



CINEMA  
THEATRE  
ASSOCIATION

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

# BULLETIN

Vol 56 No 2

ISSN 1479-0882

March / April 2022



The Odeon Weston-super-Mare in August 2003 – see Newsreel p20



The proscenium of the State Grays c2004 – see p8; photo by Peter Hammond



## FROM YOUR EDITOR

Please can I remind you of the rubric at the bottom of the next column: "It is assumed that submissions are for publication, unless stated otherwise." If you send me something confidential, please say so – or I might inadvertently get us both into trouble.

At the risk of repeating myself, please can you ensure any photos submitted for publication are of printable quality. I'm afraid I get many that are out of focus, are too dark and/or suffer camera shake. I can make some adjustments with software but focus and camera shake are very difficult to deal with. If you are taking photos in low light or indoors, please steady your camera, preferably by using a tripod. If you scan prints, please send them at the highest resolution possible. Please don't 'doctor' any images – if I have to make further adjustments the two could conflict. I prefer images as jpgs but I can cope with virtually any format.

I have a few holiday snaps held over but I could do with some more. Now that Covid restrictions are easing and spring and summer are approaching, remember to take your camera and get snapping. I would also welcome some more articles, again illustrated with photographs. I have photos of most cinemas in Britain, taken this Century but if you have recent ones, so much the better.

Harry Rigby, CTA Bulletin Editor



The 2021 edition, number 46, was collected by Royal Mail from the printer on Christmas Eve. Most members seem to have received it on New Year's Eve but we have reports of its arrival in mid-January, clearly as a result of staff shortages at some local post offices, as reported in the national press.

Please email any letters regarding the contents of this issue [of *Picture House*] to [picture.house@cta-uk.org](mailto:picture.house@cta-uk.org) or by post to 13 Tennyson Court, Paddockhall Road, Haywards Heath RH16 1EZ.

The 2022 edition of *Picture House* will focus on Shipman and King, using scans of high quality images provided by Jenny King from the photographic albums of her grandfather, Sam King. To help fill out a history of the circuit, if you worked for or had contact with S&K, have any memorabilia or recollections of the individual cinemas, please contact the Editor, Allen Eyles, by email at [picture.house@cta-uk.org](mailto:picture.house@cta-uk.org), by post at the address above, or by phone on 01444 455763.

Allen Eyles

## Quick Guide to CTA Social Media



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Zoom talks and presentations platform

## Useful CTA Contacts

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Amazon Smile link : [smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1100702-0](https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1100702-0)

## CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

(Founded January 1967)

**promoting serious interest in all aspects of cinema buildings**

Company limited by guarantee. Reg. No. 04428776.

Registered address: 59 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, TW11 0DJ.

Registered Charity No. 1100702. Directors are marked + in list below.

**PATRONS:** Alan Baxter; Allen Eyles; Lucinda Lambton

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## © CTA BULLETIN – published six times yearly by the 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

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

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE  
WEDNESDAY 20 APRIL**

# VISITS AND EVENTS

## A Spring day out in smart Mayfair

**Tuesday 29 March 10:30am,**  
**organised by Richard Gray and Ray Ritmeester**



The Curzon Mayfair in April 2004

Britain's youngest listed cinema (Grade II), the Curzon Mayfair opened in 1966. It replaced a distinguished cinema of the same name but this single-storey structure became sacrificed to the pressures of greater development on such a high-profile site. The new building not only accommodated a new picture house but also a restaurant, with eight floors of offices and flats overhead. The ingenious planning fitted the foyer into a semi-basement below a stadium-style auditorium. The same architectural practice – Burnet, Tait and Lorne – was again employed (project architect: HG Hammond).

Particularly notable are William Mitchell's distinctive acoustic treatment of the auditorium wall surfaces in a random abstraction, a device also extending to a sliding screen in the foyer, which can seal-off the bar area if desired. The ceiling is in cellular form, above which a raft supports the superstructure. The Curzon is therefore noteworthy not only for these features but also for the extremely clever use of internal levels. In more recent years a second screen has been fitted into the rear part of the auditorium but not to drastically alter its overall appearance.

Both the new and old Curzon cinemas have held a prominent place in London film-going, presenting not only art films but also more general product. Curzon as a company is determined to continue operating on the site but they are now at the behest of a new ground landlord, whose proposals are not entirely clear but may include conferences and even theatrical use.

For this, certain changes are suggested, leading to unwanted compromise and the CTA Casework function recently attended a meeting about this and is in discussion with both the exhibitor and the planning authority, Westminster City Council.

It is possible the CTA has never before visited this important cinema and we felt it an opportune moment to explore its complexities before any alterations are made.

Following this visit we hope to include one or two other entertainment buildings. Full details of these other venues will appear on the Ticket-Source and CTA websites.

**Getting There:** The Curzon is at 37-38 Curzon Street, London W1J 7TY and is situated towards its further end going towards Park Lane. The closest Tube station is Green Park, then walk west along Piccadilly, taking Clarges Street on the right, turning left at the top into Curzon Street.

### BOOKING YOUR TICKET

Members £8 and Non-Members £10 (including notes and tea/coffee)



Booking is done on-line using TicketSource:  
[www.ticketsource.co.uk](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk). Simply enter 'Cinema Theatre Association' into their Search Box.  
Members without Internet access may book by telephone on 01494 532241 or 07852 761842.

## Coming Soon

Here are provisional details of some 'in person' events planned for the remainder of the year:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Saturday 2 July | CTA AGM, possibly at the Odeon Luxe Holloway, with a talk by the architects for the recent renovation.   |
| June/July       | CTA Wessex event in the Bournemouth area.  |
| August          | Projected Picture Trust [PPT] collection at Dean Clough Mills, Halifax. Plus: Regal, Picture House, Odeon, Theatre Royal, Playhouse and Civic [former Victoria Theatre] in Halifax.                      |
| September       | CTA Archive Open Day. Plus: Palace Westcliff-on-Sea. Photo stop at Plaza Southchurch Road, Southend, described as a 'quasi-church'. Coach from Westcliff Station, returning there at the end of the day. |
| October         | IMAX Science Museum, South Kensington. Plus: Picture House (ex Forum) Fulham Road and Everyman (on the site of the Classic / Kings Road Theatre).  |
| October         | Plaza Stockport to celebrate 90 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of opening on 8 October 1932. Plus: Rex Wilmslow, Savoy Heaton Moor and possibly Buxton Opera House. Probably a weekend visit.                 |
| December        | Alan Baxter's Gallery, Farringdon. Members' Christmas party, plus a cinema music presentation entitled <i>When Cinema Let In The Light, Part 2 – The Organist Entertains</i> by Martin Cleave.           |

## OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

(not) organised by the CTA

### London Film Fairs

Sunday 3 April & Sunday 19 June

Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1H 0DG

The conventions presents dealers from all over the UK, Europe, US, Canada, Australia and South America that specialise in vintage and modern film memorabilia. Items cover the history of cinema from the silents to present day blockbusters. [londonfilmconvention.co.uk](http://londonfilmconvention.co.uk)

### Jazz Night at the Troxy

Tuesday 19 April @ 7pm

480 Commercial Road, London E1 0HX.

The combination of a jazz group with the mighty Wurlitzer unlocks another dimension in sound.

Tickets £18, discount for students & COS members.

[www.troxy-wurlitzer.org/product/jazz-night-at-troxy](http://www.troxy-wurlitzer.org/product/jazz-night-at-troxy)



### Talking Pictures Weekend at the Regent Christchurch

Sat 16 / Sun 17 July 10:30am – 7pm

Celebrity guests, newsreels, short films, lost feature films projected from 35mm, quizzes, stalls, music and interviews with the stars on stage – plus meet the stars, browse the stalls and some very special exclusive show deals all weekend!

Tickets: £50 for the whole weekend, £30 for one day.

[www.renownfilms.co.uk](http://www.renownfilms.co.uk)

### QUOTATIONS

Two more cinematic quotations from the list sent by Gavin McGrath:

♦ What do I look for in a script? Days off!

Spencer Tracy

♦ They shoot too many pictures and not enough actors.

Walter Winchell

CTA Zoom Talks are listed overleaf



# CTA VIRTUAL TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

## A Virtual Stroll Down Los Angeles Broadway

**Saturday 2 April at 5:30pm (BST) / 9:30am (US PDT)**  
(Zoom talk No 17)

**BY THE LOS ANGELES HISTORIC THEATRE FOUNDATION**

After the popular success of last year's *Atmospheric Theatres* presentation, the CTA again joins with the Los Angeles Historic Theatre Foundation [LAHTF] to invite you to take a virtual stroll through LA's very own Broadway Theatre District. Explore the theatres that beat the wrecking ball and continue to shine as a beacon in a district over 100 years old. Each theatre as different as the next, they each lend their own unique design and architectural features to the rich character of the largest theatre district listed on the USA's National Register of Historic Places.

New York City's Great White Way has reigned supreme over Broadway productions but in Los Angeles, Broadway was the epicentre of vaudeville and motion picture exhibition in the early 1900s. The development brought out prolific architects and master craftsmen, creating a story woven throughout Broadway of theatres – some lost but many thriving in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Major moves over the last decade have breathed new life into the theatres and district, evidencing how important the district is not only to downtown but a flourishing reminder of the industry's roots in the home of motion pictures and entertainment. Both CTA and LAHTF members enjoy the same admission price for this special presentation. (see below)



The blazing marquee neon of LA's busy Broadway

### BOOKING YOUR TICKET

CTA Zoom talks are open to everyone – members and non-members alike. CTA & LAHTF Members: £3; Non-Members: £5 per device

Zoom talk starts at 5:30pm BST / 9:30am US PDT  
(log-in from 5:15pm / 9:15am)

Booking is done on-line using TicketSource:  
[www.ticketsource.co.uk](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk)

Simply enter 'Cinema Theatre Association' into their Search Box. (Talk No 17)



## The Cinemas of Thomas 'Tommy' Thompson

**Saturday 21 May at 5:30pm (UK time)**  
(Zoom talk No 18)

**BY PETER HALLINAN**

Thomas Thompson was a true pioneer of cinema exhibition in the North-East of England. In 1908, at the age of 40, he gave up his job as a shipping clerk in Hartlepool, rented a hall in Middlesbrough and hired a second-hand projector. Two years later he had bought that hall and also the 3,000-seat Hippodrome in Middlesbrough with its 18-piece orchestra. From then there was no stopping him and during his lifetime he owned 50 cinemas and became a key figure in English cinema exhibition.

Generously illustrated with rare images, this talk will look at how he started, the audience he looked for, his choice of venues and how he made them work as businesses. It will also look at his wider achievements including being a founding member of the Cinema Exhibitors Association, being a frequently outspoken contributor to their deliberations on cinema issues of the day, being a film renter, dabbling in colour films, making films (where his ambition exceeded accomplishment achievement), owning an ice cream factory and being offered a baronetcy (for a price), which he didn't take.

Our presenter, Peter Hallinan, is Thomas Thompson's great-grandson. He'd grown up hearing many family anecdotes and fascinating tales of cinema ownership. After leaving his career as a commercial property lawyer, he began a Master's Degree in Film Studies with Film Archiving at the University of East Anglia. At his interview he shared a few of those family cinema stories. "That's your dissertation", he was told. And so began the search, with fingers crossed, to find out if the reality matched what the family had said. It did, many times over. Peter later worked for a number of years as a film archivist at the Imperial War Museum and has since done a lot more research and created a much-praised website ([www.bugandflea.com](http://www.bugandflea.com)) as a tribute to his great-grandfather. Book your ticket for this exciting tribute to a true cinema pioneer!



The Palladium Middlesbrough in 1960  
(part of the Tommy Thompson circuit)

### BOOKING YOUR TICKET

CTA Zoom talks are open to everyone – members and non-members alike. CTA Members: £3; Non-Members: £5 per device

Zoom talk starts at 5:30pm (UK time, log-in from 5:15pm)

Booking is done on-line using TicketSource:  
[www.ticketsource.co.uk](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk)

Simply enter 'Cinema Theatre Association' into their Search Box. (Talk No 18)





# PUBLICATIONS

## Back Numbers Available

### PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

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

No 6	£1.50	Television in the Cinema; Atherley Southampton; Hippodrome, Blackpool.
No 8	£1.50	Sol Levy; Reginald Cooper; ABC in NW London.
No 16	£3.00	Dominion London; 3000 plus; John Broadley remembers.
No 17	£3.00	Special Issue featuring the Cinemas of George Coles with 26 original photographs reproduced in sepia.
No 18	£3.00	Sydney Colwyn Foulkes; United Picture Theatres; Tivoli Wimborne.
No 19	£3.50	Co-operative Cinemas; Ideal Lambeth; Dursley; Alister Macdonald; Granada Tooting.
No 21	£3.50	100 Years On; Travelling Shows; Reggie Rea; Albert Hall Sheffield; Regal Wells; West End Adverts; Scotland.
all issues below have colour cover and inside pages		
No 22	£3.50	Burrell, Foley, Fischer; Palace Theatre London; David Nye.
No 24	£4.50	Oldest Cinema - Harringay; Cardiff Round-up; Odeon Miscellany.
No 25	£4.50	Oldest Cinema (Brighton); FE Bromige; Committee's Choice; Gaumont Managers; Carlton Swansea;.
No 26	£4.50	Paramount Newcastle; Edward Stone; Granada Men; E de Wilde Holding; Electric Portobello Road.
No 27	£4.50	New Victoria/Apollo; Whiteladies Bristol; Clark & Fenn; Compton Organs; Tim Foster Associates.
No 28	£4.50	James McKissack; WJ King; Torbay Cinema; Tabs.
No 29	£4.50	Cinerama in Britain; Braziers the Builders; John Fernée; Waller Jeffs; John Duffin's paintings.
No 30	£5.00	The Davis Family, Croydon; Apollo Hammersmith Organ; Norwich Roadshows.
No 31	£7.50	Special 84-page edition: Essoldo - A Family Business: Sol Sheckman and the Essoldo Circuit.
No 32	£5.00	Harry Myers Photographs; Cinemas at the Coalface; Shaws of Darwen: Edward A Stone.
No 33	£5.00	Theodore Komisarjevsky; Circuit & other releases of 1956; The case for saving the New Victoria Bradford.
No 34	£5.00	Beaufort Birmingham; Granada Tooting in 1934; Rank in post-war Scotland; J Braddon's Cinema life.
No 35	£5.00	Holophone lighting; Imitations of Odeon; Cradley Records; 1909 Cinematograph Act; Kingston Showmanship.
No 36	£6.00	Leslie Kemp; Jeremy Perkins on Brighton; The Clifton Circuit; Circuit Releases of 1960.
No 37	£8.50	Special 92-page issue; saving the Electric Palace Harwich.
No 38	£6.00	Northern Morris Associated Cinemas; Point Milton Keynes; Going to the Cinema in Birmingham; Palace Conwy; Carlton Haymarket; Military Cinemas; Cinema Murders.
No 39	£6.00	WWI and the Film Trade; Tale of Two Regals; Majestic Oxford; Odeon North Finchley; Films at the Royal Albert Hall.
No 40	£6.00	Tolmer Euston; Michael Stringer memories; West End in the 1950s; Stafford Entertainments; Will Onda & James Atroy; Stephen Waddingham - a Granada man.
No 41	£6.00	CTA's 50th Anniversary; Plaza Stockport; Majestic Leeds; Grosvenor Rayners Lane; Pascal J Stienlet.
No 42	£6.00	Odeon Elephant & Castle, Plaza Crosby; Depot Lewes; Cineworld Chelsea; Gaumont Sheffield Figures.
No 43	£6.00	Virgin Cinemas; Peter Jewett's ABC memories; Scala Kings Cross; Picture House Campbelltown; Beeston/Nottingham memories.
No 44	£6.00	Village Cinemas of NE Scotland; William Keys' career; Bernard Snowball remembers Pt1.
No 45	£8.50	Classic Repertory Cinemas; Blackpool Cinemas; Thomas Jackson; Bernard Snowball remembers Pt2. Special 100-page issue.
No 46	£6.00	Cecil Clavering, Odeon Architect: Pavilion Hailsham; Working For Star: Focus Sevenoaks Figures.

