



CINEMA
THEATRE
ASSOCIATION

www.cta-uk.org

BULLETIN

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July – September 2023



In a 'cull of the Odeons', those at Weston-super-Mare (above; photo taken August 2003) and Banbury (below; photo taken February 2004) are two of five due to close on 5 June: see Newsreel for these towns and also Ayr, Blackpool and Oxford



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM GILES WOODFORDE, Bulletin Production Editor

Following the tragic death of Elaine Harwood (see opposite page), Harry Rigby has offered to take up her role as *Bulletin* features editor. Any copy sent to Elaine at her personal email or postal address, as listed in the last *Bulletin*, will not have been received, and should, please, be resubmitted – details in the adjoining column on this page.

The CTA is most grateful to Harry for coming out of retirement to act as features editor.

Giles Woodforde, Bulletin Production Editor

NEW MEMBERS

Nick Sproxtton, Timothy Tuff, Darren Jhuboo, Tobias Johnston and Bob Ramshaw.

DONATIONS

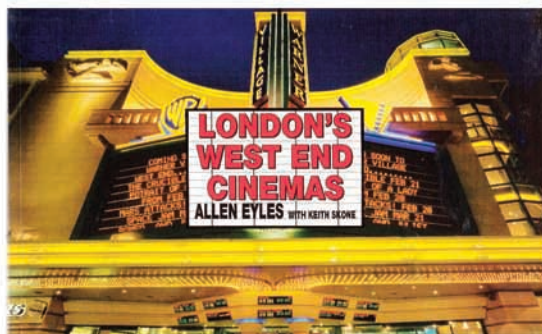
WA Bates, CG Behr, TE Benton, P Beresford, AL Body, DP Brown, ME Burgoine, RD Burke, PJ Chester, SA Christie, MR Cleave, P Cooper, GE Cranch, MR Cunningham, JD Elliott, PJA Ferrari, BJ Fretwell, RK Fuller, GC Gibson, A Goodwin, R P Hagon, P Hamer, CD Harrison, CE Hide, ECW Huggins, HB Jones, SB Kay, DR Keeling, JM Knight, RA Lascaut, RS Laugharne, TDC Laughlan, RC Lobb, AV Mabey, PV Marie, JL May, AE McCann, P Mellor, PG Moules, B Palmer, IJ Patterson, JW Perkins, DP Rees, PJ Roberts, MJ Ryder, JM Seligmann, EH Senat, RW Short, A Smith, CH Smith, BH Snowball, P Springall, M Taylor, RJ Thompson, DR Threadgall, MJ Vickers, DL Walkden, GJ Wheeler, RE Williams, RF Wilson, MJT Yallop and a thank you to the family of the late Leonard Carter for a generous donation.

IN MEMORIAM

John McKillop from Wishaw a member of the CTA since 1976, Geoffrey High from Thetford a member since 1987, Leonard Carter from Bridgwater who joined in 2010, Mark Barlow from Nottingham who recently joined in 2022 and finally CTA committee member Elaine Harwood from Islington who joined the CTA in 1986.

Ray Ritmeester, Membership Secretary

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 show-cases 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.

Published in 2013 in conjunction with English Heritage.
Large Format paperback, 210 pages, over 400 illustrations,
£25.00 plus £3.40 postage, from the Sales Officer.

CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

(Founded January 1967)

promoting serious interest in all aspects of
cinema buildings

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Harry Rigby, Ken Roe.

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BULLETIN: Members are invited to submit items for possible publication to the Bulletin Editors. 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 Editors.

It is assumed that submissions are for publication, unless stated otherwise;

items may be shortened or edited at the discretion of the Editors.

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.



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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE THURSDAY 31 AUGUST

Elain Harwood 1958-2023

The sudden, unexpected death of Elain Harwood has shocked and deeply saddened all who knew her, and there were many. Through her writing, teaching, generosity with her time and in the CTA context, her effervescent presence on trips and at events, she was widely loved and deeply respected. At the time of writing the cause of her death has not been established.

Elain was born in Beeston, the cherished daughter of Maureen and Harold, and showed from an early age a prodigious intellect, determination and fascination with everything from her father's model engineering to architecture. She was fascinated by the design and materials of the Nottingham Playhouse, where she attended children's shows as a Brownie. It was there and then that her interest in modern architecture was probably founded. She was the first member of her family to attend university, offered a place at Oxford but choosing instead to go up to Bristol to read history. Architecture was in her blood and it was in Bristol in 1976 that she and I met, initially through mutual interest in rock music and then through exploring the buildings of Bristol city and its suburbs.

Elain was a lifelong fan of the post-punk Manchester band The Fall (she contributed to a book on the band in 2021) and of indie rock bands more generally. This might not have been widely known by professional friends but it deeply informed her unique character and style. In childhood she was close to her maternal grandparents in Oldham and she described her accent, changeless over her whole life without concession to received pronunciation, as Nottingham seasoned with Oldham. She was immensely proud of her northern roots.

On graduation from Bristol Elain initially sought employment in the very highly competitive museum world, volunteering at the Castle Museum in Nottingham to bolster her CV. It was whilst there that it was suggested to her that she might consider taking the Civil Service exam, which she did without preparation and passed. The Service had no position for her immediately and while waiting for her first posting she moved to London and worked at Record and Tape Exchange in Notting Hill, a honeypot for music fans in the vinyl era. Friends might 'find' rare and sought-after LPs mysteriously marked down in odd places in the racks! Eventually she was summoned, to her considerable dismay, to the local government finance section of the Department of the Environment. Better was to come and in 1984 she found a way into the Historic Buildings Division, which in turn was to become part of the newly constituted English Heritage. One of her first jobs there was to assist Christopher Thacker with the compilation of the Register of Parks and Gardens and then with administration of the grants system for historic garden conservation, a task that took them to Chatsworth and a meeting with the famously parsimonious Duchess of Devonshire. Looking forward to a good lunch they were offered fish fingers as it was "cook's day off"!

Elain had realised at Bristol that her true calling was to architectural history and she won a place on the Masters course in the Conservation of Historic Buildings at the Architectural Association from which she graduated in 1986. In 1992, on the instigation of Baroness Blatch, English Heritage set up its Post-War Listing Steering Group, chaired by Bridget Cherry, which conducted methodical research based on building types using both in-house and external consultants. Elain soon became its lynchpin. Thus established as the organisation's in-house expert Elain's career with English Heritage, re-named Historic England in 2015, culminated with her promotion to Senior Architectural Investigator and a brief that left her free to travel, study and write on her specialist subject: post-war British architecture in which she was pre-eminently THE expert and recognised as such by her employer. Historic England Chief Executive, Duncan Wilson, described her in the organisation's tribute as outstanding in her field, a fierce advocate for twentieth-century architecture and a true heritage champion.

Her research for HE included an authoritative study of the Festival of Britain and development of the South Bank Centre, interviewing surviving members of the architectural teams responsible and seeking out primary documentary sources. This work was crystalised into a PhD thesis and in 2010 she was awarded her doctorate at Bristol University

under the supervision of Professor Tim Mowl, taking particular pride in thereby rebutting the blatant sexism that she felt had blighted her undergraduate studies there thirty years earlier. That work in turn formed a contribution, a mere chapter, to her masterwork 'Space, Hope and Brutalism', a definitive and award-winning account of England's post-war architecture.

Somehow amidst this she found time for TV appearances, notably on the 1990s BBC series *One Foot in the Past*; organising talks, walks and coach trips for the Twentieth Century Society, writing entries and providing editorial advice for the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; making many contributions to the *Guardian* obituaries page, conducting interviews for the 'Architects' Lives' series of the National Life Story Collection on whose selection panel she sat; delivering multiple lectures across the world, and providing the annual coordination and leadership of an intensive twentieth century unit for the Cambridge MSc course in Building History. And, as if this was not enough, she maintained a commitment to running, cycling and teaching Spin.

Elain joined the CTA in 1986 and was invited and then voted onto the Committee in 1987. Her vitally important role in casework will probably not have been noticed by most members as she used the pseudonym Emma Beeston in order to avoid any perception of conflict of interest with her professional position. Her work in the background included extensive advice on cinema listing and conservation cases and, most importantly, her advocacy and support for the Thematic Survey of cinema buildings (1999-2000). The resulting 'Picture Palaces' booklet was largely written by Elain. Under her own name she organised and co-organised several visits, notably to Nottingham and to the mining villages of the Notts coal field.

She was a fearless and thorough site investigator, cycling prodigious distances in all weathers to visit buildings and braving pigeon infestations, rotting floorboards and long ladders in the cause of establishing facts. She scaled the height of the proscenium arch at the long-closed Astoria Brighton to see whether anything survived of the low relief art deco decoration (it did), and Giles Woodforde recalls that Elain was instrumental in getting the Odeon, Magdalen Street, Oxford spot listed, she and he having spent a happy and unforgettable morning prising hardboard panels off walls to check on the original plasterwork underneath (with the active connivance of the then manager). Our list of listed cinema buildings would have been significantly shorter without her interest, commitment and powers of persuasion based on meticulous research.

Elain pursued what amounted almost to parallel careers as an author and tireless worker for the Twentieth Century Society and for the Society of Architectural Historians, for both of which she wrote extensively, lectured and led field trips. She held long associations as a lecturer with the Attingham Summer School and then at Cambridge, and managed to find time to teach spin at her local gym. In 2022 she was elected Honorary Fellow of the RIBA. She worked relentlessly, always with absolute academic rigour. She upheld a fundamental belief in thorough research and possessed a gift for clear, readable writing. She won many friends as a result. In an erudite illustration of her work ethic and the 'ask a busy person' principle, she volunteered to take on the features editing for the newly constituted CTA Bulletin production team following Harry's retirement. Sadly, her contribution will not come to be. Life will be a lot less colourful without her: she will be deeply missed and long-remembered.



Elain with CTA President Tony Moss

David Trevor-Jones

VISITS AND EVENTS

Astoria Finsbury Park

Please check the CTA Website in due course for the date of this visit which will be late July 2023 – organised by: Richard Gray



A return to Finsbury Park, principally to visit the magnificent Astoria, now the UCKG church, which, it has to be said, has maintained the building excellently. This and its sister in Brixton have the best Atmospheric style interiors in Britain and are rightly listed at the Grade II* level. Both were designed by Edward Stone in collaboration with Thomas Somerford and Ewen Barr. At Brixton, dating from 1929, the approach is Italianate but at Finsbury Park, opened a year later, it is Spanish – a ‘Hispano-Mooresque fantasy’, as it has been described.

The amazing thing is that both auditorium schemes sprang forth with scenographic buildings fully realised in three dimensions and completely convincing in conception, as though the architects had experienced the real John Eberson Atmospheric in the USA built during the 1920s – but perhaps they did? The Finsbury Park Astoria is also a planning miracle, with the entrance routes cleverly winding their way from the rotunda foyer to the auditorium, around Victorian terrace housing behind. An additional attraction will be the nearby Picture-House cinema opened in 2021.

