Hallé Orchestra. It also hosted popular music, which is the subject of this book by CTA member Richard Lysons. It was rarely used for films but did show *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* just before it closed in 1966.



HERITAGE CASEWORK

By Tim Hatcher

Grade II* Listed

Concern grows over the continued decline into dilapidation of the State at Grays whilst the latest proposals for alteration by JD Wether- spoon remain in abeyance. Regrettably, local councillors appear will- ing to sacrifice the integrity of the building's original features in order to facilitate a swift conclusion to its extended period of desuetude. The CTA is thus attempting to enlist the advocacy of other organisa- tions in an attempt to resist these unsympathetic interpolations and to ensure that the structure receives the immediate remedial mainte- nance required.



The Association is liaising with the Conservation Officer of Harrow London Borough Council concerning a proposed corrective under- taking to rectify defects that have arisen upon the frontage of the Grosvenor in the Rayner's Lane area. *Photo taken March 2004.*

The CTA remains in detailed discussions concerning renovation of the Granada in Walthamstow. It is encouraging to report that, as peti- tioned, the dual organ consoles have been removed for restoration. Consultation anent the results of paint analyses and subsequent choice of colour palette is envisaged.

The trust administering the Picture House in Paignton is no longer soliciting funding from the Association; it is currently applying to varied sources in order to secure finance for restoration of the cinema's façade and front-of-house areas. Various activities in relation to the forthcoming International Agatha Christie Festival are also in the embryonic stages of planning.

Grade II Listed

The religious group that owns the Ritz in Nuneaton finds itself in an impecunious state and is therefore seeking funds to underwrite expe- dition of essential repairs to the roof and to enhance the building's security provision. The seemingly omnipresent spectre of asbestos is set to exhibit a further challenge to the budget.

Trafford Council has acceded to the previously reported request for its intervention to prevent further deterioration and promote repair to the disused frontal block of the Pyramid in Sale. The authority is treating the problem as an enforcement issue and is to ensure that necessary measures are taken by the property's owners to rectify decay of affected elements.

Unlisted

A scheme to adapt the Elite in Ashbourne into a theatre would entail removal of any surviving internal detail dating from its 1929 inception. However, the structure has previously suffered considerable internal revision and subdivision; it is thus considered that insufficient original features remain to merit expending a significant amount of limited resources on the case.

The CTA is continuing to press for retention of the front and rear elevations, together with the foyers, of the Westover/ABC in Bourne- mouth. It is also soliciting the commission of a full photographic record of the interior and requesting that any significant architectural elements be salvaged.



Save Britain's Heritage has suggested that the Association might add its endorsement to the former's attempt to procure listed status for the Abbey, situated in Liverpool's Wavertree area. This support will augment that garnered locally from the civic society and from a group campaigning for the retention of the property. *Photo taken July 2007.*

Various options are under exploration to halt the corrosion to the steelwork within residual sections of the frontage of the Kensington Kinema, which are destined for incorporation into the new edifice envisioned for the plot. The resultant expansion has caused cracking to the facing stonework. Unfortunately, solutions range from short-term and possibly ineffective remedies to a highly intrusive option of complete deconstruction and re-erection with replacement steelwork. This latter alternative is likely to entail replication of many of the facing components, resulting in a consequent loss of originality and patina.

No objection has been submitted to a planning application to enclose a small balcony situated on a flank wall of the Savoy in Leyton in order to establish two small rooms thereon.

An approach is to be made to the Conservation Officer of Westminster City Council to counsel the attachment of a condition to any planning consent to be granted with respect to the Twentieth Century Fox Building in Soho. This would be to the effect that the neon roof-sign shall be punctiliously dismantled and offered to a suitable museum or collection.

A recent local planning proposal would remove the Prince's in North Shields from the official town centre zone. Whilst this would not currently render any additional risk to the venue, it could at a future date transpire that this had been a retrograde measure; thus the ordinance is to be resolutely resisted.

The Futurist in Nottingham has been locally listed; this provides an increased degree of protection to the property.

Efforts continue to dissuade Sunderland City Council from its medium-term intent to demolish the Regal, entreating it instead to regard the property as an asset in its regeneration scheme by including the current building in its new local plan.

Buzz Bingo

Following the recent permanent closure of several prominent former cinemas as bingo halls of the above company, grave perturbation arises for the future of these sites. The most notable of these is undoubtedly the Regal in Bridlington, which was recently inexplicably refused listed status by Historic England despite a skilfully crafted submission extolling its copious and varied extant detailing of distin- guished quality.

In an endeavour to secure a future for these buildings, the CTA is engaging pro-actively by contacting cinema chains with suggestions and details of those that might make useful additions to their portfo- ios. It is of course recognised that identical economic factors that prompted the closure of these halls are also adversely affecting film exhibitors to a similar degree and it is not the ideal time in which to suggest expansion.



WELSH CASEWORK

By John Skinner

Gaiety Cinema, Cardiff (Not Listed)



The former Gaiety Cinema of 1912, which closed as a cinema in 1961, is likely to be demolished in the near future. Owners the MSG group successfully obtained planning approval to demolish and replace with a block of student flats on 12 November 2018. A subsequent application by developers Bonnes Mares has been submitted to demolish and replace with a temporary surface car park prior to conversion into student accommodation. The cinema, part of the Jackson Withers circuit from 1956, was converted to full-time bingo in 1961, which ran until 1998 and up until this time the interior was relatively intact. However, the conversion into the Spin Bar and Bowling in 2001 resulted in the gutting of most of the interior features and the replacement of the balcony with a new floor.

Thankfully, my colleague in CTA Cymru, Jon Williams, who lives nearby, took a photographic record of the building and salvaged a piece of plasterwork inscribed "Splott Cinema Company" from the balcony. Attempts were made by Jon to get CADW to list the building at this time but to no avail. The Bowling venture moved out in 2006, since when the building has been empty and deteriorated, currently covered in scaffolding and looking very sad indeed. I contacted CADW recently and their spokesperson confirmed that they had looked at the building as recently as 2017 at the request of a member of the local community but that they do not consider the twin-domed frontage sufficient on its own to locally list the building. It appears that it is now too late to challenge this but very frustrating that an early purpose-built cinema with a distinctive façade will be lost. {17595}

Photo by Jon Williams

County Cinema, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf (Not Listed)



The former County Cinema in Pontypridd of 1939 looks likely to be demolished in the near future. The cinema was constructed by the Jackson Withers chain of cinemas within the walls of the former Royal Clarence Theatre of 1890, renamed the New Theatre in 1901. Cinema use continued until the early 1980s when it became a bingo club, closing as the Stardust Bingo Club in the early 2000s. Recent enquiries to Rhondda Cynon Taf Council revealed that the Council has purchased the building after several unsuccessful attempts to redevelop it by different owners. A spokesperson from the Council stated that the building has deteriorated badly with falling masonry on the external walls and that the building has serious asbestos contamination both in the roof and in the paint used on the interior walls when it was operating as a bingo hall. The Council appears to have given up on the building, which has become an eyesore and intends to replace it, preferably with residential use.

Pontypridd is due to host the National Eisteddfod in 2023 and the intention is to redevelop the site by then as it is right opposite the main rail station. In spite of its long association with entertainment in the town, I do not hold much hope of getting this former cinema listed. The interior is spacious (1,600 seats on opening) but apart from some art deco grilles on either side of the proscenium, there is little else to distinguish it. {39282}

Photo by Harry Rigby – August 2007

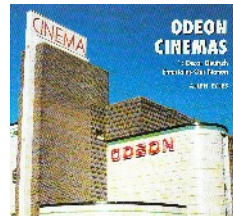
CARTOON CORNER



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

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compiled by Harry Rigby

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Monday, November 2nd, for 7 days
Charlie Chaplin with Virginia Cherrill in
City Lights
 The master comedian's master picture of a pathetic little tramp who befriends a blind flower girl.
 Additional big Talkie attraction **Leo Carrillo in**
HELL BOUND

Monday, November 9th, for 3 days
Alice Day in The
Lady from Nowhere
 Also **Leslie Fuller & Alf Goddard in**
OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE
 In the Same Programme **Zazu Pitts Comedy**

Thursday, November 12th, for 4 days
Fredric March, Mary Brian & Ina Claire
 in a scintillating and polished comedy,
The Royal Family of Broadway
 Also **Richard Arlen & Fay Wray in**
THE SEA GOD
 A romantic drama of crooks and South Sea pearl divers

Monday, November 16th, for 7 days
Marlene Dietrich with Gary Cooper & Adolphe Menjou in
Morocco
 Also showing **A drama of Capital and Labour**
THE WOMAN BETWEEN
 featuring **Owen Nares**

Monday, November 23rd, for 7 days
Maurice Chevalier & Claudette Colbert in
Smiling Lieutenant
 with **Miriam Hopkins & Charles Ruggles**
 Better even than 'The Love Parade'
 Also **Carol Lombard & Skeets Gallagher in**
IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

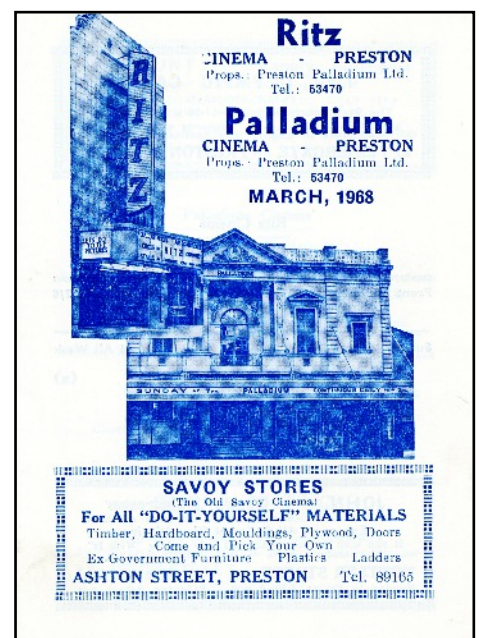
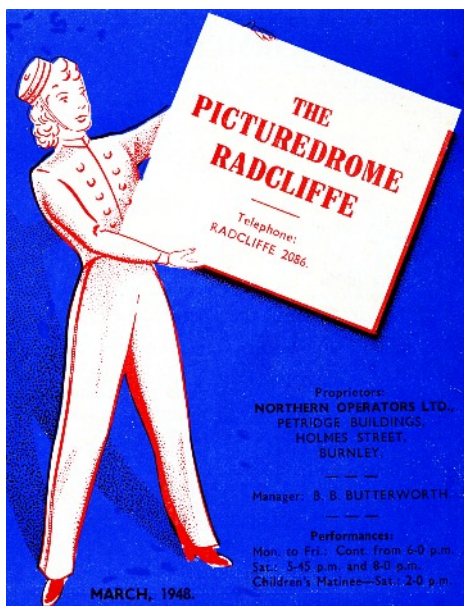
Monday, November 30th, for 7 days
Helen Twelvetrees in
Millie
 A story that cries out to the heart of every woman
 Additional Attraction **Dorothy Mackaill in**
KEPT HUSBANDS
 Also the latest **Laurel & Hardy** mirthquake
WHEN THE CHICKENS COME HOME
This Programme is subject to alteration by the Management

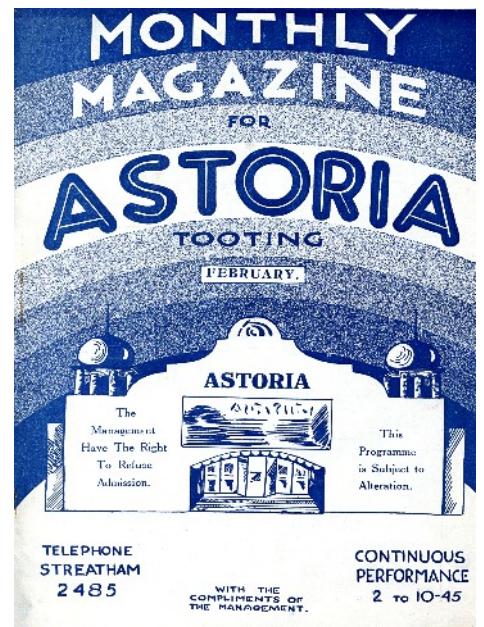
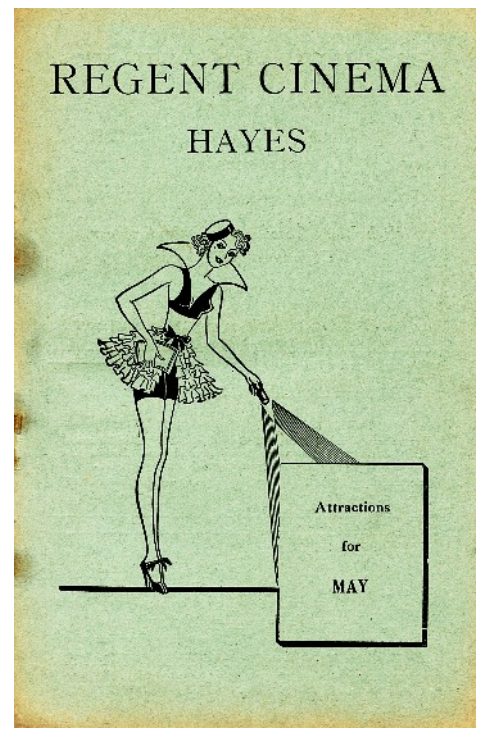
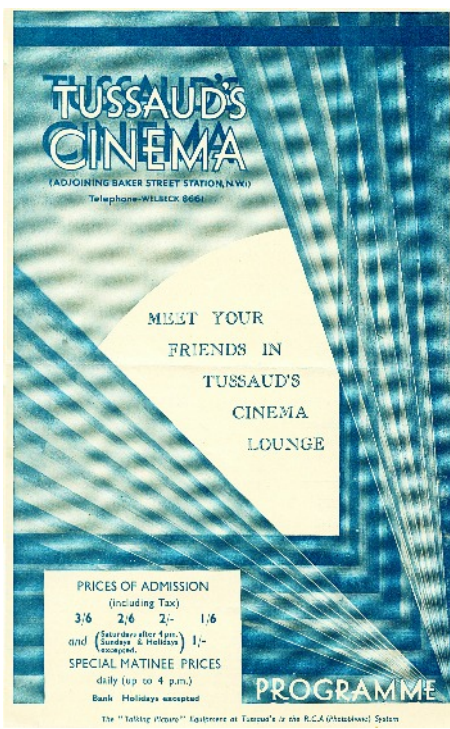
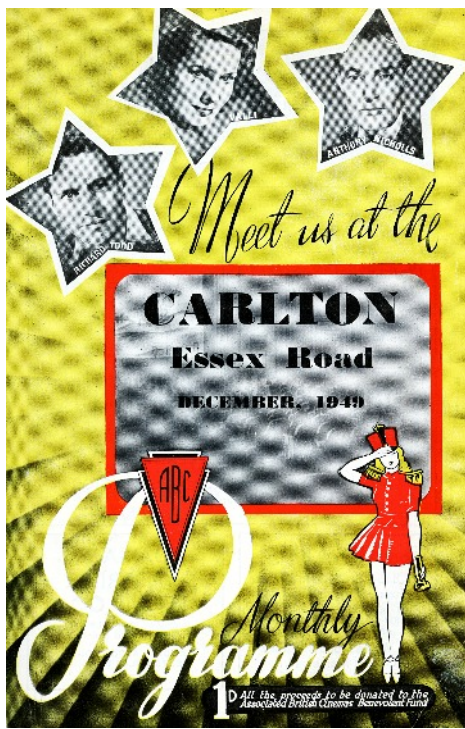
Programme for the Empress Hackney,
 November 1931 – see article on p10

COLLECTING CINEMA PROGRAMMES

By Kevin Wheelan

Souvenir opening programmes are very collectible and can fetch quite high prices. They were usually produced for the more prestigious cinemas and the films were specially selected for the openings. More interesting, in my opinion, are the humble weekly or monthly programmes issued by cinemas large and small, as they give a much greater feel of the period, showing regional difference in taste / film preference and contrasting what was available to the larger circuit cinemas with what was available to the small independents. Although often poorly printed on cheap paper, many were graced with interesting graphics as, I hope, these examples will show.





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REGENT CINEMA

DEAL

JULY 1937

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The Regent Cinema, Deal.
The Month JULY in Brief.

