



CINEMA
THEATRE
ASSOCIATION

www.cta-uk.org

BULLETIN

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January – March 2024



We congratulate the winners of this year's *Screen International* 'Cinema of the Year' awards (See page 15)

[Top] Greenwich Picturehouse (photo: Ian Grundy, 2014) and [bottom] Highland Cinema, Fort William (photo: Highland Cinema, 2020)



PICTURE HOUSE 2023

We regret to announce that, like its predecessors for several years running, this year's edition of *Picture House* will not appear until early 2024. This is the result of a shortage of articles of suitable depth and historical interest, delays in completing or delivering those in progress and other commitments on the editor's time in November.

Allen Eyles, *Picture House Editor*

FROM YOUR TREASURER

CARD PAYMENTS TO THE CTA

After much thought, the Committee has decided that the CTA will no longer accept credit or debit card payments for cardholder-not-present transactions. This is because bank fees for such transactions are now excessive – so far this year we have been charged £470 in fees on £1,580 of income. This amount is also a small part of our total income. We will continue to welcome face-to-face credit and debit card payments, for instance at our bookstall at events. PayPal payments through the CTA website and card payments made through TicketSource for events are not affected by this decision. Renewal forms and the sales list will suggest alternative payment methods.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

We offer a warm welcome to the following new members:
Brian Dutton, Colin Payne, Lynne Collins, Jane Lee and Rachel Frankel.

DONATIONS

Once more members have displayed their generosity by adding a donation to the renewal of their subscriptions. Our sincere thanks go to:

JCS Altman, JC Barnes, MA Bentley, CJ Bird, C Birnie, DC Bishop, LS Bull, E Christeler, MS Crowle, L Culver, RD Dakin, RG Dolling, JS Downs, R Duerden, DW Faircloth, GB Fenwick, M Gambles, HW Gibbs, PJ Goff, P Hake, P Hayward, DM Howarth, AF Hughes, S Kielty, MR King, CP Kisicki, WJ Linskey, EL Marriage, KC McFarlane, M Mills, IP Nash, AJ North, PR Phillips, NA Pithouse, JM Pritchard, G Reywer, FRA Rosen, JT Rourke, HR Rowley, RD Simpson, SD Simpson, C Skinner, TJ Smith, FD Snart, JP Vaux, KM Wakefield, JP Walrond, AG Williams, D & M Williams and DR Williams.

IN MEMORIAM

Richard Tite from Waltham Cross a member of the CTA since 1996.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Full Membership UK.....£33;	under 25 (with proof of age).....£16
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Overseas (Digital CTA Bulletin).....£33	
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UK 65 & over (with proof of age).....£400	
Life Membership (Overseas) Air Mail.....£840;	Economy Mail.....£645

Ray Ritmeester, *Membership Secretary*

IN MEMORY OF RICHARD TITE

I am writing to you to give you the sad news that my beloved husband of over 61 years, Richard Tite, died peacefully at home on 24 September. Although he had never smoked, he was told nearly 30 years ago he had COPD. Towards the end of his life, he could do very little for himself without needing oxygen but he never complained.

At first this progressive illness did not prevent him from enjoying his hobbies and interests and I remember his delight when we discovered the CTA. We then went on a number of day visits to cinemas in London and around England but the highlight was the visit to Hollywood in 2002. This was mentioned in the tribute to him at his cremation! Also, at the service we played Richard Hills' recording of *Theatreland* as 'going out' music to reflect his happy nature.

I would like to thank all those lovely people in CTA who might remember him for their friendship and companionship on various CTA visits.

Best wishes, *Ruth Tite*

CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

(Founded January 1967)

promoting serious interest in all aspects of
cinema buildings

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For contact details see the first page of the Newsreel section

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digital@cta-uk.org : enquires about digital services

visits@cta-uk.org : enquires about talks/events bookings

Visits' registration phone hotline: 020 8800 8393

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Harry Rigby, Ken Roe, Marion Kennett (co-opted).

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

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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 7 MARCH

VISITS AND EVENTS

Only One Everyman

The **Everyman** Hampstead –

A retrospective of the landmark repertory cinema

by Dr Margaret O'Brien

Friday 26 January 2024 at 6:30pm (doors open 6:00pm)

The story of this cinema is unique in cinema history as it experimented in carefully selecting film subjects to attract and build upon a clientele which appreciated repertory programming. Opening as *The Everyman* in 1933, throughout its history it proudly proclaimed itself an independent club-based cinema. It is considered to be the oldest repertory cinema in the world, screening a diverse programme of world cinema, documentaries and classics of film history. In 2000 it was bought by a new business to become embodied within the, now well-known, Everyman chain. (taking its name from this particular cinema).