Richard Gray

Sorry! House Full

A retrospective Review of the Cinemas of Sydney

An illustrated talk by Ian Hanson

Friday 11 August; The Gallery, 6:30pm (doors open 6pm)

ORGANISED BY KEN ROE

From Sydney, New South Wales, Australia we are honoured to welcome fellow CTA member Ian Hanson as our international guest speaker. He was first contacted by Ken Roe while seeking his help to organise ‘The Cinemas and Theatres of Oz’ CTA visit to Sydney and Melbourne in February – March 2006. 55 CTA members flew Virgin Atlantic to the other side of the planet for three wonderful weeks in the two Australian cities, visiting 28 cinemas in Melbourne (assisted by the late Gerry Kennedy, President of the Cinema and Theatre Historical Society – CATHS based in Melbourne) and 17 cinemas in Sydney (assisted by Ian who was a founder member of the now defunct Australian Cinema and Theatre Society – ACTS based in Sydney) and he is also a member of CATHS.



In recent years Ian has retired as a head projectionist with the Reading Cinemas chain. He first began work as an usher in a Brisbane cinema in 1973. In his retirement he has volunteered his help at the recently restored Heritage Listed, 2,584-seat State Theatre in Sydney for the past twelve years. His other interests include trams, buses, railways, cinema organs and of course cinemas – sounds like a typical CTA member!



Ian has recently written a book with fellow theatre researcher and author Les Tod, *Sorry! House Full – An A-Z Retrospective Review of the Cinemas of Sydney*, published in September 2022. This lavish 224-page book is packed with over 350 photographs, many in full colour and never published before, which will form the basis of Ian’s talk on some of Sydney’s 70+ City centre cinemas.

The presentation is an ideal opportunity for members who attended the 2006 CTA visit to Australia to reminisce again the beautiful cinemas we visited or those who have never had the pleasure of an Oz experience, this will whet your appetite. A limited number of copies of the book will be on sale at the CTA bookstall on the evening.

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

Getting there: On leaving Farringdon (old) Underground station (not the Turnmill Street exit), turn left. If leaving from the new Elizabeth Line station (opposite the old Underground station), turn right. Walk east 150 yards along Cowcross Street towards the ‘Snappy Snaps’ shop. The entrance to the Gallery is opposite; walk through the large gates, across the courtyard to the far end, turn right down the steps and you’re there.

BOOKING YOUR TICKET FOR THE TALK

CTA talks are open to everyone – members and non-members alike. Admission £10 per person including a glass of wine or a soft drink and nibbles

Booking is done on-line using Ticket Source:

www.ticketsource.co.uk. Simply enter ‘Cinema Theatre Association’ into their search box and book for ‘Sorry! House Full’. For members who are unable to book online, please call the visits registration line 020 8800 8393 (answerphone) stating your name and membership number and how many tickets are required. You will be registered to attend and able to pay your £10 (cash only) on the door. Please book early to secure your place.



CTA Wessex presents: Salisbury Day Monday 18 September 2023

ORGANISED BY DAVID EVE

With all the recent screen closures announced, it's nice to be able to announce a visit to a new **Everyman**, opening in an old circuit cinema.

CTA Wessex Salisbury day will take in a visit to the recently opened four screen **Everyman** in the former **ABC** and include an extensive tour of the **Odeon**, former **Gaumont Palace** in the town.

The **Everyman** opened on 4 June and is the 40th venue operated by the company, in a luxury conversion of the former **ABC**, Endless Street, which was for many years operated as a BUZZ bingo club. The best elements of the building have been retained in this cinema which opened as the **Regal** in 1937.

The **Odeon** needs very little introduction for CTA members, being one of the few remaining original **Gaumont Palaces**, opening in 1931 and retaining much originality including the foyer, created out of the Hall of John Halle, circa 1470. The tour will feature access to many areas not open to the public, so will be the kind of adventure the CTA loves.

Given the present-day early screenings, the **Odeon** tour will start at 10.00am and the **Everyman** visit will take place over lunch time when screens are available to view. There should be a chance to get to Salisbury by train on the day, however good value hotel rates should be available on the Sunday night to enjoy a city with lots to offer.

We have limited places available on this trip imposed by the cinemas involved, so booking via the CTA Website is the only option when this goes live by the time you receive your *Bulletin*. There's a small charge for the tours, part of which is donated to the charity MIND.

CTA Wessex are also planning a whole day celebrating the cinemas of **ABC**, sometime towards the end of the year.



Picture: David Eve

Visit to Gravesend and Dartford, Kent Tuesday 3 October

ORGANISED BY MARION KENNETT



CTA members will be heading in a south-easterly direction to two theatres and one former cinema in Kent. We meet at Gravesend Station at 10.45am for our visit to the **Woodville Halls Theatre** at 11am. situated close to the train station where Michael Pearce, Venue Manager has given us an hour's slot in a busy schedule to view the theatre. There is also a small cinema, seating space up to 150, where a public screening begins at 11am but we are assured some viewing time will be available.

If there is time you might like a stroll through the Heritage Quarter to the pier and St Georges Church to see the statue of Pocahontas in the churchyard.

Returning to Gravesend we board the train to Dartford which takes approximately 20 minutes. There are lifts at this station for exiting if the stairs are too difficult.

There are plenty of places for refreshment in Gravesend or Dartford, but you might like to lunch at a CTA popular venue, a Wetherspoons, *The Flying Boat* in Spital Street, Dartford. This is conveniently next door to the former State cinema now a church, where our next visit commences at 2pm.

The former **State** cinema was opened on 23 October 1935 and was equipped with a Compton 3Manual/6Ranks organ with illuminated console. The organ chambers were under the stage. It became part of the Granada chain in April 1949. It closed in late 2014 and is now a net church.



We retrace our steps back towards Dartford station and to **The Orchard Theatre**. This visit has been booked for 3pm. The Orchard Theatre is conveniently located in the heart of Dartford's town centre and attracts the latest and most sought-after touring productions in the UK. A range of entertainment is offered, from leading West End musicals, top comedians, bands, dramas, dance, classical music and opera. And of course, the ever-popular annual pantomimes.

Getting There: There are several means of travel from London including Thameslink, the Elizabeth Line to Abbey Wood to change to a Southeastern train for Gravesend which takes about 30mins or direct from London, Charing Cross to Gravesend via Sidcup which takes just over an hour.

Hope you can join us; the cost is £10 which includes visit notes. Please contact TicketSource: www.ticketsource.co.uk.

Please note: FREEDOM passes stop at Dartford.



PUBLICATIONS

It has been necessary to hold the regular **Publications** page over from this issue of the *Bulletin*.

Full details of the CTA's publications can be found on the website cta-uk.org under the Shops and Publishing headings. They may also be found on p8 of the last issue of the *Bulletin*.

Cinema King by Jennifer King. This book was reviewed in the last *Bulletin*, please note that it is not generally available in bookshops, but can be ordered at: www.thegreatbritishbookshop.co.uk

HERITAGE CASEWORK

by Mike Whitcombe

The CTA Casework Committee are continually involved in securing a positive future for many endangered cinemas, both present and former. Here's a summary of their current work load.

England

Grade II*

STATE GRAYS (1938 Francis Chancellor)



The deterioration of the State cinema's roof continues and this is becoming a major and most serious case as Thurrock Council have still not issued an Urgent Works Notice. Historic England have an architect on the case and we will approach him to determine what can be done. The problem is that Wetherspoon still own the building – the sale of the building has not yet been completed – and they do not want to pay for the holes in the roof to be plugged as this might cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. We have tried to get the case on The Twentieth Century Society's Buildings at Risk register and interest SAVE Britain's heritage. We are obtaining a meeting with Thurrock's Strategic Director of Place and we have also been in contact with Neil Speight, a local journalist who has quoted us extensively in his articles, and who is now a Thurrock Councillor.

GRANDA WOOLWICH, LONDON (1937 Cecil Massey and Reginald Uren with Theodore Komisarjevsky)

An application has been submitted for a bright, jazzy mural on the exterior west wall of the auditorium. Historic England believe it to be acceptable. We have raised no objections.

DREAMLAND MARGATE (1935 Julian Rudolph Leathart and WF Granger with John B Iles)



Sands Heritage Ltd have purchased the building from Thanet Council. We had a zoom meeting with Sands Heritage Ltd who wrote back to say that in December 2022 they secured £4million from the Town Deal initiative which will be used to refurbish the cinema in due course. They

have temporarily retained the film sets from 'Empire of Light' which was filmed there and will discuss the future of the building with us in time.

Grade II

ROYALTY HARBORNE, BIRMINGHAM (1930 Horace G Bradley)

In January 2023 we visited the site and met with a local campaigner. The wreckage of the auditorium, following the fire, had still not been cleared. We are writing to the council about an application for a car wash in the rear car park, which we feel is not a good idea.

RITZ ILKESTON (1938 Reginald Cooper)

We recently loosely supported an application for conversion to a pub with certain conditions. Erewash Council, however, refused permission on the advice of the Conservation Officer.

REGAL KINGSTON, LONDON (1932 Robert Cromie)

CNM Estates have sold the building to Jericho Estates, represented by Kevin Davies. And we have been invited to attend a site visit.

CURZON MAYFAIR, LONDON (1966 Horace Hammond)



The new Russian owners are proposing to reinstate the cafe/restaurant to form part of the actual cinema. They also want to restore the ticket kiosk and retain the original entrance doors. We attended the owners' presentation and they now want to know what we think about the possible restoration of the cafe/restaurant. We have responded by saying we need further discussions. We will also approach Westminster Council's Conservation Officer to ask what he feels about the proposal.

GRAND CASINO SOUTHPORT (1938 George E Tonge)

The Russian owners who own much of Southport's Lord Street have gone ahead with alterations before obtaining Listed Building Consent. We have written to protest this as it was unauthorised works.

GRAND WESTBOURNE BOURNEMOUTH (1922 Harry E Hawker)

There is interest in leasing this building but not for cinema use. We are to approach a couple of cinema operators to see if they would be interested in returning it to cinema use.

VICTORIA SALFORD, MANCHESTER (1900 Bertie Crewe)

We have given written support to The Theatres Trust in their bid for an application for a listing upgrade from Grade II to Grade II*

RITZ NUNEATON (1937 Samuel Beverley)

Quotations are being prepared for a roof replacement and it is feared that the cheapest solution possible will be used and not materials in keeping with the Grade II listing status.

Not Listed

ODEON ASHFORD (1936 Andrew Mather)

Ashford Council, who purchased the building in 2018, are still pushing ahead with proposals to demolish the auditorium as part of a scheme for the development of a nearby car park. The council's main objective is to open up views of a medieval church and their Conservation Area Appraisal is fixated on medieval rather than 20th-century architecture. The architects are MICA and the development is called St Mary's Fields. We believe we need to focus on a new listing application.

REGENT BOURNEMOUTH (1929 William Edward Trent with Seal and Harding)

The building is on the market for £2 million with planning permission for conversion to flats. We are hoping that internal features may be salvaged.