Thursday, July 1st for 3 days	ROMEO & JULIET —Leslie Howard, Norma Shearer Supporting Programme
Monday, July 5th for 3 days	UNDER COVER OF NIGHT —Edmund Lowe It's in the Bag—Nervo & Knox
Thursday, July 8th for 3 days	GYPSY —Roland Young King of the Ice Rink—Dick Purcell
Sunday, July 11th for 3 days	RAINBOW ON THE RIVER —Bobby Breen Supporting Programme
Thursday, July 15th for 3 days	BEAUTY & THE BARGE —Gordon Harker Supporting Programme
Monday, July 18th for 3 days	TAINTED MONEY —Rochelle Hudson Racing Blood—Frankie Darro
Thursday, July 22nd for 3 days	PLUCK OF THE IRISH —James Cagney Hats Off—Mac Clarke
Sunday, July 25th for 3 days	LOVE ON THE RUN —Joan Crawford, Clark Gable Knights for a Day—Nelson Keys
Thursday, July 29th for 3 days	BEWARE OF LADIES —Donald Cook, Judith Allen Happy-go-Lucky—Phil Regan

Programme subject to alteration

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CURTAINS, CASEMENTS, BLANKETS
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<p>MONDAY, APRIL 5th—for 3 days HENRY FONDA DAVIDARA DEL GROSSO "THE LONG NIGHT" (A) BOB HOPE DOROTHY LAMOUR "THEY GOT ME COVERED" (A) THURSDAY, APRIL 8th—for 3 days YVONNE DE CARLO GEORGE BRENT "SLAVE GIRL" (U) OLSEN AND JOHNSON "HELIZAPOPPIN'" (U) MONDAY, APRIL 12th—for 3 days ROBERT YOUNG SUSAN HAYWARD "THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME" (A) RALPH BYRD "DRUMS OF THE DESERT" (C) THURSDAY, APRIL 15th—for 3 days TOM WALLS SONJA TREMPER "WHILE I LIVE" (A) WALTER BRENNAN "MARYLAND" (U)</p>	<p>SUNDAY, APRIL 4th— "Imputation Years" (A) ALSO "Behind Closed Doors" (A) SUNDAY, APRIL 11th "Fighting Guardsman" (A) ALSO "Leave it to Blondie" (U) SUNDAY, APRIL 18th— "Raffle's" (A) ALSO "Study in Scarlet" (A) SUNDAY, APRIL 25th— "Adventures of Tom Sawyer" (U) ALSO "The Body Vanished" (A)</p>	<p>MONDAY, APRIL 19th—for 3 days GARY COOPER JEAN ARTHUR "MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN" (U) MICHAEL WHALEN "SIGN OF THE WOLF" (U) THURSDAY, APRIL 22nd—for 3 days ANNA NEALE "PEG OF OLD DRURY" (U) LAWRENCE TIERNEY "DEVIL THUMB'S A RIDE" (A) MONDAY, APRIL 26th—for 3 days ROSALIND RUSSELL JOEY MILLER "GUILT OF JANET AMES" (A) MICHAEL DIXON "KEEPER OF THE BEES" (U) THURSDAY, APRIL 29th—for 3 days JOHN WATSON "TARZAN and the LEOPARD WOMAN" (U) MORGAN CONWAY "DICK TRACY vs CUEBALL" (A)</p>
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BIRMINGHAM
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and
Programme

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ON THE STAGE
Monday, May 6th for Six Days—
BROWNING and STAR
Entertainers

Monday, May 13th for Six Days—
THE TERRY SISTERS with Billie
York at the piano
PETER WHITE
Comedy

Monday, May 20th for Six Days—
THE SIX CLAUDETTES
Acrobatic Rhythm
NICK and MARIA
Accordian Stars

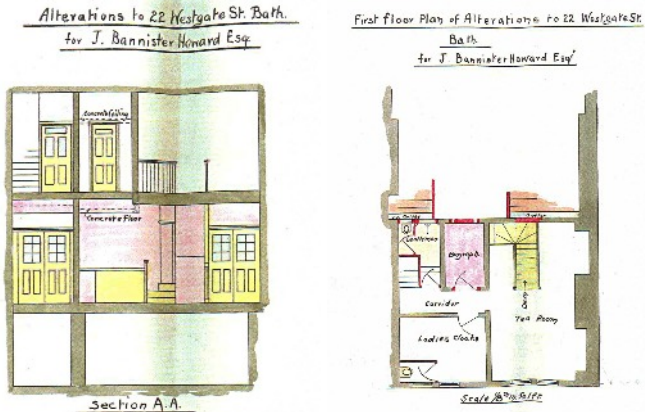
Monday, May 27th for Six Days—
O'SHEA and JOAN
Stepping it Out
STANLEY and YOUNG
Two Comedians at a Keyboard

FORUM CINEMA EALING
Reigning Supreme
1935 1935
JUBILEE PICTURE GROUP
This Month's Attractions

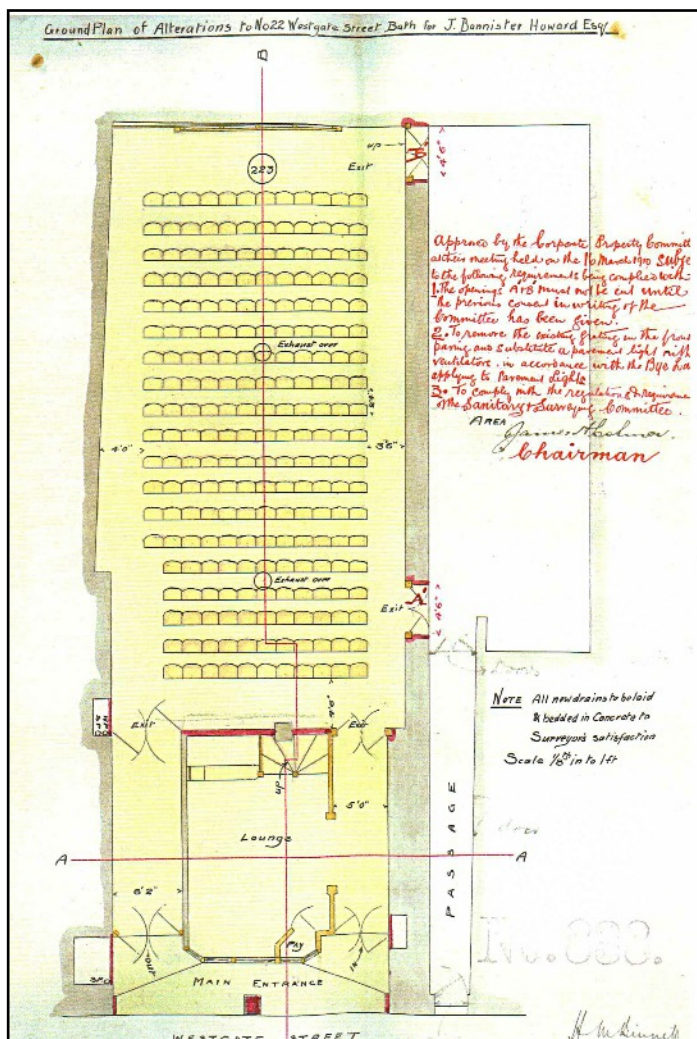
ELECTRIC THEATRE, 22 WESTGATE STREET, BATH

By Ben Doman

In January 1910 plans were announced in the *Bath and Wilts Chronicle* and *Herald* that number 22 Westgate Street had been acquired by Mr J Bannister Howard for conversion to an Electric Theatre. The site had previously been occupied by Palmers & Sons, hatters and outfitters. Original plans by renowned theatre architect Bertie Crewe, dated 14 February 1910, show the biograph box and tea rooms on the ground floor, with the internal layout changed considerably from the existing shop layout. The 'as built' drawings dated just ten days later show a different layout, retaining the existing internal walls. This would have made the conversion much cheaper and quicker.

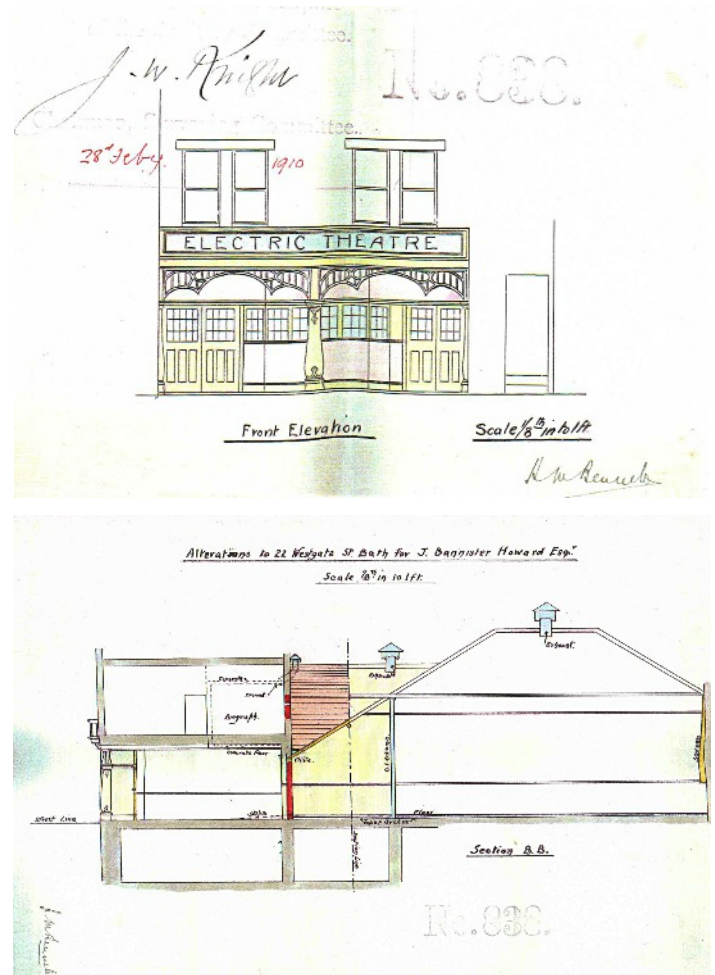


Plans 1910 - frontage showing cellars under the building; first floor, showing tearoom, biograph box and toilets.



1910 floor plan, with handwritten note [in red] stating the exit openings marked A & B on the right side should not be cut into the wall until written permission is given from the planning committee. These exits were reported in 1915 as not existing.

Conversion of number 22 progressed quickly and the Electric Theatre opened in Westgate Street on 9 April 1910. There was an open frontage, with exit doors from the theatre on the left and entrance doors on the right of the central pay box. There was a lounge situated behind the pay box, where tea or 'a quiet smoke' could be enjoyed. From the lounge, a staircase led to the first floor, where the biograph box, tea room and toilets were situated. The auditorium was situated on the ground floor, with 192 seats distributed as 16 rows of 12 seats. Exits by the stage and towards the rear of the auditorium lead to a passage that ran down the right side of the property back onto Westgate Street.



Plans 1910 - frontage; cross section showing biograph box on the first floor and cellars under the building.

ELECTRIC THEATRE,
WESTGATE STREET, BATH.
Continuous Performance. Daily 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.
ALL THE BEST & LATEST PICTURES.
Times and Prices:—Afternoon, between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., Admission 6d. (including Tea). Evening, between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m., Admission 3d. and 6d. Children Half-Price Afternoons only.
Programme Changed every Monday and Thursday.
Over 4,000 Feet of Pictures Every Hour.

"PICTUREDROME,"
SOUTHGATE STREET, BATH,
Will Open on **WEDNESDAY NEXT,**
June 21st, at 6 p.m.
(Subject to the License being granted).
CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE DAILY,
6 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Prices of Admission—Front Seats 3d., Back Seats 6d.

Press Block 17 July 1911

Keene's *Bath Journal* reported on Saturday 9 April 1910, "A novelty in the shape of an **Electric Theatre** is to be opened in Westgate Street today, by Mr J Bannister Howard, lessee of the **Crystal Palace Theatre** London. The hall in which the pictures will be shown is 53 feet long by 27 feet broad and will seat 228 spectators. Front seats will be 3d and the back seats 6d. These seats are of the latest tip-up pattern. Special arrangements have been made to secure the protection of the cinematograph apparatus in the case of fire. The operating chamber, described by an insurance official as the finest he had ever seen, is situated on the first floor, the walls being constructed of stone, with a concrete floor and ceiling. The room is entirely enclosed, save for the iron door and two small apertures, through one of which the films are shown, the other being used by the operator for focusing. Should the film catch fire, all that the operator has to do to ensure his safety is to leave the chamber and by opening the iron door he releases two fireproof shutters, which automatically close the two apertures already referred to and thus isolate the chamber.

Mr Howard has had constructed a special lantern, the films being provided by the same firm as that which supplies the pictures at the **Alhambra** London. A change of films will be effected every Monday and Thursday and it is intended to reproduce interesting events in picture form without delay. The work of decorating the building is being pushed forward unceasingly. The façade will be ornamented with plaster figures and the front elevation will be covered with Ebrunite. The opening will take place this afternoon at 3-o'clock, the performance being continuous until 11pm Smoking will be permitted in the building and adjoining the entrance is a convenient lounge where tea will be provided free to the afternoon patrons. Mr Howard's manager will be Mr Arthur Hales, who has been with Mr Howard for many years as manager of his *The Eternal City* and *The Earl and the Girl* [acting] companies. He has had much experience in theatre management, having controlled two theatres in the North. Last night an invitation performance was given when some very fine films were thrown on to the screen, all of which were heartily appreciated. A number of members of the Town Council were present...."

Bath Electric Theatre Company was registered on 21 September 1910 for the purpose of purchasing the **Electric Theatre** Westgate Street, from James Bannister Howard as a going concern with effect from 3 October 1910 for the price of £4,000. It was noted that the cinema had, since its opening, over 85,000 paid admissions. Performances were between 3pm and 11pm and free tea and biscuits were served in the two "splendidly furnished" lounges. Average weekly profits were £28, giving an annual profit of £1,450. The directors were to be Francis Milsom (gentleman), Rupert Waterhouse (physician) and J Bannister Howard (theatre proprietor). Howard agreed to act as Managing Director "for a period of not less than 5 years from 3 October 1910 for remuneration of £150 per annum". In the annual report of 22 November 1910, company secretary Arthur Hales is listed as the theatre manager. The popularity of the Westgate Street **Electric Theatre** led the Bath Electric Theatre Company to propose to build a second theatre in Southgate Street. This opened on 21 June 1911 as the **Picturedrome**, later **Regal** and then **Odeon**.

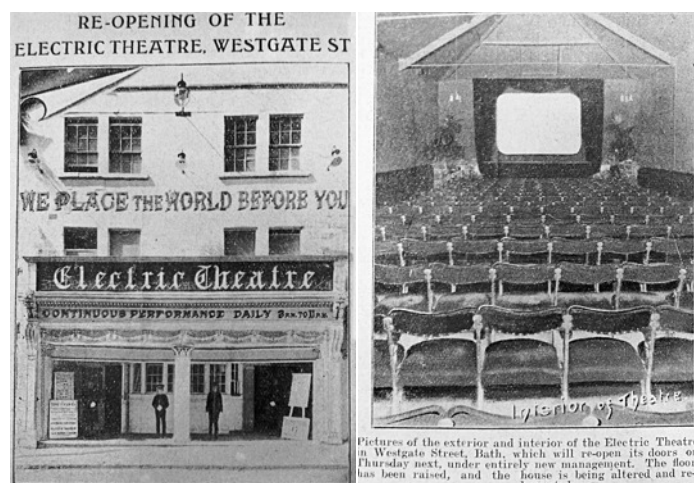
"PICTUREDROME,"
SOUTHGATE STREET, BATH,
NOW OPEN.
ALL THE LATEST PICTURES.
CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE DAILY,
3 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Prices of Admission—Front Seats 3d., Back Seats 6d.
On Wednesdays and Saturdays, at 8 p.m., Children 2d.
and 3d. Adults 6d. 21

ELECTRIC THEATRE,
WESTGATE STREET, BATH.
Closed for Re-Decoration,
RE-OPENING ON OR ABOUT SATURDAY,
SEPTEMBER 2.

The Picturedrome will be Open Every Afternoon during
the time the Electric Theatre remains closed.

Press block 19 August 1911 – The **Electric** closed for redecoration, directing customers to its sister theatre, the **Picturedrome**.

Arthur Hales appears to have taken over the day-to-day management of the Bath Electric Theatre Company's **Picturedrome** in Southgate Street when that opened in 1911.



Press adverts 1913 announcing the reopening, showing the auditorium complete with potted plants. The floor has been raised, seats re spaced and the theatre redecorated.

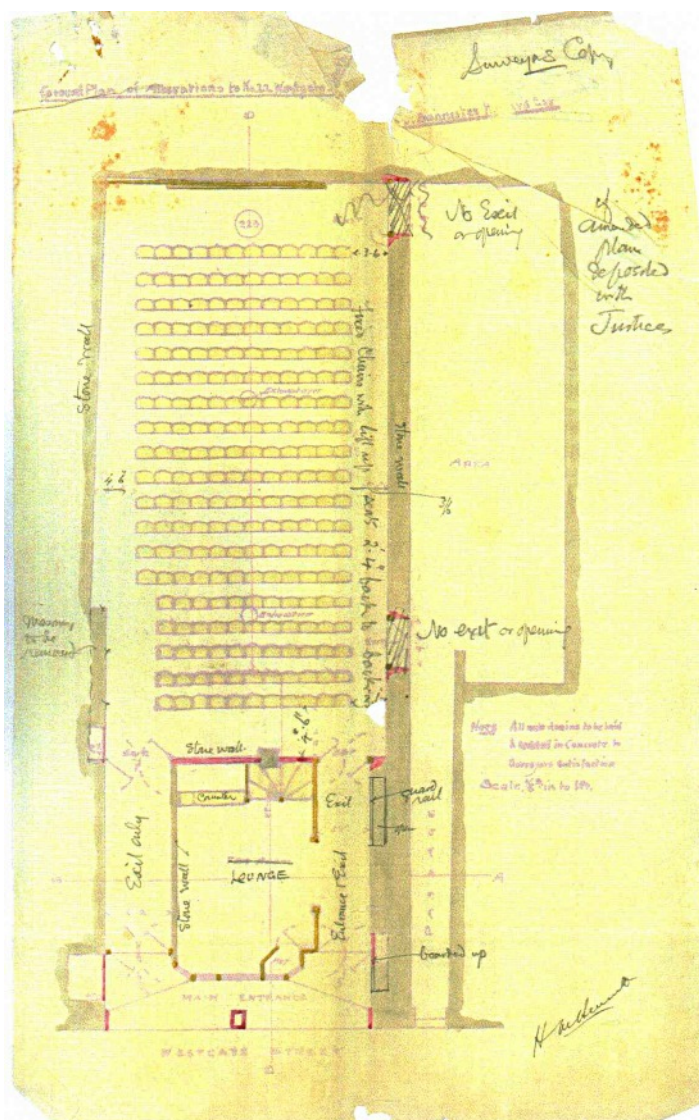
"PICTUREDROME,"
SOUTHGATE STREET, BATH,
CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE DAILY,
3 p.m. to 11 p.m.
ALL THE BEST PICTURES
Prices—Afternoons (3 to 6), 6d. ; Children 2d. and 3d.
Evening (6 to 11), 3d. and 6d.
Children Half-Price to 6d. Seats only.
Programme Changed Mondays and Thursdays.