The building started out as a drill hall and by 1920 it was adapted to a modest theatre, and among staging many plays it also premiered Noel Coward's successful *The Vortex*. The building remains an iconic presence in Hampstead, and many locals and other Londoners retain fond memories of the experience of watching films or working there. From its earliest days this local cinema offered cheap access to all kinds of films and was very much a part of the life of the village, as well as being a beacon of film culture in London.

Our presenter: Dr Margaret O'Brien is a film historian who co-edited with Allen Eyles the BFI/MOMI publication *Enter the Dream House – Memories of Cinemas in South London from the Twenties to the Sixties* (1993). Margaret has also been involved, as a trustee of the Phoenix East Finchley, in programming the much-loved local independent cinema. She is currently researching for her new book about the history of *The Everyman* Hampstead. Much of her current research can be accessed online at www.everymancinemahistory.co.uk and she requests that people with memories and memorabilia of *The Everyman* (such as old programmes and photographs) should email her at: research.everymanhistory@gmail.com



The exterior of the Everyman Hampstead c1970. Photo: CTA Archive

'Look at MY Life' in cinema!

A retrospective by the UK's foremost projectionist
from Nigel Wolland MBE FBKS

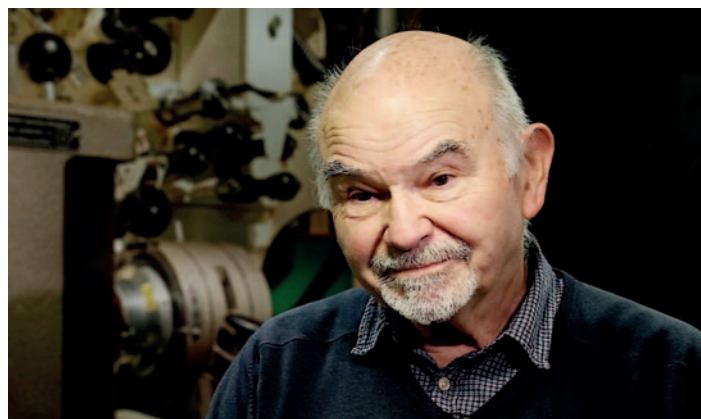
Friday 23 February 2024 at 6:30pm (doors open 6:00pm)

A legend within the film industry, our guest speaker Nigel Wolland has enjoyed (and is still enjoying) one of the longest and most varied careers as a film projectionist. His wealth of knowledge, experience and stories have made him the 'go-to' man for the trade press and public media.

The CTA is delighted that he has agreed to a presentation for us about his long and interesting career, which will include additional details and images of the many cinema buildings in which he has worked. Nigel is, of course, a member of the CTA and is often to be seen attending our meetings and visits to cinemas, when he freely gives us his impromptu comments with considerable authority.

Nigel has been a regular projectionist for the Odeon circuit at Kensington, Chelsea, Wimbledon, Surbiton and Walton-on-Thames, also undertaking relief duties across London and home counties. During the period 1983-2006 he was appointed chief engineer at the flagship Odeon Leicester Square. After becoming involved with the introduction of digital projection technology, he retired from the Odeon circuit. Among his numerous career highlights, he has officiated at countless film premières, including royalty, to ensure that every technical detail is attended to and that the film is presented to the highest professional standards.

Our presenter: Nigel Wolland has worked in the film industry since 1955 when as a teenager, he saw a slide in his local cinema for a projectionist – he applied, was engaged and never looked back and continues to work in the industry even during his retirement. He was presented to the Queen at a film première held at Odeon Leicester Square (1990); made a Fellow of the British Kinematograph Society (FBKS) (1997); awarded MBE for his services to the film industry (2008); assists the Protected Picture Trust (PPT) in various roles – Chair, Treasurer and Trustee and former President of the British Cinema and Television Veterans.



Nigel Wolland during one of his interviews. Photo: Reel Stories

BOOKING YOUR TICKET FOR THE ABOVE TALKS

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.



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

Getting there: On leaving Farringdon (old) Underground Station (Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines) (not the Turnmill Street exit) turn left. If leaving from the new Elizabeth Line/Thameslink exit (located opposite the Underground station) turn right. Walk east 150 yards along Cowcross Street toward 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.

Book online using TicketSource: www.ticketsource.co.uk; Simply enter 'Cinema Theatre Association' into their search box. For members only 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 pay your £10 (cash only) on the door.



Remembering ABC Cinemas

Easter Sunday 31 March 2024 18:00 until 21:00

Tickets: £10; Concessions: £9

A celebration of the Associated British Cinemas chain on the centenary of its founding company Savoy Cinemas in 1924.

The Cinema Theatre Association and the Regent Cinema Christchurch are planning an evening of nostalgia, featuring images, interviews and film clips in a tribute to the much missed chain.