BROADWAY FILWOOD PARK, BRISTOL (1938 Dennis Hurford and Roy Chamberlain)

The council own the building and gave themselves permission to demolish it. Redevelopment for residential use has been approved by BCC.

CENTRAL CAMBRIDGE (1930 GP Banyard)

The building is in the middle of Cambridge Conservation Area and the facade is in good condition. We have sent our views to a pre-application consultation and will write to the Conservation Officer asking if the interior relief sculptures can be salvaged.

GAUMONT PALACE CHESTER (1931 William T Benslyn)

This cinema with a faux timber-framed frontage was in use as bingo but has now closed. We have written to Chester's Conservation Officer flagging up three good features: the facade, the restaurant and the right-hand elevation. We received a favourable response.

REGAL COLCHESTER (1931 Cecil Massey)

We previously declared we wanted the foyer block to be preserved and the local council supported our views. The new developers have shown us a presentation of their new sheltered housing scheme which includes retention of the street facade and we have written to them supporting their scheme.

ODEON HALIFAX (1938 George Coles)

In a letter from the Conservation officer replying to our concerns about this cinema, we were told that this disused cinema is in a conservation area and there are no current proposals. We will continue to monitor the situation.

DOMINION HARROW, LONDON (1936 Frank Ernest Bromige)

The facade is now connected to the new residential building but some windows may end up as replicas and details of the facade are missing.

CLIFTON LEOMINSTER (1936 Ernest Roberts)

In the Conservation Area Appraisal, the Clifton gets a good write-up and we are urging for its protection. It was recently placed on the market for £480,000.

SAVOY HAYES, LONDON (1939 George Coles)

The building closed as a bingo hall on 26 February 2023 and is locally listed. Scaffolding currently cloaks the facade. We will contact Hillingdon's Conservation Officer to keep an eye on the building.

REX STRATFORD, LONDON (1934 remodelling by George Coles)

The cinema was being used as a trampoline centre but that closed in autumn 2022. We believe Newham Council are the owners and might wish to sell it.

KENSINGTON KINEMA/ODEON KENSINGTON, LONDON (1926 Julian Leathart & William Granger)

We have had a meeting with campaigners and are going to meet the Conservation Officer to ensure future work is carried out properly.

SAVOY/CORONET HOLLOWAY, LONDON (1940 William Riddell Glen)

The freehold of the building has been put up for sale by Wetherspoon. We feel it should be locally listed and will write to the Conservation Officer and the local Civic Society.

ODEON MORECAMBE (1937 William Calder Robson for Harry Weedon)

We are writing to the Conservation Officer to suggest local listing.

RITZ RUSHDEN (1936 Paul Panton for Talbot, Brown and Fisher)

On the market for £650k, it still remains intact, including projection room, stage and its equipment. A 'Save the Ritz' campaign has been initiated by local residents.

SANDONIA STAFFORD (1920 Henry Thomas Sandy)

We have formally objected to a new application to demolish the building. The local conservation officer, The Twentieth Century Society, SAVE and a local campaigner have all supported us. The cornice on the front has gone and we have contacted the Council's Enforcement team about this.

SCALA WORCESTER (1922)

We are supporting a good scheme to convert the building to a theatre.

ODEON WESTON-SUPER-MARE (1935 Thomas Cecil Howitt)

We are contacting a local Conservation Officer in regard to the fact that the cinema is being closed by Odeon on 5 June 2023. It is the last Odeon apart from Leicester Square to retain its organ.

WALES

Grade II

PALACE CONWY (1936 Sydney Colwyn Foulkes)

We are in contact with Parker Leisure, the owners, who reported some interest in the building. We are still hoping to meet the owners to discuss matters.

ODEON LLANELLI (1938, PJ Price for Harry Weedon)

We are trying to meet the owner, who is hoping to run events at the cinema to raise funds to help restore the building. Several grant applications are pending.

PALACE SWANSEA (1888 Bucknall & Jennings – is use as a cinema for many years)

The building is still covered in scaffolding and breathable white sheeting but the refurbishment has been delayed for six months to allow the interior to dry out.

Past and present cinemas around the country are always under threat. The CTA Casework team are always happy to help another cinema from disappearing forever and your help could be vital in doing just that. If any member learns of a threat to a cinema, please let the Casework Committee know. You might just save a cinema for future generations.

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.

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.

VOLUNTEER HELP REQUIRED

The Archive stores tens of thousands of images and documents electronically using a cloud storage system called OneDrive. With the digitisation of photographs in full swing, it is proving increasingly hard to keep up with the 'electronic filing' and we are seeking a home-based volunteer to provide some administrative support. Files are stored in folders by each cinema, within a folder for each place in the UK. The task is to simply move files to their appropriate folders, or if no folder exists, to create one. Anyone familiar with moving documents around on a computer, OneDrive, or similar cloud storage system and has some spare time to help out, we would like to hear from you.

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.

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. 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.

ARCHIVE TWITTER

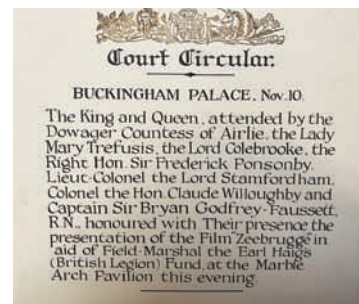
You may be interested to know that the Archive regularly posts messages, often including photographs, on its Twitter account – [@CTA_Archive](https://twitter.com/CTA_Archive). Please feel free to follow us if you use Twitter, alternatively you can view these messages via the link on our website or by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

UNIDENTIFIED CELEBRITY PHOTOGRAPHS

I am grateful to the members, Terry Hanstock and Gareth Snowden-Davies who identified that the star holding the baby (page 29, January-March 2023 CTA Bulletin) was Norman Wooland. No one was able to identify the female star in the other photograph.

ROYAL FILM PERFORMANCE

David Evans article (back page, January-March 2023 CTA Bulletin), mentions the screening of *Zebrugge* at the Marble Arch Pavilion in 1924, perhaps the first ever Royal film performance. The Archive is fortunate to hold a scrapbook created for the occasion, beautifully leather bound,



donated by Mrs. Anne Lewis, daughter of Alfred David. The album contains a copy of the court circular and a number of photographs showing King George V and Queen Mary in the foyer of the cinema meeting guests. The album is then filled with numerous newspaper cuttings from not just this country but around the world, reporting on the event.



The King meeting Earl Beatty and Queen Mary talking with Mrs I. Davis and Capt. Alfred Davis

The Archive also holds a substantial collection of Royal Film Performance programmes, with a few exceptions, if you have any you would be willing to donate, please send us a list so we can see if they are the years required. A good selection of photographs of members of the Royal Family, most commonly taken at Royal Film Performances are also to be found in the Archive, including this image of Her Majesty The Queen greeting Lord Rank.



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; if you do not have Internet access call 07971 752807.

Clive Polden, CTA Archivist

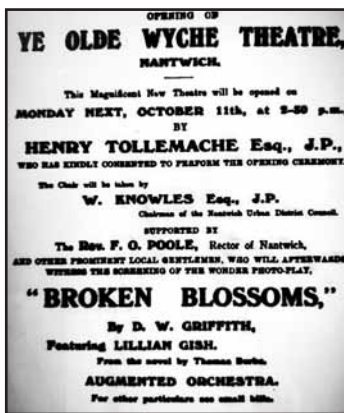
LONG GONE CINEMA OF NANTWICH

By David A Ellis and Bryan Lindop.

The small town of Nantwich, near Crewe was home to two cinemas, the Cosy and the Regal, which had been the Olde Wyche Cinema. They belonged to a Thomas E Markham. He also operated the Palladium in Whitchurch and the Hippodrome in Market Drayton. In July 1942 all four were taken over by Southan Morris Super Cinemas Ltd.

The first cinema in Nantwich was the New Picturedrome, opening in 1912. Stage shows were also on the menu, many advertised in *The Stage* newspaper. The Picturedrome was a conversion of the Ebenezer chapel and later became the Cosy cinema. The Picturedrome exited in 1919.

Before being run by Mr Markham, the Cosy was under the ownership of Norton's Cinemas & Theatres Ltd run by Ernest Parkinson Norton. He bought the Picturedrome for £1,300 and updated it.



The first cinema to open after the Picturedrome's closure was the Olde Wyche Theatre, Churchyard Side opening its doors on 11 October 1920. It was opened by Mr Henry Tollemache, a conservative politician 1846-1939.

It was designed by a Mr NH Hacking of Manchester and cost between nine and ten thousand pounds to build. It boasted a brick turreted tower on the corner entrance and seating was for around 1,400. There were Tudor-style gables along the side walls. The proscenium was twenty-five feet wide and the small stage was used for live entertainment. The building also housed a substantial café on the first floor. The theatre had six main exits and five emergency exits. It was claimed that the building could be cleared in over a minute. The decoration in the theatre was in Wedgwood colours. There was also decorative plaster work creating the atmospheric look. Power to the theatre was originally supplied by a diesel generator.

The first film presentation was the famous classic *Broken Blossoms* by DW Griffiths, starring Lillian Gish. In 1930 sound was installed. It was first equipped with British Thomson Houston (BTH) equipment, the company based in Rugby. Later, the popular Western Electric sound system was employed. Cinemascope arrived on 8 August 1955 with *Three Coins in the Fountain* Mon, Tues & Wed and *King of the Khyber Rifles*, Thurs, Fri & Sat.

When silent films were screened, a piano only was used for afternoon performances and a piano and violin for evening performances.

After the 1942 take over by Southan Morris, the Old Wyche became just the Wyche. From 19 October 1942 it became the Regal. The first film shown as that name was *Uncensored*, an exciting war drama starring Eric Portman and Phyllis Calvert. The last films under the Wyche name were, Mon, Tues & Wed *The Spoilers*, starring Marlene Dietrich, Randolph Scott and John Wayne with *Meet John Doe* on Thurs, Fri & Sat starring Gary Cooper.



The front of the Olde Wyche Theatre

In 1954 the Regal became part of the SM Associated group, the Essoldo circuit having acquired control of the Southan Morris circuit. The Regal carried on until 17 September 1966, closing with the film *Born Free*. The last person to manage the theatre was Mrs Dorothy Myford. It seems management at the theatre was mostly undertaken by a woman, previous managers being Mrs Lyon and Mrs Madge Careful. Mrs Myford had been a cashier and had been manager for eight years. Up in the operating box to screen the final show was chief operator Derek Jackson. He had worked part time at the cinema for a number of years. By day he was a dairyman.



After closure and a period of standing empty, the building became the head office of well-known local bakery firm Chatwins, with a new bakery being eventually built alongside. The rear of the auditorium was partly demolished to make way for parking the delivery vans but the shell remains.