ELECTRIC THEATRE,
WESTGATE STREET, BATH.
Continuous Performance Daily, 3 to 11 p.m.
ALL THE LATEST PICTURES
Prices :—Afternoon (3 p.m. to 6 p.m.), Admission 6d
(including Tea). Evening (6 p.m. to 11 p.m.), Fron
Seats 3d., Back Seats 6d. Children Half Price to 6d
seats only.
Programme Changed Mondays and Thursdays,

Press Block 2 December 1911

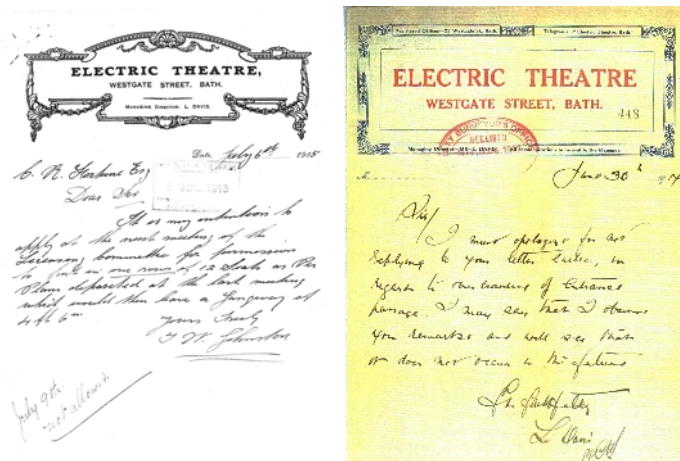
In December 1913, there was a shareholders meeting of the Bath Electric Theatre Company to discuss the action bought against the company by Mr J Bannister Howard, director of the company. It was stated at this time that the theatre was not the profitable concern it was two years previously. The theatre was too small. Where patrons had been content to stand in the gangways when the seats were all taken (and the police to turn a blind eye) when it had been the only electric theatre in town, with the **Picturedrome**, **Coliseum** and **Vaudeville** opening and films being shown at the **Palace Theatre** and **Assembly Rooms**, people were expecting more comfort. With the **Electric Theatre** running at a loss, attempts were made to sell the premises. An offer was made by two gentlemen from Oxford of £250 rent for the first year, with an option to buy the theatre after 12 months for £1,350. Mr J Bannister Howard interjected with his suggestion that either the shareholders run the theatre themselves and enlarge the theatre, or sell the premises and use the proceeds to pay off the mortgage of the **Picturedrome**. Mr Howard had brought the action against the company to recoup his remuneration for the remaining two years, as it seems that the board had tried to remove him from his post. The dispute seems to have been resolved quickly, as shortly after in the 13 December edition of the *Chronicle*, the reopening of the theatre was announced for the following Thursday, under the new management of Mr L Davis. There was a full redecoration and new sloped floor. By November 1914, Mr Bannister Howard had resigned his seat on the board of the Bath Electric Theatre Company.

Plans drawn up by Alfred J Taylor, dated October 1914, show accommodation for 193 persons over 16 rows, with plans by the same architect dated April 1915 showing an extra three rows inserted between the existing back row of seats and the rear wall. This would have given an extra 30 seats, bringing the total to 223, showing the trend at the time of the increasing popularity of cinema-going. This was not approved as a letter dated 3 September 1917 from the acting City surveyor notifies that it had been reported that the number of seats had been increased from 193 to 229 and thus lessening the required one foot space between one fixed seat back and the next, without the consent of the Justices. Mr Davis is notified that this leaves him liable to a penalty of £20 and a daily penalty of £5 and the revocation of the license. A report from a Mr Edwards says that on a visit to the theatre on 20 June 1917 he "...sat in a seat and had difficulty in getting out again until others had moved...". Further visits were made on 5 and 6 September to accurately measure the seats. It was found that the distance between the front of one seat and the back of the next was between 3" and 15", the requirement being 12". Also, rather alarmingly is the note on the City surveyor's plan that the two exits on the right of the auditorium had never been built, leaving the only means of escape through the entrance doors at the rear of the auditorium.



Floor plan 1915, marked up with notes that the exits did not exist; tip up chairs measured 2' 4" and gangways measured 4' 6" on the left and 3' 6" on the right.

It was announced at the shareholders meeting of 24 November 1914 of the Bath Electric Theatre Company that the sale of "the Westgate Street premises" (the Electric) had been arranged. The sale would complete on Lady Day 1915 (25 March), with rent being paid in the interim. It was also noted at the time that business at both the Electric and Picturedrome had been affected by the Coliseum, whose management had taken to giving out free tickets to entice customers to the cinema in James Street West.



[L] Letter dated July 1915 to the planning committee applying for permission to add a section of twelve seats, which was denied.

[R] Letter dated June 1917.

The sale of the premises had been arranged at the end of 1914 and the report of the annual general meeting of the Bath Electric Theatre Company in November 1915 states that the Electric Theatre had been sold. Proceeds of the sale were used to expand their other theatre, the Picturedrome, in Southgate Street. The Post Office directory of 1915 lists a change of ownership of the Electric as Davis & Lewis Properties. The Manager in 1916 was a Mr CH Fletcher. By 1917, the manager was listed as a HP Parker and in 1918 the director listing states Electric Theatre Syndicate Ltd as the owners.

Between 1915 and 1921, the management of the Electric also ran films in the former ballroom of the Assembly Rooms. In press adverts in 1917, the cinema was described as "The oldest and most up to date picture house in Bath. Old Bath saying - 'Meet me in the lounge at the Electric'."

Grand plans drawn up in October 1915 by Alfred J Taylor show an enlarged theatre, taking in the premises at number 23 Westgate Street. The frontage was in much the same Edwardian style as the existing cinema. Seating was on one floor, with a café, operators' and rewind rooms on the first floor over the entrance. Internal side wall decoration had plaster panels with 'wreath and swags' designs topping them, later revised with the side wall panels squared off, without the elaborate decoration.

Designs for a new theatre to replace the Electric were dramatically rethought in 1916 as Alfred J Taylor drew up plans for the Beau Nash Picture House, seating 560 in the stalls and 209 in the balcony, on the site of both Nos 22 & 23 Westgate Street. This would entail the demolition of the Electric Theatre and of the neighbouring premises at No 23

of Mrs Louisa Sims. Presumably, these were frustrated by the lack of labour and materials as the First World War was still in full swing. The plans were finally submitted in 1920 for the Westgate Electric Theatre Syndicate, Bath.

The last advert for Bath's first permanent cinema appeared in the Bath Chronicle on Saturday 6 March 1920 [L]. Showing Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday was *The Spender*, starring Bert Lytell, accompanied by "Pathé's great serial *The Lightning Raider*, episode - *The Bars of Death*". Advertised from Thursday next was *The Marriage Price* and coming shortly, Chaplin's *A Day's Pleasure*. The Chaplin film was showing at the Vaudeville Picture Theatre across the road the next week. It is believed the Electric Theatre closed in April 1920 and was then demolished ready for Bath's new super cinema.

VAUDEVILLE
PICTURE THEATRE, BATH.

Monday to Wednesday Next.
MONROE SALISBURY
in a wonderful Canadian story
"THAT DEVIL B'ATEESE"

Thursday to Saturday Next.
DOROTHY GISH
in an original live act comedy
"PEPPY POLLY"

Descriptive pianoforte music by
MR. FRANK TAPP
daily throughout the week from
2.30 till 4.30 and 6.30 till 8.30.

Continuous performance from 2.30 till 10.30.
Prices: Stalls, 6d. and 1/6; Balcony 3/6.

Electric Theatre
WESTGATE STREET, BATH.

MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY.
A FIVE ACT METRO ALL STAR COMEDY.
"THE SPENDER"
featuring Bert Lytell.
Pathé's Great Serials: "THE LIGHTNING RAIDER,"
Episode II: "THE BARS OF DEATH."

THURSDAY NEXT:
"THE MARRIAGE PRICE"
featuring Elsie Ferguson.

COMING SHORTLY-CHARLIE CHAPLIN IN
"A DAY'S PLEASURE."

Continuous Performance from 2.30 till 10.30.

CINEMA IN LOCKDOWN – THE SEQUEL

by Mike Whitcombe

"We will survive. We just need movies." Those were the words of Tim Richards, CEO of Vue International Cinemas, shortly after Vue announced in mid-October that financial worries created by the Covid-19 crisis were forcing them to reduce opening hours on the advice of consultancy firm Deloitte. Richards was not alone in demanding some new releases to attract cinema-goers. Denied every potential Easter and summer blockbuster, cinema chains were desperate for new films and the revenue they would bring when they began to reopen in July after the first national lockdown. The Hollywood studios, however, had different ideas. "We reopened in August on the basis that we were going to get movies that then didn't arrive," continued Richards. "Our problem right now is we have no movies even though there's a pent-up demand like we've never seen before to go out and enjoy a safe environment socially with others."



A couple of weeks later and cinemas across the land were shut once again by the government as the second national lockdown of the year began. The cinema industry, already crippled by the first lockdown, now faced another destructive period of closure. "Vue is likely going to make it through," said Richards. "But I'm concerned about the independents and the small regional operators that are going to really struggle when they close and may not reopen." But it's not just your friendly little independent that might not survive the pandemic. Global giants AMC (American Multi-Cinema) and Cineworld, are the top two cinema exhibitors in the world. Both are now in dire straits with rumours circulating of closures and bankruptcy. In the space of just six months, an unseen deadly virus, government restrictions and their own overstretched balance sheets, caused by debt-fuelled acquisitions sprees in recent years, have caused these colossal corporations to spiral from grace and teeter on the edge of an abyss. It's a story not even Hollywood could make up – although if Orson Welles was alive today he would probably remake his masterpiece *Citizen Kane*, swapping the life of a fictionalised newspaper magnate for the life of a fictionalised CEO of a movie chain! There's a much quoted scene in *Citizen Kane* when Welles, as Charles Foster Kane, says about a newspaper he owns: "I did lose a million dollars last year. I expect to lose a million dollars this year. I expect to lose a million dollars next year... at the rate of a million dollars a year I'll have to close this place in sixty years."

Right now, our biggest movie chains would be quite happy to be losing a million bucks a day, let alone a year. If the current pandemic has proved anything, it's just how precarious the finances of our much loved cinema chains are – even though 2019 saw an all-time global box office high of \$42 billion. Take AMC Entertainment, for example. Controlled by billionaire Wang Jianlin's Dalian Wanda Group, they are the largest cinema chain in the world, running AMC Theaters in the US and Odeon in the UK. They operate 7,967 screens in 620 US theaters and 2,866 screens in 358 European cinemas. But when the pandemic first swept the world at the beginning of the year, AMC was particularly vulnerable. This was because it had amassed a staggering \$4.75 billion debt before the crises by outfitting cinemas with luxury seating and buying American competitor Carmike Cinemas for £1.2 billion and UK rival Odeon for £921 million, both in 2016. This colossal debt was just manageable before the pandemic but was anything but once cinemas started closing and studios began withholding films.



The grim reality AMC found itself in was reported by CNBC journalist Sarah Whitten in late October. She revealed that in a preliminary earnings report, AMC reported \$119.5 million in revenue during a three month period ending 30 September – in the same period in 2019 AMC had made \$1.32 billion. AMC also reported that for the first nine months of 2020 they received revenue of \$1.08 billion, a quarter of the \$4.02 billion it made during the same period in 2019. When your debts are in the billions, that's a shortfall almost impossible to make up. These figures naturally caused panic and AMC's credit rating was downgraded two notches to triple C (a fact not helped by AMC's stock plunging 56% in a year). AMC responded by saying they might file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy (which would allow the company to stay in business as it reworks its debts and seeks fresh liquidity). And when it was revealed the company was burning through more than \$100 million a month, an AMC press release stated: "Existing cash resources will be depleted by the end of 2020 or early 2021."

Despite their financial worries and the lack of new releases, AMC were at least trying to keep their cinemas open, as grateful Odeon moviegoers in the UK appreciated. But AMC's closest rival, Cineworld, as deeply in debt as their competitor, decided to simply close up shop as soon as MGM and Universal announced at the start of October to postpone the release of *No Time to Die*, the latest James Bond offering, from November 2020 to April 2021. Within hours of the news, Cineworld announced they were closing indefinitely, with immediate effect, all their UK and US sites, leaving 45,000 employees out of work, including 5,500 UK staff and 20,000 US staff as well as thousands of minimum paid contractors such as cleaners and security workers. "From a liquidity point of view we are bleeding much bigger amounts when we are open than when we are closed," said Mooky Greidinger, Cineworld's CEO and a member of the family that owns more than a fifth of the company's shares. "If we stayed open we would be like a grocery shop with no food. We had to take this decision."

The enormity of Cineworld's decision cannot be underestimated. This British-based cinema chain founded in 1995 became the second largest theatre chain in the world in December 2017 when they acquired US chain Regal Cinemas for \$3.6 billion. They now have 9,518 screens across 790 sites in ten countries. Apart from the UK and Ireland (where they have 127 sites) and the US (536 theaters), Cineworld also operates cinemas in Poland, Romania, Israel, Hungary, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Slovakia. "It's not a decision we made lightly," added Greidinger. "We did everything in our power to support safe and sustainable reopenings in all of our markets – including meeting and often exceeding, local health and safety guidelines in our theatres and working constructively with regulators and industry bodies to restore public confidence in our industry."

Critics of Cineworld questioned these words, pointing out Cineworld were failing financially before Covid. After Cineworld sites went dark, Jasper Jolly, writing in *The Guardian*, revealed their debts amounted to \$8.1 billion and that they had lost \$1.58 billion in the first half of 2020 as revenues slumped by two thirds to \$712 million. Three weeks later, Alex Ritman of the *Hollywood Reporter* wrote that Cineworld was "considering a permanent shuttering of some of its UK

sites” in a bid to restructure their debt pile. Ritman also reported that Cineworld had hired restructuring specialists AlixPartners to save them. Four days later on 23 November Cineworld announced a financial lifeline of \$750 million – enough liquidity for the firm to struggle on until May 2021. This lifeline, though, was not a magical pot of cash. Instead it comprised of a new \$450 million debt facility, a waiver on all covenants on payments of its debt until June 2022 and an extension on its \$111 million revolving credit facility to 2024. In addition, a \$200 million tax refund would be generated by accelerating the closure of its US tax year.

What any of this means in plain English is anyone’s guess – but don’t start thinking it rules out cinema closures. For though shutting your local cinema wasn’t mentioned directly, Greidinger’s assertion that “our entire team is focused on managing our cost base,” doesn’t inspire trust. Nor do the words of Steve Spitzer, managing director of AlixPartners, Cineworld’s advisors. He claims “bankruptcy is a tool that can help theatre owners restructure their business in a way to reset capital structure and become more effective.” In other words, it’s an excuse to close underperforming cinemas.

The big question is whether the major Hollywood studios were right in refusing to release their blockbusters during such uncertain times? The box office returns of the Christopher Nolan helmed *Tenet*, the only major blockbuster released after the first national lockdown, doesn’t give a clear answer. Postponed three times because of the pandemic, it made Warner Bros (a subsidiary of AT&T’s Warner Media) \$350 million worldwide by mid-November after three months on release. But as the movie cost \$200 million to make and had a publicity budget of \$50 million, it barely broke even. “I can’t tell you that we walked away from the *Tenet* experience saying it was a home run,” said new AT&T CEO John Stankey, “but I’m happy we did it.” Cinema chains, finally able to entice cinema-goers with a new film, were happy they did it as well. But rival Studios were not impressed by box office returns and refused to release their long delayed movies, meaning the UK box office is unlikely to reach £400 million in 2020 (the smallest take since the mid-1990s) compared to £1.25 billion in 2019.

One of the reasons studios have stubbornly refused to release films is because of government limitations on auditorium capacities. But AMC CEO Adam Aron doesn’t believe this hinders the long-time profitability of a movie and was delighted in October when cinemas in New York State were allowed to reopen with 25% capacity. “Our industry is like a church built for Easter Sunday,” said Aron, talking on CNBC. “We are not always full. Last year when AMC sold more tickets than any cinema chain in the world, we only filled 17% of our seats. Capacity limitation is not the issue. Our concern is meeting consumer demand and getting blockbuster movies – we’ve had one major release since March.” Aron and AMC deserve credit from movie-goers for struggling on during the pandemic, even if that did mean reprising classic movies in an attempt to entertain audiences. Unlike their closest rival Cineworld, who shuttered cinemas and left their regular customers quite literally in the dark, even when authorities said they could remain open, AMC proved the ‘show must go on’.