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 2020 are £4.00 per year (6 issues), individual copies are £1.00 each. Prices for issues in 2021 and 2022 are £5.00 per copy. All prices include postage. There are some issues available from earlier years - 1967 to 1986. Please send enquiries to the Sales Officer.



## BINDERS FOR PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

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

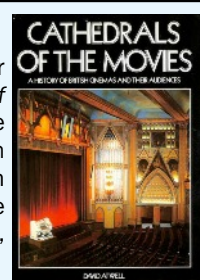


**Price:** £6.00 per binder, supplied in a special postal carton. Please add £3.40 to your total order for post and packing.

Ordering details below.

## Second-Hand Books

We have a selection of second-hand books for sale, including rare titles such as *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](mailto:sales@cta-uk.org) with 'Second Hand Book List' as the subject. Or write to the 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](mailto: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](http://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)

*Movie Theaters* by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, 304 pages, hardback, 200 illustrations, large size, ISBN 978-3791387741. About £35.99 from Amazon.

Following on from their incredibly successful *The Ruins of Detroit*, this major new project by two prolific French photographers poignantly eulogises and celebrates the tattered remains of hundreds of movie theatres across America. They are in every American city and town - grandiose movie palaces, constructed during the heyday of the entertainment industry, that now stand abandoned, empty, decaying, or repurposed. Since 2005, the duo have been travelling across the US to visit these early 20th Century relics. In hundreds of lushly coloured images, they have captured the rich architectural diversity of the exteriors and have also stepped inside to capture the interiors - crumbling plaster, rows of broken crushed-velvet seats, peeling paint, defunct equipment and abandoned concession stands - as well as their transformation into bingo halls, warehouses, fitness centres, flea markets, parking lots and grocery stores. Using a large format camera, the photographers' carefully-composed images range from landscape exteriors to starkly beautiful close-ups. Presented here in an oversized format, this illustrated eulogy for the American movie palace is certain to interest many cinema enthusiasts!



A selection of the images can be viewed at: [tinyurl.com/357nn7vv](http://tinyurl.com/357nn7vv)



# HERITAGE CASEWORK

By Tim Hatcher

## Grade II\* Listed

A press release has been issued by the Association raising concern over lack of progress in conversion of the **State** in Grays to a hostelry of the JD Wetherspoon chain of such establishments. Subsequently a representative of the architectural practice KDPA has contacted the CTA in order to seek advice on the technical equipment which survives in the cinema. See article on p8.

Formal objection has been forwarded against proposed removal of certain decorative features from within the **Granada** in Walthamstow, as detailed in published plans for its renovation.

It is anticipated that the **Dreamland** cinema in Margate will be utilised as a location for filming of a cinematographic feature. This would involve temporary replacement of external signage and internal doors. A watching brief will be maintained to ensure that any such alterations are reversed following completion of the project.



The Dome Worthing in March 2009

A modicum of progress has been made towards the rectification, currently stalled, of the unapproved alterations to the **Dome** in Worthing. Historic England has now deemed the basic revised plans to be acceptable; however, it requires that the intended moulding details be re-designed and expertly crafted.

## Grade II Listed



The Rio Dalston in April 2006

A scheme to install solar panels on the roof of the **Rio** in Dalston will be assessed when detailed plans become available; any resultant comments will then be submitted to the relevant authorities.

In similar vein, observations will also be advanced when specifics are to hand of proposals which relate to alterations to the **Curzon** in London's Mayfair district. These are as yet inchoate but may include reversal of the present division of the auditorium. See Visits p3.



The Majestic Mapperley in May 2006

Acting upon advice from the Association, its local Conservation Officer is brokering negotiations between the owner and tenant of the **Majestic** in Mapperley to advance a repair schedule for the building, which is currently used for storage and requires maintenance. The CTA visited in May 2008, when it was in use as a golf shop.

A planning pre-application is under consideration concerning a proposal from Mikhail Hotel and Leisure Group to convert the **Grand Casino** in Southport into a conference and entertainment centre. See p5 last Bulletin.

The CTA has objected to that section of a scheme which entails removal of black tiling from the exterior of the **Odeon** in Weston-Super-Mare. However, renovation of the structure's right-hand block has been encouraged; this wing houses retail units, which now approach a state of dereliction. See Newsreel p20 & photo front cover.

## Unlisted

The local Council, in the purview of which the **Brontë** in Haworth is situated, has now apparently rescinded its interest in the future survival of the building because it is neither listed nor situated in a Conservation Area.



The Ritz Leyton in September 2004

It is reported that the auditorium block of the **Ritz** in Leyton is under threat of demolition, although retention of the façade is envisaged. Further examination of the relevant planning application will ensue.

The **Grand** in the Chapel End area of Nuneaton has been sold at auction for £239,000 against a guide price of £250,000. The identity of the buyer has not been revealed. It is suggested that the cinema could find favourable future employment as a community facility and would thus be worthy of candidature for designation as an Asset of Community Value.



# THE (1970) GOOD CINEMA GUIDE

By Ben Doman

NO 33 ODEON, RAYNERS LANE



For issue 33 of The Good Cinema Guide, published in the 31 March 1970 edition of *Today's Cinema*, writer Neill Ross visited the Odeon, Rayners Lane, Harrow. Today we marvel at Frank Bromige's wildly extravagant riot of art deco modernism, with its elephant trunk / question mark feature descending down to the canopy level, Mr Ross was less than enthusiastic. He remarks "The décor ... is cold and uninviting. The outside of the cinema must have struck the public as a pretty revolutionary monolith when it was first built in the 1930s. Now it looks just a little incongruous and a distant reminder of the mammoth cinema of yesteryear."

He was more impressed at the modernisation of the foyer, with a new combined ticket office and refreshment bar. "It's bright and it's new. This two-in-one unit is not only a great staff saver – it looks slick and efficient too. There's nothing so off-putting as an antiquated foyer." As well as the usual sweets and ices, hot dogs and Cokes were available at the refreshment bar, all advertised on the screen. The sunken café area in the middle of the foyer was disused and it was remarked that maybe this could be used for displays.

Unable to check out the recently refurbished seating in the circle, closed due to staff shortages, Mr Ross settled for the original seating in the stalls. This was apparently comfortable (foam rather than sprung cushions) with ample legroom ("It's a pleasure to be able to cross one's legs without stubbing one's toe on the ash tray.") but still had un-upholstered wooden arm rests. There was no carpet under the seats, just a strip down the aisle ("predictably floral") and no visible clock to keep you informed of the time.

Whilst commenting on how helpful the staff were, Mr Ross was less than impressed with the toilet facilities. String instead of chains on the toilet cisterns and the facilities weren't "shining white", although the auditorium was pleasantly clean and tidy.

The Grosvenor Cinema opened on 12 October 1936, with 830 seats in the stalls and 405 in the circle and a stage. Oscar Deutsch took control in May 1937, with a name change to Odeon in 1941. A further name change to Gaumont happened in October 1950, then back to

Odeon in April 1964. Independent operator ACE took over in November 1981, finally closing the cinema in October 1986, after which it became a nightclub and bar. The building still stands today, having been a church since 2000 and is Grade II listed.

In the 1970 article the cinema was given an overall score of 33 out of 50.

Taken from *Today's Cinema* issue 9791, additional information from *Cinema Treasures*. {11167}

NO 35 ODEON, HARLOW NEW TOWN



In the 28 April 1970 edition of *Today's Cinema*, writer Neill Ross chooses to go "off the beaten track" and visit the Odeon in Harlow. The cinema was by then ten years old, having opened in February 1960. Mr Ross was impressed by the design of the new town centre and remarks on how the layout gave easy access to the cinema.

"The flat brick fascia of the Odeon contrasts well with the surrounding grey slabs. The foyer is large by modern standards – perhaps too large to be useful – but space around the walls is taken up advantageously by ads for forthcoming pictures and a list of films to come for a month ahead. The foyer has a rather chilly look about it; inside the auditorium more attention has been given to the décor. The curtain in front of the screen has an attractive motif and modern chandelier-like lights hang from the ceiling. The walls look rather bare and make the cinema look larger and less intimate than it might. The seating has been arranged arena-style, with the 'circle' on the same floor as the stalls but raised to a higher level. This is an attractive and unusual feature in a non-West End cinema"

As for comfort, Mr Ross found the seats were not that comfortable, although there was plenty of legroom and ash trays provided on each seat. Carpeting, in a "rather uninspiring pattern", extended under the seats. Service at the box office was rather poor but the usherettes inside the auditorium were most helpful, escorting customers to their seats. Sweets, ices, hot dogs and Cokes were available at the kiosk but there was no bar provided.

As for cleanliness, "This was one area where the cinema fell below par; though the foyer was bright and cheerful, the auditorium was a little musty. The lavatories were no more than functional, done up in those drab white tiles, to give a scruffy appearance."

The cinema was the first new Odeon to open in Britain since 1939 and was built by TP Bennett & Son with 1,244 seats. Fitted with a giant Todd-AO screen, it also featured six track magnetic sound. With its stadium seating layout making it difficult to split the cinema, it lasted as a single screen until 1987 when it was tripled, with two screens fitted in the raised rear section, retaining the original front part of the auditorium as the main screen. The Odeon finally closed in August 2005.

In the 1970 article the cinema was given an overall score of 26 out of 40.

Taken from *Today's Cinema* issue 9799, additional information from *Cinema Treasures* {2510} and *Odeon Cinemas 2* by Allen Eyles.

Photos from CTA Archive

**Editor's Note:** I asked Ben to check, as one report gives the score out of 50, the other out of 40. He assures me that this is what was printed in 1970. There is a 38¼ minute video of the Odeon Harlow projection room, filmed in 1998 at: [youtu.be/WykDOSd5Mag](https://youtu.be/WykDOSd5Mag)



# THE CONTINUAL BATTLE FOR THE STATE

by Mike Whitcombe

Even during what we now consider to be an almost mythical era of cinema building, the State Cinema in George Street, Grays, Essex, stood out. And considering that during the latter half of the 1930s, predominately art deco designed cinemas with seating capacities of over two thousand were literally opening every week, that's a remarkable fact.



Even more remarkable is the fact that the State still stands. It might not have shown a film in thirty years but as one of the few remaining 'super cinemas' from the late 1930s to survive almost unaltered, it's culturally important not only to the local area, where it has dominated the town for over eighty years but to the nation itself. Empty and forlorn since the mid-1990s, it's been watched over by the casework committee of the CTA for many years. When pub chain Wetherspoon announced they intended turning this iconic cinema into a pub, the CTA naturally voiced their opinions to ensure any planning application would not destroy, in particular, the unique preserved interior decoration of what is a Grade II\* listed building. In 2018, when Planning and Listed Building Consent was given to Wetherspoon by Grays Council after strong guidance from both Historic England and the CTA, there was much anticipation. But since those heady days, progress has been slow. Deterioration of the interior due to a damaged roof has continued unabated and the CTA has once again been forced to publicly demand that the State Cinema be saved.



The State opened on Monday 5 September 1938. It was originally going to be called the Roxy and was built by the independent circuit Frederick's Electric Theatres Company. After twenty houses in George Street were demolished to make way for the site, the cinema soon became one of the largest cinemas ever built in Essex. It seated 2,200 patrons – 1,400 in the stalls and 800 in the circle – as well as a 50-seat restaurant at circle foyer level and stage facilities for live entertainment with complete stage equipment and three dressing rooms. Equally impressive was the three manual, six rank, Compton organ with a Melotone attachment, a 'rainbow' illuminated console and two chambers containing approximately 500 pipes, which were located under the stage, giving sound through the orchestra pit. Such extravagance didn't come cheap.



The State organ console, some organ pipes & the orchestra pit showing the organ shutters

The cost for the build was £100,000, a huge figure at the time, particularly for a town the size of Grays, which, in the mid-1930s, only had a population of 18,000, most of whom were working class.

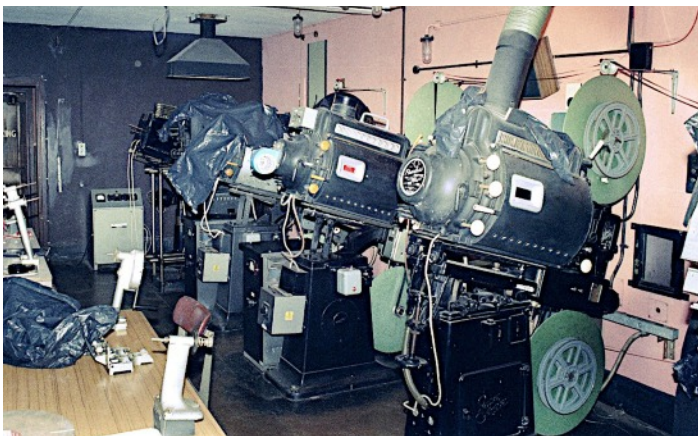
The architect was Francis Graham Moon Chancellor (1869-1940). He was a Tasmanian who had begun training as an architect before arriving in England in May 1894 on board the *RMS Oroya*. In 1900 he was hired by Frank Matcham and when Matcham retired in 1913, Chancellor largely took over the running of Matcham & Co. Chancellor was clearly held in some esteem by Matcham, for when Matcham died in 1921, Chancellor was co-executor of Matcham's will. By the end of the 1920s, Chancellor realised that the hey-day of theatre building was long gone and he modernised Matcham & Co's business model to concentrate on cinemas. In 1938, just a year before he retired, he produced his most notable work – the State Cinema. Interestingly, it was the second 'super cinema' that Chancellor had designed in Grays for Frederick's Electric Theatres. His first was the Regal in New Road, which opened in 1930. Sadly, it was demolished in 1971.