We are delighted that Allen Eyles, author of ABC Cinemas, *The First Name in Entertainment*, the most important history of the chain, will be with us, as well as former employees and hopefully management of the ABC Bournemouth, the last ABC that closed in a blaze of Glory in 2017, eighty years since first opening. Savoy Cinemas was the first cinema exhibition company created in England by John Maxwell, who used this to form the National circuit ABC.



The Regent Christchurch, just down the road from Bournemouth, was taken over by the Shipman and King cinema circuit and absorbed into the ownership of ABC, although never advertised as such. The Regent, an art deco cinema in Christchurch's friendly High Street has survived as a refurbished cinema and theatre and has been featured by Talking Pictures Television.

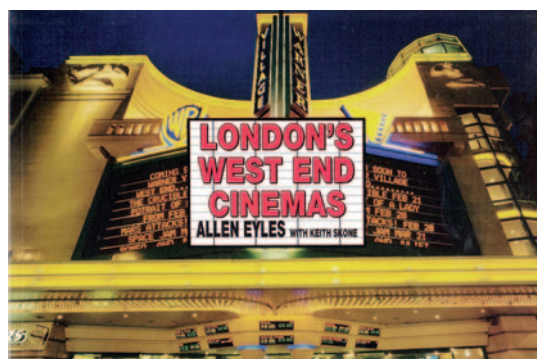
The ABC event takes place at the Regent on Easter Sunday in this Priory town, from 18:00 until 21:00. Light refreshments will be available during the evening and the town has several hotels (including a Travelodge) and restaurants to enjoy for a longer weekend stay. There's a large car park beside the Regent (Wick Lane) and Christchurch train station is on the main London Waterloo to Bournemouth rail line.

BOOKING

Tickets for this event are available from the Regent Box Office over the phone: 01202 499199 or book on line: www.theregent.co.uk stating interest in: Remembering ABC. Specific enquiries can be made to the organiser David Eve: evcinema@talk21.com

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.

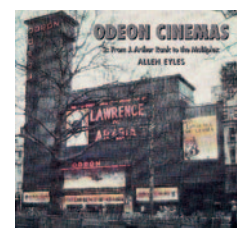
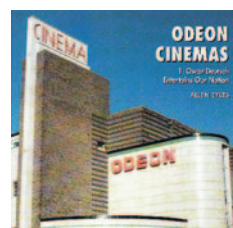
Large Format paperback, 210 pages, over 400 illustrations, £25.00 plus £3.40 postage, from the Sales Officer.

Published in 2013 in conjunction with English Heritage.

Available from the Sales Officer
ordering details on Publications page

All you need to know about... ODEON

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



Now at reduced prices!

ODEON 1 – Oscar Deutsch Entertains Our Nation – £15.00

ODEON 2 – From J Arthur Rank to the Multiplex – £15.00

Buy both Odeon 1 & 2 together for £27 (plus postage)

Also available – THE GRANADA THEATRES – £18.99.

Last few copies!

Please add £3.40 to your order for postage.

Available from the Sales Officer
ordering details on Publications page

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It's quick, safe and easy. Just visit our website:

www.cinema-organs.org.uk

INTERNET CORNER

★ tinyurl.com/chester-ph From the Chester Cinemas website – a description with photos of the Picturehouse in Chester, which opened on 10 November. The website also has excellent material on other Chester cinemas. Sent in by Jeremy Perkins

HERITAGE CASEWORK

By Mike Whitcombe

The CTA Casework Committee is continually involved in securing a positive future for many endangered cinemas, both present and former. It's important work - here's a summary of our current work load.

ENGLAND

Grade II* Listed

STATE, GRAYS (Francis Chancellor, 1938)

There was a site meeting in July between the new owner, the Council representative and KD Paine Associates, the architects for Wetherpoons. From speaking to the project architect and Historic England, we have been told that the new owner will fund urgent roof repairs. Social media posts show inspection scaffolding has been erected and that the work is likely to take place from inside. Distressingly, the interior of the building is now in a very bad condition and we have written to the owner about this. In regard to future plans for the cinema, the new owner wants a combination of banqueting suite and hotel above, accommodated into secondary spaces within the building and some extension, fairly low-rise, above the auditorium. Unfortunately, it appears that metalwork from the interior has been stolen.

GRANADA, WALTHAMSTOW, LONDON

(Cecil Masey & Theodore Komisarjevsky, 1930)

We still have no date for reopening. There is to be an 'interpretation display' with original artefacts and display panels. We have been sent initial ideas, asking us to comment, although we feel they could do with more artefacts.

GAUMONT PALACE, WOOD GREEN, LONDON

(William Trent & Ernest Tulley, 1934)



We are contacting the Conservation Officer with regard to the fact that scaffolding at the front of the building has been up now for about four years.