PricewaterhouseCooper predicts it will be 2024 before revenues recover to pre-pandemic levels – although for some cinema chains it’s already too late. In April 2020 Cinemax Holdings USA, operators of Miami-based CMX Cinemas, filed for bankruptcy. This prompted The Directors Guild of America, the National Association of Theater Owners and the Motion Picture Association to write a joint letter to Congressional leaders asking for financial aid, warning “our country’s beloved movie theaters” would die without it. The letter continued: “If the status quo continues, 69% of small and mid-sized movie theater companies will be forced to file for bankruptcy or to close permanently and 66% of theater jobs will be lost. Our country cannot afford to lose the social, economic and cultural values that theaters provide.” It’s no wonder that number crunchers such as Susannah Streeter, senior investment and market analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown, believe that 2020 has been a “horror movie for the industry” and a “devastating story for cinema chains”. But if cinema chains can learn to adapt to the brave new world created by Covid-19, there are glimmers of hope.

AMC has already begun to adapt. Since March they’ve raised \$900 million from new debt and equity, secured more than \$1 billion of concessions from creditors and landlords and raised more than \$80 million from asset sales. They’ve also launched a Private Theatre Rental program where a party of 20 can hire an auditorium from as little as \$100. And let’s not forget their unique agreement with Univer-

sal Pictures in which AMC receive a cut of online sales from a Universal film that is streamed just 17 days after debuting at an AMC theatre. This has already paid off for AMC when *Kajillionaire* was sold online after debuting at cinemas in September. AMC made more money from streaming than they would if the film had played at cinemas for three months. “At a fundamental level, I think people believe the cinema model works,” confirms Steve Spitzer. “It’s why, after being shut down, AMC feels it can go to the market and raise money. Investors believe the model is not broken, just disrupted.”

There might even be a few new faces in exhibiting to shake things up. In September 2020 a federal judge in New York’s Southern District terminated the Paramount Consent decrees as part of a Justice Department review of legacy antitrust judgements. The Paramount decrees became law in the late 1940s and banned the Hollywood studios from owning theatres. It was a bid to block anti-competitive practices. Although not widely reported, the 2020 judgement has already led industry experts to suggest the possibility of streaming services Netflix and Amazon – both heavily involved in financing and producing movies – bidding for a smaller, failing cinema chain. Marc Simon, a former film maker who is now a partner at Fox Rothschild and chairman of the firm’s entertainment law department, believes cinema will once again thrive. “People have been sounding the death knell for cinema for a long time but cinema has always survived,” mused Simon. “The communal experience of going with friends and loved ones to a dark room with a big screen and the smell of popcorn is too powerful to die.”



A deserted Cineworld Chichester and Odeon Port Solent, both taken on a November Saturday afternoon, when the areas would normally be buzzing with people.

Anyone missing their regular weekly cinema fix will be hoping this optimism becomes reality. Statistics can tell us many things but in a creative industry it’s what your heart also tells you that counts. And no matter what the balance sheets say, we all hold such an emotional attachment for going to the movies, there will always be a demand for it. To misquote the tag line from the Kevin Costner favourite *Field of Dreams*: “Show the new release and they will come.” Back in August 2020 legendary movie star Tom Cruise was in London. Cruise has probably enticed more people into a cinema than almost any other living actor. After attending a screening of *Tenet* at the BFI Imax shortly after cinemas reopened following the first national lockdown, Cruise issued a tweet that all of us who miss our favourite picture palace can relate to. “Great to be back in a movie theater, everyone!” he enthused. “Big movie. Big screen. Loved it.”

2020 – A TALE OF PICTURE HOUSES

By Giles Woodforde

"It was a catastrophe," said Clare Binns, joint managing director of the Picturehouse chain of 26 cinemas. "It was a sort of out-of-body experience," said Kevin Markwick, owner of the independent Uckfield Picture House. Both were describing the moment in March when the Government ordered them to shut down, in an interview aired by BBC Radio 4's *The Film Programme* just before Christmas. What follows is my account of this interview, with all answers by Clare and Kevin transcribed directly from the broadcast.



The independent Picture House Uckfield in April 2004

Interviewer Antonia Quirke began by asking how things were looking at the start of 2020.

"It was looking amazing," Clare replied, "We'd had the best kick-off to the year for about three years, I think. We were flying with *Parasite*, which was just such a wonderful film to be playing, a foreign language film that was taking money like no other foreign language film had ever done, everything was looking absolutely 120%. Kevin, do you agree?"

"Absolutely, yes. I can only echo that, it was such an amazing start to the year. *Jojo Rabbit* was taking big money, *1917* was massive, taking really good money: it looked as if it was going to be one of the best years ever. Our restaurant was flying, the deals we were doing, it looked like it was going to keep going for ever."

When, asked interviewer Antonia, did you first hear tell of a virus?

"We were aware something was going on," said Clare, "But we had absolutely no idea that it was going to affect us in the UK. I went to Sundance in January, I then went to Berlin and word was beginning to spread that something was going on. Then suddenly it started to affect us."

"I would say the same," added Kevin. "It was mid-March probably, as late as that. The idea of closing was unimaginable, absolutely unimaginable and when the Government decided that they would give advice not to go to cinemas, that was terrifying. Shutting us down, which they eventually did a week later, was a much better outcome because just advising people left us in limbo: 'what do we do: do we stay open, do we close?' Business just fell off a cliff. But it was very, very late that the reality of it became apparent."

"It was a catastrophe," Clare continued. "That's the word that springs to mind. When you are dealing with a catastrophe you that you've never dealt with before, trying to figure out the best thing to do and to make sense of it, communicate with staff, customers, suppliers - it was a really huge, mammoth task to elegantly deal with something that we'd never dealt with before."

"It was a sort of out-of-body experience to be honest," said Kevin. "That's how it felt to me. This has been my whole life, literally my whole life. To see it have to shut down like that, through no fault of our own. It took a long time to shut everything down. And then there was that enormous stress of 'how am I going to pay my staff, what am I going to do?' The relief when they announced the Job Retention Scheme, I have to say that I did weep slightly when I heard that. It was such a relief, because I didn't know which way to turn. Clare's operation is way bigger than mine but to shut it all down took me weeks."

Picturehouse faced criticism when it seemed to slavishly follow parent company Cineworld's decision to shut down completely because of a lack of saleable films to show. The radio interviewer didn't address this question directly but did ask Clare how optimistic she felt.

"They always talked about a second wave. I had always thought that was likely, so it didn't come entirely as a surprise to me. But for very good reasons film distributors are nervous about releasing films that have cost them an awful lot of money to produce. But the film calendar just kept moving and changing. We made the decision before the second lockdown that we would shut because of the uncertainty of the film calendar. Now I think that was absolutely the right decision until everybody gets their ducks in a row - we could be in another lockdown in January."

Not surprisingly perhaps, Kevin took a different view:

"It was an easy decision for me because it is absolutely my only livelihood. I was determined to try and make it work, although I wasn't very optimistic, given the way the distributors were all turning tail and fleeing. But we did manage to cobble together a programme; ironically a lot of the stuff was from Netflix or the streamers, which did OK business in relative terms to Covid - but nothing like we'd been doing before. Titles like *Rebecca* were doing really well for us and also we were putting together a programme of event cinema's greatest hits from the National Theatre and things like that, which always do well for us. So actually by the time we got to October it wasn't looking too bad at all."



The Phoenix Picture House Oxford in February 2004

"You used the phrase 'turning tail', talking about the distributors," noted the interviewer. "Sounds like you're slightly more bitter?"

"I am a bit, to be honest. I felt we were abandoned. I know they have their own reasons but I think they could have tried a little bit harder to release some titles at least. But no, they all chickened out really. The way we've been treated by some of them, putting films on their own platforms and not allowing us to show them, I think that is not great behaviour, especially as cinemas are the reason they are in the position they are. But hopefully that will change in time."

"I think there's a lot of short-termism going on," added Clare. "The fact is that in 2019 our industry was worth £1 billion in the UK: distributors do this not for love but for money. Once we are back and operating those distributors are going to want their films to play in our cinemas. I think they do need to think about that. Some of them have been really supportive: hats off to Warner for releasing *Tenet*. But ultimately it's a partnership: we need the films, they need the cinemas. This is something they have to look at, not for the next six months but for the next five, ten years. People will want to go to cinemas, will want to be together and will want to see great films from around the world. So they just need to think about that when they make decisions which perhaps aren't for the best for everybody."

"But," countered the interviewer, "You are also a distributor and you pulled films as well."



The Picture House Stratford (East London) in April 2006

"We pulled our film just when we shut and Ireland had shut down as well: it's an Irish film. We felt that, to give it its best shot as a small independent film, at that point the calendar was so uncertain, also the sense that the second lockdown was coming. But I felt absolutely terrible about the decision we made."

Both Clare and Kevin agreed that the decision to pull the rather ironically titled new Bond film *No Time to Die* was totemic.

"That's what did it," said Clare. "It was a game changer, wasn't it Kevin? [Kevin is heard agreeing]. Perhaps for small independent cinemas Bond is not the be all and end all at all but it is a major blow to everybody. But I do understand why they made that decision, for very good reasons. That company only has one or two films every three or four years so it's an important film for them. But it did absolutely change everything."

"Whilst I was kicking things around the office and swearing and cursing," Kevin replied, "I don't know whether people at [producer] Eon had some kind of crystal ball but it did turn out to be the right decision. If we want to know when the pandemic is going to end maybe we should talk to Eon, they seem to know something we don't!"

"The other point to make," added Clare, "Is that this business is not driven from the UK, it's driven from the US, which is in a complete mess as far as Covid is concerned. They are in a different world altogether and those films will not open until America is open."



The Clapham (London) Picture House in August 2015

"Do you get advance notice of these decisions?" asked the interviewer. Kevin's reply was again quite bitter.

"I see it on *Deadline Hollywood* on Facebook, nobody tells us anything. It was just radio silence. We're out here on our own in small independent land." Clare answers: "We do get told, we certainly know the rumblings that are going on, the conversations that are being had at studio level. I heard about the Bond ten minutes before everybody else, I was on a train and I got a text to say that the Bond was moving. I virtually burst into tears. I knew then that was going to be a whole new world of pain."



"I'd gone out and invested in improving the cinema ready for the Bond," Kevin continued. "I'd put in big electric recliners and all sorts of really wonderful new stuff just to try and make people feel safer and give them another good reason to come to the cinema. So that was a double blow. The Bond is for us by far the biggest film of the year when it comes out. *Skyfall* and *Spectre* are in our top five films of all time, so they are really, really important to me. The news was just so deflating. One of the most upsetting things particularly over the lockdown – and it's continued – is the press narrative that cinema is doomed. That really gets up my nose because, first of all, they are trying to portray us as a dinosaur that has now been fatally wounded, which was not the case at all. Somehow there is a sort of glee in it and I don't understand that: it's not what I see in the foyer of a cinema. People want to come back to the cinema."

"I agree with Kevin," says Clare. "It's a nice story for journalists to write, the demise of cinema. It isn't true: the best place to see a film is in a cinema, with other people having a glass of wine and talking about it without having to go and empty the washing machine, answer the door or make a cup of tea. Directors make films to be seen in the cinema."

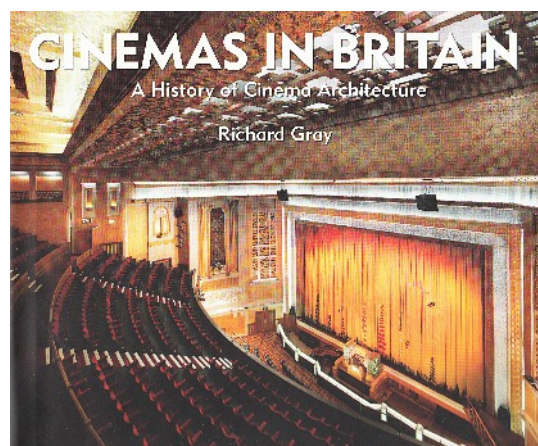
The interview ended with a look ahead to 2021. Clare went first:

"We'll open up in the early part of the year. We've got some films to release and we're opening a new cinema in March, Picturehouse Finsbury Park. So far as I'm concerned, we are going to get through this, there's lots to do. We want to be there to welcome customers back into a safe environment, watching fantastic films."

Kevin has plans too: "Pretty much more of the same. We've also got one or two local film makers who have stepped up and joined the fray to help us survive. We've got local director Corin Hardy, who makes some amazing horror movies: he's going to curate seasons of film and bring all his mates down to talk about them. Hopefully there will be enough to keep us going until it's all over."

A **MUST** for your collection

CINEMAS IN BRITAIN



A History of Cinema Architecture by Richard Gray

This is the definitive guide to the buildings that were built to show moving pictures, from the earliest origins in 1896 up to the multiplex era. There are many illustrations with several in colour and a 24-page gazetteer of cinema buildings telling the reader what there is to see in most places in the UK. There are useful appendices about listed cinemas, a glossary of architectural terms and a comprehensive bibliography.

Hardback, 180 pages, fully illustrated, normal RRP £45

Special price for CTA members
£29.50 + £3.40 postage from
CTA Sales Officer, address on p5.

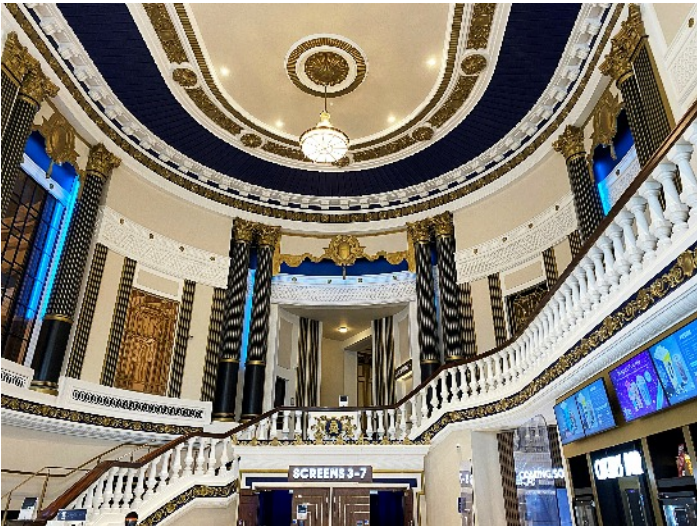
THE ODEON LUXE HOLLOWAY

By Adrian Zak



My local Odeon in Holloway has been renovated and is now an Odeon Luxe with luxury reclining seating, 4K projection and Dolby Atmos. Due to the Covid crisis this has taken some time but the cinema was reopened in time for the release of *Tenet* in August.

The exterior has been cleaned up with new lighting, poster boxes and signage (though sadly the ancient and out-of-date billboard poster for telephone booking with a wonderful Godzilla image has also gone). The Odeon lettering that used to sit on the awning was, I believe, supposed to be moved to the very top of the building by the flagpole but sadly seems to have vanished altogether.



The inside is very impressive with your eye drawn to the sweeping staircase, the large windows upstairs reopened, interior columns repainted and new drapes hung. The feeling is one of lightness and space (I did visit on a bright sunny autumn day, which helped). Obviously with the Covid restrictions the new bar area above the ticket hall is currently closed but will be quite something when it does open to the public.

I was there to see the excellent *Saint Maud* (one of the best films I've seen all year and one marking writer/director Rose Glass out as a major new talent. Hopefully the UK film industry will embrace her so we don't lose her to the US as happened recently with the team behind the lockdown horror *Host* who have been signed for a three-picture deal with Blumhouse in the US – the UK industry great and good seemingly having an issue with genre pictures?).

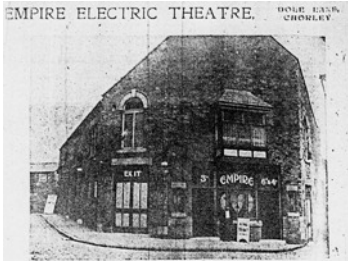


The main change to the screens themselves is the new luxury seating – these are in black rather than the light brown used in the flagship Odeon Luxe / Dolby Cinema in Leicester Square – also electronically controlled for full reclining. With the larger seats the capacity is reduced but you're comfortably spaced and the sightlines/raking are still great. The only annoyance is the small table attached to the right arm that I found got in the way.

It was essentially a private matinée screening as I was the only one there – great for me, less so I guess for Odeon. Sadly like all cinemas in England it closed on 5 November with the second lockdown and remains closed as London is in tier 4.



CHORLEY



As new subscribers to your magazine we are enjoying it very much and look forward to delving even deeper into what the Association has to offer. Our interest in old cinemas comes from running one ourselves but it is not listed in your latest issue so please find attached some photos and details. The photo [above] is how it looks now but there is one from a newspaper advert in 1911

Our venue, Chorley Theatre, opened as The Empire Electric Picture House on 3 September 1910 and has shown films almost continuously ever since. It is now run by volunteers from Chorley Amateur Dramatic & Operatic Society (CADOS) and puts on plays, comedy and family shows but still has an average of 2-3 film screenings per week (when we're allowed to open!). We show new films, classics, event cinema and whatever else takes our fancy. The venue originally seated over 800 people but is now a more manageable 230. The official name is Chorley Empire Cinema at Chorley Theatre.

The interior has gone through many changes over the years but the exterior is still largely as it was 110 years ago. The last major change to the shape of the building was the rear section added in the mid-1920s. Please let me know if you need any more information, or visit [www.chorleytheatre.com].

Also here are photos of the former Chorley Odeon [R]. This closed in 1971 and became a bingo hall. Sadly, Gala Bingo have chosen not to reopen after the pandemic and handed it back to Chorley Council. They have worked out it would cost at least £500,000 to remove asbestos, let alone carry out the rest of the repairs. So the building is currently being demolished but they let me take some photos before demolition started and I've attached them here. It's a bingo hall but hopefully of interest.