The *State*'s opening film was a South Seas drama called *Hurricane* starring Dorothy Lamour and directed by John Ford. Variety and concert performances supplemented films during the 1940s and cinema staff at this time offered to take telephone messages for patrons "if they will be good enough to inform the cashier at the Box Office that a call is expected". As cinemas began closing during the 1950s and then began to be carved up for additional auditoria a decade later, the *State* defied the odds by not only remaining open but remaining a single-screen cinema, pretty much unaltered from its opening night.

In 1975 the *State* was sold to Mecca Leisure. They kept things going until dwindling audiences caused them to close the cinema in 1985 (*Gremlins* was the final film). At the time, the *State* was the largest single-screen cinema still operating in the country and, to avert a serious threat of demolition, it was awarded Grade II listing in February 1985. Valiant efforts were then made to revive its fortunes. Independent operator Robins Cinema reopened the *State* in 1986, when the cinema also played a starring role in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Sadly, Robins could only battle on until 5 September 1988, the *State*'s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, when they closed by showing the film that had opened the cinema half a century earlier. A year later another independent operator tried their luck but that only lasted a few months. On 30 November 1989, *Great Balls of Fire* became the final film to be shown on the famous silver screen.



The projection box – projectors still in situ

During the 1990s the Charleston Nightspot opened in the lower foyer. David Essex and Suzi Quatro both performed on the stage. But it was too little too late and when the cinema was upgraded to Grade II\* listing in 2000, this huge building was already beginning to deteriorate. A year later the supermarket giant Morrisons paid £10 million for the site. They made the usual vague claims that they would ensure the upkeep of the building but their real interest was in the *State*'s large car park. When they had built a store on the car park, the cinema held no interest for them and in 2006 they sold the building to TSP Properties for £550,000.

Various suggestions were made for the future use of the *State* but it was only when JD Wetherspoon bought the cinema in 2015, claiming they would spend millions of pounds sympathetically redeveloping it, was there a belief the *State* might be realistically saved. And when Thurrock's Planning Committee approved plans by Wetherspoon in August 2018 to turn the *State* into one of the largest pubs in the Wetherspoon chain, it was believed desperate remedial work would begin immediately.

By November 2020, there was little or no sight of any vital repair work being done, prompting the CTA Casework Committee to take action. They fired off a press release, declaring they were genuinely concerned for the very fabric of the *State*.



The north wall, showing the water damage

"Water is leaking into the interior from a roof desperate for repair and this work is the responsibility of Wetherspoon's, who own the site," said Richard Gray, Chair of the CTA Casework Committee, in the press release. "The *State* is a cultural marker of historical importance and a visual centrepiece of Gray's town centre. Remedial work must be begun immediately if the fabric of what is an extremely rare representative of a 1930s 'super cinema' is to be saved."

The redevelopment of the *State* was meant to herald a £200 million investment in Grays, which, according to Mark Coxshall, lead councillor for regeneration in Thurrock, speaking in November 2019, would transform Grays "from the river to the very heart of the town." This point was alluded to by Richard Gray, who added: "The importance of the building cannot be stressed enough. It really has remained unaltered with much of its original décor, organ and fittings intact. But unless urgent repair work is carried out to stop further water penetration from the fast-deteriorating roof, we have serious fears for the building. We cannot allow the much-loved *State* to be exposed to another harsh winter. We urge the Council and JD Wetherspoon to cooperate and live up to their promises."



The staircase & a stalls side exit



The press release was immediately picked up by local media outlets. The *Thurrock Gazette*, in a piece by Matthew Critchell on 1 December 2020, gave it much coverage and printed a response to the CTA's claims from Wetherspoon spokesman Eddie Gershon. "We are still committed to opening a Wetherspoon pub on the site of the former *State* cinema," said Gershon. "Once specific points have been resolved, Wetherspoon will resubmit a revised planning application. We hope to be in a position to develop the site in 2021. It will be a substantial project, costing up to £5 million, restoring the dilapidated Grade II\* Listed building."

The article also contained a quote from Cllr Rob Gledhill, leader of Thurrock Council, who made it perfectly clear whose side he was on. "I am disconcerted that the reasonable requests of Wetherspoon are being denied," he said. "I feel the changes they propose are more than reasonable. Yes, there would be a change to the exterior and some of the interior features would not be original but that is an acceptable price to pay. To get this iconic building back into use would be good for the regeneration of Grays and show Thurrock is open for business."

The CTA's press release had done its job in rattling a few cages but four months later there was still no sign of any repair work being carried out on the roof. It was also difficult to get Wetherspoon or their architects, KD Paine, to reveal what changes would be contained in a resubmitted planning application. The CTA decided it was time for a second press release. Again, Richard Gray made the concerns of the CTA crystal clear: "JD Wetherspoon need to live up to their responsibilities," he stated. "They urgently need to commission immediate repairs on the roof to stop any further water penetration that could irrevocably damage an interior that has been listed Grade II\* for a reason."

He went on to add: "We (the CTA) cannot understand why Wetherspoon's are dragging their heels over this development, which could transform the centre of Grays and prove the impetus needed to regenerate the whole area. But the Council also need to take their fair share of responsibility. It's all very well for the leader of Thurrock Council to claim that turning this iconic building into a Wetherspoon's will boost the economy of the Borough and show Thurrock is open for business, as he did after our last public intervention but unless something happens soon his words are meaningless."



[L] a side grille & [R] a seat end casting

Matt Critchell was one of the journalists who received the press release and he reported in the *Basildon, Canvey and Southend Echo* on 31 March 2021 that Wetherspoon were still keen to push ahead but made no mention if any work would be begun on the roof or why Wetherspoon were resubmitting their planning application. It seemed as if the whole affair was cloaked in secrecy but then on 15 July 2021 the Council approved the new plans. By 19 July 2021 the local media was awash with the story.

Louise Lazell, writing for *Essex Live*, reported a quote from Wetherspoon spokesman Eddie Gershon. "We are delighted with the decision of the Council," said Gershon. "We are committed to developing the site and once again making it an important part of the town's social scene. The Council has a superb plan to regenerate Grays and we are delighted to be part of that." Cllr Mark Coxshall, cabinet member for the grandly named Regeneration, Strategic Planning & External Affairs, chipped in: "I can't wait to see the iconic doors of the *State* finally reopen!"



A side view of the proscenium, showing the house tabs





The foyer [top] & the restaurant [bottom]

Lazell also wrote that restoration work to the main lobby and stalls foyer will supposedly celebrate the building's rich heritage. She added that the organ would be restored. This had always been a priority for the CTA and was one of the main conditions the CTA had asked for in agreeing to any planning application. Other conditions insisted upon by the CTA included a new roof covering, the need that the interior paint scheme should be sympathetic to the original design and that some of the original seating should be re-used as a reminder of the cinema's previous role.

The resubmitted plan was certainly not as sympathetic as the previous one and now included insertion of new windows in the north façade and huge enlargements of those behind the stage. They also suggested a lesser standard of restoration of historic detail, in particular the fibrous plaster decoration severely damaged by water ingress. However, the CTA reluctantly accepted the Wetherspoon scheme as it would benefit the town and prevent further deterioration of a building that was criminally neglected and unused.

And that's where the story should end ... but, of course, it doesn't. Five months after what should have been a happy ending – or beginning, depending on how you look at it – winter had arrived and no work, particularly on the infamous leaking roof, had started. The CTA, ever vigilant, now issued a third press release to make the public aware that promises needed to be kept.

"Wetherspoon appear to be dragging their heels and we feel there is a serious threat that the building will deteriorate beyond a point of no return," claimed Peter Wylde, CTA Architectural Caseworker. "When Wetherspoon resubmitted their plans, the CTA pressed for tight conditions to ensure a high-quality restoration of an iconic building. Thurrock Planning Committee broadly accepted these conditions and they formed part of the permission. One particular point that we insisted upon and which the Planning Committee accepted, was that the permission lasts for two years instead of the usual three. This means substantive work must start before 19 July 2023 and, although that might seem some time away, immediate repair, particularly to the roof, needs to be begun to secure the fabric of the building. We have checked with Historic England and Essex Conservation, who would both supervise the works and they believe no work has started.

"If proper repairs are not immediately begun on the roof to prevent further water penetration, the cinema will deteriorate further as we enter another damaging winter. Wetherspoon has owned the State since 2015 and it's a cultural marker of historical importance. Redevelopment of the cinema was meant to herald a £200 million investment in Grays town centre and we urge both the Council and Wetherspoon to take their responsibilities seriously and ensure the State Cinema is made watertight immediately."

These were strong words and Louise Lazell, senior reporter at *Essex Live*, asked for a comment from Wetherspoon. On 15 December 2021 her story on the CTA's concerns included this reply from Eddie Gershon. "We refute the claim that Wetherspoon are 'dragging their heels'," the Wetherspoon spokesman said. "The company has been reviewing layouts internally and had several changes that will enhance the running of the pub. The project is due to go out to tender within the next month and, following a review of tenders, Wetherspoon will look into a date for development to begin. The redevelopment of the former cinema is a big project with a large investment and Wetherspoon is taking its time to ensure the project runs smoothly and ultimately results in a superb pub being built."

All cinema enthusiasts will hope this will be the case, which given Wetherspoon's history of turning former cinemas into pubs would seem to be the case. As anyone who has visited cinemas converted by Wetherspoon, including the former *Wallaw* at Blyth or the former *Caley* in Edinburgh, among an impressive list of many, the conversion of the former State should be worth the wait.

But whatever happens, one thing is certain. And that's the fact that the CTA, particularly the Casework Committee, will remain vigilant, not only at watching over the State Cinema but any other former picture palace around the country that has been neglected or is under threat of demolition instead of being regarded as a local asset or national treasure.

2004 photos courtesy Peter Hammond [www.taylor-hammond.com](http://www.taylor-hammond.com)

### STATE INTERNET CORNER

- ★ [tinyurl.com/2bkxcs5s](http://tinyurl.com/2bkxcs5s) A report by Urban Explorers in July 2011.
- ★ [youtu.be/-kxVshLIZrU](https://youtu.be/-kxVshLIZrU) A 25½ minute Urban Explorers' Video.
- ★ [youtu.be/Zlynu9maiv4](https://youtu.be/Zlynu9maiv4) A 30-sec video showing the tabs rising.
- ★ [youtu.be/NoDTmloWjAQ](https://youtu.be/NoDTmloWjAQ) A 30-sec trailer for the *Sunday Express*.
- ★ [youtu.be/WIUAC03YMIA](https://youtu.be/WIUAC03YMIA) A music video filmed at the State.
- ★ [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State\\_Cinema](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Cinema) The Wikipedia article.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/hkub4ssy](http://tinyurl.com/hkub4ssy) A *Daily Mail* article on Wetherspoon's conversion proposals, including architect's plans.

Richard Gray writes: At the end of January, we were contacted by a new and communicative Project Manager for the architects, KDPA. He says that serious work is due to start in March.

The State ending up as a pub is only an expedient, second best at most. We had always pushed for a more creative use, such as performance – with some film at least – but Thurrock Council was never interested to take it on.

Peter Hammond writes: The organ was built with six pipe ranks plus a Melotone attachment (an early electronic tone generator that effectively added an extra rank). One more pipe rank (a Vox Humana) was added many years ago but those pipes were stolen together with the rest in 2011. As and when restoration is undertaken, the organ will be returned to how it was built (assuming the Melotone can be restored sufficiently).



The circle bar



# GAUMONT PLYMOUTH

By Tim McCullen

*This significant giant of a building surprisingly still stands but very little has ever been written about it in our publications.*

In April 1976, I was on an interesting educational excursion to the West Country, when the school party was based at Dawlish. My cinema interest was very much in its infancy then – however I wondered if there would be a cinema in Dawlish. Well, I discovered that, disappointingly, there wasn't. But my interest was piqued and according to various records I've looked up since, it seems that there may have been a **Scala** cinema in Albert Street, dating between 1930 and 1960, although sadly, no record or evidence of it, remains in the town.



As part of the excursion back when I was a teenager, our party visited Plymouth and I believe that I saw the **Plaza** from the coach window. We then toured the docks and, on our return, I spotted to the right of the coach, what looked like a massive **Odeon** Cinema. Only viewing it from the side wall, I was unable to determine whether it was a multi-screen or single screen. A little later, on one of my last family holidays in August 1980 in the West Country, we visited Plymouth and, seeing that the **Odeon** was not being advertised in the local press, I feared the worst! Yes, the building was still there and the **Odeon** signs were still there but the cinema had closed. While dejectedly staring towards the locked doors, I became aware of a rather forlorn, ancient typewriter in the foyer. On the window of the door was a planning application to convert part of the building into a roller-skating rink. Upon joining the CTA in February 1981 and acquiring the *Directory of Cinemas*, I realised that the projection of films there had ceased on 9 April 1980. I purchased all the back copies of the *Bulletin* but found that it was never recorded as having closed (possibly due to no press cutting service at the time and/or no member picking it up).



The building as the Gaumont

The **Odeon**, as I like to call it, opened as the **Gaumont Palace** on 16 November 1931 and was designed by WH Watkins to seat 2,252: 1,462 in the stalls and 790 in the circle. The building took the place of a former theatre, the **St Andrews New Picture Palace** (1910-1930) which had been demolished. By the 1960s, the **Gaumont Palace** had grown too large and finally closed on 2 December 1961. The building was subdivided into a nightclub and dance hall in a levelled stalls area. A more modest cinema, seating 1,043, was constructed in the former circle, with a new proscenium arch and a 70mm screen with a width of fifty-four feet. Regrettably, the organ was sold (I wonder if it still exists and if so, where it may now reside?). The cost of the conversion was over £200,000, a lot of money in its day and must have been one of the first subdivisions of a super cinema (**Preston Gaumont** also underwent a similar fate).