PICTURE HOUSE, PAIGNTON (Hyams & Hobgen, 1914)

We are investigating an application for a new lift, new ramps and stairs, additional toilets and solar panels on the roof.

Grade II Listed

ODEON, SUTTON COLDFIELD, BIRMINGHAM

(John Clavering for Harry Weedon, 1936)

We are in dialogue about the cinema's future with local MP Andrew Mitchell. In a press release in October, Mitchell stated that there is a buyer but he can't reveal their identity.

GRAND, WESTBOURNE, BOURNEMOUTH (Harry Hawker, 1922)

The cinema is currently up for sale.

MAJESTIC, HARTLEPOOL (William & Thomas Milburn, 1936)

We have objected to the demolition of the cinema as proposed in the Hartlepool masterplan. The cinema has been closed and unused since 2002.

REGENT, IPSWICH (William Trent, 1929)

We are investigating reports that the canopy is to be restored and there is to be an upgrade to provide more dressing rooms.

RITZ, ILKESTON (Reginald Cooper, 1938)



The Conservation Officer did not like the outline applications and wants the owner to submit a full scheme. They were for gym use plus a separate application for a mini block of flats in the car park. We argued for a linkage between the applications but this was refused by the planner. The site is deteriorating and the site is not secure but the adjacent shops are now let.

FORUM, LIVERPOOL

(William Glen & Alfred Shennan, 1931)

We are monitoring the reaction to local councillor Nick Small's attempt to chase up officers re the future of the Forum. A fire broke out in the cinema during June and ongoing vandalism is a major concern.

CARLTON, HAYMARKET, LONDON (Frank Verity, 1927)

New applications are being submitted and we have been in contact with the owners asking them to provide an external display about the future of the Carlton. The Haymarket façade stonework has recently been cleaned.

REGAL, KINGSTON, LONDON (Robert Cromie, 1932)

Jericho Estates say a survey they commissioned shows that damp has penetrated the plasterwork and they believe it should be replaced with replicated plasterwork. We are not happy with this and we will be contacting the Conservation Officer. The new owner is devising a scheme for a hotel within the building and also to utilise adjacent land.

CURZON, MAYFAIR, LONDON (Horace Hammond for Sir John Burnet, Tait and Partners, 1966)

Curzon's architects, Benedetti (who also designed the new BAFTA HQ), contacted us with their scheme in the summer and we were as much in favour with it as we were the landlord's scheme. The landlord's proposals have now become an actual planning application and we are writing to Westminster City Council asking them to ensure that it is for the same scheme as the previously seen proposals. The summer release of *Oppenheimer* gave the cinema, described by Historic England as the finest surviving cinema building of the post war period, its best ever box office receipts.

REGENT, LYME REGIS (William Watkins, 1937)

The foyer (the only part of the building remaining following the 2016 fire that destroyed the auditorium) has been converted into a cocktail bar.

RITZ, NUNEATON (Frank Verity & Samuel Beverley, 1937)

The cinema is to have a new roof, keeping the auditorium dry and we are actively monitoring the case.

SUPER, OXFORD (Frank Matcham & Co with JC Leed, 1924)

Following the shock closure of this cinema in June we have written to the Council to say that the murals and plaster decorative urns should be retained in any scheme for a new use. We have received a reply saying the Council is keeping a close watch on the building.

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

We were pleased that Merlin Cinemas are to become the new operators of this cinema, which was another of the surprise closures by Odeon in June. Merlin are to rename the cinema Plaza.

ODEON, WOLVERHAMPTON (PJ Price for Harry Weedon, 1937)

We are talking to the Council as the new owners, without permission, repainted the interior and the exterior cream faience tiling a black/grey colour. We are urging that the overpainting of the exterior be removed as it will damage the faience tiling.

Not Listed

ODEON, LANDSDOWNE, BOURNEMOUTH (George Coles, 1937)



There is an application to demolish the auditorium and to replace it with apartments. The flanking retail and residential blocks are up for sale. We have contacted the Bournemouth Conservation Officer who agreed with our argument that the foyer block should be treated as a non-designated heritage asset.

REGENT, WESTOVER ROAD, BOURNEMOUTH (William Trent, 1929)

The cinema has been sold and we contacted the Conservation Officer to discuss salvaging the fittings of the cinema but the new owner is already selling off items.

WESTOVER, WESTOVER ROAD, BOURNEMOUTH (William Glen, 1937)

The new owners have cleared debris to put the building on the market. Decorative fittings are due to be salvaged as a planning condition.

CENTRAL, CAMBRIDGE (George Banyard, 1930)

We supported the Twentieth Century Society's listing application but it was turned down. The cinema's façade, though, is highlighted in the Conservation Area.