Ian Robinson & Estelle Bryers, Chorley Little Theatre



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]

ABERTRIDWR (Caerphilly)



The former Workmen's Hall is up for sale with planning permission to convert it into twelve two-bedroom apartments; the asking price is £210,000. It was built in 1910 and operated as a part-time cinema. Bingo was introduced and by 1980 it was full-time bingo. This closed in the mid-2010s. The estate agent's website [tinyurl.com/yb4t85q5] has pictures of the bingo interior and so has Cinema Treasures. {30528}

Sent in by Darron Keeling; photo taken July 2008

ANNAN (Dumfries & Galloway)



A third screen is virtually ready to open at the Lonsdale Cinema. They were in the middle of doing this when the lockdown struck, removing the source of income – and now a further lockdown has halted progress. Originally a church session house when first built almost 200 years ago and then turned into a Mechanics Hall and Institute, it was then converted into a cinema in March 1917. It became a bingo hall in the 1960s but was split in two to house a two-screen cinema in the front stage area with a bingo hall at the back in 1999. The bingo hall then closed in 2019 and a new 90-seat cinema has been created in that area. During asbestos removal an old film poster from 1924 was found in the space above the projection box. The two-screen cinema entrance is at the rear of the building and the former bingo entrance at the front of the building will soon be the screen ③ entrance.

Lonsdale Cinema Press Release – 13 November; sent in & photo by Alan J Towers

BEESTON (Notts)

Despite the varying restrictions on construction work since the first national lockdown in March, the build of the new eight-screen Arc cinema has progressed well and is on target to be completed imminently. The keys for the new venue will then be handed to operator ahead of its planned opening in summer 2021. There are photos on the Beeston Wire website at [tinyurl.com/ydhxgm7d].

Beeston Wire – 17 December; sent in by Terry Hanstock

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral)



The former Gaumont has been sold to a Southport-based property developer, who plans to convert it into up to 30 apartments. The plans, which are subject to consent from Wirral Council, are at an early stage and the designs are not expected to be revealed until later in the year. "Subject to planning, we are confident that we can convert this building in line with its surrounds and environment, maintaining the original façade and many of the historic internal features." The hand and footprints of British film star Nova Pilbeam, who starred in two of Alfred Hitchcock's pre-Hollywood films, can still be seen on the pavement adjacent to the entrance; it is hoped they can be incorporated into the development. The cinema opened in May 1938 and closed in January 1964 in favour of bingo, which closed in November 1986. It was last used as a furniture store. The CTA visited in August 2018. {41147}

North West Place – 20 November; sent in by Mark Lees; photo taken July 2007



The former Savoy/ABC has been demolished. The site will be used as a car park. {32707}

Sent in by Ken Roe; photo taken July 2007

BISHOP AUCKLAND (Durham)

Plans have been submitted to convert the former Argos store in the Newgate Shopping Centre into a three-screen cinema. No operator or time scale has been given. Previous plans for a cinema on a retail park at Tindale / St Helen Auckland seem to have stalled.

Northern Echo – 12 November

BLACKBURN (Lancs)

New signage has gone up at the new eight-screen Reel cinema. It was due to open before Christmas but has been delayed.

Lancashire Telegraph – 2 December; sent in by Philip Crompton

BOGNOR REGIS (West Sussex)

The Council is to spend £49,350 on remedial and redecoration work at the Grade II listed Picturedrome. The works include a disabled access ramp. {14782}

Bognor Regis Observer – 4 November

BRADFORD (West Yorks)

A host of artefacts uncovered as contractors work on the former New Victoria / Gaumont / Odeon are to be put on display when the venue reopens as Bradford Live. These included theatre notices, light fittings, teak handrails, and pieces of plasterwork. The opening date has been put back to 2022. A time-lapse video of the removal of the internal structure that was inserted in the 1960s is available on the *Telegraph & Argus* website at [tinyurl.com/y6w6f9jy]. {3677}

Telegraph & Argus, Bradford – 31 October

BRIDGNORTH (Shropshire)



Pupils from Bridgnorth Endowed School have been visiting the Majestic as a reward for their hard work during the autumn term. Each year group attended separately in the safety of their 'bubble'. The cinema reopened in October and slashed admission prices.

Shropshire Star – 11 December

BRIDGWATER (Somerset)

Scott Cinemas has released architect's drawings of what its new seven-screen cinema at Northgate could look like. It hopes work will begin in January, having had its premises licence approved. The venue will be spread over two floors.

Somerset Live – 30 November

BRISTOL



The owners of the Hengrove Leisure Park want to demolish it and build 350 new homes. The site houses a fourteen-screen Cineworld. {24267}

Bristol Live – 1 December

CHIPPING NORTON (Oxon)

Plans have been unveiled for a three-screen cinema and 13 apartments at 29-30 Horsefair. The plans can be seen at [setha.co.uk/properties/chipping-norton]. Grade II listed buildings will be brought back into use. The town has a theatre, which shows films.

Oxford Mail – 17 November

COLCHESTER (Essex)

Plans for a £50m development at the Northern Gateway Leisure Park have been approved. The scheme includes a twelve-screen Cineworld. No time scale has been given.

Essex County Standard – 11 December; sent in by Terry Hanstock



COVENTRY



Plans have been submitted to demolish the former Crown/Paris and build a six-storey block of student flats. The cinema opened in August 1912 and finally closed in November 1981. It lay derelict for over ten years, during which it was damaged by fire. In 1999 it reopened as a snooker club and was later a nightclub and music venue. {15736}

Insider Media – 11 December; photo taken August 2004

CREWE (Cheshire)

Clearance of shops at the Royal Arcade has begun. The site will be developed and include an eight-screen Empire cinema. No opening date has been given.

North West Place – 4 November

DEAL (Kent)



The group campaigning to reopen the Regent has warned it is falling into serious decay with water ingress and collapsed roofing. There has also been drug-taking and pigeon invasion. Photos showing the serious condition are available on the *Kent Online* website at [tinyurl.com/yahhe55k]. The venue opened as the Pavilion in July 1928 and closed in July 1963 in favour of bingo, which closed in January 2009. Plans to convert the building into a two-screen cinema have been delayed. {32928}

Kent Online – 15 December; sent in by Martin Tapsell; photo taken April 2008

DERBY

The Theatres Trust has awarded a grant of £15,000 towards restoration of the Grade II listed Hippodrome. The cash will be used to appoint a consultant to prepare a business model. The venue was badly damaged in 2008 and has had several fires since. {14683}

Derbyshire Live – 5 November

DONCASTER (South Yorks)

The frieze from the demolished Gaumont has been renovated, framed and displayed in Sir Nigel Gresley Square, facing towards the CAST theatre. The site is also near the forthcoming six-screen Savoy cinema. Photos and a short video are available on the Doncaster Council website at [tinyurl.com/y9lqv9o] with links to more information. See p12 Bulletin 54/1. {18617}

Doncaster Council website – 16 December

DUNDEE

Plans to build a nine-screen cinema on a vacant site in the City centre have been dropped in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

Dundee Evening Telegraph – 13 November

EDINBURGH (Central)

Plans for the new six-screen Filmhouse have been amended following a public consultation. The height of the building's tower has been reduced by two storeys to bring it in line with a neighbouring office block. A decision is expected by early summer; if successful construction could start in 2023 ready for completion in 2025. The existing Filmhouse is in a 190-year-old listed church building and cannot be redeveloped.

BBC News website – 14 December

EDINBURGH (Morningside)

We reported on p 20 of the last Bulletin how the four-screen Dominion is closed but still incurring costs. Now the owners have launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise £60,000 and reached their target in just 23 days. {23061}

Daily Record – 28 October; sent in by Tom Laughlan

FAREHAM (Hants)

Plans to remodel the Ferneham Hall have been put on hold for six months due to the pandemic. It means that it will not now open until 2023. The main theatre will be enlarged and technical facilities improved. The new venue will be called Fareham Live, following a public vote. BIC [Bournemouth International Centre] which is rumoured to be taking over the venue, has said it cannot afford to pay employees' pension or NI contributions in this crisis.

*Daily Echo, Southampton – 14 October, 5 November;
sent in by RW Hawkins & Ian Patterson*

FAWLEY (Hants)

Plans – announced on p 20 of the last Bulletin – to demolish the former Esso cinema have been approved. The building has stood empty since 2016. It will be replaced with a smaller venue. {16762}

Daily Echo, Southampton – 5, 12 November; sent in by Ian Patterson & Philip Stevens

Ian Patterson writes: I do not think it was built exclusively for the employees of Esso. It always advertised in the local paper under the name of Esso Cinema. Some years ago it changed its name to Waterside – open to all to attract more patrons.

FORFAR (Angus)



Fire ripped through the former Pavilion on 29 November. Fire crews spent nine hours at the blaze. The remains of the building will have to be demolished. The fire is being treated as unexplained but youngsters were earlier seen clambering along the side of the building. The cinema opened prior to 1934 and had closed by 1980 in favour of bingo, which closed in 2009. {47617} *photo taken September 2006*

The Courier, Dundee – 2 December; sent in by Philip Stevens;

GAINSBOROUGH (Lincs)

Plans have been approved for a new four-screen Savoy cinema on the site of the Lindsey Shopping Centre, which will be demolished. No time scale has been given.

Lincolnshire Live – 12 November

GIRVAN (Ayrshire)

The Council has purchased the former Regal/Vogue and the 300-year ground lease, so it can be demolished. The venue opened prior to 1932 and films ceased in the late 1970s. It became a bingo hall, which closed in the mid-2000s. In 2017 the building was deemed structurally unsafe. See p14 Bulletin 54/4. {50825}

Ayr Advertiser – 20 October

GLASGOW (Central)

Work is almost complete on the new nine-screen Vue in the former BHS site in the St Enoch Shopping Centre. No opening date has been given.

Glasgow Evening Times – 1 December

GLOUCESTER



The New Olympus Theatre (ex Picturedrome/Ritz) was set to be restored before the pandemic hit in March. Gloucester Arts Council has put a fresh offer in for a 99-year lease for an undisclosed fee after the initial offer fell through. Last year, 450 seats were donated by the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, saving the Arts Council thousands of pounds. There is a danger that if something doesn't happen soon, the building could be beyond repair. {22457}

Gloucestershire Live – 7 November; photo taken May 2005

HAMILTON (South Lanark)



Funding is now in place to turn the former Vogue Bingo into a five-storey project with 23 flats. The Grade B listed façade will be retained and become the entrance to the flats. It opened as the La Scala in March 1927 and was renamed Gaumont in April 1950. It closed in November 1960 and was converted into a bingo club, which closed in 1997. The auditorium was partially demolished in 2008. {23257}

Daily Record – 4 December; photo on front cover

HARWICH (Essex)

The restoration of the Grade II* listed Electric Palace has gone well. Major works are complete and they hope to finish the add-ons soon and reopen sometime in 2021. The entrance lobby and ticket kiosk have been refurbished and security gates fitted. The auditorium has been redecorated and seats will be refurbished with the first two rows removed. An operations manager and an education officer have been appointed. *Picture House #37* is devoted to the Electric Palace; see p5. [electricpalace.com] {2597}

Electric Palace Press Release – autumn 2020; sent in by Chris Strachan

HULL (East Yorks)

The bomb-damaged National Picture Theatre is looking for volunteers to help with the restoration. The second stage of the funding bid to the National Lottery was due to be submitted in November 2020 with a result expected in spring 2021. Photos at [tinyurl.com/y9hj2r3n]. {40893}

Hull Daily Mail – 17 October; Sky News – 31 December; sent in by Philip Stevens

HYDE (Tameside, Greater Manchester)



The Theatres Trust has slammed the approval of works to convert the Grade II listed former Theatre Royal into a mosque. Under the approved works, images on the stage arch and balustrade frontages are to be covered up, as is detail of the main ceiling, which depict 'female form' in reference to Shakespearean plays. "The proposal is to cover this with a plasterboard of timber ground, so the embossed Papier-mâché and Plaster of Paris detailing is not damaged." The stage will be partially removed and lowered to be at the same level as the rest of the floor, to allow for it to become the main prayer area of the building, accommodating up to 800 people. Alterations will also be made on the first floor to allow for female members of the mosque to attend. These include the installation of a glazed screen to the first-floor circle and the creation of two new floor levels to allow female worshippers to pray. The screen will be one-way glass so that female worshippers can look to male worshippers but the male worshippers cannot look back. A metal-studded wall is also to be installed to enclose the second-floor balcony to reduce the volume of the building for heating purposes. {3261}

Manchester Evening News – 2 November; sent in by Terry Rourke; photo taken September 2007

KING'S LYNN (Norfolk)

A new two-screen cinema opened in the Corn Exchange at the end of September. Seating is for 58 and 52 people with wheelchair provision on both screens. A gallery of 23 photos is on the *Your Local Paper* website at [tinyurl.com/y7hc8ub3]

Your Local Paper – 18 September

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LEEDS (West Yorks)



Building work has been completed at the Grade II listed former Majestic. The exterior has been restored and a new atrium constructed. Channel 4 will take three floors, national law firm Knights will have two, leaving two floors. The building opened in June 1922 with around 2,500 seats and films ceased in July 1969. It became a bingo hall and later a nightclub. The building was being refurbished when it suffered a serious fire in September 2014. {2718}

Yorkshire Post – 13 November; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken October 2019

LEWES (East Sussex)

The Depot cinema has been awarded the Highest Achievement for Commitment prize at the national Creative Green Awards. The awards recognise the achievements of the creative community in taking action on climate change. {55997}

The Argus, Brighton – 20 November; sent in by Barry Quinton

LIVERPOOL (Kirkby)

Plans have been approved for a six-screen Reel cinema on the site of the former library. No time scale has been given.

Liverpool Echo – 9 November

LONDON (Bayswater)

Contracts have been exchanged for the redevelopment of the former Whiteleys centre. The scheme will include a new [unspecified] cinema. The centre was home to a multi-screen Odeon from 1989 to 2018. {21181}

pbc today – 9 November

LONDON (Deptford)



The Deptford Cinema, a volunteer-run community cinema in Deptford Broadway in South London, was due to leave its home by the end of November and is looking for a new premises with a view to reopening in 2021. The move is prompted by an end of tenancy on their existing location, combined with Coronavirus restrictions. Their existing cinema is a former shop, which volunteers have refurbished and operated since 2014 as a 44-seat cinema with bar. When the cinema opened, it was the only cinema in Lewisham borough, since joined by Goldsmiths Curzon and Catford Mews. [deptfordcinema.org] {52353}

Sent in & photo by Scott Keir

LONDON (Hoxton)

The new three-screen Curzon on the site of the former Cinema/Gaumont at 55 Pitfield Street will have 119, 66 and 60 seats. However, no opening date has been given. The venue opened in January 1914 and closed in October 1956. The building was then used for commercial purposes. Work to rebuild it started in 2009 and the auditorium was demolished. The façade was retained with plans to build behind it but it was demolished in 2016. A complete new building has been constructed, with a replica of the façade. {13803}

Time Out – 13 October; photo on front cover

LONDON (Lewisham)

The Ladywell Playtower scheme (to include a Curzon) is still in development; the creation of a new cinema as part of the Lewisham Gateway is now set for 2023.

Sent in by Scott Keir

LONGRIDGE (Lancs)



The **Palace** featured on national television when it filmed a sentimental Christmas advert last year. It is run by film maker Lara Hewitt (38) whose father Tony's company Parkwood Leisure Ltd bought it in 2017. Tony died suddenly just a few months later and the company, which manages leisure facilities for a number of local authorities, including theatres at Maidstone, Crawley and Weston-Super-Mare, has been badly hit by the Coronavirus lockdown. It has had to take out a large government loan, most of the sites have had to close and half the staff have been made redundant, including Lara and her two part-time assistants (the other staff are volunteers) She said the company can no longer afford to subsidise the **Palace**, which last year lost £20,000 and hopes someone can be found who will use it for cultural or community purposes.

The 193-seat **Palace** opened in 1912 in what had once been a weaving shed. In 1954 it became a roller rink and in 1967 bingo was introduced but films returned in 1970 and its programme now includes classics and art-house gems as well as the new releases. There is also some theatrical use with comedy nights proving particularly popular.

A small café-bar serves local beers alongside the popcorn and teas and coffees in china mugs can be taken into the auditorium. Organ music plays as the audience are taking their seats and the National Anthem strikes up at every performance. Even the ice cream is sold in the traditional way - by a girl with a tray! {6903}

Lancashire Evening Post – 15 December; sent in by Ray Dolling

MARGATE (Kent)

The Council has sold **Dreamland** to the current operator Sands Heritage Ltd. The amusement park, the undercover building housing The Hall by the Sea and The Ballroom, along with the seafront cinema building are all included in the sale. The authority had owned the site since September 2013 following a Compulsory Purchase Order. Conditions are attached to the sale to ensure that the listed heritage structures are protected and a restrictive covenant is in place to control future use of the site and retain it for leisure. A £29m investment plan has been submitted to the government. It includes money for refurbishing the **Dreamland Cinema** and sunshine café complex and also for improvements to the **Theatre Royal**.

Isle of Thanet News – 14 December; Kent Online – 21 December

MATLOCK (Derbys)

Derbyshire Dales District Council is to spend a maximum of £800,820 on a project to build a two-screen cinema and restaurant in the former Market Hall. The screens will seat 89 and 67. It is planned to open in December 2021.