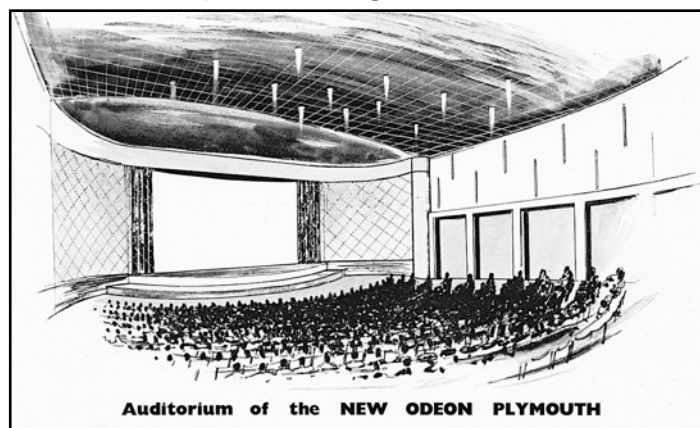
The City's former **Odeon** in Frankfort Street closed its doors on 9 September 1962 and the **Gaumont Palace** took the name of **Odeon**, reopening the very next day, 10 September 1962. The new circle cinema was launched with the Mayor and many other local dignitaries and company representatives, plus Leslie Philips (who went to one of our visits in the Lake District 24-26 September 2004.) The projection equipment was supplied by **Robert Rigby Ltd**.

The **Drake** cinema, also an **Odeon/Rank Organisation** theatre, resided only a few yards away and was tripled on 27 March 1975 (five screens from 29/3/91, since closed 31/10/99, with the great majority of the building being demolished). The **Drake** was in a much better central trading location. The **ABC**, standing almost opposite it, was also tripled on 5 May 1977. By the 1980s, at 1,043 seats, the **Odeon** must have been proving over-large, although according to a local newspaper, was regarded as screen ④ for the **Drake**. Having two already tripled sites in the town, one of which was an **Odeon** one, no subdivision at the **Gaumont/Odeon** was ever going to happen at this site and the cinema closed on 9 April 1980.

Union Street had rather a dubious reputation at this time, which must have played its part as a contributing factor, of course. I understand that the downstairs nightclubs have been under various managements and company names over the years and a roller-skating rink also operated. However, there is conflicting information as to whether the skating rink was situated downstairs, or upstairs in the former circle cinema area – it would be interesting if can anyone was able to shed any light on this question! Other questions might include whether the 1,043-seat cinema is still intact (although no doubt all of its fixtures will have been removed) and whether this area has been in use at all in the past forty plus years? When the building was converted into a cinema and nightclub, was the building completely gutted, or were the night club/cinema capsuled inside? If the latter, does any of the 1930s art deco remain?

A few years ago, a church planned to renovate the building but proved unable to raise the necessary funds. Today, money needs to be raised to restore the building as a music venue, although it is not yet clear which parts of the building will be refurbished and renovated. Does any member remember seeing a film in the 1970s-1980s circle cinema and possess any interior photographs? Has any member ever ventured into the former circle cinema since 1980 and if so, what exists currently? [\[33729\]](#)

Next Column: Four photos of the original **Gaumont**





## NEWTON STEWART CINEMA

By David Kay



In February the Cinema in Newton Stewart (Dumfries & Galloway) commemorated 25 years since it was rescued from demolition and successfully reopened. To celebrate the event they held a week-long Silver Screen Festival with prices reduced by half to 1997 levels at just £3. Films shown included *Shepherd*, a new thriller set in Scotland and the Final Cut of *The Wicker Man* (1973) some of which was filmed in the area 50 years ago.



We were in the area last year and had our first cinema visit in over a year to see the new Bond Film or as they said on the old fashioned what's-on board *Nae Time Tae Deee*.



The cinema first opened in 1933 with a seating capacity of 500 and closed in 1968. The current capacity is 244. The stage is sometimes used for live events. {27099} [nscinema.co.uk](http://nscinema.co.uk)

All photos by the author



# MAJESTIC THEATRE TAIHAPE, NEW ZEALAND

By Mel Moratti



On a recent holiday around some of the more remote places of New Zealand's North Island, I came upon something very surprising. A still functioning cinema that had originally been built in 1912. This is unusual in that the town, Taihape (pronounced *Tie Happy*) has a population of only 1,790 and is around a 45-minute journey in any direction to any other community.

Taihape once was a key railway and transport town mostly during the 1950s and 1960s. Now it is just a refreshment stop for people bound for other destinations. An interesting side note is that Taihape celebrates 'Gumboot Day' in April each year. For the visitor, you will find a large sculpture of a gumboot on the outskirts of the town.



[L] The entrance to the Majestic with a red carpet, denoting a special occasion (photo courtesy Simone Simpson)  
[R] The gumboot sculpture in Taihape

The King's Theatre was only running for five years when it was unfortunately burnt down. In 1917 the present building was opened, still calling itself the King's. In 1929 it was renamed the Majestic, which is still the name today. There were one or two periods in recent times when the theatre closed but never for long as locals always banded together to keep the venue functioning.

In August 1993 the theatre became officially protected with a category two listing from the Historic Places Trust. In recent times digital equipment has been installed and on my short visit in early January 2022 they were showing *West Side Story* and *Dune*.

I have been asked several times which is the oldest still functioning cinema in New Zealand. The Majestic is not the oldest but it is very close.

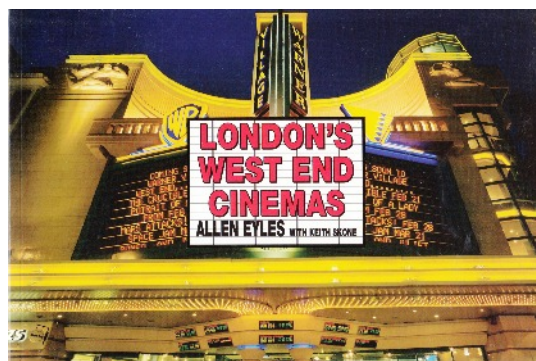
**Editor's Note:** For an explanation of why Taihape became the 'Gumboot Capital of the World' see [tinyurl.com/yc4x6w3h](https://tinyurl.com/yc4x6w3h). The theatre's website is [www.majestictaihape.co.nz](http://www.majestictaihape.co.nz).

## Local paper report on the opening of the King's in 1917 OPENED TO-MORROW NIGHT

Mr Nicholls, lessee of the splendid structure erected by Mr T Elliott Wilson to replace the old King's Theatre, which was destroyed by fire, has decided to open the new theatre to the public to-morrow night. He has secured a splendid double star programme for the occasion and it is much to be regretted that the opening of the finest privately-owned building in the town is not to be accompanied with some public demonstration. The New King's Theatre is a building highly creditable to the town and it reflects the owner's belief and confidence in the progress of the whole Taihape district. The intimation that the opening was to take place on Thursday Night came too late for a description of the building to be given but picture-lovers and town patriots are strongly recommended to be present at the opening performance and get first evidence of the class of building that has been built so that their entertainment can be taken in comfort and security from foul air and fire. Mr Nicholls has done his part towards making Taihape the proud possessor of the finest picture projecting plant in New Zealand.

**LATE ADVERTISEMENTS.**  
FOUND—In King's Theatre, a lady's fur muff. Owner can have same by paying cost of this advertisement. Apply, King's Theatre.

## 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 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



# MISCELLANY

## ANOTHER CINEMA MODEL



To general surprise and amusement, the Ritzy cinema in Brixton has joined what remains of the Tudor village in Brockwell Park. Not to scale, but that would be too much to expect. But who is responsible? Not the friends of Brockwell Park, certainly. It seems to be the work of guerrilla model-makers and we hear rumours that it was made in Morley College. The truth is out there. There used to be more Tudor houses but they were, sadly, vandalised many years ago.

*Friends of Brockwell Park Newsletter; sent in by Richard Norman*

## UPLIFTING THEATRE

The 1,733-seat Palace Theatre in Times Square, New York, is being lifted 30ft into the air in its entirety! The theatre will become part of the \$2.5 billion 46-story TSX Tower, currently under construction on Broadway. Lifting the Palace Theatre will preserve the iconic venue while freeing up ground-floor space for commercial use. It opened in 1903 as a vaudeville theatre and was later home to shows like *Oklahoma* and *La Cage aux Folles*. It has taken five years of planning and the lift only moves a quarter of an inch an hour. The move will take 6-8 weeks then the theatre will undergo a \$50m renovation. There is a 2-minute video on the WABC-TV webpage at [tinyurl.com/2p82uf2f](http://tinyurl.com/2p82uf2f).

*WABC-TV Eyewitness News – 8 January*

## MOVIE ICON TOPPLED

A palm tree in Plockton (Highlands) that featured in *The Wicker Man* has been felled during a storm. It is thought it was planted in 1950.

*Daily Record – 15 December; sent in by Tom Laughlan*

## THE CENSORS STRIKE BACK

Over the past few years, Britain's film censors have been busy re-classifying some of the best-loved films. *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* has been upgraded from [U] to [PG] because a little boy shouts "Not Bloody Likely" at a Nazi soldier. *Jaws* has been pushed from a [PG] to a [12] and *The Empire Strikes Back* from a [U] to a [PG]. The BBFC says the changes are "to keep in step with the direction in which society is moving". An article in the *Daily Mail* says this is political correctness gone mad and points out that children can get much more explicit material on the Internet for a few mouse clicks.

*Daily Mail – 22, 23 December; sent in by Tom Laughlan*

## SOME DOUBT CLASSIC FILM

The 1994 hit comedy *Mrs Doubtfire* has been labelled "transphobic" and "racist" after it was on TV on New Year's Eve.

*Sunday Mirror – 2 January; sent in by Barry Quinton*

## LOST FILMS

In 2010 the BFI published a list of the 75 most-wanted lost films not held in their archive and classed as "missing, believed lost". The earliest is from 1913 and the latest from 1984. The holy grail of the list is Alfred Hitchcock's 1926 second film as director, *The Mountain Eagle*. The good news is that 18 of the films have been found complete. The earliest is 1923's *Love, Life and Laughter*. The full list can be seen on the BFI website at [tinyurl.com/3b858k58](http://tinyurl.com/3b858k58).

*Daily Mail – 3 February; sent in by John R Forster*

## SWEET NOTTINGS

A Radio2 poll in time for Valentine's Day has named the 1999 film *Notting Hill* as the nation's favourite rom-com. *Pretty Woman* (1990) was second and *When Harry Met Sally* (1989) came third.

*Daily Mirror – 10 February; sent in by Barry Quinton*

## AUCTION RESULT

An original piece of concept artwork for *The Empire Strikes Back* has sold for over £53,000. It was expected to sell for £8,000.

*Daily Mirror – 11 December; sent in by Barry Quinton*

## FLYING HIGH

A vintage Spitfire that flew in WWII and later featured in the 1969 classic *Battle of Britain* is up for sale for £4.5m. The 79-year-old plane MH415 retains 95% of its original parts and can still fly. It is thought to be the most intact of its kind.

*Daily Mirror – 20 January; sent in by Barry Quinton*

## LAST ORDERS

The pub that featured in the film *Local Hero* – The Ship, in Banff, Aberdeenshire – has been saved from redevelopment. A bid to convert it into flats was rejected on the grounds that it is a "tourist attraction". The plan may be revived if the listed pub, which closed during the pandemic and has not reopened, is not sold. Last year a red phone box from the film was saved by residents.

*Daily Mirror – 27 January*

## THEATRES AT RISK



Ten theatres have been added to the Theatres Trust *Theatres at Risk* register for 2022. Amongst them are the Imperial Walsall {24723}, the Garrick Southport {22651} and the Regent Great Yarmouth (above, in July 2007) {22589}. There are now 41 on the list – the highest number since 2013.

*Theatres Trust Press Release – 2 February; [tinyurl.com/4fd8sztf](http://tinyurl.com/4fd8sztf)*

*The Stage – 3 February; sent in by Barry Quinton*

## OVER-LONG FILMS

In the 1950s and 60s, long films such as *Cleopatra* (3h:53m) and *Ben Hur* (3h:42m) were given the 'theatre' treatment with an overture, an interval and a 'play-in' to the second half. This also helped the cinema maximise its intermission kiosk sales. In the late 1980s and into the 90s, films started getting longer but without an interval. This could cause problems for an exhibitor as a lot of projection equipment could not run for longer than about two hours without having to stop. So cinema managers inserted their own intermission at what they considered a suitable point. These intervals would not only see good sales at the kiosk but queues at the toilets, often causing a delay to the second half of the film. Now cinema is all digital, there is no longer a technical reason to have an intermission, which probably leads to a lot of crossed legs. Let's hope the latest Bond movie *No Time to Die* at 2 hours 34 minutes is not shown on commercial TV – you'd need a spare four hours to watch it!

*Daily Mail – 19 January; sent in by John R Forster*



# 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](http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/nnnnn)

## ASHBOURNE (Derbys)

Work has started on converting the upper floor of the former Elite into a 120-seat cinema. Builders are constructing new tiers and a stage and a specialist architect has been enlisted to turn it into a cutting-edge cinema and theatre. The project has attracted one of the last EU funding grants. It is hoped work will be finished by September with a view to opening before the end of the year. The ground floor of the building was converted into shops in the late 1970s. {29267}

Derbyshire Live – 9 February; sent in by Terry Hanstock

## BANBURY (Oxon)

The forthcoming eight-screen Light cinema has been granted permission for a retractable roof on its outdoor café area as well as a screen for an open-air cinema. See p18 last Bulletin.

Banbury Guardian – 20 January

## BARNESLEY (South Yorks)

Interior works have begun on the new 13-screen 2,000-seat Cineworld as part of the Glass Works development in the town centre. It is expected to open late summer. The site is virtually opposite the existing two-screen Parkway (ex Odeon).

Yorkshire Post – 15 February; sent in by Terry Hanstock

## BIRMINGHAM (Central)

As reported on p18 of the last Bulletin, the two-screen Electric in Station Street reopened on 21 January. The media interest was extraordinary, covering local news and Sky News and a big segment of *The One Show* on the Wednesday before opening. The old digital projectors had been turned off for so long they could not be saved. They have sourced some almost new 35mm projectors that only have a few hours on the clock, which will be going in soon, so the image on 35mm will improve considerably. They are also waiting for the second laser projector to go in screen 2; the improvement in the picture will be quite remarkable. [electricbirmingham.com](http://electricbirmingham.com) {9559}

NME – 11 January; The Independent – 19 January; BBC News website – 20 January; The Guardian – 22 January; Sky News – 23 January; sent in by Margaret Burgoine, Phillip Crompton, John R Forster, Tom Laughlan, Barry Quinton, Joseph Roberts, R David Simpson & John West

## BLAENAVON (Torfaen)

The 1895 Workmen's Hall has launched an appeal for volunteers to help keep it open as it is "struggling to keep going". It recently had a £280,000 refurbishment, including new sound and lighting equipment for the 350-seat theatre and new seats in the 69-seat cinema. [www.blaenavonworkmenshall.uk](http://www.blaenavonworkmenshall.uk) {26560}

Abergavenny Chronicle – 16 January

## BOURNEMOUTH

The 19-seat Colosseum is set to reopen in March following the easing of Covid restrictions. It opened in September 2013 and is located downstairs in *The Vintage Lounge* coffee shop in Westbourne Arcade. {56057}

Daily Echo, Bournemouth – 13 February; sent in by Terry Hanstock

## BRADFORD (West Yorks)

Plans, reported on p21 of Bulletin 55/2, for the Grade II listed former Scala to become an extension to the adjacent wedding venue have been approved. A link will be created between the two buildings. The 700-seat cinema only lasted nine years between 1913 and 1922 and many of its features are still intact. {3674}

Telegraph & Argus – 17 January

## BRISTOL

Councillors have backed a plan to save the former St George's Hall / Granada from being turned into flats, after a petition with 9,000 signatures was presented to them. The auditorium is said to be largely intact behind the foyer area, which was used as a Wetherspoons pub until last September. See p6 & p18 Bulletin 55/6. {27949}

Bristol Post – 10 December

The Grade II listed three-screen Everyman (ex Whetladies) has been granted permission to add a 37-seat fourth screen in an adjacent former restaurant, the Cowshed, which opened in 2009 and closed at the start of the pandemic. {849}

Western Daily Press – 30 December

## BURNLEY (Lancs)

Work started at the end of January on the Pioneer Place development. It will incorporate a seven-screen Reel cinema. It is set to be completed in late summer 2023 and opened in the autumn of that year. Reel will relocate from its existing site and their old building will become a supermarket.