The Cosy in Castle Street opened on 23 December 1920. As stated above it had originally been the Ebenezer Free Methodist chapel, which was built in 1857. It had also been a warehouse. In October 1938 the cinema had a make-over. It was stated that the interior was completely re-formed, with replacements from balcony to stage. The object was to make the Cosy a comfortable bright and up-to-date cinema. The walls were stripped and re-papered with cream and gold, which harmonised with new panelling. Spring seating accommodation was provided for 400, the covering of the seats being crush pink velvet. There was an extended new stage with a 16-foot proscenium. The projection room was removed from the back of the balcony to the ground floor. A new scheme of lighting was also introduced, being placed in the ceiling.



The rear and front of the Cosy

In the 1940s it was known as the Cosy Deluxe. The last film was *Yankee Fakir*, screened from Thursday 30 March 1950 for three days.

It is stated that the Cosy was also taken over by Essoldo in 1954, so it is possible Essoldo held on to the empty building before interest was shown in converting it into a night spot.

The building was left empty for many years. The building is still there and for a number of years was known as the Birdcage club and casino, which opened on Friday 18 March 1966 with Freddie and the Dreamers. It went on to become Roosters and Gregory's. Today it is the Studio Nightclub and Entertainment Venue.

Photos by Brian Lindop

THE (1970) GOOD CINEMA GUIDE

No 37 – Odeon Shepherd's Bush

By Ben Doman



Exterior of the Odeon around 1971 showing *Up Pompeii*. The 'O' of Essoldo can just be seen on the building to the left of the photograph. CTA Archive, Rank collection.

In June 1970 Neill Ross visited West London. "On Shepherd's Bush Green there's a David and Goliath situation nicely set up; representing the giants is the Odeon and in the red corner – or to be more precise, right next door – the Essoldo [Palladium / Essoldo / Classic / Odeon 2]." Choosing the mighty Odeon, Mr Ross continues, "The giant, of course, has had a recent complete overhaul to its armoury; the renovated Odeon was opened very recently and it's certainly very impressive indeed. The huge old frame belies the very modern interior." The Pavilion had opened in 1923, with an Italian renaissance interior and a Compton Theatre organ. Gaumont took over shortly after. The auditorium was badly damaged by enemy action in 1944 and was rebuilt in a plainer style, reopening in 1955. Renamed Odeon in 1969, the building was closed, with the circle extended forward to create a new auditorium and bingo hall in the former stalls, opening in March 1970.



Exterior of the Odeon, showing John Wayne in *Brannigan*, around 1975, with the Essoldo next door now known as Odeon 2, as it was known from 1973 to its closure in 1981. CTA archive, Raymond Webb.

"Of course, the escalator really scores as a novelty; you go in the main door and straight up the moving stairs and into a delightfully large and spacious foyer... The escalator brings you up into the centre of the foyer, which is decorated with an attractive orange carpet. Along the walls are seats and couches, with some set back and apart rather like a small private alcove. It is an airy, bright place; it's good to be there."



Odeon new auditorium in the old circle area from 1970. *Kine Weekly Special*, 29 August 1970.

Inside the auditorium, the newly fitted seats were noted as comfortable, with padded arm rests and with a reasonable amount of legroom. The distance between the front row and screen was noted, that one wouldn't get eye strain even sitting in the cheaper front seats. "The auditorium itself, like the foyer outside, is spacious; the lack of the old-style circle with balcony makes for a cleaner, more modern appearance. The usual Rank style star lights still twinkle from the ceiling." The overall decoration of the cinema was in brown, orange yellow ochre. The cinema was clean and the staff prompt and helpful. Surprisingly, no bar was evident but a combined ticket desk and kiosk had a wide selection sweets, ices and hot dogs.

The Odeon was given grade II listed status in 1974 and closed in 1983. The bingo continued until 2001 and, after a brief spell as a concert venue, the auditorium was demolished for a hotel, retaining the façade.

The cinema was given a score of 34 out of 40 in the article in *Today's Cinema* – 30 June 1970.

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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 Treasurer, 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

FOR SALE: Digital Plus projection unit complete with amplifier, DVD player and 12" speaker in case, with all leads – demonstration, collect, Southampton. £150.

Mr JJ McWilliams, 19 Warren Close, Shirley Warren, Southampton, SO16 6BJ. Tel: 023 8077 8104

MISCELLANY

BOX OFFICE 'TAKEAWAY'

The original art deco box office from the **Regal**, Stowmarket, rescued as part of the re-development works undertaken by its owners, Stowmarket Town Council, has been auctioned off. First installed in 1936, it has a white upper fascia and all the original parts to create a working box office. Estimated at £80 to £120, it appears to have sold for £150.

*East Anglian Daily Times – 13 April;
sent in by Terry Hanstock*

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR

Staff and patrons at the **Kenai Cinemas** in Kenai, south-west of Anchorage, Alaska, were stunned when a moose wandered into the foyer and made for the concession stand. After devouring a large bowl of popcorn it left: perhaps there was nothing 'a-moose-ing' on screen to tempt it that day!

*Metro – 27 April;
sent in by Tom Laughlin*

FILM FAIRS GALORE!

The Royal National Hotel, Bloomsbury, London, is to host Comic Marts (which include DVDs and other film material) on 6 August, 24 September and 3 December (full details at londoncomicmart.com) and also the latest, wider-ranging, London Film Fair (londonfilmconvention.co.uk) on 17 September.

Advertising leaflets sent in by Tom Laughlin

A NEW USE FOR OLD

Based near Chelmsford, upholstery company Unseen Icons was founded by Kerry Rutter in 2017. Having always loved all things vintage, she spotted some 'traditional' cinema seats at a collectors' fair and, on a "total whim", bought them. She posted pictures on Instagram, received a favourable reaction, and has been re-upholstering and re-posing such seats ever since. Most of them are personalised to each customer's specification, and they receive an information sheet with a history of the cinema their seat(s) came from; however, for the slightly more budget-conscious, 'ready to go' single seats are available, starting at £1,035. See their gallery at unseenicons.com/collections/vintage-cinema-seats.

Eastern Daily Press – 31 March

WHEN IN SAXMUNDHAM...

...A must-see destination for CTA members is Saxmundham Museum. This has an area dedicated to the 'Golden Age' of cinema, specifically commemorating the town's former **Playhouse**. That closed way back in 1962, but has been 'recreated' at the museum, and is the centrepiece of a display that includes a projector from that cinema, art deco fittings, an immaculately dressed 'usherette' selling ice creams, and other memorabilia. Vintage film plays throughout the day, and the 'mini-cinema' (it has just 12 seats) can be hired for private screenings. The museum is open from April to September, but not full-time. Check times at saxmundhammuseum.org.uk.

Great British Life – 4 May; sent in by Terry Hanstock

A BETTER BAFTA

"Benedetti Architects' comprehensive refurbishment and extension of the BAFTA headquarters is as ambitious as it is well executed. The team has taken a tired building in London's Piccadilly and created a world-class headquarters befitting its client." So says the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), which has honoured their work with the West London Regional Award 2023. "Cleverly retaining and lifting the roof structure by a modest amount, within the Grade II-listed structure, enabled the insertion of two world-class cinemas, an events space, a youth gallery and training facilities, while also opening up a top-lit double-height space to bring daylight deep into the building. This additionally opened up the rear of the building to capture splendid views across the Piccadilly skyline."

The RIBA Journal – 12 May



CINEMA BUSINESS

SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENT FILM

The BFI has announced its new National Lottery Filmmaking Fund. £36.6m will be available for fiction features, while £17.4m will go to supporting documentaries, shorts, talent development and related activities.

Televisual – 21 March

A RETHINK AT CINEWORLD

Cineworld has said it will raise new funding as it dropped plans to sell its businesses in the US, UK and Ireland after failing to find a buyer. The troubled circuit saw its share price fall by nearly 30% after the announcement but, at the same time, said it had struck a deal with its lenders to restructure its substantial debt and exit bankruptcy. Cineworld, the world's second-largest cinema chain, filed for bankruptcy in the US last year as it struggled under the weight of \$5bn (£4bn) in debt. The company, which employs more than 28,000 people across 740 sites globally, said it now plans to raise \$2.26bn of new funding. Meanwhile the sale of its businesses in eastern Europe and Israel has been abandoned as the bids it received were deemed to be too low.

*BBC News – 3 April
and, sent in by Tom Laughlin: Evening Standard – 3 April,
Daily Record – 4 April, The i – 12 and 19 April*

CINEMA IS BACK!

This was the message from CinemaCon, the annual convention for cinema owners, held in Las Vegas. As the studios previewed their forthcoming releases for 2023 many, including Warner Bros. Discovery boss David Zaslav, said they were committed to releasing films in cinemas before the streaming services.

*The i – 28 April;
sent in by Tom Laughlin*

SMILE: YOU'RE ON CAMERA!

Trafalgar Theatres are considering fitting staff with bodycams, in an attempt to tame bad audience behaviour. They highlighted a recent show in Manchester, during which police were called when some patrons refused to stop singing along.

*Evening Standard – 20 April;
sent in by Tom Laughlin*

A FAREWELL TO DVDs

Netflix has decided to "wind down" its DVD rental business after 25 years. Boss Ted Sarandos said this ever more 'old-school' service has "become increasingly difficult" as its customer base shrinks. The final discs will be posted out on 29 September.

*Evening Standard – 19 April and Metro – 20 April;
sent in by Tom Laughlin*

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS WITH EVERYMAN

The boutique circuit has announced increased ticket sales and a return to profit. Admissions surged to 3.4m last year, up from 2m in 2021, while an operating profit of £402,000 overturned a loss of £2.2m. It opened cinemas in Edinburgh and Egham last year, and is set to open six more – in Durham, Salisbury, Northallerton, Plymouth, Marlow and Bury St. Edmunds - this year. Six further cinemas are promised for each of the next two years.

Evening Standard – 12 April

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

www.theppt.org

NEWSREEL

The 'Newsreel', 'Cinema Business' and 'Miscellany' sections are compiled by Assistant Archivist David Simpson. Contributions from members are welcomed, and should be sent to David at david.simpson399@btinternet.com or by post at 399 Woodgrange Drive, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3DY.

Although the 'Newsreel' items have been checked by Allen Eyles, errors of reporting can occur. So corrections – and/or updates – are also welcomed.

Photos courtesy of Harry Rigby, unless otherwise credited.

ALFRETON (Derbyshire)

Essex based Cinegogh Ltd has submitted plans to convert a dance hall at the Alfreton Genesis Enterprise and Business Centre into a three-screen cinema. If approved, the cinema would have 178 seats, divided into 25, 99 and 54-seat auditoriums.

Derbyshire Times – 30 March; sent in by Terry Hanstock

AYR



The Odeon was due to close on 5 June, having been deemed “no longer viable”. This was to be one of a number of Odeon closures that day: see also Banbury, Blackpool, Oxford and Weston-super-Mare. The cinema opened in 1938, its facade dominated by a large tower. It was tripled in 1987; a fourth screen was added in 1992.

Daily Record – 5 May; *STV News* – 6 May; photo taken July 2009

Meanwhile, a key figure behind plans to bring an 8-screen multiplex to Ayr says he can't guarantee building work will start this year - as had been expected. Concerns have been raised over the lack of 'tangible evidence' of the redevelopment at the former Kyle Shopping Centre since the multi-million pound scheme was first announced in February 2021. Arc Cinemas have signed a long-term lease to become the 'leisure anchor' at the High Street development.