East Midlands Business Link – 26 November; sent in by Terry Hanstock

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Masonry and scaffolding from the Odeon in Pilgrim Street fell on 3 April 2017, crushing a bus shelter. Two firms have now been charged by the Health and Safety executive of failing to prevent danger while carrying out demolition work.

BBC News website – 13 October

NEWMARKET (Suffolk)



The former **Doric** has become a Turkish restaurant. The cinema opened in March 1937 and closed in July 1964. It then became a cabaret club and later a pub and then a nightclub, which closed in 2015. {24935}

Cambridge News – 18 November; photo taken August 2004

ORMSKIRK (Lancs)



Plans to demolish the former **Regal**, which were approved in 2019, have been modified in the light of many objections. The developer has now gone back to a scheme whereby "most" of the building will be retained and converted into shops, café and student accommodation. The cinema opened in January 1936 and closed in 1963. It became a bingo hall for a short period and was converted into a Tesco's Supermarket in about 1965. Poundstretcher was its most recent occupant and they left the premises in 2019. A history of the **Regal** with photos, is available at tinyurl.com/ycfs7cth. {39244}

Champion Newspapers – December

PEEBLES (Borders)

The **Eastgate Theatre** has upgraded its sound and projection facilities. The new programme of films featured a mix of mid-week movies, as well as family blockbusters on Saturday afternoons. It reopened in November after being closed since March but had to close again due to lockdown.

Border Telegraph – 26 November

PLYMOUTH

The Royal Cinema Trust is submitting a pre-application to reopen the three screens of the former Royal/ABC/Reel as a "vintage cinema" and add a restaurant, café/bar and a "variable capacity music and events venue" with a capacity of between 700 and 1,200 people (presumably in the former bingo area downstairs). The cinema closed in February 2019. {24749}

The Herald, Plymouth – 28 October

SOUTHAMPTON

A £250m proposal to redevelop Leisure World has been submitted to the Council. The development includes a new [unspecified] cinema. A decision is expected in the first quarter of 2021.

Southern Daily Echo – 23 November

STAFFORD

The Wetherspoons pub in the former Picture House reopened in September after being closed due to flood damage since October 2019. The repairs cost £1.5 million and included refurbishment of the fibrous arched ceiling and the stained glass canopy at the front. The balcony of the Grade II listed building is also now open to customers, having been closed previously. {22692}

Wetherspoon News – Winter 20/21; sent in by Jeremy Buck & Martin Tapsell

WAKEFIELD (West Yorks)



The Council has bought the former Regal/ABC. A number of plans for the future of the building have been considered in recent years but all have been unsuccessful and the building has continued to stand empty. Plans for the cinema site have not been confirmed but a note in the Council's delegated decision register in August mentions plans for "the acquisition and demolition of a property at Kirkgate." The cinema opened in December 1935 and closed in 1997. {3787}

Wakefield Express – 18 December; photo taken July 2004

WOKING (Surrey)



The Ambassadors has completed a twelve-month refurbishment and reopened as the Nova. It has a new premium screen, making seven in total. The venue first opened in April 1993 with three screens; three more were added in 1997. {25859}

Surrey Life – 1 November; photo taken April 2006

WORCESTER



A £17.9m transformation of the northern end of the City centre has been announced. It will see the reopening of a restored Scala Theatre and Corn Exchange and the creation of new homes for first-time buyers. The Scala opened in November 1922 and closed in June 1973. The building was gutted internally and was last used as an amusement arcade. {39608}

Worcester News – 26 December; sent in by John West; photo taken September 2012

WORKINGTON (Cumbria)

Plans for a new three-screen cinema have been submitted by Graves, who run the Plaza multiplex in the town and also the Gaiety in Whitehaven. It would be in a former soft play centre on the top floor of John Peel House, already owned by the Company.

Workington Times and Star – 18 October

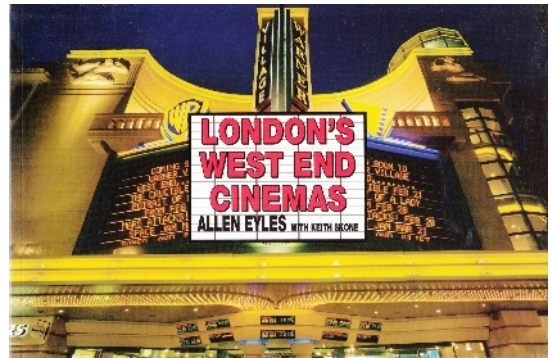
WORTHING (West Sussex)

Outline plans for a major development in Union Place, which include an extension to the Connaught theatre and cinema, have been approved. Detailed design proposals will follow.

The Argus, Brighton – 10 November; Worthing Herald – 12 November; sent in by Barry Quinton

London's West End Cinemas

by Allen Eyles with Keith Skone.



The history of London's West End cinemas dates back more than one hundred years. This book details all of them, in chronological order, totalling well over one hundred, from 1906 up to 2013. The best of the West End's cinemas were outfitted to a very high standard to match their role as showcases for new films, hosting press shows and premières, as well as a being a magnet for film enthusiasts anxious to see films on exclusive première runs. Even now, when films are available everywhere at the same time, the West End's cinemas are a vibrant attraction to visitors from all over the world as well as for Londoners having a night on the town. There are interior views as well as exteriors of most of the cinemas and over 50 illustrations are in full colour, together with appendices of club cinemas and theatres used as temporary cinemas.

Large Format paperback, 210 pages, over 400 illustrations, £25.00 plus £3.40 postage, from the Sales Officer.

Published in 2013 in conjunction with English Heritage.

Ordering details on p5

OVERSEAS NEWS

GENEVA (Switzerland)



The Cinema Plaza opened in 1952 and was designed by architect Marc-Joseph Saugey. Seating was provided for 1,250 (860 in the orchestra and 420 in the balcony). It was one of Geneva's prestigious cinemas but sadly closed on 24 January 2004. Plans were put forward by the State of Geneva to demolish it for a car park (refused) then for a shopping centre (also refused). The cinema stood vacant but in remarkably good condition for 15 years. There was little hope of it ever being used again, despite support for its re-use by citizens of Geneva, who since 2014 had gathered more than 11,000 signatures on a petition. In 2020, despite the terrible conditions inflicted on the cinema industry by the Covid-19 pandemic, there was good news that the Wilsdorf Foundation had given 100 million Swiss Francs (£85 million) to purchase and restore the building. The Cinema Plaza will reopen at the end of October 2023 with 650 seats in the orchestra and 100 seats in the balcony. A bookstore, library and restaurant will be included in the renovation, which will make this place a totally innovative cinematograph cultural centre. [43836]

Sent in by Elisabeth Christeler; photographs by Simon Edelstein

WARSAW (Poland)

The Kino Relax opened 50 years ago in October 1970. Originally the amphitheatre auditorium housed a 19 metre high screen and 650 seats but after a renovation in 1998 that number was reduced to just under 600. There was also a theatre downstairs. In the early 2000s the cinema struggled to compete with the emerging multiplexes and it closed in 2006. There were plans to turn the building into high-rise flats on a number of occasions but in 2019 it gained protected status. The building has now been restored as Scena Relax – a performance centre but with no cinema.

First News, Poland – 15 October; photos at [tinyurl.com/yaveyv67]

MELBOURNE (Australia)

Village Cinemas will operate a pop-up Drive In(Door) Cinema across 11 bays of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, with the dividing walls retracted, from January 7 to 24. Because it is entirely indoors, the venue will be able to operate in all weather and in daylight hours. Up to five sessions a day are planned, with the first starting as early as 9:30am on a Sunday.

Sydney Morning Herald – 17 December; [tinyurl.com/ybej5zfx]

THE ASTORIA WALTON, LIVERPOOL

By David A Ellis



The Astoria Walton, Liverpool, designed by Gray and Evans was originally only going to be a ballroom and billiard hall. Construction was well underway when the proprietors Astoria Entertainments (Liverpool) Ltd realised that cinema was big business and so called a halt to building work. Plans were revised and the cinema opened on 21 July 1930. It was stated that it was the ultra modern 'Talkie' theatre of Liverpool. It cost fifty thousand pounds, a large sum back then.



The auditorium was eighty-five feet long and sixty-three feet wide. There was a large entrance hall with a central paybox fitted with the popular automatic ticket machine. There was a spacious lounge and hide-covered settees for the comfort of patrons. Seating capacity stood at 1,586; the stalls housed 1,070 and the semicircular balcony 516. The proscenium was twenty feet wide by twenty five feet high. An outstanding feature was the curtain with an artistic design. The number of lamps used was approximately 800 and in wiring the building nearly seven miles of electric cable was used. The stage was fitted with three colour head and foot floats, dually controlled by three sets of liquid dimmers, the whole of this lighting being installed by Holophane Ltd.

Behind the screen stood six dressing rooms and a ventilating plant chamber. The stage area measured thirty one feet wide by eleven feet deep. The projection area was large, extending almost the full width of the building. Two Kalee projectors with Western Electric sound ran the films with a throw of around one hundred feet.

The opening attraction was *Innocents of Paris*. Five years after opening it was run by Associated British Cinemas; this was from September 1935. In December 1963 it became just ABC. The end came on 23 February 1974 with Bruce Lee in *Enter the Dragon* plus *Cleopatra Jones*. The building was empty for ten years, in which time it was vandalised.

On Friday 9 November 1984 it became a social club called the Astoria Social Club, aimed at the 25-50 year age group, run by Gerry Grimes, using the stalls area only. Six years later bingo became the game known as the Astoria Bingo Club. This closed in 2001 when a new hall was built. The Astoria went the way of many others and fell victim to the wrecking ball.

Photos from the Roger Shone collection

LETTERS

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Having read the letter from Richard Hagon and David Trevor-Jones' reply about the CTA's aging membership and the future (Bulletin Nov/Dec 2020) can I please suggest that a solution could be for the CTA to widen its remit.

At present we are solely interested in the buildings but if lockdown 1 & 2 has shown us anything it's the fact that cinemas themselves are at risk, including the big chains and multiplexes. I think we need to be about "supporting and preserving cinema as a lived experience" as well as just interest in the diminishing number of cinema buildings themselves as part of what we are for. I say that as someone whose passion started with the buildings, then went onto loving the movies themselves. I'm one of those who'll sit near the back of a cinema as the auditorium I'm in is as much part of the experience as the film itself.

Put it this way, with fewer and fewer cinemas and former cinemas of interest remaining, we should be looking at combining seeing movies in more of our visits. Laura and I thoroughly enjoyed the Lincoln visit in 2019 but it showed me two things – first, we were now seeing buildings that were never cinemas and would not be on the itinerary a few years ago and secondly, how wonderful it was to see a movie in the best cinema we visited. Watching *Went The Day Well* in the Kinema in the Woods was a fabulous experience and rather than just imagining what seeing a film there would be like, we actually did it. Seeing historic or classic movies in the kind of cinemas they would have been seen in is bound to appeal to more people than just us. It would also be a welcome opportunity for some revenue for the cinemas that host the screenings. On the Paris and Evesham CTA trips Laura and I had to sneak off on our own to actually see a film in a cinema.

I know one-off screenings have been tried in the past – I could never make those occasions unfortunately, mainly because they were generally in London and on Sundays – but it's worth trying again. Maybe do screenings around the country, perhaps do a co-presentation with a film club or society and certainly look into including screenings in more CTA trips. They will both enrich CTA trips and make up for void space because there are fewer and fewer cinemas left to visit. I'm quite happy to look into this in the second half of 2021, maybe by picking the brains of those who organised screenings before. Other commitments prevent me from doing much before then.

My own visits to cinemas between both lockdowns have felt almost like private screenings, with other patrons being in single figures. At the Showcase Avonmeads in Bristol we had the auditorium to ourselves for one movie. I find this really worrying and although the BFI has provided welcome funding to some independent cinemas it's by no means enough to save the industry. This prompted me to contact the Chair myself to suggest we offered whatever support we could to the UK Cinema Association and he gave me permission to contact them on the CTA's behalf. That could mean supporting UKCA calls for better financial help from the government and backing any campaigns to get people back into cinemas. The industry has done an excellent job of making cinemas Covid safe and if we can help get that message out it will be no bad thing. It will do the CTA no harm to show the industry that we support them and it will raise our profile and relevance. It may even make some operators less hostile to our requests to visit their cinemas. So far the UKCA have welcomed our offer of support but at the time of writing I'm still waiting to see where we get involved.

As long as there are cinemas left the CTA will still be needed. I believe that by widening the net we can help secure our future.

Fabian Breckels

Should the CTA try to increase membership by seeking new members at universities that offer film courses? I have several bright, young friends who study film at Portsmouth University. Despite their relative youth, they all enthuse about "old cinemas" and say they prefer watching a movie at a traditional High Street cinema rather than a multiplex where, to be fair, they watch most of their films. Maybe if the CTA contacted lecturers running film courses and offered them a special deal to join (giving them access to the Bulletin, visits and talks), the odd student might also want to sign up.

I also wonder if the CTA should approach top film critic Mark Kermode and either make him a CTA Patron or offer him honorary membership. Kermode is a real cinephile and covers far more than the latest movie release on his television appearances, podcasts, radio shows and books. I'm sure he would want to lend his name to our group, bearing in mind his love for all things cinema. At the very least we should send him issues of our excellently edited Bulletin from the past year – that would surely grab his interest!

Mike Whitcombe

THEATRES TRUST ACT AND CINÉ-VARIETY THEATRES

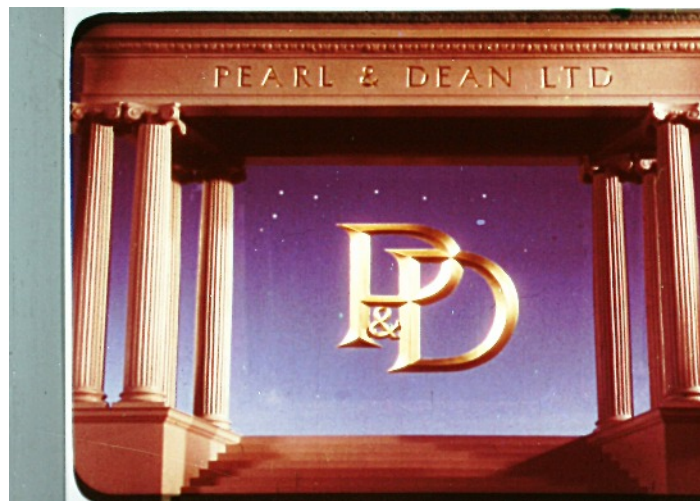
Campaigners who are striving to prevent a cinema-theatre from being demolished or mutilated will find that Ciné-Variety Theatres have some protection under the Theatres Trust Act. Though the Act of Parliament was mainly intended to protect live theatres, Ciné-Variety Theatres and circus buildings are included. Many cinemas had the screen at the back of the stage with several sets of curtains and drapes in front. Performances and acts were performed in front of these, thus the cinema is a Ciné-Variety Theatre and has protection in law. (Most of these variety stages were concealed when 'CinemaScope' screens were installed immediately behind 'the main house tabs (curtains) to avoid the ends of the wider screens being obscured.)

Local Councils are obliged to consult the Theatres Trust regarding plans for any land "on which there is a theatre". It does not have to be full of 'luvvies' and it can be in other uses. Councils can and do ignore the Theatres Trust's recommendations but they are useful in slowing down any development proposal and to involve the press and media, which may help preservation.

The Leader and the Opposition Leaders of Redditch Borough Council were apologetic that their Planning Department had given permission to demolish the former Gaumont Palace Theatre, as their ignorant Planning Officers thought that it was a "club". It is wise for campaigners to ensure that Planning Departments know of the Theatres Trust and that all forms of theatre development need to be brought before them for consultation, before any plans are approved.

John West BFDG

PEARL AND DEAN



I much enjoyed reading *Also Full Supporting Music* by Ben Doman in the last issue. One of my lasting regrets is that, in 1972, I failed to cadge a print of the Gordon's Gin advert with the original Jeff Wayne music. I would love to find a copy of that or to discover its whereabouts on the Internet. With regard to Pearl and Dean, their original pillar opening title (or at least an earlier version than that with the Grand Vista music) was in fact silent and is shown in the attached picture. It faded in, then the image slowly came forward to a point where the 'Pearl & Dean Ltd' title on the pediment disappeared. At two of my cinemas I still have the P&D Grand Vista pillar opening and closing titles on the adverts; it's written into the contract! Although the originality and quaintness of my cinemas is frequently remarked upon, this aspect has yet to be mentioned!

Charles Morris

LEICESTER SQUARE

Page 24 of the last Bulletin has an entry originating from the *Daily Express*, via Ian Mitchell, mentioning that Leicester Square is named after a square in Penshurst, Kent. Can I just mention that there is indeed a Leicester Square in this village but, just to set the record straight, I honestly think it is the other way round, as the centre of Penshurst – described by the *Buildings of England (Pevsner) Kent: West and the Weald Guide* as ‘a tiny open-ended square’ – dates from c1850, while the much larger one in London goes back to 1670. Both commemorate the Earls of Leicester, who lived in a grand house just north of the London square and laid it out and also, as the article reports, in Penshurst Place.

Richard Gray

ODEON LEICESTER SQUARE DOORS



Might someone amongst the readership have any knowledge of what happened to the unique glass doors of the original Odeon Leicester Square?