Lancashire Telegraph – 29 January; sent in by Phillip Crompton

## BURY ST EDMUNDS (Suffolk)

Everyman has submitted a proposal to turn part of the former Debenhams store into a four-screen cinema, with a fifth screen available for private hire. In total, the screens would provide 306 seats; the largest screen will accommodate 104 customers with the others comprising a 74-seat screen and two 48-seat screens. The private hire space will cater for 32 viewers. No time scale has been given.

Retail Gazette, BBC News website – 14 February; sent in by Roger Fox & Terry Hanstock

## CANVEY ISLAND (Essex)



A full-size model of *Star Wars* Jedi master Yoda has been stolen from the four-screen Movie Starr. CCTV shows the villain sheepishly looking around before swiping the 2ft high character. Staff gave chase but were unable to catch the thief. Cinema bosses are appealing to the public to help find the missing figurine. Anyone with information can use The Force – Essex Police! {14619}

The Sun – 10 February; sent in by Barry Quinton; photo taken July 2007

## CHELMSFORD (Essex)

The 500-seat Civic Theatre is to get a £1m makeover as it celebrates its 60th birthday. The foyers and ground floor bar will be redesigned to give more space and a second café/bar area created at the front of the building, allowing for tables on the pavement outside. The toilets will also be updated. The work is due to be done this summer. The theatre has some cinema use.

Essex Chronicle – 4 November; sent in by David Johnson

## CHESTERFIELD (Derbys)

The Grade II listed Museum and the adjacent Stephenson Memorial Hall of 1879 are to have a £15m renovation. The Hall houses the 590-seat Pomegranate Theatre and Cinema. The museum was due to close on 1 March to move the collections but the theatre will remain open during this time; no closure date has been announced for the theatre. {64495}

East Midlands Business Link – 18 February; sent in by Terry Hanstock

## COLCHESTER (Essex)

A drive-in cinema has gone into administration after its bid for permission was rejected. Nightflix had been allowed to use a former supermarket site in Stanway as a pop-up cinema and had applied to build on the site.

Daily Gazette, Colchester – 31 January



### DARLASTON (Walsall)

The former Showcase has been demolished and will become a car supermarket. At the time of the report the façade was still standing but it is unclear if this will be reused. {17102}

*Express & Star, Wolverhampton – 1 January; See photo p23 Bulletin 55/4*

### DAVENTRY (Northants)

The delayed opening of the new four-screen Arc cinema was scheduled for 4 March. All screens feature VIP electric recliner seats as standard.

*Northants Live – 4 February*

### DINGLE (Co Kerry, Ireland)



The 150-seat Phoenix closed last November but news has only just reached us. It first opened in 1919 with 600 seats. {24651}

*Sunday Times, Ireland – 28 November; photo taken September 2017*

### DONCASTER (South Yorks)

The six-screen Savoy, which is owned by the Council, has been devalued by more than half of what it cost to build. The latest external audit report says it is worth £3.29m against a build cost of £8.5m. {65131}

*Yorkshire Post – 30 November*

### DORCHESTER (Dorset)



The four-screen Plaza had to shut for a few days in early January due to a power failure. It first opened in July 1933 with 986 seats. {15143}

*Dorset Live – 11 January; photo taken May 2006*

### DUNDEE

Plans for a Light cinema in the Wellgate centre were first mooted in 2013 but fell through after talks collapsed. Now the centre is up for auction and Light says it has “not lost interest” and would be “very enthusiastic” to talk to whoever buys the centre.

*Dundee Courier – 3 December*

### EASTBOURNE (East Sussex)

Plans have been submitted to turn the former six-screen Cineworld at Sovereign Harbour Retail Park into a B&M store with garden centre. Originally a project of Cineplex Odeon, the cinema opened in August 1990 as a Cannon. It had a succession of names before becoming the Cineworld in November 2005. It closed in July 2019 when the circuit relocated to the Beacon Shopping Centre. {24682}

*Eastbourne Herald – 7 January; sent in by Geoff Gill*

### EDINBURGH (Portobello)

As surmised on p19 of the last Bulletin, plans to redevelop the C-listed former George have been rejected for the third time. The assessment said that the applicant had not sufficiently demonstrated that the building was incapable of meaningful repair and had not fully demonstrated that the potential for the building to be reused as a cinema (or similar compatible community use) had been fully explored. {23292}

*The Herald – 12 January*

### GRAVESEND (Kent)

Plans to convert the former Majestic/EMD into flats have been delayed again after the developer announced it would reduce the height of the building. See p20 last Bulletin. {37337}

*Gravesend Messenger – 2 December*

### GREENOCK (Inverclyde)

Work to demolish the former BB Cinema was due to begin in January. The building was purchased by the Council for £280,000 as part of a plan to free up the land for a housing development. Knocking the building down is expected to cost £400,000. The money is coming from funds set aside for town and village centre improvements. The cinema opened in January 1913 and closed in the early 1970s. It became bingo and then a nightclub, which moved out several years ago. Photos of the demolition can be seen at [tinyurl.com/5f2jn46s](https://tinyurl.com/5f2jn46s). {50366}

*Inverclyde Now – 29 December*

### HASTINGS (East Sussex)



The 50-seat Electric Palace Cinema had to close in January. “Due to the understandable concerns that affect us all regarding the ongoing Omicron variant, January film bookings and venue hire were at an all-time low. It has not proved financially viable for us to open our doors for film screenings.” The venue launched a community fundraising appeal with a target of £15,000; more than £17,000 was raised, saving it from permanent closure. {24720}

*Bexhill-on-Sea Observer – 11, 19 January; photo taken April 2008*

### HULL (East Yorks)



The Grade II listed former Tower is due to reopen in March as a live music venue. The new owners [un-named], who also run a venue in London, have taken out a 25-year lease on the building. It opened in June 1914 with 1,200 seats, later reduced to 750. Films ceased in September 1978 and it was last used as a nightclub [towerballroomhull.com](https://towerballroomhull.com) {3278}

*Hull Daily Mail – 4 February; sent in by David Alexander; photo taken July 2005*



### LIVERPOOL (Wavertree)

Work appears to have started to convert the former Abbey into a Lidl supermarket. The original proposal was to demolish the building but it was awarded a Grade II listing. {44856}

*Liverpool Echo* – 26 January

### LONDON (Catford)



The Grade II\* listed Broadway Theatre is to undergo a £7m refurbishment to mark its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The renovation will see an overhaul of the 845-seat auditorium, foyer, bar areas and toilets; building work has already started. It aims to make the building more accessible. The venue was forced to close for “health and safety” repairs in early 2020 and has remained closed throughout the pandemic. No reopening date has been given. {30219}

*The Stage* – 3 February; sent in by Barry Quinton & R David Simpson; photo taken September 2004

### LONDON (Kensington)

The façade of the Odeon has been demolished due to corrosion of the original steelwork that supported it. Apparently, the Portland stone blocks from which the façade was made have been numbered and will be reinstated on the new building. We wait and see if that will happen but, sadly, the entire former Odeon Kensington has now been demolished and the site is an empty plot. {13801}

Sent in by Ken Roe

### LONDON (Lewisham)

Plans to transform the Grade II listed Ladywell Playtower have been revived after stalling due to the pandemic. The Council has reached an agreement with the developer, paving the way for a planning application to be submitted. If permission is granted, work on a four-screen cinema, with a restaurant and bar, could begin next year, possibly opening to the public in 2024. Curzon withdrew from the project and the proposed cinema will be operated as an independent.

*News Shopper* – 22 January; *Building Design* – 31 January; sent in by Roger Fox

### LONDON (Tottenham)

Tottenham Hotspur Football Club has won permission to build 72 homes and a four-screen cinema on the site of a former printworks in High Road. No operator has been named.

*Enfield Independent* – 12 January

### MATLOCK (Derbys)

Plans have been approved to convert the former Market Hall into a two-screen cinema. The auditoria would seat 89 and 67. An operator has been appointed but not named yet.

*Derbyshire Times* – 4, 9 February; sent in by Terry Hanstock

### MILTON KEYNES

The site of the Point – the UK’s first multiplex – has been bought by Galliard Homes. A retail development and shops are planned. The ten-screen cinema opened in November 1985 and closed in February 2015. {25085}

*Evening Standard* – 24 January

### NORTHALLERTON (North Yorks)

Work has re-started on the four-screen 276-seat Everyman on the site of the former prison. A new contractor has been appointed as the previous one went into administration. The pause only lasted a few weeks. No opening date has been given.

*Yorkshire Post* – 7 February; sent in by Terry Hanstock

### OAKHAM (Rutland)

Plans for a two-screen cinema in the Victoria Hall have ground to a halt. A major investor had to pull out so the developers asked the hall’s trustees for an additional six months to complete the project but the plans were rejected. The Council had granted planning permission last November.

*Rutland and Stamford Mercury* – 15 January; *Leicester Mercury* – 24 January

### OKEHAMPTON (Devon)



The New Carlton has added a third screen, seating 41. The main screen has 152 seats and the second screen has 67. {25228}

Sent in by Tim McCullen; photo taken September 2015

### OSWALDTWISTLE (Lancs)



The former Palladium is being put up for auction with a guide price of just £50,000. It opened prior to 1934 and had 1,024 seats. Films ceased around 1968 in favour of bingo but there are reports that it reopened for Asian films. It had closed by 2000 and the building has been empty since. It suffered an arson attack in 2004. {18512}

*Lancashire Telegraph* – 13 February; sent in by Phillip Crompton; photo taken June 2005

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### OSWESTRY (Shropshire)

The Town Council has agreed to look into taking on the former Regal building and restoring it to cinema use. See p25 last Bulletin. {28606}

*Oswestry and Border Counties Advertiser* – 1 February; sent in by John Powell

### PAISLEY (Renfrew)

Plans to bring a five-screen cinema to the town centre have been put on hold due to funding problems.

*Glasgow Herald* – 17 December

### PETERBOROUGH (Cambs)

Selladour is to take over the running of the Key Theatre after the Council said it could no longer afford the venue. This will bring it under the same management as the New Theatre (ex Odeon/Broadway). The Key Theatre has some cinema use. See p22 last Bulletin.

*The Stage* – 27 January; sent in by R David Simpson

### PORTSMOUTH



At the end of January, the six-screen Odeon at Port Solent had seats in several screens replaced. The new seats are the same shape and design as the former ones but instead of being covered in blue fabric, they are upholstered in imitation black leather. {25248}

*Sent in by Mike Whitcombe; photo taken May 2006*

### RAWTENSTALL (Lancs)



The former Picture House is on the market for £1.5m after permission was granted to turn it into 42 apartments. The façade would be restored. It opened in December 1920 and was split into four screens in 1975. Films finally ceased in early 1996 and it was converted into an indoor market. {43550}

*Lancashire Telegraph* – 29 January; sent in by Phillip Crompton; photo taken June 2005

### ROTHERHAM (South Yorks)

Plans to demolish the former Regal/Odeon/Scala have been withdrawn following the granting of Grade II listed status. The building is still on the market. See p23 last Bulletin. {18509}

*Rotherham Business News* – 2 February

### SHEFFIELD (Central)



In August 1987 a two-screen Odeon was opened on the site of the former Gaumont, which had been demolished. The modernistic façade, of mirrored glass and garish red steelwork, proved highly controversial but both auditoria (seating 500 and 324) offered a high standard of comfort. However, it had only a short life as it was closed in 1994, shortly after a new seven-screen Odeon opened not far away in March 1992. The building was converted to retail use with a nightclub in the former cinema spaces. Now the interior has been stripped back to brick and the façade will be removed in late summer. Talks are taking place with three companies about converting it into a leisure space, set to open in summer 2023. {50354}

*The Star, Sheffield* – 16 February; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken February 2005

### SHEFFIELD (Nether Edge)

The Grade II listed Abbeydale Picture House has had to close temporarily after problems were found in the ceiling plasterwork. Events at the venue have been suspended until safety works have been carried out. {22681}

*The Star, Sheffield* – 21 January; sent in by Terry Hanstock

### SLOUGH

A local man has admitted to conspiring to set fire to the ten-screen Empire in the town centre. He planned to commit the arson attack between 28 November and 3 December. He was remanded in custody until his sentencing. {24512}

*Slough Observer* – 11 February; sent in by R David Simpson

### SOUTHAMPTON



The 13-screen Odeon at Leisure World closed on 27 February. It opened in August 1997. It will be demolished and the site redeveloped to include a new cinema. {25376}

*Sent in by Ken Roe; photo taken May 2006*

### SOUTHSEA (Portsmouth)

Portsmouth Film Society hopes to take out a lease on the former Halifax branch in Palmerston Road and convert it into a community centre with a 40-seat cinema,

*The News, Portsmouth* – 1 February



### SUTTON COLDFIELD (West Midlands)

An application has been submitted for a listed building permit to renew the interior of the Grade II listed Empire (ex Odeon) with sofas and to provide a new ramp, door and a 'flex steps' lift 'to provide an accessible route to the downstairs three of the four screens. The proposal is to create wider rows in screens ② and ③ by using a wooden construction over the existing sloping floor. In screen ① the new floor will be built on every other row of stepping. Screen ④ would see the existing sloping floor preserved and, after removal of the standard seats, wider rows of sofas would be created. See letters p24 last Bulletin and p22 this issue. {15012}

*Hollymovies – 15 January*

McCarthy & Stone has lodged plans for 43 retirement apartments on the Empire's car park. A spokesman for Empire said selling off the car park would help fund improvements to the cinema. However, concerns have been raised about over-development and the loss of customer parking. Councillors agreed to object to the proposal in its current form.