Ayrshire Live – 1 February

BACUP (Lancashire)



The former Regal is set to be demolished, after plans to give it a new lease of life have failed to come to fruition. The cinema opened in 1931, and moved over to bingo in the late 1960s. That closed in the early 2000s and the building has remained empty ever since. In 2020 Rossendale Borough Council revealed it was one of 22 buildings set to be renovated after a successful bid of more than £1m for funding from the government's High Street Heritage Action Zone scheme. However, structural investigations concluded the building was beyond repair, and Peter Boys, of Waterfoot construction firm B&E Boys, has submitted a planning application to replace it with five modern commercial units, to be named Bacup Technology Hub.

Lancs Live – 24 April; sent in by Philip Crompton; photo taken July 2007

BANBURY (Oxfordshire)

The Odeon was due to close on 5 June, with the company saying it has been “forced to make this very difficult decision”, although they did add that it's “no longer viable”. Presumably the opening of the Light multiplex across the town, in Castle Quay, in June 2022, didn't exactly help. The Regal had opened in 1940. By 1946 it had been acquired by S. M. Super Cinemas then, in 1954, by Essoldo, and was renamed accordingly. From 1972 it became the Classic, and it was twinned in 1973. It became the Cannon in 1986 and ABC in 1996, before being acquired by Odeon in 2001. Its closure sees the county losing two Odeons in one day: see also the entry for Oxford.

Oxford Mail – 11 May; sent in by Giles Woodforde

BECCLES (Norfolk)



Prezzo has announced its restaurant in Beccles is to close, after the company has been hit hard by soaring energy and food costs. It is among 46 branches that are due to close, primarily at sites where “the post-Covid recovery has proved harder than we had hoped”. This will leave the hospitality chain with 97 restaurants, but comes only two years after the group closed 22 restaurants. Their restaurant in Beccles operated as the Cinema from 1914 to 1960 and had then been a furniture showroom. Although rather blandly named, the ‘CINEMA’ signage was (and still is) very impressive.

Greatest Hits Radio – 25 April; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken May 2004

BIRMINGHAM (Digbeth)

News has only just reached us that a second screen opened at the Mockingbird Cinema & Kitchen on Friday 6 May 2022. This seats 30, and was financed by a very successful crowd-funding campaign, which raised the £4,160 cost in just a few weeks.

Submitted by David Simpson

BLACKPOOL (Lancashire)

In with the new, and out with the (relatively) old: The Backlot Cinema is taking shape as the anchor tenant of the Phase 2 extension to the town centre's Houndhill Shopping complex. This nine-screen multiplex will have a total of 850 luxury seats, and include an IMAX auditorium. By complete contrast, the Odeon multiplex, which (only) opened in 1998, was set to close on 5 June, following the termination of its lease.

Planning permission was granted last year to convert the building into a family entertainment centre.

Visit Fylde Coast – 30 April; The Gazette – 6 May

BLYTH (Northumberland)

Northumberland County Council has given the green light to the Culture Hub and Market Place project as part of the Energising Blyth plans. Funded by the Council and the Government's Future High Street Fund, **Jam Jar Cinema** will be the main operator of the new flagship building, which will house a 3-screen cinema, creative and developmental play offer, café, and spaces for a range of events including live music, comedy, drama, dance and celebrations. The Market Place will also be significantly improved, adding more green space. The planning application is due to be considered in June; all being well, a winter 2024 opening is being forecast. **Jam Jar Cinema** founder Dan Ellis received a British Empire Medal for services to cinema earlier this year, having founded the popular Whitley Bay venue back in 2013.

Chronicle Live – 9 May

BOURNEMOUTH (Dorset)

Plans to convert the former **Regent/Gaumont/Odeon**, Westover Road, into flats, with additional floors added to the top of the building, have been described by Bournemouth Civic Society as being "top heavy and visually discordant". Libra Homes has submitted the detailed proposals, and outline approval was granted back in 2020 after two previous schemes failed. The society has suggested that one storey should be removed and also suggested changes to the window designs on the upper floors to mitigate the "jarring impact of the austere modernist design on the neo-classical structure below". The cinema opened as the **Regent** in 1929, before being renamed **Gaumont** in 1949. It became the **Odeon** in 1986, and closed in 2017.

Daily Echo – 4 April; sent in by Terry Hanstock

BRENTWOOD (Essex)

Brentwood Borough Council's planning committee has approved plans to develop the Baytree Centre into an upmarket cinema and retail destination. This would include a four-screen Everyman-style 'boutique' cinema and new restaurants and bars. This is designed to emulate the success of the Bond Street development in Chelmsford - in which an **Everyman** cinema opened in December 2016.

Romford Recorder – 24 March

BRISTOL

The **IMAX**, on the harbourside, which opened in 2000 but closed to regular public film shows in 2007, is slowly coming back to life. Last year, the Forbidden Worlds Film Festival was held there and, building on that success, this year's festival was also presented there, from 18 to 21 May. It is hoped that further screenings, including premieres, will take place during the year – and that, far from being put off by the grubby carpets and general air of neglect, audiences will embrace its 'time warp' charm!

B24/7 – 27 April



Demolition of the former **Broadway**, Filwood Park/Knowle West, has finally begun. A campaign had been launched to try to save the building (see Bulletin 57/2 p19) but planning permission for demolition had been granted back in 2019, and the campaigners were told it was now just a question of what would be built on the site. For the record, this is to be a crescent of 17 flats and 13 houses, with commercial space on the ground floor.

Bristol Live – 30 March; photo taken March 2021

Save Redfield Cinema group organisers told a meeting on 13 January they are preparing a new bid to secure asset of community value (ACV) status for the former **St George's Hall Picture Palace**, which contains a 110-year-old auditorium. Latterly the **Granada**, the cinema closed way back in 1961. After some 30 years on bingo, the foyer area became a Wetherspoon pub in 1998, while the auditorium was used for storage. Following the pub's closure in 2021, the building was acquired by a local developer, Landrose, which has submitted an application for conversion into a 44-bed house of multiple occupancy. The campaign group did manage to secure an ACV in late 2021, but Landrose had this overturned on a technicality.

The Bristol Cable – 16 January

BROUGHTY FERRY (Angus)



Demolition of the former **Regal** has marked the end of an era. It followed inspections that found that the building was unsafe and a risk to the public. It has been closed since last October, with the garage that occupied it being forced to vacate. That business had applied for permission to pull down the whole of the C-listed building, but their plans had been refused by Dundee City Council after Historic Environment Scotland (HES) objected. A spokesperson for the public body said at the time that further consideration was needed around options to retain the listed building. But HES subsequently withdrew its objections. When it opened in 1870 the building was used as a drill hall by the First Forfarshire Artillery Volunteers. The Arbroath Cinema Company took it over and re-opened it as the **Regal** in 1936, with a new entrance foyer and a circle being added. Bingo was introduced from 1978, initially on a part-time basis, but later full-time, before that closed in 1991. The property was taken over by the West End Honda Garage as a showroom from the mid-1990s.

The Courier – 20 April; photo taken September 2006

BURY ST EDMUNDS (Suffolk)

In good news for those who like a tipple (or two!) with their films, West Suffolk Council has licenced the new **Everyman**, at Charter Square, from 8am to midnight on Sundays to Thursdays, and until 1am on Fridays and Saturdays. Plans for the conversion of the former Debenhams store, which closed in May 2021, were approved in August last year. Everyman Media hopes to open the cinema by the end of the year.

East Anglian Daily News and Suffolk News – 11 April; sent in by Terry Hanstock

CAMBRIDGE

Hopes of turning the former Mill Road Library into a cinema and arts centre have been dashed. The proposal was one of eight put forward, but the council decided the building will go to an unnamed children's charity. That had provided "a very professional business case with clear financing", according to the council, although Matthew Webb, a director of the Cambridge Film Festival, said that more than 700 local residents had written in support of their plan, which also had the backing of Anglia Ruskin and Cambridge University - and the mayor.

Cambridge News – 6 April

The former **Central** could be re-developed into mixed-use, with offices and community space. The building has been empty since 2009, after plans for it to be turned into a nightclub were rejected. Proposals to

demolish it, and rebuild across the site, which includes the unused 16-17 and 18-19 Sidney Street, are currently open for consultation.



Cambridge Independent – 12 April; photo taken August 2004

CANVEY ISLAND (Essex)

Bosses at the Rio Bingo Hall have confirmed to the local press that the business has been sold, but were unable to provide any further details. Opened around 1937, the independently operated **Rio** cinema originally had seating for 1,000, but that had been substantially reduced, to 588, by 1954. It closed in June 1976 and was converted into the Canvey Social Club. The Rio Bingo Hall was visited by the CTA in July 2001.

Echo – 12 May

COLCHESTER (Essex)

“Significant progress” is being made on the £65m Northern Gateway Leisure Park, which got underway in March last year. The development will be home to a Travelodge hotel, Hollywood Bowl, Puttstars indoor golf centre – and a 12-screen **Cineworld** (for which an unspecified contingency plan is in place, bearing in mind the circuit’s fraught financial position). Covering 200,000sq ft, the development is expected to be completed by the autumn.

Daily Gazette – 31 March; Essex County Standard – 7 April

CRIEF (Perth and Kinross)

Councillors on the region’s Local Review Body have unanimously overturned Perth and Kinross Council’s planning department’s rejection of the proposed Leadenflower Cinema and Community Radio Hub. The plan is to demolish the former Crief Hotel, on East High Street, and replace it with a two-screen cinema, a radio hub for Radio Earn, a courtyard, bookshop and bistro. The application had been refused as the site is within Crief Conservation Area and it was deemed that the development “would have an adverse impact on the character and visual amenity of the site”. However, the Review Body said that buildings opposite the site are of a modern design, the hotel building (which dates back to 1901) is in a very dilapidated state, and the scheme will bring considerable economic benefits.

Strathern Herald – 16 March

DARLINGTON

Darlington council has received a planning application to demolish the former **Scala** and replace it with 12 affordable homes. The **Eldon Street Picture Hall** opened in 1913. It was soon re-named the **People’s Palace**, before becoming the **Scala** in 1920. The cinema closed in 1962 then moved over to bingo, which finally ceased in 2014.



Northern Echo – 5 April; photo taken September 2006

DUNFERMLINE (Fife)

Plans by the Dunfermline Cinema Project to open a community cinema in the **Alhambra Theatre** have been dashed by the pandemic and a consequential lack of funding. Ironically, a possible re-opening of the former **Cinema House/Robins**, suggested by the Dunfermline Regeneration Trust, had been shelved when the Cinema Project was launched.

Dunfermline Press – 30 March

An IMAX screen is set to be launched at the **Odeon** in June. It will have 150 ODEON Luxe recliner seats, with triple the legroom of a standard seat. Swindon Interiors were awarded the contract to convert one of the existing auditoriums.