Michael Jones

Richard Gray writes: Yes, the doors were thrown into a skip outside the Odeon when the interior was given an appalling remodelling in 1967. Not only were the doors destroyed but the Art Deco detail inside was smashed up. I remember seeing the glass doors but being young couldn't drag them out for salvage. The whole thing was a tragedy.

LEICESTER

I was interested to see that a new road is planned to go through the site of the demolished ABC. It was a lively cinema, which had its own organ. I remember seeing *Oklahoma* there on the Todd-AO screen. Its name was changed from Savoy to ABC about 1957, which I thought was a pity, as Savoy is a nice name for a cinema.

The original Floral Hall was built in 1876 as the Floral Hall Skating Rink and was demolished in 1900. The Palace Theatre was built in its place, a good Frank Matcham theatre with a large rotating name sign on the roof. The Floral Hall was rebuilt at the back and to one side of the Palace. It was approached by a long tunnel at the side of the theatre. It is this second Floral Hall that some people may remember. The Leicester Palace was a Leicester institution, where many famous artists had appeared. However, I only remember it in its last four years when the big names had gone to TV. I remember Kitty McShane and a young Bill Maynard. Both buildings closed about the same time and the contents were auctioned. I still have the auctioneer's catalogue dated February 1959. I remember going around the theatre and thinking it was a crying shame to pull it down. The corporation did not seem bothered.

I remember that the Floral Hall showed mainly horror films. Usually a queue of little old ladies was waiting outside to pay their nine pence – I would have expected them to watch Disney!

Ian Patterson

INDEPENDENT SUCCESS

It was interesting to see a list of the Top Ten Independent Cinemas in the last Bulletin. Even more interesting was that number 3 (Plaza, Dorchester), number 5 (Picturedrome Bognor Regis) and number 10 (Luxe Wisbech) are all run by Adam Cunard's Electric Theatre Company. If there were a few more enthusiastic cinema owners like Mr Cunard, smaller towns around the country would still boast the alluring magic of a local cinema.

Mike Whitcombe

SINGLE SCREEN CINEMA

I can add the following to the list of single screen cinemas published in Bulletin 54/6: Bonington Cinema, Arnold, Nottingham. Originally a theatre and performance space forming part of Arnold Leisure Centre (other components include a swimming pool and library) which was built in 1963-64 and remodelled in 1983. A digital projection system with 5.1 surround sound was installed in 2015 and feature films are now shown on a regular basis. 178 seats (in pre-Covid days) now reduced to 24. Operated by Gedling Borough Council. {57129}

Terry Hanstock

PORTSMOUTH AREA UPDATE.

Here is an update on venues in the area, including some from the Peter Arnett Bingo Organisation. In Gosport, the Criterion closed at the beginning of the first lockdown and is now up for sale, freehold. In Portsmouth the Shaftesbury has had its planning board removed and it looks like it is being stripped out – there are items in the foyer. The Odeon in London Road and the Majestic in Kingston Road are now looking very derelict; the small bar/snooker entrance on the right side of the main door is now closed. The car park in front of the Troxy is now boarded off due to rough sleepers camping in front of the entrance doors. The huge picture window, where many posters were placed, is starting to be revealed. One I remember was very risqué *Nudes of the World* (1961) – see the present DVD cover for that one!

RW Hawkins

CHANNEL ISLANDS CINEMAS

When I joined the CTA in early 1981, the first Bulletin I received (Vol15, No1, Jan/Feb 1981) had a newsreel article about the consolidation of Rank's four Channel Island outlets to two but retaining the same number of screens. The article at the end said, “we have much historical data on the cinemas of Jersey, so hopefully, one of these fine days, it may be possible to collate this into a worthwhile article.” Well, it's some twenty eight years later! Gavin McGrath has done such a great article (p8 Bulletin 54/5) with it being very much updated in subsequent years.

Having been on a number of family holidays in Guernsey in the 1970s and seeing *Live and Let Die* and *Swallows and Amazons* in 1973 and 1974 in the Gaumont and *Moonraker* in the Odeon in August 1979 has given me great memories of these buildings, particularly the Odeon. The Odeon was always a single-screen cinema and even at that time the organ was lit up although not illuminated or played that evening of *Moonraker*. I even overheard somebody's dad saying to their child, “It's not a Odeon 123 cinema.”

Being a ‘Bond’ film in a holiday period in August, there was a good attendance, however in less than a year it was sad to learn that the Odeon closed on 31 May 1980 and was soon demolished. I wonder when its organ was last played, I believe that the organ went to a Mr Don Pallot of Trinity, Jersey for his museum.

It surprised me and Marcus Eavis, the Bulletin editor at the time, that the Gaumont survived as the Odeon was the far more modern cinema. Both cinema properties were not in the town Centre of St Peter Port, particularly the Odeon but that had plenty of car parking. I expect that at the time of my visit in 1979, various options were being looked at for these venues, the way film admissions were going. Sadly, the Gaumont only lasted until 5 January 1985. In Jersey, the Odeon was twinned in 1981 and two extra screens were added at separate times. The Odeon closed 7 November 2004 and reopened as the Forum, initially with two screens and in late April / early May 2005, when the CTA visited, the other two screens opened. These closed 15 January 2009. The Forum closed on 17 January 1981 and was used prior to demolition as a TV set for *Bergerac*.

Given the small population of Guernsey, CTA members have been very few and far between in these Islands, hence why it's taken time for an article!

Tim McCullen



ODEON BOLTON

Here is a photo taken last October of what I think is a fascinating image of all that remains from the Odeon Bolton – the largest of its time; opened on 21 August 1937 and demolished in February 2007. The 'portion' is the front west-side facing corner, showing quite clearly the black/green faience for which Oscar Deutsch was famed. I hope the image is of some interest to fellow members.

Michael Pass



NECROLOGY

It is always sad to read about people in the entertainment world who have left us forever. *Talking Pictures* TV channel provides an 'in memory' caption at the end of films shown. Some that have been missed from the Bulletin are: Margaret Nolan [75] (aka Vicky Kennedy) who appeared in glamour films for Harrison Marks, Peggy Cummins [95], many films including *Hell Drivers*, Brian Locking [81] and Jet Harris [74] both members of *The Shadows* and Kenny Lynch [81] who starred in several films and is famous for singing *Up On The Roof* on top of the Plaza Northam, Southampton.

RW Hawkins

Editor's Note: As Mr Hawkins surmised in the rest of his letter, it is simply down to a matter of space. I try to pick the more famous people to include. Mr Hawkins also said he heard on the radio that John Barry's father owned "a chain of cinemas in the north of England" but the only one mentioned was the *Rialto* in York and wondered if we knew of any others. The only other one I know is the *Clifton* in York, which is still owned and run as bingo by the same family. Do any members know more?

FILM LOCATIONS

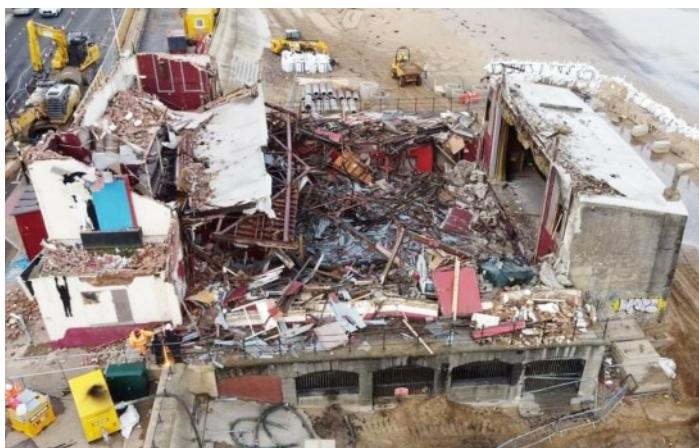
I came across an interesting location at Borehamwood, near Elstree Studios. It was Ewhurst Manor at 37 Furzehill Road. Does any member remember this or what films did the house appear in? It was owned by a Mrs Doris Clifford, who encouraged filmmakers and photographers to use her property. The Tudor mansion is long gone and a housing estate now stands there.



RW Hawkins

Editor's Note: A quick Internet search reveals it was frequently used by George Harrison Marks for his 'glamour' movies and photos. It was also used for several ITC productions in the late 1960s, including *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*. The house was demolished in 1970. See [tinyurl.com/y82tghlr] and [tinyurl.com/ydc6sd79].

REDCAR



Here is a picture of the demolition of the *Regent*. It will be replaced by a three-screen cinema on the same site. See p20 and front cover Bulletin 54/5. {5304}

Malcolm R Crow

DEMOLITION COMPLETED

I was in King Street in Hammersmith recently and noticed that the former *Regal/ABC/Cineworld* has now all been knocked down. Part of it had been left standing for a couple of years but it's just a pile of bricks now.

Malcolm Gambles

CHORLEY

You may recall that I contributed an article in Bulletin 42/6 (Nov/Dec 2008, p10) on Saturday Mornings at the Odeon Chorley.

The contemporary Odeon Chorley photos on p21 are very interesting. Although I moved from Chorley many years ago, we still have close friends there who (in normal times) we visit every year. On one of these visits a couple of years ago, I spent a couple of hours on my own visiting the town centre to see what had changed. It was around midday and I could see lots of people entering the old Odeon for a bingo session. Although you need to be a member to play bingo, you don't need to be a member to enter the building, so I duly entered.

The stalls foyer was of course now full up with gaming machines and the original stair access to the circle was blocked off. I wandered into the auditorium and to my delight discovered that most of the main architectural features were unchanged and generally in good condition. In particular, the proscenium, stage and lighting feature extending from the proscenium along both sides of the auditorium was still there (but no longer illuminated). As expected, all the stalls seating had been replaced with players' tables and chairs and the decoration was now in somewhat garish colours but there was very nice carpeting throughout. And high intensity ceiling lighting (concealed cove lighting that previously lit the front half of the auditorium was not used anymore).

The original stadium-style circle at the rear of the stalls was largely intact but access was now from 'newly' constructed stairs at the rear of the stalls. The first couple of rows were now occupied by players' tables and chairs but rows of tip-up seats remained in the rest of the circle. I walked up and sat down for 15 minutes to take it all in and contemplate its previous glories.

The derelict projection room in the new photos is saddening. I spent many happy hours there and noted that the original Strand Electric lighting control board was still in place. As described in my article on the Saturday morning shows, as a teenager I loved creatively playing with this 'toy', doing gradual manual colour changes to the proscenium feature and to the tabs lighting.

Thanks too for the Empire photos. I used to go the Empire in my childhood, until it closed in the mid/late fifties. It was an independent, single-floor operation with a hideous exposed steel and sheet roofing, cold and draughty in winter. The programmes were largely re-runs or major circuit rejects. But I remember being blown away by a re-run of *Singin' in the Rain* and the fun of *It Came From Outer Space* in 3D (red and green specs)! The Empire ownership was the same as the *Pavilion* cinema, about half a mile away. I occasionally went to their Saturday afternoon children's matinées. For this they ran the same serial. The single print was played at the *Pavilion* before the feature and a projectionist would then walk with it to the Empire to be played after the feature. I think the same procedure was followed with *Pathé* News for the adult programmes, by staggering the programme times.

When the Empire was reopened as Chorley Little Theatre with amateur stage productions, I attended now and then. The modifications did make the place much more comfortable and the performers were very good. (From the photos, the Empire today looks very impressive). I was also a member of the Film Society they operated, showing popular old classics (*Kind Hearts and Coronets* etc) as well as Art House films (Truffaut, Bergman, De-Sica etc) – 16mm only in those days.

Graham Fee



MISCELLANY

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE



Shakespeare's Globe Theatre on London's South Bank reopened for one weekend last November as a socially distanced open-air cinema. The capacity was reduced from 1,500 to 218 to show eight films, including *Shakespeare in Love*, *Gnomeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*.

Evening Standard – 21 October; sent in by Tom Laughlan; photo taken September 2006

JUMBO CINEMA

One of the last British Airways Boeing 747 jumbo jets to leave Heathrow is to be transformed into a cinema and conference centre. It left London for the last time on 8 October for its new home at Cotswold Airport, Gloucestershire.

Daily Record, Daily Telegraph – 27 October; sent in by Ray Dolling & Tom Laughlan

FULL HOUSE?

A poll has found that eight out of ten bingo players are keen to get back and nine out of ten would feel safe. Mecca Bingo quizzed punters after it reopened 28 of its venues in England.

Daily Mirror – 5 December; sent in by Barry Quinton

GOING, GOING, GUN

Sean Connery's pistol from *Dr No* has sold for £190,000 at an auction in Los Angeles. Tom Cruise's fighter pilot helmet from *Top Gun* sold for £80,000 and his US Navy officer cap from *A Few Good Men* made £7,000. A sword used by Bruce Willis in *Pulp Fiction* went for £26,000, nearly 25 times its estimate. A script from *The Godfather* marked 'Third Draft' sold for more than ten times its estimate, making £7,608. A hoverboard from *Back to the Future II* went for £7,900 and a poem written by Marilyn Monroe on her playwright husband Arthur Miller's personalised stationary sold for £11,900.

Daily Mail – 5 December; sent in by Barry Quinton

MODERN TIMES

The warehouse Charlie Chaplin once rehearsed in is now a lofty artist's home. It is listed for sale in Southwell Road, Brixton for £3.25m. The four storey property was bought piecemeal over several years. It was built as Karno's Fun Factory in 1906 along with the adjoining building, now called Clockwork Studios.

Evening Standard – 25 November; sent in by Tom Laughlan

INDIANA JONES RETURNS

Harrison Ford [78] is to return as adventurer Indiana Jones for the fifth and final time. The as-yet unnamed film, directed by James Mangold, will be released in 2022, 41 years after *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Daily Express – 12 December; sent in by Barry Quinton

JAWS RETURNS

The new Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles plans to open on 30 April. It will feature a model of Bruce, the fiberglass shark from *Jaws*. The three mechanical Great Whites were destroyed when production wrapped. But once the film proved to be a box office phenomenon, a fourth shark was made from the original mould. For 15 years he hung at Universal Studios Hollywood as a photo opportunity for visitors until he wound up at the Sun Valley junkyard he would call home for the next 25. The 45ft long model weighs 1,208 pounds [548kg].

News & Star – 23 November

DISNEY IN CARTOON RACISM ALERT

Disney has put warnings of racial stereotypes on some of its best-loved cartoons. *Dumbo*, *The Jungle Book*, *Peter Pan* and *The Aristocats* carry the message on the Disney+ streaming service. The message says, "These stereotypes were wrong then and are wrong now. Rather than remove the content, we want to acknowledge its harmful impact and learn from it." *Dumbo*, released in 1941, features singing crows; their leader is Jim Crow, a reference to segregation laws in the US south. Native Americans are called "redskins" in 1953's *Peter Pan*.

Daily Express, Daily Record – 17 October; sent in by Tom Laughlan & Barry Quinton

COUGHS IN CINEMAS

Guardian travel writers were sent to reopened cinemas around the world to monitor the post-Covid experience and how much nervous coughing they heard. Observations of interest include the Cineworld Ashford, Kent; there a maskless man coughed after 90 minutes. The observer noted a cordoned-off pick and mix station and some "watch this space" placeholder posters. Four men in to see *Proxima* at lunchtime. Half a dozen were watching *Summerland* at the Everyman Hampstead. Manager spoke to audience in a mask and one woman went further wearing a complete plastic visor. The trailers assumed films had been released in May. A possible problem for some London cinemas is the surrounding shops and offices were closed. So confidence levels and office working trends going forward are vital.

The Guardian – 7 August; sent in by Martin Tapsell

Editor's Note: Note the date on this article. I meant to include it in Bulletin 54/4 but overlooked it.

SMALLEST CINEMA?



Wayne Burns, the manager of the Leiston Film Theatre (Suffolk) spent the first lockdown building a nine-seater cinema in his garage. It includes stage curtains, velour wall drapes and a proscenium arch around the screen. Wayne said, "I started my career showing films in the garden shed when I was too young to work in the projection room, so it feels quite ironic that the show goes on, albeit in a garage this now and it's much posher this time around. It's a proper picture palace." The cinema opened with *The Smallest Show on Earth* for Mr Burns' bubble of six people. The Leiston Film Theatre screened the film when it originally came out and has shown it several times since. See p11 Bulletin 54/4. {24966}

East Anglian Daily Times – 24 June, 11 October

NECROLOGY

DAVE PROWSE MBE 85

6ft 6in Dave was well-known as the *Green Cross Code Man*, for which he was awarded the MBE. He appeared in *A Clockwork Orange* but is best known as Darth Vader in *Star Wars*, although his voice was dubbed. He played Frankenstein's monster in three films, *Casino Royale* and two Hammer horrors.



DAME BARBARA WINDSOR 83

Babs is probably best known for her appearances in nine of the *Carry-On* films and 22 years as pub landlady Peggy Mitchell in *Eastenders*. She received a BAFTA Award Nomination for her role in *Sparrows Can't Sing* (1963).



CINEMA BUSINESS

I have delayed compiling this column until 31 December, after the new tier system had been announced, as things have changed and I didn't want to re-type everything. Following a four-week national lockdown in England, cinemas in tier 2 had been allowed to open (although not all did). Now there is nowhere in England in tier 2; we are all in tier 3 or 4 where places of entertainment must remain closed. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have also had lockdowns of varying lengths. I'm sure you share with me that it's a hard job trying to understand the rules – and they may have all changed by the time I prepare the next Bulletin! Watch this space.