*Royal Sutton Coldfield Chronicle – 10 February; sent in by Graham Fee*

### SWANSEA



Work is due to commence this month [February] on transforming the former Albert Hall Cinema into an 800-capacity entertainment venue to be named Depot Swansea with additional space reserved for businesses and offices, including a rooftop terrace. The project is being undertaken by the Loft Company, who have carried out a similar development in Cardiff called the Tramshed and have a proven track record in this field. This is encouraging as the building has remained derelict since Mecca closed their bingo operation in March 2007 and was becoming an eyesore.

The building opened as the Music Hall in 1864 with a 2,500 capacity and its name was changed to the Albert Hall in 1882. Conversion to a cinema took place in 1922 to the plans of Charles Tamlin Ruthen, who was responsible for the nearby Carlton Cinema in 1914. It was closed as a cinema by Rank on 3 December 1977, who had already closed the Carlton in October 1977 to eliminate the competition to their Odeon cinema in the nearby Kingsway, which they had opened in 1966. The Albert Hall is Grade II listed and was one of several South Wales' cinemas with balcony projection, where the projection box was located underneath the balcony with portholes at the front, as opposed to the more conventional arrangement of being at the rear. Above are some images of the building as it will look when the refurbishment is complete, as appeared in Wales Online. {17667}

*Sent in by John Skinner*

The owner of Cinema & Co, who reopened the venue several times in defiance of the Welsh Government's lockdown rules, appealed against the £15,000 fine imposed. However, she was absent from her own appeal hearing. The judge said she could have her sentence and fine increased should she lose her appeal. A crowdfunding appeal to cover the cinema's legal costs has raised over £55,000 so far. {52976}

*The National – 13 January*

### THIRSK (North Yorks)



During the recent Covid closure period, improvements have been made to the 204-seat Ritz, helped by a grant of £6,392 from the BFI's Cultural Recovery Fund. The downstairs seating has been replaced with new multiplex-style seats and the white ceiling tiles replaced with new black tiles with better acoustics. A new carpet has been laid, the decoration spruced up and the sound system improved. It reopened with *Save The Cinema*, about the rescue of the Lyric Carmarthen. The film strikes interesting parallels with the Ritz. The cinema was closed in 1994 but Thirsk Town Council took the decision to try and save it and soon a group of volunteers ably supported by both the previous enthusiasts and the Town Council itself had the cinema back up and running. A year later, the Town Council handed it over to the volunteer group. {3372}

*Darlington & Stockton Times – 11 February; photo taken April 2015*

### TUNBRIDGE WELLS (Kent)

Plans for a three-screen Everyman cinema on the site of the former ABC (etc) have been scrapped and more flats are proposed, subject to planning permission. When the ABC closed in 2000, a covenant was put on the site preventing a cinema until 2032. The building was demolished in 2014 and the site has had a succession of owners since.

*Times of Tunbridge Wells – 5, 12 January; additional information from Tim McCullen*

### ULVERSTON (Cumbria)



The front door of the Roxy was vandalised after weeks of anti-social behaviour by a group of youths. Owner Charles Morris is now planning to install CCTV. He is looking to get the community together in order to deal with this group and help police catch them collaboratively. {18520}

*The Mail – 12 January; photo taken June 2005*

### WESTON-SUPER-MARE (North Somerset)

The shops units within the four-screen Grade II listed Odeon building have been boarded up for many years. Now planning permission has been applied for to enhance the interiors. One unit has collapsed, causing water damage to one of cinema auditorium walls. There is a possibility that one unit, a former sweet shop, could become a public toilet. See Casework p6. {13851}

*Somerset Live – 19 January; Weston Mercury – 27 January; photo on front cover*

### WREXHAM (Clwyd)

The Council says it is keeping its options open after it bought the grounds of the former Hippodrome, which was demolished in 2009 following a fire. It has sparked a public debate over how the area should be used, with a petition calling for a theatre to be built there.

*Daily Post, Wales – 2 February*



# REWINDING BACK – SECOND HALF 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Sent in by David A Ellis (except \*)

## EMPIRE'S NEW SCREEN

A new screen, made of woven glass fibre, has been installed at the Empire Leicester Square as one of the features of the re-equipment of the theatre for the inauguration of the new kiné – stage show policy. Manufactured in America and imported for the occasion, this new type screen, it is claimed, reflects a third more light, evenly distributed over the entire surface. The 'glascreen' as it is called, is woven from fine filaments of pure glass, the fine texture being porous to sound. Dust and tobacco smoke stains can easily be removed by a spray of water.

*Kine Weekly – 19 January 1950*

## HULL CIRCUIT EMBRACES CINEMASCOPE



The Dorchester Hull; photo courtesy David Alexander

Associated Hull Cinemas, of which Brinley Evans is managing director, proposes to equip each of its fourteen theatres with CinemaScope, at a cost of approximately £70,000. Work will start in the next two or three weeks on the Dorchester for the installation of the CinemaScope screen and stereophonic sound, which will be ready by 5 November. The new screen will be 20ft by 40ft. The first picture will be *The Robe* early in the new year. Mr Brinley Evans plans to go ahead with the installations at the rate of one a week at each theatre in his circuit. He was one of the first exhibitors to sign up at the Odeon Tottenham Court Road.

*Kine Weekly – 15 October 1953*

## CAPITAL TAKES OVER ALLIED'S BOOKINGS.

Capital and Provincial has taken over the booking and management of the Allied Times Theatres of Manchester. Mr Eric Rhodes, General Manager of Capital and Provincial, told *Kiné* this week that the move is a result of the prolonged illness of Mr C Fennell, Allied director. He added that the arrangement was a temporary one and at this stage at any rate, Capital and Provincial was not acquiring the theatres.

*Kinematograph Weekly 6 May 1954*

## CINEMA CLOSES IN UPROAR \*

Uproar broke out in The Cinema New Mills, on Saturday night at the last house before it closed after 36 years, a victim of the cinema depression. Towards the end of the feature film, gangs of youths downstairs started shouting and then began wrecking seats and throwing them about. Five seats in one row were ripped from the floor and smashed; arms and backs of others were broken and padding pulled from ripped seats. Altogether twenty seats in different parts of the cinema were damaged. About a couple of dozen fireworks were lighted. The youths ignored appeals by the manager. Mr Fred Chadwick, so he ordered the operator to stop the film, *The One that Got Away*. When police were called the audience of more than three hundred crowded out of the cinema. Mr Chadwick said yesterday, "It seems that the youths had come with the sole purpose of wrecking the place. They behaved like hooligans. They were not teddy boys, just hooligans and the more we asked them to be quiet the worse they became."

*Manchester Guardian – 29 September 1958; sent in by Richard Lyons*

## TOWN'S ONLY CINEMA CLOSES

Tomorrow night (Saturday) sees the closure of the only cinema in Brownhills, the Regent Picture House. Audiences have increased since cinema owner Miles Jervis took over in January but development plans affecting the main street have ended the life of the building. Mr Miles Jervis Jr said this week that he was sorry the cinema had to close because they had been doing so well since their takeover. At first they had no idea that the building would have to come down in the near future. When they realised it would have to be demolished, renovation plans were scrapped. They intended moving back into Brownhills if they could get a new site for a modern cinema. The Regent Bingo sessions will be transferred to another of Mr Miles Jervis's cinemas at Chase Terrace. There were some sad faces as residents stared at the posters announcing the last show, outside the cinema whose original date of erection is uncertain. One problem with which parents will now be faced is where their children can go on a Saturday afternoon. Since January, a thriving children's club has run at the Picture House but the club, whose membership numbers about 500, will have to be disbanded.

*Walsall Observer – 28 September 1962*

## ON ITS OWN – THE EMPIRE CINEMA



The CTA group outside the Plaza Widnes in 1999

Widnes will be left with just one cinema at the end of the month when the Plaza in Peelhouse Lane, switches to bingo. A former cinema, the Regal, which has been a bingo hall for several years, is to be closed and sessions transferred to the bigger Plaza. That will leave the Empire in Widnes Road as the town's only cinema. All three buildings are owned by Cheshire County Cinemas. Present manager of the Plaza, which opened in 1937, is Mr James Hutson, of Fir Avenue, Halewood, who will be transferring to the company's cinema at Northwich. While attendances have been dropping at the Plaza they have been booming at the Regal bingo sessions and some nights patrons have had to be turned away.

*Liverpool Echo – 4 February 1970*

## LIGHTS ON AGAIN AT ELECTRIC

The Electric Cinema [Portobello Road] Britain's oldest surviving purpose-built cinema is set to reopen at the end of the month. The Grade II listed building, closed for nearly three years, has been restored to the tune of £200,000 and will now show a mixture of classics and new films five days a week and live cabaret acts on Mondays and Tuesdays. Ward councillor Bob Pandy, active in the three-year-long 'Save The Electric' Campaign, welcomed the opening. He said: "We have fought long and hard for this and we wish the Electric every success."

*Kensington Post – 11 January 1990*

## SMALL ADS

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

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

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

Display rates: eighth page – £15; quarter page – £25; half page (horizontal or vertical) – £45; full page – £80



# LETTERS

## MODEL CINEMA

I have just been reading the latest CTA Bulletin and had quite a surprise when turning to page 30. I am the builder of the model cinema shown in the photograph – but I have no idea why a copy of the photograph has turned up in a file relating to the Electric Palace at Harwich.



The model was built in 1984/85 and was part of a family project in which I built a 1/12th scale model of a fictitious Black Country Street. This 1" to the foot scale is the internationally accepted scale used by dolls' house builders and I was challenged to produce this scene by the organiser of the 'Miniatura' Dolls' House Exhibitions because I had complained that dolls' house exhibitions were boring and asserted that people would prefer to see fish & chip shops and cinemas rather than exquisite Georgian houses.

The cinema frontage was 'freelance' – ie not based on a particular cinema but combining elements of several cinemas that were often converted from live theatres. It was given the name **Electric Palace Kinema** to give it a pre-First World War ambience.

The auditorium part of the cinema, which is just about visible in the photograph, was about the size of a very large dog kennel and consisted of four sides that folded up into position from the base. Two hinged roof sections were then dropped onto the side and end walls. However, the side walls could be removed to let people see the cinema's interior. My one-year-old daughter was able to sit in the auditorium until we started installing a balcony and some of the seats. On several occasions a 'standard 8' compact Bolex ciné projector was placed beneath the balcony and this projected films onto the screen on the back wall of the auditorium. The top of the screen can just be seen in the photograph.

In the end, the dimensions of these buildings were determined by practical issues concerning being packed into the family estate car rather than exact scale and most of the buildings were never quite finished. However, the street was exhibited at several West Midlands exhibitions, including a 'Miniatura' where some people dismissed it as a poor joke in bad taste and reaffirmed their view that the Georgian house was the only architecture worth modelling in the dolls' house world. When they noticed that a film was actually being shown in the cinema, they accused me of being a cheap showman and obviously not a 'serious' modeller.

The problem in building models of this size is that we quickly ran out of space and at a family conference it was decided that we should sell the entire street and start again using 1/2 inch to the foot as our scale. The street was advertised in *Exchange and Mart* and a lady came down from Liverpool and bought the lot. She said her intentions were to use it in a school but we never heard anything about its fate. Our problems were not over as we then produced twice as many smaller models but I never built another model cinema, except in popular railway modelling scales. I am still addicted to building model shops in a variety of scales.

I enclose a photograph of the family – as it was then – that shows the models as in 1985.

Ned Williams

## MATTERS ARISING

As Stuart Smith notes in *Cinema Cruising* [letters, p25, last Bulletin], the *Iona* is indeed a vast ship. The four cinema auditoria are very well appointed and the staff take great pride in their cinemas. The huge Headliners Theatre is also equipped for (digital) film, with a full Dolby Atmos sound system. I was lucky enough to go on board the *Iona* before its maiden voyage, to train the crew on how to use and maintain the digital cinema equipment. It really is a floating city!

Regarding Trevor Chapman's Odeon / Empire Sutton Coldfield letter, it may be a case of the listing doing more harm than good. The original screen ④ conversion was especially poor. The seats aren't great and the room acoustics are terrible. Unfortunately, the auditorium, with all its faults, is included in the listing and as such everything in it is subject to the same restrictions as the original 1930s fittings. There was a standing joke that even the chewing gum on the seat backs was listed!

A planned refit several years ago for screen ④ ended up being limited to increasing the picture size. The new screen sheet was fitted on the original screen frame, the tabs are still hanging there, you just can't see them anymore! Having tabs and masking locked in the open position is a common commercial decision these days. With no perceived cost benefit, if they are not used you don't have to pay for maintenance. There are some original features still visible in screen ④ though. The stage with its orchestra pit and the decorative grilles on the side walls are still there.



The main dimmer board at Sutton Coldfield

There are a couple of oddities at Sutton Coldfield. The original dimmer board was still in use (with the addition of a motor to drive the levers) for screen ① until a few years ago. It was found to be an experimental type that was only manufactured for a short time where, instead of taking the live potential down to earth, the earth potential was taken to live, meaning that when the lights were out the fittings were still at full mains voltage! The other unusual feature was that the roof void was accessed from the front stalls, rather than from the projection room level. Stairs at the side of the stage took you up past staff rooms and up to the roof void. See Newsreel p20.

Ben Doman

## SUTTON COLDFIELD EMPIRE (EX ODEON)

The outlook for the Empire seems very uncertain, perhaps grim. The car park was always pretty full when I have visited as the cinema is on the edge of the town with very limited parking in the vicinity. The main town centre car parks are up to a ten-minute walk away. There is not enough space for parking for a 43-apartment complex and the cinema. Even though McCarthy & Stone are miserly with their retirement development parking spaces, they would still want 20 or so. Closure of the Empire would be serious for Sutton as the nearest cinemas are 8-10 miles away in Tamworth, Lichfield, Walsall or Birmingham. My conspiracy theory is that the owner would like to sell the whole site for development rather than refurbish and reopen. The Empire badly needs an expensive refurbishment. I'm not sure how listed status would protect the cinema. The fate of the former Odeon in Chorley may be relevant. Closed by Gala Bingo at the start of Covid restric-



tions, it never reopened. The owners sold the whole building and site to the Council (for £1?) because redevelopment would allegedly cost £½m to remove asbestos. The Council demolished the building in autumn 2021 and the site is now a car park. See Newsreel p20.

Graham Fee

### LONG EATON (Derbys)

Further to the item on p21 of the last Bulletin, the former **Palace** opened on 3 July 1913 with 830 seats in stalls and circle and later became the **Ritz**. The **Ritz** closed on 23 February 1983, when it was converted into a retail unit and circle cinema seating 253 called **Screen**.