REGAL, DARLINGTON

(Percy Browne, Charles Harding, Charles Phipps, 1938)

We are contacting the Council as although no planning application has been submitted, contractors have been seen working on the building.

REGENT, DEAL (PV Levett, 1933)



The operator, James Wallace, has appointed architects who have produced a scheme to split the site so the rear would have houses and the front would contain a 49-seat cinema with a replica front façade. We have urged the architects to keep the original façade and they are looking at the possibility.

RITZ, KEIGHLEY (Samuel Beverley, 1938)

Keighley's Civic Society's application for designation of the building as an Asset of Community Value has been accepted by Bradford Council. There have been no planning applications to date although the building is being marketed.

DANILO, HINCKLEY (Ernest Roberts, 1937)

Locally listed and in a Conservation Area, the Danilo has been stripped both internally and externally including some of the roof cladding, so it is literally open to the elements at one end. The Danilo has recently been sold.

CLIFTON, LEOMINSTER (Ernest Roberts, 1936)

The building was turned down for listing. We have met the Chairman of the Civic Society and a Herefordshire Councillor to discuss the cinema's future. A theatre group have said they would definitely be interested in becoming the operator.

SAVOY, HAYES, LONDON (George Coles, 1939)

We have objected to the planning application for subdivision of the auditorium.

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

Wetherspoons have sold this long established pub to a developer who also own the Tollgate pub in Turnpike Lane and we understand they want to continue running the Coronet as a pub. We have written to Islington's Conservation Officer about the case.

KENSINGTON KINEMA / ODEON, KENSINGTON, LONDON

(Julian Leathart & William Granger, 1926)

Plasterwork and granite have been salvaged from the building and is being stored in Wraysbury. All pieces have been numbered and recorded.

REX, STRATFORD, LONDON

(Frank Matcham & JM Gladwell/George Coles 1897/1934)

Historic England is to inspect the building following the Twentieth Century Society's listing application.

ELITE, MIDDLESBROUGH (James Forbes, 1937)

We are continuing to liaise with the Conservation Officer about this case. The Council bought the cinema earlier this year for £750,000. It has been unused since closing as a pub in 2015.

ODEON, GEORGE STREET, OXFORD (Robert Cromie, 1936)

We have written to the Council to alert them about the Newbury Trent sculptured figure on the main frontage. The cinema is to close next year.

ADELPHI, SLOUGH (Eric Bailey, 1930)

The sale went through in late Spring after Slough Council vetted and approved the buyer, who wants to convert the building into a banquet suite but no planning application has yet been submitted.

POINT, MILTON KEYNES (Building Design Partnership, 1985)

We are supporting The Twentieth Century Society in resurrecting the listing application as the building is under threat of demolition and redevelopment as flats.

WALES Grade II Listed

ODEON, LLANELLI (PJ Price for Harry Weedon, 1936)

We have been in contact with the owner who says that everything is on hold at present until the prosperity of the town picks up.

ALBERT HALL, SWANSEA (Charles Ruthen, 1864)



The building is covered in scaffolding at present but due to reopen as a performance and music venue in February 2024.

Past and present cinemas around the country are always under threat. The CTA Casework team is 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.