EVERYMAN RETHINK

Everyman is reconsidering its plans to open more cinemas after Coronavirus hit ticket sales. Shares nudged lower after the company scaled back its plans from eleven to eight new cinemas in the next financial year.

The i – 1 October; sent in by Margaret Burgoine

CINEWORLD

As reported on p25 of the last Bulletin, Cineworld closed all its 127 Cineworld and Picturehouse cinemas in the UK following record half-year losses and the delayed release of films. The company had roughly £308m in the bank in June but it was expected to burn through £324m in the following six months and could run out of cash. Now it has raised more than £560 million in finance. Shares jumped nearly 20%, up 9p at 55p. The company said it is working on the assumption that they can reopen "no later than May 2012" but there is fear that some of the Picturehouse cinemas, such as the Duke of York's in Brighton, may not reopen.

The company's shares took a dive after Warner Bros unveiled plans to debut films online and in cinemas at the same time next year. They fell 15% to 62p. See also article on p16.

Daily Mail, Evening Standard – 14 October; Evening Standard – 23 November; Metro, Daily Mail – 24 November; Daily Mail – 5, 9 December; sent in by Margaret Burgoine, Barry Quinton & Tom Laughlan

PLEASE RELEASE ME

Independent cinemas have called on film studios to consider the full impact of delaying big releases, warning, "if we wait for life to return to normal, all our cinemas will be gone." Figures suggest UK cinema revenue will be down by about 60% this year – £900 million. As well as those previously reported, Disney has delayed *Death on the Nile* and *Free Guy*. MGM has insisted that the new James Bond film *No Time to Die* will not be sold to streaming services. See above item.

Evening Standard – 15 October, 8 November; Daily Mail – 27 October; sent in by Tom Laughlan & Barry Quinton

DISNEY STREAMERS

The Disney+ streaming service has amassed more than 70 million subscribers in its first year, underlining the challenge it poses to rivals Netflix and Amazon. The figures show a leap of 13.2 million since August. The service was launched in November 2019.

Daily Mail – 14 November; sent in by Tom Laughlan

The Projected Picture Trust

Dean Clough Mills, HALIFAX, HX3 5AX

The Projected Picture Trust exists to locate and preserve projectors and related film equipment, both professional and domestic. Since 1978 enthusiastic volunteers have been happy to help restore these items and so preserve THE MAGIC OF CINEMA.

The Trust provides help and assistance to non-commercial community cinemas and museums exhibiting film related artefacts.

The Museum of Cinema Technology has perhaps the largest collection of all types of film equipment in the UK. The Data Archive holds over 3,000 items including press cuttings, manuals and film related technical documents. We are presently looking to strengthen our management team...

PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU ARE ABLE TO HELP
or if you would like to become a member only.

contact@ppttrust.org

www.projectedpicturetrust.org

CULTURAL RECOVERY FUND GRANTS

More than 200 independent cinemas across England are being supported with £16 million in grants from the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund.

201 cinemas have received funding so far from a £30 million pot allocated by the British Film Institute [BFI], on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, as part of the biggest ever single investment in this country's cultural sectors. More grant applications from independent cinemas are also currently being assessed. Cinemas will be able to apply for another £14 million in grants in the New Year as part of the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund. The new round of funding is in addition to the £30 million already being allocated by the BFI.

The BFI has been accepting applications and awarding grants to independent cinemas throughout the autumn. Eligible cinemas were able to apply for Safety Grants to help venues meet the immediate costs of implementing Covid-secure measures to protect staff and audiences and larger Business Sustainability Grants to help stabilise sites financially.

Recognising that cinemas need content, during this crisis, the Government's Film and TV Production Restart Scheme has helped keep the cameras rolling at the other end of the screen supply chain. The £500 million scheme, which opened for applications in October, has assured nearly 100 productions that they will be supported if future losses are incurred due to Covid-19 and provided the confidence they need to restart filming.

The majority of the grant funding allocated by the BFI has been awarded to cinema sites in every corner of the country, from Penrith to Peckham and Penzance, with cinemas outside London benefitting from 78% of funding to date.

Some of the grants given are (in no particular order):

Hailsham Pavilion (£55,446), Ilkley Cinema (£204,421), Berkhamsted Rex (£350,332), Cromer Merlin (£69,200), St Albans Odyssey (£120,377), Melton Mowbray Regal (£98,661), Oxford Ultimate Picture Palace (£44,269), Wilmslow Rex (£138,141), Dalston Rio (£110,296), London's Peckhamplex (£564,423) Wells Film Centre (£78,980) Leiston Film Theatre (£57,509) Wirksworth Northern Light Cinema (£27,749) Penrith Alhambra (£121,488) Christchurch Regent Centre (£243,405) Sheffield Showroom (£536,449) Winchester Theatre Royal (£219,134), Dorchester Plaza (£126,458), Wareham Rex (£3,707).

And finally – the independent Colosseum in Bournemouth has only 19 seats and its size is reflected in the amount of grant received – just £675.

A regional breakdown of funding from this round of awards is as follows:

East Midlands.....	£1,830,719
East.....	£1,791,775
London.....	£3,466,490
North East.....	£169,669
North West.....	£1,076,294
South East.....	£1,862,028
South West.....	£2,868,037
West Midlands.....	£679,041
Yorkshire and the Humber.....	£2,267,101

As part of the second round of grant funding from the Culture Recovery Fund, Arts Council England will deliver £250 million; Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund will deliver £36 million; and the BFI will deliver £14 million. In addition Arts Council England has received £100 million in the form of repayable finance.

More than £1 billion has now been allocated from the Culture Recovery Fund to support culture in all four nations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

UK Government Website – 20 December; [tinyurl.com/y7m3dxcob]

Editor's Note: It is obviously impossible to list all the details for all 201 cinemas receiving the awards. The above is what was on the Government website or what we have received in press cuttings. In many places the cinema itself has organised additional fundraising and in some cases matched or exceeded the grant. The UK devolved nations all have similar schemes but, despite an extensive search of the Internet, I could not find detailed information available.

CTA ARCHIVE

The Archive is open for enquiries and visitors, provided local conditions and government guidance allows.

We will continue to monitor the situation carefully and the number of volunteers and visitors will be limited to allow for social distancing to be observed. It should be remembered that most enquiries do not require you to visit the Archive in person.

The Cinema Theatre Association Archive is open for research visits and for enquiries from members and the general public. Located in a modern building on the outskirts of Southend-on-Sea, the Archive offers all the facilities and resources you would expect from a modern archive. The Archive contains an extensive collection of material that has been steadily growing since its inception in 1967. This includes books, periodicals, articles, newspaper cuttings, photographs, plans and drawings, many donated or acquired from leading architects or industry figures and supplemented by personal collections and research. The breadth of the collection is such that there are very few topics related to cinema history, architecture, design or operation that are not represented.

MAKING AN ENQUIRY OR ARRANGING A VISIT

Please visit the new Archive website for full details, to make an enquiry or arrange a visit: [cta-uk.org/archive]. The *Exploring the Archive* page of the website includes catalogues and lists for various collections along with indexes for periodicals including the Bulletin and Picture House. You may find these lists useful in identifying material for research. As the catalogues can only provide a brief snapshot of a small part of the Archive, please use the enquiry form that can be found on the *Making an Enquiry* page to tell us about a project you are undertaking or subject which you are interested in researching – or maybe it's a photograph that eludes you. Visiting the Archive is not normally necessary and material can simply be sent to you. If your enquiry will benefit from a visit in person we will help you arrange a visit; please do not just turn up.

The Archive is expected to be open on the following dates from 10am until 5pm: 23 January, 20 February and 27 March.

DONATING MATERIAL TO THE ARCHIVE

Please visit the *Donating Material* page of the website. Almost everything held in the Archive has been donated and is the main way that the collection grows. The Archive will not turn down material which is on subject and adds to the breadth of its holdings so please do not hesitate to contact us if you have something which you think should be preserved. If the material includes books or magazines, please first prepare a list and submit it to us, so we can determine which copies are not already held. We will occasionally accept books that are already held if they are in good condition, on the understanding that they will be sold to raise funds. Please do not post items to the Archive address as there is no facility to receive parcels when it is closed and they may be lost or returned to you as undelivered. Please contact the Archivist, who can provide a safe address. Although we always prefer to receive original material, if you cannot part with the originals we are happy to accept scanned material or copies of your digital photographs.

ARCHIVE TWITTER

You may be interested to know that the Archive regularly posts messages, often including photographs on its Twitter account – @CTA_Archive. Please feel free to follow us if you use Twitter, alternatively you can view these messages via the link on our website or by visiting [twitter.com/CTA_Archive].

CONTACTING THE ARCHIVE

To make an enquiry please use the enquiry form on the website. For any other matter, such as donations or volunteering, please email [archive@cta-uk.org] or if you do not have Internet access call 07971752807.

Clive Polden, CTA Archivist



VOLUNTEERING WITH THE ARCHIVE

The Archive is entirely run and maintained by volunteers and is a busy place with a lot going on all the time. Volunteering can be a very interesting and rewarding experience helping to file, organise and sort the collections and new donations, deal with enquiries and assist visitors and undertake special projects, including digitisation. New volunteers are welcome.



A volunteer restoring a cinema artefact in the Archive

Volunteers don't need any experience or particular skills, although if you do have a particular interest, knowledge or skill this may be put to good use. The Archive is located at Rochford near Southend-on-Sea and can be reached from London in around one hour by car or public transport. Access can be provided on certain weekdays, however most volunteers meet once a month on a Saturday.

If you cannot easily visit the Archive perhaps you might be of service in other ways. For example, if you have computer skills and access to the Internet, we have plenty of work that can be undertaken remotely from the comfort of your own home, without ever visiting the Archive. If you have a scanner, then there are lots of photographs that need to be scanned. Again this can be done from home.



Volunteers in the Archive (before Covid-19)

There is another interesting way to assist the Archive, by joining the CTA Google Group – a safe email discussion board whose primary purpose is to try to identify the many cinema images that remain a mystery. If sleuthing is your interest, or you are familiar with a lot of cinemas, then this might be a really interesting way to help out the Archive. If like Groucho Marx you don't want to belong to any club that would have you, you can still access the photographs at Flickr and if you can identify a cinema or have a useful observation that might help to identify it, just email me the information, with the photo number.

Google Group: [www.groups.google.com/forum/#!/forum/cta-uk].
Flickr album: [tinyurl.com/uomjyom]

Please contact us to find out more about volunteering and to share with us your interest in becoming a volunteer at [archive@cta-uk.org].

INTERNET CORNER

- ★ [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/kinematograph-weekly] no less than 208,500 pages of the *Kinematograph* [later *Kiné Weekly* 1904 - 1960 (few years missing) – with more to come. Note: This is a subscription service. *sent in by Robert Holden*
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y672r644] From the *Edinburgh Evening News* – 11 cinemas around Edinburgh's Southside from yesteryear.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y5unvt6s] From the *Telegraph & Argus* – Recalling past Bradford cinemas.
- ★ [nomajesty.com/film-tv] Stories from the big screen and in-depth analysis of the world of cinema.
- ★ [www.macearchive.org] The Media Archive for Central England [MACE] has over 65,000 titles. A search for "cinema" reveals 83.
- ★ [bdcmuseum.org.uk] The Bill Douglas Cinema Museum at the University of Exeter, which is open to the public. The Home Page includes a video by Mark Kermode. *sent in by Jeremy Perkins*
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y83bxf7] A page from *Coventry Live* in 2017 – eleven Coventry cinemas we've loved and lost; with photos.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/ycpqtmmf] A page from the *Newcastle Chronicle* – cinemas of the North East, mainly Tyneside area; 20 photos.
- ★ [www.derelictlondon.com/cinemas.html] As the URL implies, some good photos of old cinemas in London by Paul Talling.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y9l2vr3r] A Facebook post of a 2½ minute news item from *BBC South Today* on 35mm at the *Slindon Cinema*.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yb6ocncx] From the *Plymouth Herald* – a concept video of what the former Gaumont would have looked like if it had become the HQ for GodTV – a project that was abandoned. Also photos of the cinema in its heyday and recently as a nightclub.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y8ftg7o] A page from *Belfast Live* – photos of the *Strand* cinema over its 85 years.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/ybs8p3ev] A few photos from *Essex Live* from the old *Astoria / Odeon* in Southend-on-Sea.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yan4hlhs] An article from *The Spectator* – A reporter's view: "Why I won't mourn the death of the cinema".
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y88mrbbm] A page from *Wales Online* with 20 photos and a short video inside the former *Palace Theatre*, which is being restored for office space - see p12 last AGM Supplement.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y8ms5rq4] A page from the *Liverpool Echo* – inside the former *Gaumont Dingle*; six photos from the abandoned bingo.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y8ypmxjd] A page from *ComingSoon.net* – "What's old is new again" – the history of 70mm film.
- ★ [youtu.be/UNIM1q2INJE] A 4-minute video of a slide-show of photos of cinemas, called 'Old British Cinemas 1'. Unfortunately it doesn't say where they are! There are links on the page to Nos 2 & 3 and other cinema videos.
- ★ [youtu.be/txaRcg8_lvc] A 17-minute video – The last carbon arc projectionist in Chicago. *Above two items sent in by Nick Taylor.*
- ★ [youtu.be/HID2iaGx2H8] A 4-minute video on the *Redford Theatre* in Detroit. Has views of the auditorium, box and organ. Page has links to other cinema videos.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yabehfps] From *The Londonist* – 18 Underrated Art Deco Buildings In London. Includes two cinemas.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yb7nhae6] From *ArchDaily* – the Architecture of Movie Theaters. 12 photos.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y5gqv6fz] From *Messy Nessy* – Documenting Africa's Old Cinemas.

QUOTATIONS

More cinematic quotations from the list sent by Gavin McGrath:

- ◆ A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.

Samuel Goldwyn

- ◆ I never thought I'd land in pictures with a face like mine.

Audrey Hepburn

- ◆ Pain is temporary, film is forever.

Michael J Fox

MEMBERSHIP

NEW MEMBERS

We offer a warm welcome to the following new members:

Stan Holdsworth, Roy Jefferies, Zoe Norfolk, Phil West, Alan Bennett Jeffrey Morris and David McCabe.

DONATIONS

Once more, members have displayed their generosity by adding a donation to the renewal of their subscriptions. Our sincere thanks go to: JCS Altman, RS Anderson, MA Bentley, EG Bottle, BC Brister, IC Cooper, MS Crowle, GC Donaldson, R Duerden, L Essex, DW Faircloth, GB Fenwick, H Fisher, WG Gilbert, RJ Gillings, PJ Goff, VF Harvey, JL Howarth, AF Hughes, PD Jennings, J&M Kennett, P King, CP Kisicki, J Leworthy, IP Nash, T Pate, JM Pritchard, FRA Rosen, JG Rumble, CA Simmons, RD Simpson, SD Simpson, C Skinner, BR Stevenson, RJ Stovell, JP Vaux, KM Wakefield, WA Watters, MW Weston, AG Williams and BD Wingrad.

IN MEMORIAM

We have been sorry to learn of the deaths of Michael Armstrong from Wymondham and Brian Harries from Brynamman. Our sincere condolences are sent to their families and friends. Obituaries appear below.

Ray Ritmeester, Membership Secretary

OBITUARIES

BRIAN HARRIES BEM 77

CTA member Brian Harries, former manager of the Public Hall Cinema in Brynamman, Carmarthenshire, died suddenly at the age of 77 just before Christmas. Brian was a veteran of cinema, having started as a projectionist at the Welfare Hall Cinema, Cwmllynfell, at the age of 15 where he learned his trade from his father, John Moy Harries. He spent the next 50 years devoted to the Public Hall Cinema and kept it going against all odds when other halls were closing as cinemas and going over to bingo. He received the British Empire Medal in 2014 for services to cinema and the community. He hosted a visit by the CTA to the cinema on the morning of 11 April 2010 as part of the *West is Best* trip and will be greatly missed by his wife Gillian and the family, by the Public Hall Cinema and last of all by myself.

John Skinner

MICHAEL ARMSTRONG 73

As a boy, Michael used to love to visit the Regal in Wymondham and watch the projectionists at work and on Saturday nights would go and fetch their fish and chips. He went on to deliver advertising leaflets and help with projection. The Regal closed in 1993 and was converted into an Ex-Servicemen's Club but Michael was determined to keep its memory alive. He had the garage at his home converted into a replica mini Regal. In 2000 Cinema City [Norwich] suggested a one-off screening of *The Titfield Thunderbolt* at the Ex-Servicemen's Club, where the 35mm projectors had been left in situ. It was such a hit The Regal Experience was formed; their classic Sunday afternoon film shows were sell-outs and attracted many stars to the town including June Whitfield, Sylvia Sims, Dora Bryan, Virginia McKenna and so many more. All profits went to charity. While Michael had been confined to a wheelchair for some time, his courage, his spirit and his humour was an inspiration to all who knew him. The Club installed a stairlift so he could get up to the projection box. He organised trips to Hollywood and met many film stars; the photo shows Michael with Jean Simmons at her home in Santa Monica

I met Michael when we visited the Regal on the Heritage Open Day in 2009. He showed us around and invited us back to his home to see the 'mini Regal' and gave us afternoon tea. A real gentleman.

Harry Rigby



HOLIDAY SNAPS

By Jeremy Perkins



Strasbourg: Cinécité – April 2012



Strasbourg: Vox – April 2012



Dijon: Le Darcy – June 201



Montpellier: City centre Gaumont – October 2010



Saumur: Palace – May 2008



St Moritz: Scala – March 2010