The outside and interior of the Screen on the CTA visit April 1993

The cinema was called **Screen** as the lady who used to operate the cinema for the previous six years thought the **Ritz** name was horrible; "it strikes me as being sleazy." The **Screen** cinema closed on 3 October 1996 due to the death of the owner, John Francis. The building later became a pub, which has since closed.

I find it hard that the Council is looking to provide a cinema again, although very encouraged by this news. Does the building still have the mothballed circle cinema upstairs? Surely a single-screen cinema won't be viable in this day and age, considering the **Scala/Galaxy**, which is not too far away from there, had a very problematic conversion and existence when it reopened as a three-screen cinema with three further screens promised upstairs, which did not happen. That is due for demolition.

The **Palace/Ritz/Screen** and the **Scala** were visited by the CTA on 11 April 1993. The **Scala/Galaxy** was visited by the CTA on 25 May 2008. Pictures by me. Quote from **Ritz** owner – CTA Bulletin 17/2 (1993) p8.

Tim McCullen

### CAMBRIDGE

The photo on p12 of the last Bulletin refers to a projector at the **Regal** in Cambridge – the cinema became the **Arts Picturehouse** in 1999. It shows one of a pair of **Cinemeccanica Victoria 8s** that came from the **Lumière** (ex **Odeon**) in St Martin's Lane, London. I know – I took them out. One has been retained; the other is installed at the **Picturehouse Central** in London's Piccadilly Circus. I did make a suggestion for the CTA to cover the **News Theatres** of UK – and their place prior to TV.

Tony Jones

**Editor's Note:** I'm sorry, I should have used the name current when the photograph was taken. It is sometimes difficult to know by which name to refer to a cinema that has had several names, especially if the cinema is no longer operating. I tend to use the name most people remember it by. Regarding **News Theatres**, I know some have been mentioned in recent Bulletins. I'm sorry, I don't remember Tony's original request but if any member has researched this and would like to write an article for the Bulletin, I would welcome it – with photos.

### AN EXCELLENT GUIDE

As a former projectionist who still misses the heat and noise of the projection box, I enjoyed immensely our Editor's excellently written *A Beginner's Guide to the Projection Room* as featured in the last issue of the Bulletin. Not only was Harry's article concise and informative but it was also easily accessible and made use of some great photographs which, for me at least, brought back many memories. I only wish I had been given a copy of this article when I began training as a projectionist. It really would've answered so many of the questions that I then had and which my old chief at the time couldn't answer as he spent most of his time propping up the bar at the pub opposite the cinema, rather than standing at his rewind bench splicing trailers! His only advice on how to make up a seven-reel feature was: "Don't get the reels back to front and put the reels in order." He really wasn't much of a teacher!

Mike Whitcombe

I want to say thank you for an exceptionally good issue of the Bulletin. I think I have read it with more speed than any other issue, which is a real compliment. I must also congratulate you on your *Beginner's Guide to the Projection Room*. It explains everything with accuracy, clarity and economy. I can't fault it – not that I would want to. All the accompanying images are well-chosen and illustrate the text extremely well.

Tony Williams

**Editor's Note:** Ray Sutton has advised me of a free downloadable 39-page Introductory Guide to Film Projection published by the Independent Cinema Office at [tinyurl.com/mrxb53c3](http://tinyurl.com/mrxb53c3).

### CINEMARK

Early this Century, **Cinemark** of Dallas [Texas] planned to build five multiplexes in the UK: Banbury, Grimsby, Halifax, Northampton and Scunthorpe. The first three were not built; **Cinemark** pulled out and the last two were opened in 2004 by **UCI**. That is what we were told when I was working at the **Majestic** Scunthorpe. My job there finished and I went elsewhere.

A Smith

**Editor's Note:** This may explain my comment about a tourist sign in Banbury on p18 of the last Bulletin.

### DR CHRIS WOOLARD



I was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Dr Christopher Woolard. Chris was a good friend of mine from back in the 1980s. He was a supporter of the **Gaumont Camden Town** (later **Odeon / Gate / Parkway / Odeon**) on its fight with the developers and also of the **Plaza** Camden at its demise. The projector photographed with Chris on p31 of the last Bulletin was in full working order in his conservatory and he would delight in showing films to his friends. He could screen 16mm, 35mm and 70mm and had Dolby sound. Another of his many interests were days sailing on the last seagoing paddle steamer **Waverley** as it too was in danger of extinction. Here is a photo taken c1990 on a day trip from London to Whitstable, showing **Waverley** in Whitstable harbour and Chris [L] with Mr J Cahill, Chief projectionist at the **Plaza** (deceased 2001). Chris was a very kind and extremely clever man and 'cinema' will be all the poorer for his passing.

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@theppt.org](mailto:contact@theppt.org)

[www.theppt.org](http://www.theppt.org)



## CINEMA BUSINESS

### ODEON BRAND



Europe's largest cinema chain, Odeon, has revealed its new platform. Building on the "We Make Movies Better" slogan, inherited from its parent US company AMC, the cinema chain has adopted four brand characters; The Magician, who immerses people in the magic of the movies to create a sense of escapism; The Memory Maker, who makes the experience "magically unforgettable"; The Creator, who makes movies "more delicious" and The Navigator who makes movie-going "easier." A 30-second trailer can be seen on the Adweek website at [tinyurl.com/3n2ttfw4](https://www.adweek.com/3n2ttfw4).

Adweek – 18 February

### OLDER BINGO PLAYERS WARY OF RETURNING

The boss of Mecca Bingo's parent company, Rank, said that older customers are cautious of returning to bingo halls, despite the easing of Covid restrictions. Rank said net gaming revenue jumped by 88% to £333.7m for the six months to the end of December, compared with the same period last year,

Daily Mail – 28 January; sent in by Barry Quinton

### RECOVERY FUND FOR SCOTLAND'S INDEPENDENT CINEMA

Backed by the Scottish government, Screen Scotland has announced a £25m fund "to support cinemas to develop activity that addresses changes in the marketplace and changes within their audience, with a focus on growth and development." Applications are being invited.

Screen Scotland Press Release – 9 February [tinyurl.com/ye236dnx](https://www.tinyurl.com/ye236dnx)

## CARTOON CORNER



Sent in by Carl Chesworth

### EVERYMAN

Cinema Chain Everyman saw sales double last year following their reopening in mid-May. Revenues for the year were £48.7m, double the £24.2m in lockdown-hit 2020. Annual profits are set to beat hopes at around £8.3m.

Daily Express – 22 January; sent in by Tom Laughlan & Barry Quinton

### CINEWORLD

Cineworld shares crashed by nearly 40% after it was ordered to pay Canada's Cineplex more than £725m in damages over a failed takeover bid. It pulled out of a £1.7bn deal to buy Cineplex last June after the pandemic shattered its finances. The shares fell 17.88p to 27.5p. They recovered a little following a strong opening for the latest *Spider Man* film. The company has started talks to defer a £125m pay-out to its shareholders.

City-AM, Daily Record, Daily Mail – 16, 18 December; Evening Standard – 1 February; sent in by Margaret Burgoine, Tom Laughlan, Barry Quinton & R David Simpson

## INTERNET CORNER

- ★ [tinyurl.com/2p8eksuf](https://www.tinyurl.com/2p8eksuf) From the *Sheffield Star* – Memories of the Hippodrome Sheffield. {25443} sent in by Terry Hanstock
- ★ [tinyurl.com/464nr4za](https://www.tinyurl.com/464nr4za) A report from *28 Days Later* on the Adelphi in Moston, Manchester. Some text taken from *Cinema Treasures* but there are recent photos of the interior. {36607}
- ★ [tinyurl.com/57xs8ssj](https://www.tinyurl.com/57xs8ssj) From the *Mansfield Chad* – 18 photos of Mansfield's cinemas through the years.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/4uhkvet6](https://www.tinyurl.com/4uhkvet6) From the *Edinburgh Evening News* – 29 pictures from the 1950s & 60s of Edinburgh Cinemas.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yd8kja75](https://www.tinyurl.com/yd8kja75) From [untappedcities.com](https://www.untappedcities.com) – The ten oldest Broadway theatres in Times Square, New York.
- ★ [youtu.be/0wOb0EgP93Q](https://youtu.be/0wOb0EgP93Q) A one-minute trailer A Warm Welcome to Odeon – modern version.
- ★ [youtu.be/HZFoLmEN8sg](https://youtu.be/HZFoLmEN8sg) A 10-minute *Pathé News* item on the opening of the ABC Preston in March 1959. {25257}
- ★ [tinyurl.com/bdck5h99](https://www.tinyurl.com/bdck5h99) From the *Newcastle Chronicle* – The story of Black's Regal (Odeon) Gateshead on what would have been its 85th birthday. {52461}
- ★ [tinyurl.com/55345v7y](https://www.tinyurl.com/55345v7y) From the *Unrestricted Theatre* website – photos inside the Hippodrome Dudley, which is due to be demolished. Links to other interesting pages and a video. {41631}
- ★ [tinyurl.com/5n78krccr](https://www.tinyurl.com/5n78krccr) From *Egyptian Streets* – Four of Cairo's oldest cinemas. sent in by Bob Bradshaw
- ★ [tinyurl.com/5n8y7cj8](https://www.tinyurl.com/5n8y7cj8) From the *East Anglian Daily Times* – the story of the Abbeygate cinema in Bury St Edmunds. {24294} sent in by Pat Church & Terry Hanstock

## USA NEWS

### HOLLYWOOD

The Cinerama Dome may be planning to reopen in 2022. A public notice of an application to sell alcoholic beverages was posted outside the theatre in December. It has been dark since March 2020 and ArcLight Cinemas announced they were closing it for good in April 2021. {33}

Hollywood Reporter – 17 December

### NEW YORK (Brooklyn)

The twelve-screen Regal on Court Street closed suddenly in January; no reason was given. It is thought it is planned to convert it to retail use. It opened in July 2000 and had 2,337 seats in total. {17037}

News 12, The Bronx – 18 January

### SAN FRANCISCO

The owners of the 1,500-seat Castro Theatre have announced it may soon become primarily a venue for live entertainment and no longer screen films. It had gone dark for 15 months during Covid but reopened in June 2021 to host the 45th edition of *Frameline* LGBTQ+ Festival. It hosted the US premiere of *Matrix Resurrections* last December. It is one of the few single-screen cinemas remaining in the City. The Wurlitzer organ was removed from the theatre at the end of September 2015 and has been replaced by a seven manual pipe/digital organ. {48}

The Guardian – 22 January



# CTA ARCHIVE

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 or to make an enquiry: [cta-uk.org/archive](http://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.

## VOLUNTEERING AT THE ARCHIVE OR FROM HOME

The Archive is maintained entirely by volunteers. Volunteering can be a very interesting and rewarding experience and you do not have to be a member to be a volunteer. Volunteers might file, organise and sort the collections, deal with enquiries or undertake special projects. You don't need any experience or particular skills. If you cannot easily visit the Archive and have computer skills, a scanner or access to Word or Excel at home, you can still volunteer as we have plenty of work that can be undertaken remotely without visiting the Archive.

## ARCHIVE TWITTER

You may be interested to know that the Archive regularly posts messages, often including photographs, on its Twitter account – [@CTA\\_Archive](https://twitter.com/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](https://twitter.com/CTA_Archive).

## CAN YOU HELP US WITH THIS PICTURE?



Several members were able to identify that the unknown star featured in a publicity photograph on page 29 of the last Bulletin was not an actor but the director of *The Night My Number Came Up* (1955), Leslie Norman. He was the father of TV presenter Barry Norman. Thank you to Leslie Woods and Richard Burke for contacting me with this successful identification. This month we have a similar publicity photograph from the Odeon Glasgow from the early 1950s. In the centre with glasses is Francis Hozier, the cinema manager but can anyone identify the gentleman on the right?

## NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVE

CTA lifetime member John Wilkinson sadly passed away at the end of last year and his family have kindly arranged to fulfil his wishes that his collection of cinema-related material be donated to the Archive. This broad collection contains many interesting and rare items including a collection of vintage cinema programmes for the Liverpool area, including programmes for the Walton Vale Picture House, a cinema for which no material was held in the Archive. There was also newspaper cuttings and John's own research notes focusing mainly on The Potteries and Manchester areas. Other worthy items included a number of pre-war cinema posters, such as these two fine examples from Barnoldswick.



John was a member of the North West Cinema Preservation Society and a number of their newsletters have filled gaps in the Archive's collection. One of John's prize possessions was a piece of Essoldo carpet, which is a welcome addition to the various cinema carpets preserved at the Archive. Further information on John's life can be found in Obituaries on page 27

## 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.

## 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](mailto:archive@cta-uk.org); if you do not have Internet access call 07971752807.

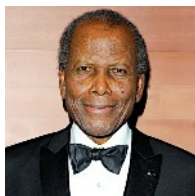
Clive Polden, CTA Archivist



## NECROLOGY

### SIDNEY POITIER KBE 94

He was first noticed in *Blackboard Jungle* (1955). He was the first black actor to win the Oscar for Best Actor for *Lilies of the Field* in 1963. He continued to break ground in three 1967 films that dealt with issues of race relations: *To Sir, with Love*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *In the Heat of the Night*; the latter won the Oscar for Best Picture for that year.



### HARDY KRUGER 93

The German actor is best known for his role as SS officer Karl Ludwig in *A Bridge Too Far* (1977) and as a mercenary in *The Wild Geese* (1978). He was given his big break in the British 1957 war film *The One That Got Away*. The following year he played a German maths scholar in *Bachelor of Hearts* who falls for a student played by Sylvia Syms.



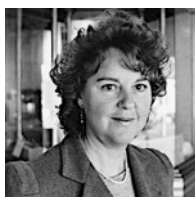
### SALLY ANN HOWES 91

Sally will be best remembered as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*'s Truly Scrumptious in 1968. Aged 13 she appeared in *Thursday's Child* (1943) and followed this with several films, including *Nicholas Nickleby* (1947), *Anna Karenina* (1948) and *The Admirable Crichton* (1957). On stage she took over from Julia Andrews as Eliza in *My Fair Lady* on Broadway in 1958.



### ROMAINE HART 88

In 1970 she transformed the run-down Rex in Islington into The Screen on the Green; six more followed. Always having to fight for the best films to show, Romaine set up her own distribution company, Mainline Pictures, acquiring the UK rights to a diverse collection of world cinema. On her retirement, the seven Screen cinemas were sold to Everyman in 2008. She was a cousin of the late Laurie Marsh.



### BARRY CRYER OBE 86

Although I don't think Barry was involved in the movies, many members will have known him from radio and scriptwriting in a career spanning seven decades. He wrote for Tommy Cooper, Frankie Howerd, Bob Hope, Jack Benny and Stanley Baxter. He made his professional debut as a comic at The City Varieties in Leeds in 1955. He was a stalwart on Radio 4's *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*, subtitled *The Antidote To Panel Games*.