PUBLICATIONS

Back Numbers Available

PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

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

No 6	£1.50	Television in the Cinema; Atherley Southampton; Hippodrome, Blackpool.
No 8	£1.50	Sol Levy; Reginald Cooper; ABC in NW London.
No 16	£3.00	Dominion London; 3,000 plus; John Broadley remembers.
No 17	£3.00	Special Issue featuring the Cinemas of George Coles with 26 original photographs reproduced in sepia.
No 18	£3.00	Sydney Colwyn Foulkes; United Picture Theatres; Tivoli Wimborne.
No 19	£3.50	Co-operative Cinemas; Ideal Lambeth; Dursley; Alister Macdonald; Granada Tooting.
No 21	£3.50	100 Years On; Travelling Shows; Reggie Rea; Albert Hall Sheffield; Regal Wells; West End Adverts; Scotland.
all issues below have colour cover and inside pages		
No 22	£3.50	Burrell, Foley, Fischer; Palace Theatre London; David Nye.
No 24	£4.50	Oldest Cinema - Harringay; Cardiff Round-up; Odeon Miscellany.
No 25	£4.50	Oldest Cinema (Brighton); FE Bromige; Committee's Choice; Gaumont Managers; Carlton Swansea;.
No 26	£4.50	Paramount Newcastle; Edward Stone; Granada Men; E de Wilde Holding; Electric Portobello Road.
No 27	£4.50	New Victoria/Apollo; Whiteladies Bristol; Clark & Fenn; Compton Organs; Tim Foster Associates.
No 28	£4.50	James McKissack; WJ King; Torbay Cinema; Tabs.
No 29	£4.50	Cinerama in Britain; Braziers the Builders; John Fernée; Waller Jeffs; John Duffin's paintings.
No 30	£5.00	The Davis Family, Croydon; Apollo Hammersmith Organ; Norwich Roadshows.
No 31	£7.50	Special 84-page edition: Essoldo - A Family Business: Sol Sheckman and the Essoldo Circuit.
No 32	£5.00	Harry Myers Photographs; Cinemas at the Coalface; Shaws of Darwen; Edward A Stone.
No 33	£5.00	Theodore Komisarjevsky; Circuit & other releases of 1956; The case for saving the New Victoria Bradford.
No 34	£5.00	Beaufort Birmingham; Granada Tooting in 1934; Rank in post-war Scotland; J Braddon's Cinema life.
No 35	£5.00	Holophane lighting; Imitations of Odeon; Cradley Records; 1909 Cinematograph Act; Kingston Showmanship.
No 36	£6.00	Leslie Kemp; Jeremy Perkins on Brighton; The Clifton Circuit; Circuit Releases of 1960.
No 37	£8.50	Special 92-page issue; saving the Electric Palace Harwich.
No 38	£6.00	Northern Morris Associated Cinemas; Point Milton Keynes; Going to the Cinema in Birmingham; Palace Conwy; Carlton Haymarket; Military Cinemas; Cinema Murders.
No 39	£6.00	WWI and the Film Trade; Tale of Two Regals; Majestic Oxford; Odeon North Finchley; Films at the Royal Albert Hall.
No 40	£6.00	Tolmer Euston; Michael Stringer memories; West End in the 1950s; Stafford Entertainments; Will Onda & James Atroy; Stephen Waddingham - a Granada man.
No 41	£6.00	CTA's 50 th Anniversary; Plaza Stockport; Majestic Leeds; Grosvenor Rayners Lane; Pascal J Stienlet.
No 42	£6.00	Odeon Elephant & Castle, Plaza Crosby; Depot Lewes; Cineworld Chelsea; Gaumont Sheffield Figures.
No 43	£6.00	Virgin Cinemas; Peter Jewett's ABC memories; Scala Kings Cross; Picture House Campbelltown; Beeston/Nottingham memories.
No 44	£6.00	Village Cinemas of NE Scotland; William Keys' career; Bernard Snowball remembers Pt1.
No 45	£8.50	Classic Repertory Cinemas; Blackpool Cinemas; Thomas Jackson; Bernard Snowball remembers Pt2. Special 100-page issue.
No 46	£6.00	Cecil Clavering, Odeon Architect: Pavilion Hailsham; Working For Star; Focus Sevenoaks Figures.
No 47	£8.50	Special 96-page issue: The Shipman & King Circuit; Mollo & Egan

There are also available a few second-hand copies of out-of-print issues of *Picture House* 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14/15, 20 & 23, priced £5.00 each, plus postage. A list of their contents was printed on p4 of Bulletin 52/2 or can be obtained by SAE or email from the Sales Officer.

BULLETINS

We can supply back numbers of most Bulletins from Volume 21 (1987) to date. Prices for issues from 1987 to 2022 are £7 per year (6 issues). Individual copies are £2.00 each. Prices for issues in 2023 and 2024 are £6.00 per copy. All prices include postage. There are some issues available from earlier years - 1967 to 1986. Please send enquiries to the Sales Officer.

BINDERS FOR PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

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



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

Still Available

The People's Palace - the story of Bradford's New Vic.

By Mark Nicholson. 364 Pages, fully illustrated. Price £20.00 plus postage (reviewed in the last Bulletin)

Ordering

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

Note: We no longer accept card payments for orders by post.

Also Available (but not from the Sales Officer)

Paris Cinés 1982-1992 des Cinémas Disparaissent
(Disappearing Cinemas of Paris 1982-1992)

by Jean-Francoise Chaput. Hardback, 266 pages, fully illustrated. French language. ISBN 9789461617125. Available from Amazon, etc, about £29.00.



The author presented a talk to the CTA last December about his photography project and this book is the result of his work. Between 1982 and 1992, 110 cinemas closed their doors in Paris. Through a selection of more than 180 photos taken over these ten years, the author offers a unique testimony on these popular cinemas in the

capital. The Far West, the Cinex, the Rialto, the Eden, 48 cinemas, most of which have disappeared, are presented following a geographical route, from the Grands-Boulevards (birthplace of the first cinemas) to the Latin Quarter. The images are accompanied by numerous texts taken from the life stories of cashiers, usherettes and projectionists. Their stories, instructive or comical, are the voices that populate a little-known world, that of dark rooms in the now lost time of film on film.