Fife Times – 29 April

EDINBURGH

The SNP group on the city council had called for the **Filmhouse**, which closed last October, to remain “the home of cultural cinema in the city”. The party intervened days after it emerged that a pub company had abandoned its bid to acquire the site. However, the B-listed building was subsequently sold for £2.65m. The administrators would not confirm the identity of the new owners, but press reports say it is pub operator Caledonian Heritable. Apparently, their offer was £1m more than what was being put forward by “cultural bidders”.

Edinburgh News – 20 March; BBC News – 21 April

The **Odeon**, Clerk Street, that closed 20 years ago, could be given a new lease of life, as locals spotted fencing going up and workers entering the vacant building. Nightclub mogul Stefan King’s G1 Group (now Scotsman Group) purchased the site in 2015 and received permission 12 months later from the City of Edinburgh Council to transform the building into a film theatre, café and bar. Since then there has been little activity, but notices have appeared saying that parking restrictions will apply to the west side of Clerk Street “to facilitate safe access for nearby building works” until 30 July. Contractors P&M Sinclair have said they are erecting a large steel-framed structure in the interior, but they were unable to clarify whether this was in relation to the Scotsman Group’s 2016 entertainment complex plan. Scotsman Group have been approached for clarification.

Edinburgh Live – 21 April

Edinburgh East MP Tommy Sheppard has called on the city council to step in to save the C-listed **George**, Portobello, which closed on bingo in 2016. The fenced-off building has been branded an “eyesore”, with foliage growing out of it and “visible signs of deterioration”.



Edinburgh News – 20 March; photo taken September 2008

ELLAND (West Yorkshire)

Planning permission is being sought to convert the upper floors and roof space of the former Town Hall into 60 apartments. (The existing retail units, facing Southgate and Huddersfield Road, would be unaffected.) Built in 1887, it was designed in a Palladian style by architect C.F.L. Horsfall. The **Town Hall Cinema** opened there in 1909, being re-named the **Palladium** in 1920. That closed in 1959 and bingo took over. That closed in 1977 and a succession of businesses have occupied the cinema space since then. The building is Grade II listed.

Insider Media - 27 April

HAILSHAM (East Sussex)



A blue plaque has been unveiled at the **Pavilion** by Jennifer King, granddaughter of Sam King, in celebration of its 100 years as a cinema and to commemorate Alf Shipman and Sam King, and the founding of their circuit. (Read the full story about Shipman and King in the latest edition of *Picture House*.)

CTA e-Newsletter - 2 April; photo taken April 2008

HALSTEAD (Essex)



A bid for National Lottery funding of over £50,000, for a new roof for the **Empire**, has been rejected. Fortunately, the council, which submitted the bid, mindful that this might be the case, has been putting funds away in earmarked reserves. The roof is said to have been "deteriorating steadily" over the past few years and is costing at least £500 each year to patch it up.

Daily Gazette - 17 March; photo taken July 2007

HAVERFORDWEST (Pembrokeshire)

Concerns arose over the future of the **Palace** when the owners said they were intending to retire. However, independent operator Sinema Palace Ltd (which, also in Wales, operates the **Gaumont Plaza** in Flint) signed a lease with Pembrokeshire County Council to take over the venue, and the cinema re-opened on Friday 28 April, with *Super Mario Bros* and *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*. The new operator has completely renovated the foyer, and refurbished Screen 2 with new carpeting and bigger, comfier seats with more leg room. Screen 1 will get a similar treatment as soon as possible.

Western Telegraph - 7 April and 28 April

HELENSBURGH (Argyll & Bute)

Volunteers and staff at the **Tower** community cinema have been told they have 90 days to turn a profit or the owner will sell it. It has been

struggling in recent months due to low visitor numbers and the high cost of screening films. The pandemic had a big impact, and, while the cinema survived thanks to the help of its volunteers, it has continued to struggle since re-opening in July 2022. (The **Tower** has a fascinating history. The former St. Columba church complex was acquired by semi-retired social entrepreneur Brian Keating in 2014 with the intention of opening a submarine museum - the naval base at Faslane being not far away - but then, realising how extensive the complex is, he opened the **Tower Arts Centre and Digital Academy** in August 2015 and started regular film shows the following year.)

STV News - 8 April

HUDDERSFIELD (West Yorkshire)

Work has begun on a £9m project at the town's biggest shopping centre. Kingsgate, which first opened in 2002, is undergoing a transformation that will see a huge entertainment hub on the third floor. This will include a bowling alley, go-karting track, climbing walls - and, of course, the obligatory multi-screen cinema, this time a **Light** multiplex with six auditoriums. An autumn 2024 opening looks likely.

Huddersfield Daily Examiner - 27 March

HULL (East Yorkshire)



A correction: In the last issue (57/2 p21) the Newsreel commented that the **Cecil**, at which Mecca Bingo had closed in February, was built on the site of a former cinema of the same name. However, Hector J. Hill sent in this photograph, taken in May 1925, which shows that the earlier **Cecil** was erected on part of the grounds of the former Mariners' Hospital, diagonally across the road from the new cinema. When the hospital was demolished, Ferensway was extended, and the T-junction in the photograph became a crossroads.

IPSWICH (Suffolk)

Bosses at the **King Street Cinema** have set up a GoFundMe page to try to raise £18,000, half the cost of a new projector. They say the current equipment is "one step away from completely failing" and new parts can no longer be sourced. Also, the new projector will use laser technology, which can last for about 14,000 hours, whereas the current one uses a lamp, which needs to be changed every six months at a cost of around £2,000. The cinema, housed in the Corn Exchange, opened in 1975 as the **Ipswich Film Theatre**.

Ipswich Star - 17 April; sent in by Terry Hanstock

KIRKCALDY (Fife)

Having been without a cinema since the **Odeon** closed in 2000, the town is edging closer to resurrecting the 'big screen' experience - ironically on a site connected with that of the former cinema! That opened as the **Kings Theatre** in 1904 and was eventually tripled as the **ABC** in 1977. After closing, it was to become a pub and performance venue, but that never happened and it has remained empty. Meanwhile, the current owner, Kings Theatre Kirkcaldy Ltd, also owns adjoining sites at 262 High Street (next door to the former theatre/cinema) and 9 Esplanade (backing onto High Street). The latter was re-opened as Kings Live Lounge in September 2019 - and the company recently launched a crowd-funding appeal so that cinema equipment can be acquired. That quickly hit its target of £5,000, which

triggered match-funding from Creative Scotland. Films could return as early as this summer, but the company has even more ambitious plans, which could see the **Kings Theatre/Odeon** being converted back into a single, 1,750-2,000-seat, multi-purpose auditorium.

Fife Free Press – 20 April

LICHFIELD (Staffordshire)

Moves to bring a new cinema to the town have edged a step closer. The owners of the Three Spires Shopping Centre have announced they have signed a joint venture deal with Lichfield District Council for a multi-screen complex. The project will see the former Debenhams site redeveloped into a cinema, together with restaurants and bars. The town has been without a cinema since the **Regal** closed, way back in 1974.

Lichfield Live – 22 March

LIVERPOOL

Knowsley Council has submitted proposals seeking to reinstate (unspecified) key features of the former **Picture Palace**, Prescot. The building was re-modelled into a cinema from two 19th century townhouses in 1912, and closed, as the **Palace**, in 1957. Grade II listing was granted in 2021. It was acquired by the council that year, but is in a significant state of disrepair. The current plans include the demolition of four mid-20th century extensions at the rear, as well as extensive works to bring the facade back to the condition it was in as a functioning cinema.

CTA E-Newsletter – 16 April



Lidl has pulled out of its controversial plans to convert the **Abbey**, Wavertree, into one of its stores. Having purchased the former cinema, the original plan was to demolish it and replace it with a new store. However, a campaign was launched, and in 2021 the building was saved by being granted a Grade II listing. Lidl came up with revised plans in August 2022, but have now made the “difficult decision” to withdraw their application.

Liverpool Echo – 29 March; photo taken July 2007

The **Woolton Picture House** remains closed, the last update from the owners having been issued back in October when, they said, a re-opening this spring was being planned – “subject to the economic climate”. Since then, nothing. A combination of government funding and a GoFundMe campaign allowed the cinema to survive the pandemic, with nearly £50,000 to support its reopening. In December 2021, there were plans to re-open the cinema in 2022. The owners had said they would provide monthly updates, but efforts by the local press to contact them have so far been unsuccessful.

Liverpool Echo – 1 May

LONDON (Brixton)

A petition to save the O2 Academy (the former **Astoria**) from permanent closure has reached 50,000 signatures. The venue had its licence suspended after two people died during a crush ahead of a gig by Afro-pop singer Asake last year. Academy Music Group (AMG), which runs the venue, said it has put together proposals which would enable the venue to re-open safely. Concerns have been raised over the strength of the venue’s doors and its staffing levels, including whether there was enough medical cover. The petition, to Lambeth Council, has been supported by musicians and bands including The Chemical Brothers and Garbage. A spokesperson for AMG said the company “had co-operated fully with the Metropolitan Police and Lambeth Council since

the tragedy occurred. AMG has been awaiting feedback on its proposals and looks forward to hearing from the police as soon as possible”.

BBC News – 2 May; sent in by Margaret Burgoine

LONDON (Hammersmith)

The management of the **Riverside Studios** has confirmed that the community arts centre has begun the process of entering administration. It said it has been forced into this due to high energy and debt costs hitting at a time when the venue was still struggling to rebuild revenue after the lockdown. However, at least for the time being, the centre will remain open. The current **Riverside Studios** only opened in 2019, following the closure of its predecessor in 2014.

Chiswick Calendar – 1 April

LONDON (Harrow)

The **Dominion** opened in 1936. In 1962 it was renamed **ABC**, and its wonderful art deco exterior was encased with steel sheeting. It became the **Cannon** in the 1980s then, from 1995 to 2020, operated as the **Safari**, showing Bollywood films. Bingo and church use followed, but the building then fell into disuse. Redevelopment has followed. The auditorium has been demolished, but the good news is that the iconic façade is slowly being restored – and the new building will return to cinema use, with a four-screen picture house on the ground floor, alongside a café and community space. The rest of the building will be home to an 11-storey block of 78 flats.

Time Out – 5 April

LONDON (Mayfair)

Steven Spielberg has been rallying film stars, including Toby Jones, Emily Mortimer and Tilda Swinton, to help save the Grade II listed **Curzon** from closure. The operators are desperately pleading with their landlord to renew the lease, which is due to expire next year. The iconic venue regularly hosts star-studded premieres, including, in January, Spielberg’s *The Fabelmans*. The famed director has said it would be “a travesty” if it closed. Historic England describes the auditorium as “the most elaborate and best surviving of the post-war period”. Curzon has formally applied for a new lease and says it is prepared to make a substantial investment by bringing on board Benedetti Architects, who recently worked on the redesign of the BAFTA headquarters (see “Miscellany”), to carry out an extensive refurbishment. By contrast, the landlord has revealed their own £15m plans to refurbish the iconic cinema - but not with Curzon as its operator. These include a new restaurant, bar, opera nights, and independent and local film screenings, with interior designs by Archer Humphries Architects. According to Dan Zaum, chief executive of 38 Curzon Lease Ltd, the team behind these proposals, “The Mayfair cinema will always have film at its heart – and will become a vibrant venue serving the wider community.” In response, Curzon is threatening to take the landlord to court if its lease is not renewed. If successful, the circuit would be able to run the cinema for the next 15 years.