### PETER BOGDANOVICH 82

His first film was the thriller *Targets* in 1968. He went on to direct *The Last Picture Show* (1971) – the black and white drama that earned eight Oscar nominations. A year later he directed *What's Up Doc?* starring Barbra Streisand and had further success with *Paper Moon* in 1973.



### IVAN REITMAN 75

His first commercial film ventures were as producer of two horror films, *Shivers* (1975) and *Rabid* (1977). His big break came when he produced *National Lampoon's Animal House* in 1978 and directed *Meatballs* in 1979. He went on to produce a number of comedies, including *Stripes*, *Ghostbusters (I&2)*, *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop* – the last two with Arnold Schwarzenegger.



### MEATLOAF 74

Although better known as a rock singer, he appeared in several cult movies: *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), *Wayne's World* (1992) and *Fight Club* (1999). According to IMDb, his first film appearance was as a 'boy in stand' (uncredited) in *State Fair* (1962).



## MEMBERSHIP

### NEW MEMBERS

We offer a warm welcome to the following new members: Mark Hazell, Steve Brownjohn, Mark Barlow, Nigel Smith, Glenda Vencatachellum, Duncan Short, Peter Hallinan and Tony Mundin from the Rex Wilmslow.

### DONATIONS

Once more members have displayed their generosity by adding a donation to the renewal of their subscriptions. Our sincere thanks go to: DA Abbott, K Addison, KR Bailey, S Barrett-White, DR Bennett, EG Bottle, W Burns, B Campbell, GH Catterick, AT Davies, R Deahl, MM Dupre, G Dutton, VA Edwards, KJ Finch, JR Forster, GW Gill, H Hamblet, P Hamer, GF High, DM Howarth, AP Jowett, J&M Kennett, AS King, AC Llewellyn, KC McFarlane, E McNamee, JJ McWilliams, TA O'Sullivan, DJ Reeves, PD Regan, TJ Rhodes, TR Sedgwick-Jell, EH Senat, CB Simmonds, CA Simmons, VR Simon, C Skinner, BJ Steer, BR Stevenson, R Sutton, C Syner, RB Thomas, MW Weston, JHC Williams, BD Wingrad and PG Yaxley.

### IN MEMORIAM

We have been sorry to learn since the last issue of the Bulletin of the deaths of the following members: Walter Philip Cobb from Shrewsbury, a member since 1971; Mike Collins from Wembley, since 1990; Gerald Smith from Ilford, since 1982; Simon Walker from Hanwell, who joined in 1987 and John Love from Henley-in-Arden, a past member who joined in 1981.

Ray Ritmeester, Membership Secretary

In memory of John Love, the CTA has received a donation from the Henley-in-Arden Wildlife Society, of which he was a founder member. He had loved cinema and theatre all his life and was a member of the CTA for 30 years.

Neville C Taylor, Treasurer

## UNIDENTIFIED CINEMAS

### ONE SOLVED FROM BULLETIN 55/5!

Photo 047 on p7 of Bulletin 55/5 has been identified by John Griffiths as the rear of the former **Walpole Picture Theatre** in Ealing, West London.

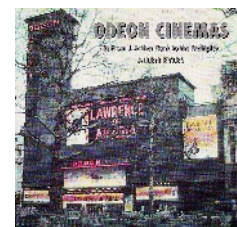
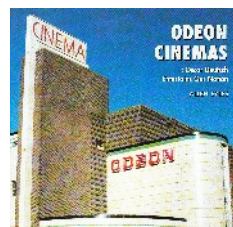
### ONE SOLVED FROM THE LAST BULLETIN

On p27 of the last Bulletin, Int154 has been identified by Mr Spencer Hobbs as the foyer of the **ABC Elephant and Castle**, taken in the early 1960s by David Freeman. We are happy to confirm that this photograph is under copyright and is now in the ownership of Mr Hobbs.

Darron Keeling & Clive Polden

## All you need to know about... ODEON

These two volumes, by Allen Eyles, provide a comprehensive history of the Odeon circuit, from its beginnings in the 1930s up to the multiplex era. Fully illustrated in b/w and colour.



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Available from the Sales Officer – address on p5.



# OBITUARIES

## GERALD SMITH 87

Gerald was a great asset to the many groups and organisations to whom he devoted his life, volunteering his practical skills and talents to help in their running; their underlying interest was entertainment.



Being interested in the theatre, he decided to offer his services to the Wakefield Theatre and Opera House joining a local group and assisted in redecorating the theatre's interior.

Involvement in drama and stage productions began in his late twenties – notably in supporting the actress Nita Valerie to set up the New Theatre, Huddersfield. Set building and painting were tasks that Gerald took great pleasure in. He met and worked with stars such as Hylda Baker, Roy Barraclough, Thora Hird, Roy Hudd and Jack Warner.

Having arrived in London and initially living in Hampstead, it wasn't long before he became involved with an amateur dramatics group (believed to be in or around Doughty Street, Bloomsbury?). His involvement with the 'amdram' company brought him into contact with Tony Moss. Tony was a leading light in the world of cinema history (the buildings), being President of the CTA and also co-founder of the Cinema Organ Society (COS). What a delight this must have been for Gerald as his new acquaintance and friend was a 'dream from heaven' with an encyclopedic knowledge of these subjects being able to satisfy his ambition to learn deeper of his passionate interests. He greatly assisted in mounting the orderly sorting and cataloguing of Tony Moss's massive collection of cinema photo albums after Tony's death (2005) to enable them to be passed on to the CTA's archive, where they form a major reference resource. He was also a member of the Cinema Organ Society, the British Music Hall Society and the Frank Matcham Society. He collected theatre programmes and ephemera, which enabled him to create his own catalogues and references to the Victorian and Edwardian period of theatre growth.

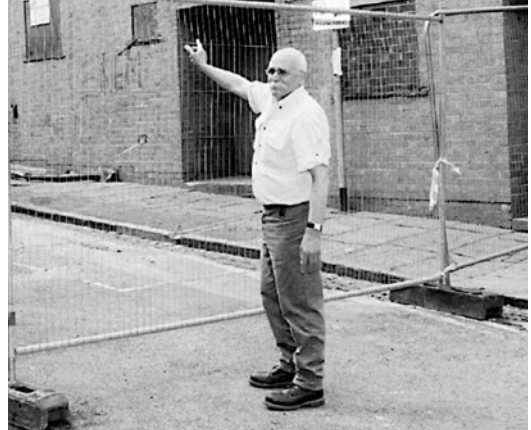
His pride and joy was when he moved into his final residence, an unaltered 1930s period house in Chadwell Heath, which he had decorated and furnished in a very impressive theatrical style using ephemera reclaimed from old theatres and cinemas that had closed. However due to his declining health he was unable to continue maintaining his property and made the decision in 2019 to transfer himself into sheltered accommodation in Ilford. Sadly, Gerald died aged 87 in January 2022 after a short illness and his funeral was held on 9 February 2022 at the City of London Crematorium.

Gerald was a very private and modest person who never really lost his Yorkshire roots and style but was very helpful, kind and friendly to whoever he thought was in need. Many of us have benefited and are richer in various ways, for having known him.

*Richard Norman*

## JOHN WILKINSON 77

News of the passing of John Wilkinson, Salford came in December last year just as I had checked on his address to send a Christmas card. I say John Wilkinson, Salford, as that's the way he used to sign his card, very much in the manner of an old cinema company logo which I'm sure was at the back of his mind. I first got to know John as a member of the former North West Cinema Preservation Society, which was active in the 1980s and he regularly supported trips that I arranged on their behalf. We began to do these in conjunction with the CTA and I would think it was through these visits that John joined our Association and became, at a later date, a life member.



John had a love of theatre and cinema buildings from an early age, growing up in the Potteries and being born just before the War ended. As a boy John helped his mother Elsie, who worked at the Marshlands Cinema at Wolstanton in Staffordshire, a venue which advertised that "the hall is vacuum-cleaned and disinfected daily with Jeyes Fluid". The smell wasn't to put John off and when the building closed in the 1960s, he contacted the land-owners to see if he could buy the building. Although this venture was rebuffed, another opportunity arose and John joined the projection team at the Danilo (later Essoldo) Stoke on Trent. When films ceased at the Danilo, John started on a different career path, which took him to Manchester, via Great Yarmouth.



The love of cinemas and the Danilo never left John and when he heard that CTA committee member Gary Trinder had some old Essoldo carpet in his garage, a deal was done and John had it cleaned and laid in his Salford flat. As John couldn't get to attend the CTA event on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apollo Ardwick, I sent him a copy of the limited-edition programme we had printed and his reaction was one of someone who had won the pools!

John always supported CTA events when he could, particularly around the Manchester area and became an expert on the entertainment buildings of Salford and was always happy to correct anyone if they didn't have all the facts and background information on his home turf. John regularly attended LGBT events in the area and was proud of Manchester as a liberal City, with some of the finest listed cinemas outside of London. He was a regular supporter of the Plaza Stockport, watching films that he had once enjoyed and projected in Stoke on Trent.

I'm sorry that I will not be getting my annual Christmas card from John but delighted that John's wonderful collection of cinema memorabilia is heading to the CTA archive.

*David Eve, CTA Wessex*



# WARTIME FRANCE GOES TO THE PICTURES

By David Evans



A recent view of the Rex Paris [A Hellmann, creative commons licence]

As in Britain, going to the cinema in France was a hugely popular pastime during the Second World War. There, for a few hours, audiences found a brief escape from the awfulness around them in a country divided into an occupied northern zone under German control and a southern so-called 'free zone' under the government of Marshal Philippe Pétain, until the whole of the country was occupied from November 1942. In Paris, large capacity cinemas such as the Olympia and the Paramount on the Boulevard des Capucines and the Biarritz, Colisée and Lord Byron on the Champs Élysées played to packed audiences, whereas the huge 5,000-seat Rex on the Boulevard Poissonnière was requisitioned for German service personnel only as a 'Soldatenkino'. Outside Paris, theatres such as the Pathé Palace on the Rue de la République in Lyons and Le Prado on the Avenue du Prado in Marseilles were equally busy. Even a medium-sized departmental capital such as Troyes, in the North-East of France, boasted five cinemas, from the upmarket 1,600-seat Cirque Municipal to the small Jeanne d'Arc with around 400 seats.

With American and British films totally banned throughout France from November 1942 – a few had circulated before this in the Free Zone when this was still officially 'independent' – French film production worked overtime to fill the gap. Some dubbed German productions were distributed and pictures such as the all-Agfacolor *Münchhausen* (1943) attracted fairly large audiences. The Germans even set up a production company – Continental Films – to exploit the profitability of the French market where, for example, a version of *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (1942) attracted huge audiences during its run at the Olympia in Paris in early 1942 and, earlier, Marcel Pagnol's *La Fille du Puisatier* (1940) took well over 600,000 Francs during a three-week run at the Pathé Palace in Lyons. Continental Films was the brainchild of the Francophile German Alfred Greven, who received full support from Joseph Goebbels back in the Reich but it had plenty of competition from French production companies such as Pathé and Gaumont.

Of the many stars and directors of the French film industry it might be said that "some strayed while some stayed". Those who left France for the USA or the UK included actors such as Michèle Morgan, Jean Gabin, Claude Dauphin and Françoise Rosay, with directors such as Jean Renoir and Julien Duvivier settling in the US. Top female stars such as Danielle Darrieux and Micheline Presle and directors such as Henri-Georges Clouzot and Marcel Carné stayed in France. Here it should be noted that from 1941, as well as other cruel and onerous restrictions placed on them, Jews were forbidden to work in any part of the French film industry. One notable Jewish actor who managed to get to the USA, with his wife Madeleine Lebeau, was Marcel Dalio, both of whom are remembered for small but memorable roles in *Casablanca*.

Of the 220 films made in France during the Occupation – all subject to strict censorship by the Nazi and/or Free Zone authorities – many stand out as superb examples of work undertaken in very difficult circumstances. These include two directed by Henri-Georges Clouzot; *L'Assassin habite au 21*, *Le Corbeau* (1943) and two by Marcel Carné; *Les Visiteurs du Soir* (1943) and *Les Enfants du Paradis* (1944).

*L'Assassin habite au 21*, a Continental Films production, found Pierre Fresnay as a police superintendent going undercover, disguised as a Protestant clergyman, in a Paris boarding house in order to discover the identity of a serial murderer known simply as "Monsieur Durand". In all this he is joined by Suzy Delair in a very funny role as his girlfriend. The novel on which it was based was set in London but this locale was not deemed appropriate in 1942! Again, for the German-controlled Continental, Clouzot directed *Le Corbeau* in 1943, once more starring Pierre Fresnay. Strangely, its theme of poison pen letters seemed not to have bothered the censors, despite the fact that anonymous denunciations to the German and French authorities were very much a part of everyday life in wartime France. *Le Corbeau* opened at the Normandie cinema on the Champs Élysées in Paris in the Autumn of 1943 and was very well received there and on its general release. For example, one of the largest-selling weeklies of the totally collaborationist official press, *Je Suis Partout* gave it an excellent review, as did the equally collaborationist cultural weekly *Comoedia*. However, after the war the film and Clouzot were given the cold shoulder by the French film industry as it was deemed to have presented the wrong image of France and it took some time for the picture and Clouzot, to be rehabilitated.



Carné's *Les Visiteurs du Soir* (1942), a mediaeval fantasy, starring Arletty, Alain Cuny, Marie Déa and, in a key role as the Devil, Jules Berry, was seemed by some as a cleverly concealed protest against the German occupiers but, after the war, Carné denied this. His *Les Enfants du Paradis* (1945), set in the Paris of the 1830s / 1840s, is often seen as the most important picture made in France during the war, even though it was not released until 1945, after the Liberation, following many production difficulties going back to 1943.

Only one newsreel was shown in each zone, *Actualités Mondiales* in the Occupied Zone – no more than a dubbed version of the official German newsreel *Deutsche Wochenschau* – and *France Actualités* in the Free Zone. This was produced in France but in August 1942 it became the sole newsreel shown in both zones, well before complete Nazi occupation of France in November that year. The glorious, victorious forces of the Reich featured heavily in this as did the Allied bombings of France. However, as the war progressed in the Allies' favour it was found that cinema audiences started to make loud anti-German comments, especially when Hitler appeared on the screen. Applause for the Allies and boos for the Axis were not uncommon and so to counteract this, newsreels were shown with the auditorium lights fully on and audiences were warned that such conduct would lead to arrest and the immediate closure of the cinema. On other occasions the authorities often interrupted performances in crowded cinemas for identity checks, as they looked for those trying to avoid compulsory conscription for war work in Germany, other opponents of the regime and, of course, Jews. This is really where the similarity between wartime picture-going in Britain and France, mentioned at the beginning of this article, ends.