Jean-François Chaput is a French photographer born in Paris in 1955. His work on Parisian cinemas has been the subject of several exhibitions; his works are present in public and private collections.

(Please note that the text is in French only).



Second-Hand Books

Thanks to generous donations from members, we have a new, larger selection of second-hand books for sale, including many rare titles and some *Kine Year Books* from the 1950s and 60s.

To receive a full list with around 120 titles, please send an email to the Sales Officer sales@cta-uk.org with 'Second Hand Book List' as the subject. Or write to the Sales Officer, 34 Pelham Road, London, N22 6LN (SAE appreciated).

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 simply to 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: go to cta-uk.org/archive and click on *Making an Enquiry*. 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.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

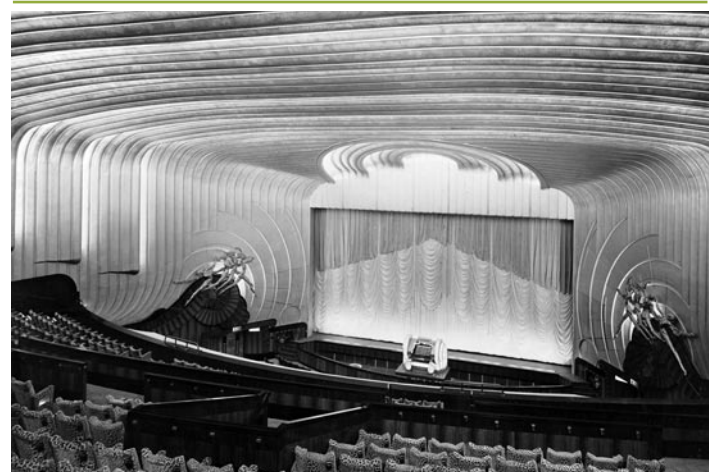
The Archive is seeking a member who has access to the Internet and possesses a reasonably large back catalogue of the *CTA Bulletin* and *Picture House* for a special one-off project that can be carried out at home. The *CTA Bulletin* and *Picture House* have recently been digitised and there is need for a volunteer willing to go through these scanned copies, held online in pdf format and compare them with the originals. The volunteer will be looking for missing pages or perhaps errors in the scanning process. If such issues are identified they simply need to note the copy of the magazine and the page or pages affected so they may be corrected. If you feel this would be of interest to you and you can spare some time for this over the coming months, please do contact me to discuss it further: Clive Polden, archive@cta-uk.org or 07971 752807.

RESTORATION OF ODEON LEICESTER SQUARE PHOTOGRAPH

The Archive contains a few early photographs of the interior of the Odeon cinema in Leicester Square. Unfortunately, one of the best views of the auditorium was marred by a nasty crease running almost centrally across the image. It was so severe as to make the image almost unusable. Fortunately, one of the users of the Archive took an interest in the image and decided to give it a professional digital restoration. The results can be viewed for yourself below as we compare the original to the restored version.



Close-up of damage to original photograph



Newly restored photograph

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

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

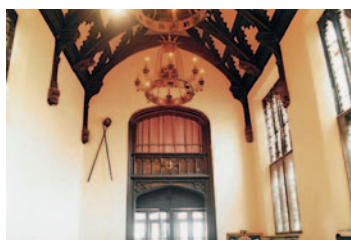
CTA WESSEX PRESENTS SALISBURY DAY

Monday 18 September 2023

By Fabian Breckels

I had a particular interest in this CTA trip – I'd done one relief management stint at the Odeon Salisbury during my brief time with Rank back in 1990, so I wanted to see what the place was like now, compare it with the photographs I took then and round it off visiting the Everyman, a cinema reopened only in June, having closed for bingo when I was two. Only about twenty or so of us attended what was a very worthwhile visit, so I'd like to pass my thanks onto David Eve for organising it.

First the Odeon; back in 1990 it was a triple, now it's a five-screen cinema with screens added in the front stalls and former restaurant area. The 'Cinema Experience Manager' Naomi knew a lot about the cinema but I was surprised to find out that they are now run by four staff members on a usual day, I was used to far more! The then Gaumont Palace Cinema opened on 7 September 1931 with Ralph Lynn in *Chance of a Night Time*. The façade and outer foyer is actually a Grade I Listed building, built as Ye Halle of John Halle, a Tudor Gothic style building, which was originally built as the home of a 15th Century wool merchant around 1470. It received a new Mock Tudor style façade, designed by Pugin, in 1834. The cinema built behind was designed in a Tudor style to match by William Edward Trent. Tripled in 1973, the 1931 part of the building was listed Grade II in 1984. The 4th and 5th screens went in during the 1990s. With thanks to Ken Roe's summary on Cinema Treasures for that potted history.