Mail OnLine – 23 April; Evening Standard – 26 April; My London – 28 April

LONDON (West End)

Fans of the irreverent heritage of the UK’s self-proclaimed “greatest repertory cinema”, the **Prince Charles**, have been reassured that at least one thing will not change following the Coronation, with the marquee proudly announcing “NO, WE ARE NOT CHANGING OUR NAME”!

Time Out – 4 May

The **Empire**, Haymarket, closed suddenly on Thursday 11 May. First indications were that this was for refurbishment, with the upstairs screen remaining, while the two screens in the former stalls would be reconfigured. The lightbox on the façade was to be removed (permanently?) and the frontage cleaned. However, conflicting updates, apparently from Empire, indicated that the closure would be permanent. The cinema was opened as the **Carlton**, in 1927, by Paramount; a ‘smaller’ version of the company’s **Plaza**, Lower Regent Street. Fully equipped for film and stage use, it opened with a musical play, *Lady Luck*, and did not show its first film until *Wings* started its run in March 1928. In 1954 it became the West End showcase for 20th Century-Fox’s CinemaScope presentations. It closed in 1977: Classic split it into three screens and the stagehouse was replaced by an office block. It re-opened as the **Classic Haymarket** in January 1979, then

came a succession of new names as it changed hands: **Cannon** (1985), **MGM** (1992), **Virgin** (1996), **UGC** (2000) and **Cineworld** (2005). During 2008 the main screen was converted into a live theatre for the play *Brief Encounter*, based on the David Lean film. In 2017 it was acquired by **Empire**, and renamed accordingly. *Brief Encounter* returned in March 2018, but lived up to its name, as the run ended early, in July. Attempts to get the building listed had been rebuffed over the years by English Heritage, but the CTA's and Theatre's Trust's persistence finally paid off in October 2018, when it was listed Grade II. Crown Estates, the owners, had planned to demolish the building, leaving only the façade fronting a shopping precinct. Perhaps this is now back on the drawing board.



Facebook – 2 May; CTA e-group – 9 May;
photo taken August 2018

MARGATE (Kent)

Thanet council has been awarded £10,000 of grant funding from the Theatres Trust towards the **Theatre Royal** project. The funding, from the Resilient Theatres: Resilient Communities project, is in recognition of the theatre's heritage and 'at risk' status, and follows an allocation of £2m in April 2022, for renovations, from the Margate Town Deal. The funding from the Theatres Trust will enable Thanet council to commission two reports: a 'heritage significance' statement and an update to the business case/options appraisal for the future management of the theatre. Both the **Theatre Royal** and **Winter Gardens** are closed while their future is examined. The former closed its doors last April, while the latter followed several months later.

Isle of Thanet News – 14 April

MARLOW (Buckinghamshire)

An advertisement for an assistant general manager is being taken as indicating that the long awaited **Everyman** might soon be opening. Plans had been submitted for the development of the old Market Hall back in February 2020. The pandemic led to inevitable delays, and the site appears to have had its own issues, but a summer opening is now being hoped for.

Bucks Free Press – 14 April

MATLOCK (Derbyshire)

Derbyshire Dales District Council has directed £400,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund towards the two-screen cinema that is being proposed for the Bakewell Road market hall. This would see public spending on the scheme rise to £1.64m, but it is projected to create around 18 jobs and increase the town centre's footfall by 37,700 a year, bringing in £706,000 in additional spending. The plans were approved in February 2022, but none of the three tenders for the construction work, which were received in January, were deemed acceptable – and costs are rising all the time.

Derby Telegraph – 7 March; Matlock Mercury – 9 March

MIDDLESBROUGH

Plans to create a boutique cinema in Captain Cook Square have been given the green light. The three-screen picture house (seating 77, 67 and 60) is earmarked for units 9-10, the site of the That's Entertainment store, and will "maximise the use of the whole building", meaning it will occupy both floors. A report which went before Middlesbrough Planning Committee on 14 April said that the venue

would "provide additional footfall within this section of the town centre and additional employment opportunities that will assist in improving the vitality and viability of Captain Cook Square and the wider town centre". The cinema is the latest of a number of schemes planned for the shopping centre, including bar and leisure venue Dovecot, and Lane 7, which will create a new bowling alley, indoor golf and electric go kart track in the vacant TJ Hughes store. And here's a fun quiz: The regeneration project manager said she has been working with the cinema operator for well over a year but, rather coyly, she has not named them. However, she has said that "the family-run business has four other outfits nationally, although none in this region, and tends to be based on refurbishing derelict town centre properties". So, who is it? We have our thoughts: no doubt all will be revealed in due course!

Insider Media and Evening Gazette – 18 April

MORECAMBE (Lancashire)



The **Winter Gardens** has been awarded over £2.7m from the government's Cultural Development Fund, the largest single investment in the venue in over 100 years. Over the three years of the grant the building will be transformed into a fully functioning 1,600 capacity music venue, the largest in North Lancashire and the South Lakes, which also hopes to become a mecca for the UK touring circuit.

Beyond Radio online – 20 March; photo taken May 2008

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE

Bosses at the **Tyneside** have said that a combination of a post-Covid slump in audiences, the cost of living crisis, soaring energy bills and public sector funding cuts have left the 86-year-old "cultural institution" facing a "stark" future. Without additional funds, and support from the public, the cinema would have no other option but to close its doors for good. A fund-raising campaign has been launched, and patrons are being urged to visit as often as they can.

ITV News – 6 April; The Film Magazine – 19 May

NORTHALLERTON (North Yorkshire)

The four-screen **Everyman**, with 274 seats, opened on Friday 19 May. It is part of the final phase of the £20m Treadmills shopping and leisure complex on the site of a former prison, adjacent to the High Street. Free admission was offered on the first two days.

Northern Echo – 15 April; Press (York) – 21 April; Yorkshire Live – 5 May

NUNEATON (Warwickshire)

A planning application has been submitted for a five-screen cinema on part of the Abbey Street redevelopment area, which has been renamed Graysons Place. No operator has been announced.

Coventry Live – 29 March; Coventry Telegraph – 31 March

OLDHAM (Lancashire)

An application has been submitted to demolish the former **Gaumont** and develop the site (with no further details being provided). Opened as the **Grand Theatre** in 1908, the building was almost totally rebuilt in 1937 and re-opened as the **Gaumont**. After closing as a cinema in 1961 it was briefly renamed the **Astoria Theatre**, before use as a bowling alley, then a nightclub and, in a separate area, a snooker club. After being closed for several years, Thunderdome roller derby centre opened in 2011, but that closed in 2020. Plans for demolition had first been mooted in 2007. Then, in May 2022, Properties Ade Limited, owned by Dubai real estate conglomerate Al Dallal Group, purchased the building for £825,000.

I Love MCR – 26 April

The **Coliseum Theatre** closed on 31 March, after losing its funding from Arts Council England (ACE). Oldham Council had said the building was not fit for purpose and had a "litany of problems", including asbestos, as it unveiled plans for a new theatre. This is being supported by ACE, which has pledged almost £1.85m for performing arts in the borough. The new purpose-built theatre, on Greaves Street, is scheduled to open in 2026. The **Colosseum Theatre** opened in 1887, and was converted into the **Colosseum Super 'Talkie' Theatre** picture house in 1931. Unfortunately, this was not a success, and it closed the following year. The building remained closed until 1939, when it was taken over by the Oldham Repertory Club and re-named the **Coliseum Theatre**. After initially operating as a theatre club, it became a public theatre. Various upgrades and improvements allowed it to continue as one of the North of England's leading theatres. Its closure had been announced in November.

Oldham Times – 3 April

OXFORD

The **Odeon**, Magdalen Street, was due to close on 5 June. It opened as the **Oxford Super** in 1924 ("Oxford" referring to the operating company, Oxford Cinematograph Theatre Co.). Acquired by Union in 1931, its name was abbreviated to **Super**. In turn, Union was taken over by Associated British Cinemas in 1931, but the cinema was not renamed **ABC** until 1971. Around 1986 it was acquired by **Cannon**, and renamed once again, and then by **MGM**, taking on that name. Odeon Cinemas took over in 2000. The building is Grade II listed. (Meanwhile, the **Odeon** George Street (former **Ritz/ABC/Cannon/MGM**), having had a refurbishment in 2010, continues to entertain the city's filmgoers.)

Oxford Mail- 10 May

PENRITH (Cumbria)



In a very worrying development, Alan Towers, owner of the **Alhambra**, has issued an urgent plea for people to support his cinema, as rising costs (including £175 a day on electricity alone) and falling attendances could see it closing as early as June. From Friday 31 March, during April, ticket prices were reduced to £5 (apart from event screenings) and just £2.50 for family films at weekends.

Cumbria Crack – 29 March; News & Star – 30 March; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken April 2016

PLYMOUTH (Devon)

The delayed **Everyman** will be open before the end of the year, according to Alex Scrimgeour, the circuit's chief executive. In January 2023 Urban Splash, which is regenerating the Royal William Yard, confirmed work was under way to create the new three-screen luxury cinema in the historic Melville building. The company said the Grade I listed building would be home to "a waterfront cinema like no other", blending "classic architecture with a modern interior". This will bring "whole new cinematic and leisure experience" to Plymouth.

Plymouth Live – 13 April; The Herald – 15 April

PRESTON (Lancashire)

Foundation work has begun on the city's £45m Animate leisure complex, which will include an 8-screen **Arc** multiplex. Planning permission for the old market hall and car park site was granted in

2016 and completion is scheduled for late next year. Only three of the units are still to be let.

Lancashire Evening Post – 20 April

PRESTWICK (South Ayrshire)



A charity has moved a step closer to reviving the **Broadway**, after The Friends of Broadway were granted a licence to occupy the building. Designed by Alister MacDonald, the 'C' listed cinema opened in 1925 and closed for films in 1966, when full-time bingo took over. The Friends have the support of Buzzworks Holdings, which acquired the building in 2005. The hospitality group had hopes of converting it into a hotel bar, restaurant and nightclub. However, after a number of years of applying for the necessary permissions and licences, the bid remained unsuccessful. The 'licence to occupy' means the Friends can preserve and maintain the building, and apply for funding to purchase and restore the **Broadway** to its former glory.

The Herald – 11 April; photo taken July 2009

PWLLHELI (Gwynedd)

After receiving an investment of £36,000 from the Arts Council of Wales, the **Neuadd Dwyfor** re-opened on 20 April with a National Theatre Live presentation of *The Crucible*. This grant will also allow the venue to experiment with creating a varied programme of events, such as live music, cabaret, comedy, dance and theatre shows. Recent maintenance work has safeguarded the historic building, which opened as the Town Hall in 1902 but has been in use for film shows since 1920. Work has also been undertaken to protect the external red brick from dampness, and other external works have also been completed.

Insider Media – 20 April

RAMSGATE (Kent)

The **Granville Theatre** had its Grand (re)Opening Gala Night on Saturday 27 May, when a variety show was presented. That was followed, from 31 May to 3 June, by Margate Operatic Society's production of *The Addams Family Musical*, which heralded a packed programme of live shows. Westwood One Ltd, which also operates Under 1 Roof kids' playgrounds in Ramsgate and Canterbury, completed the purchase of the building from Thanet council last October. The company, run by Ramsgate sisters Zahra and Parisa Tarjomani and Pyramid Martial Arts & Just Kids Parties owner Matt Milchard, has been working on renovations to bring the venue back into use as a theatre and cinema, with, in due course, a sea view bar, restaurant and community arts space. The 1998 sub-division is to be removed, leaving a single, 600-seat, auditorium. No cinema programme has been announced as yet.

Isle of Thanet News – 2 April and 20 April; sent in by Margaret Burgoine

READING (Berkshire)

Following its closure at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, **Reading Film Theatre** did manage to re-open, as national restrictions were lifted, but difficulties arose with local restrictions imposed by the University of Reading, where it was based, and it also suffered projection equipment "failures". It was therefore decided to close the **Film Theatre** from Autumn 2021. Happily, however, the three screen **Reading Biscuit Factory**, which opened in July 2021, stepped in, and films programmed by the **Film Theatre** are screened every fortnight on Wednesdays and Sundays. So its spirit lives on!

Submitted by David Simpson

ROYSTON (Hertfordshire)

A petition has been created by volunteers in an effort to help keep **Royston Picture Palace** operating. The cinema is on the brink of closure

as, after 28 May, they were to lose their managing organisation, Saffron Screen. The petition was launched on 30 April and soon gathered almost 800 signatures. This not-for-profit community cinema is located inside Royston Town Hall. The petition organisers have encouraged residents to signify their support of the town council who, they hope, will do “everything in their power” to keep the venue open.

Herts Live – 5 May

SALISBURY (Wiltshire)

Everyman Media applied for permission from Wiltshire Council to transform the former **Regal/ABC**, latterly Buzz Bingo, into a four-screen cinema last summer. The resulting **Everyman** was due to open on 2 June. The **Regal** had opened in 1936, and an Everyman spokesperson said the circuit is “proud to honour these historic roots with its innovative and redefined cinema experience”.

Salisbury Journal – 12 April and 24 April;

photo (Screen 1) taken May 2023 by Gary Trinder



SCARBOROUGH (North Yorkshire)

Plans have been approved for a town centre multiplex. Scarborough Group International, which bought the “declining” Brunswick Shopping Centre in 2021, will now move ahead with their scheme to convert it into a leisure-led destination. Previous plans, to build multiplexes at North Bay and then the former Atlantis water park, ultimately came to nothing, so it is fervently hoped that this latest development will succeed.

Scarborough News – 16 March

STOURBRIDGE (West Midlands)

A former nightclub, where footballer Ryan Passey was stabbed to death in August 2017, is set to become a cinema. Chicago’s closed down in February 2018, and re-opened as Soda Club the following year. But that only lasted six months and the building has been vacant ever since. Ryan’s family had called for it to be converted into a community centre but, on 14 March, Dudley Council Planning Committee approved the change of use to a single screen cinema. The town has been without regular ‘big screen’ entertainment since the **ABC** (former **Scala Picture Theatre/Savoy**) closed in November 1982, although films are shown as part of the entertainment programme at Stourbridge Town Hall.

Express & Star – 23 March, Birmingham Mail – 27 March and Wolverhampton Chronicle & Birmingham Mail – 31 March

SWADLINCOTE (Derbyshire)



The former **Empire** is to be auctioned off - at a reduced price. The building has stood empty for almost a year, and has yet to attract a buyer. It was previously occupied by “acid house-themed street food restaurant” The Balearic Eye and originally put on the market for

£485,000. That was reduced to £450,000, but still failed to attract a buyer. It is now set to be auctioned off, and has been given a guide price of just £399,000. It is being marketed as a “commercial building with potential for a residential conversion”. The **Empire Picture Palace** opened in 1912 and could seat 500 patrons. It was later enlarged, and re-opened as the **New Empire** in 1931, with 716 seats. The cinema closed in the early 1960s and the building became an amusement arcade for several years. It was then bought by the Barracuda Group and converted into a Smith & Jones pub named the Paramount.

Derbyshire Live – 19 April; photo taken March 2021

WESTON-SUPER-MARE (Somerset)



The **Odeon** was due to close on 5 June, with the company saying it is “no longer viable”. One of the original Odeon Theatres, this Grade II listed cinema opened in May 1935 and was one of only nine to be equipped with a theatre organ. It was tripled in 1973; a fourth screen was added in 1991. For many years, since the **Regent/Gaumont** closed in 1973, it had a monopoly on big screen entertainment in this popular resort. However, the arrival of the 8-screen **Cineworld**, on an adjacent site, in January 2018, must have had an adverse impact. The **Compton** was played for the final time on Sunday 21 May, at a concert organised by The Theatre Organ Club.

BBC News – 6 May;

sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken May 2023 by David Eve

WINDSOR (Berkshire)

Plans for a major development of Windsor Yards, which include a new office building, aparthotel, cinema and Travelodge extension, have been recommended for approval. The application site has been split into five key areas, and it is the eastern development site, which includes 113-115 Peascod Street and the retail units fronting the eastern side of Bridgewater Way, which could accommodate a four-screen boutique cinema, with 307 seats, situated above those retail units.

Insider Media – 30 March

WOLVERHAMPTON

Further to the news in Bulletin 57/1 (p25) that three operators had expressed interest in re-opening the **Light House**, it was reported that “dozens” of potential operators had come forward – against a backdrop of local councillors rowing over whether Wolverhampton Council supports the arts sector! More recently, it was confirmed that eight bids have been received. A shortlist will be put together, with the Council saying its aim is for the new cinema - or (slightly worryingly, at least to us) “creative arts” – operator to take over by the summer.

Express & Star – 31 March; BBC News – 19 May

WYMONDHAM (Norfolk)

Plans to transform the Old Goods Shed, next to Wymondham railway station, into a boutique cinema, were first put forward, and approved by South Norfolk Council, in 2019. It had been hoped that it would open in 2020 but, inevitably, work ground to a halt when the pandemic struck. Now Filmhaus, the Bury St Edmunds-based business behind the scheme, is planning on an opening in the first half of 2024. The Victorian Grade II-listed building will house two screens – with 94 and 31 seats - a café/bar and a meeting room for community use.

Norwich Evening News – 10 April; sent in by Terry Hanstock

A MORE COLOURFUL CINEMA

By David C Evans



The New Victoria Bradford in April 2013
starting to undergo restoration

In September 1943, when press advertising for the 20th Century-Fox musical *Hello Frisco, Hello* appeared for the Gaumont Manchester and the New Victoria Bradford, the small item (paper space was very limited due to wartime paper rationing) was dominated by the heading 'In Ravishing Technicolor'. Doubtless, this was one of the reasons why as one of the top box office attractions of 1943 it probably filled the 2,300-seat Gaumont and the 3,300-seat New Victoria to capacity at many performances. This was all due to a minor revolution during the late 1930s and well into the 1940s when three-colour Technicolor was a massive attraction for cinema audiences, helping to enhance the movie-going experience for millions.

Two-colour Technicolor dated back to the silent era of the 1920s but the three-colour version did not appear until the 1930s with the first full-length feature in this being *Becky Sharp* (1935) with Miriam Hopkins in the title role and, although still a rarity, by October, 1938 a cinema such as the State Barking in Essex was advertising Alexander Korda's *The Drum* as its opening feature 'in glorious Technicolor'... and 'glorious' it was, if judged by the quality of the previous pastel-hued two-colour system.



From the late 1930s until the mid-1940, Hollywood studios released around four or five Technicolor movies per year, the exceptions being Columbia whose first colour feature was in 1943 – *The Desperadoes*, RKO, first feature 1945 with *The Spanish Main* and 20th Century-Fox, which released more pictures in this process than any other studio during this period. The only other country with Technicolor cameras and processing at this time was Britain and a number of UK pictures were made in the system. For example, *The Great Mr Handel* (1942), *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *This Happy Breed* (1944) and *Henry V* (1945) among others. However, these represented just a very small percentage of releases for any given year and 'Photographed in Technicolor' appeared on film credits, as a separate acknowledgement of its special use, until the final years of the decade.



The Prince of Wales Theatre London in August 2018

For Christmas, 1940, the flagship of the Odeon circuit, the Odeon Leicester Square, announced the UK première of Alexander Korda's *Thief of Bagdad* as being in 'magic Technicolor' and, of course, this matched the superb special effects, for the era, in the picture. Earlier in the year, Reg Whitley, film critic of the *Daily Mirror* saw *Northwest Passage* starring Spencer Tracey, at the prestigious Empire Leicester Square and commented that "the producers of the film have done this saga proud with the finest Technicolor I have seen for months." Later, in 1944, he went to see *Cover Girl* starring Rita Hayworth and Gene Kelly at the *Prince of Wales Theatre* on Coventry Street and wrote "if there is a more beautiful screen sight than red-headed Rita Hayworth, in Technicolor, I have yet to see it." (Although a live theatre venue, the *Prince of Wales* was used occasionally between 1940 and 1950 as a cinema.)

In 1944, daytime crowds on Piccadilly Circus would have seen a huge image of Ginger Rogers over the entrance to the *Plaza* announcing *Lady in the Dark* as 'Paramount's Technicolor Triumph!' At night, however, this would not have had much publicity effect due to the blackout. The picture went on to play the Odeon circuit and make a profit, which must have been a great relief to the studio, which had paid \$285,000 for the rights to the Kurt Weill Broadway show on which it was based, filmed everything in 1942 and then held up release until 1944. Anyone who had seen the show would have wondered where most of the songs had gone as Paramount ditched most of the sparkling score or reduced it to just background music.

By 1946, Technicolor was becoming a little more usual but even then, Paramount advertised *Blue Skies* at the Carlton Haymarket as 'Irving Berlin's Technicolor Masterpiece!' and in 1947, in US cinemas, the same studio advertised its passion-filled *Desert Fury*, starring Burt Lancaster, as being 'A Paramount Picture in Blazing Technicolor.'

Today, colour is used, routinely, for nearly all feature films and when a picture is released in black and white, this elicits great interest from the critics and public alike. However, during the period with which this article deals, Technicolor was often a thrilling experience for cinema-goers worldwide. Luckily, quite a few of these films survive today so we can have some idea of what that experience was like for many who, in those days, often made weekly or even bi-weekly visits to an entertainment that was developing, slowly but surely, from a monochrome world into a new colourful one.