Above: The Hall of John Halle in 1990; note the Odeon poster on a frame to the right.

Right: the same space in September 2023; curtaining over the minstrel's balcony has gone and there are medieval weapons on [both](#) sides of the entrance



From here we were led into the Foyer – rather too crowded for a decent photograph and on into the new Screen 2 in the front stalls. This was quite a decent size but the grilles either side of the original proscenium were painted white, while the screen was pushed towards the back of the stage.

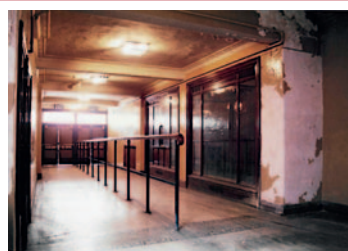


Screen 2 in the front stalls



If we compare that to the view [R] from Screen 1 back in 1990, you can see just how much has been boxed in by the conversion, including surviving wall paintings in the stalls area and the ceiling over the grilles.

From Screen 2 we were led into the area containing the front stalls paybox, which I thought was quite a find but which has been considerably spruced up now, as it serves as the disabled access to the ground floor screens.



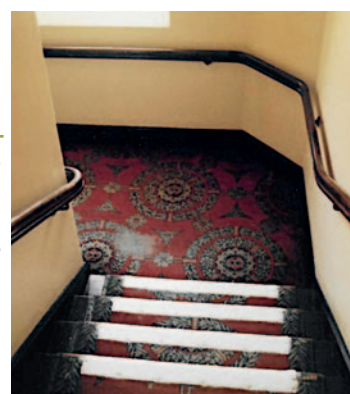
Top: The abandoned front stalls pay box and foyer area in 1990, compared to now (bottom); note the changed exit signs and generally better condition, including far nicer period doors.

From here we were taken into the basement – not somewhere I had seen last time I was here. This was a warren of rooms containing old equipment and some surviving GB carpet, table and chairs from the restaurant. Thirty-three years previously, some GB carpet survived in the stairwells as well, which fascinated me, despite the obvious signs of wear and tear.



Above [L&R]: rooms in the basement.
Right: GB carpet in a stairwell in 1990.

Next, we were taken into the minis – originally Screens 2 & 3 but now 3 & 4. Something I had noticed when on relief duty was how there was a gap between the pelmet for the curtains and the ceiling, something which looked decidedly odd but which left more of the ceiling intact.



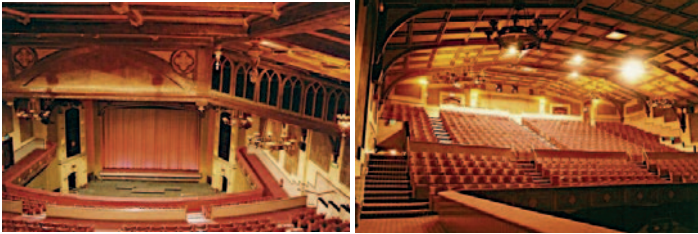
In 2023 that anomaly survives in both screens, intact. [R] is the same screen in September 2023. The exit has now been moved to the left to allow the passageway to the screen in front of it to go in to the right, while a central aisle is used instead of aisles down the sides.

Next it was upstairs. The cinema in the former restaurant is now Screen 5. What wasn't lost on any of us was how much space was lost in the conversion.



[L] the former restaurant; [R] screen 5 in the same space

The new screen is in front of the entrances to the kitchen. The archway into the second room can just be made out with a dark blue curtain covering a now locked door. We were let into what is now a storage area and the GB carpet has long gone.



Top: screen 1 in 1990; middle & bottom: screen 1 today



The Odeon exterior in [L] 1990 and [R] today

Screen 1 survives but is not what it was. Laura and I saw *A Haunting in Venice* there the night before. What we did notice was that the re-stepping of the auditorium to accommodate the new larger seating had led to an uneven stepping of the seating, while some seats have been 'decommissioned' because the chandeliers are now in the way of the screen.

Finally, the outside hasn't changed much. There was a readograph above the doors in the 1990s – the type with the slide-in letters. It's completely in shadow in this photo but the evening I was there we had an issue with discovering an ex-staff member had altered the film titles!



The exterior of the Everyman [ex ABC/Regal]

Next, we made our way to the former ABC Regal, a WR Glenn cinema that shut for bingo in 1969. It had first opened on 22 February 1936 with Shirley Temple in *Captain January* and Joseph Schmidt in *A Star Fell From Heaven*.

What is interesting is how Everyman converted it back into a cinema. Most of the ground floor is an L-shaped cafe bar with Screen 1 in the front stalls, a tiny Screen 2 behind it on one side, while screens 3 and 4 have been built effectively on top of the circle. The tiny Screen 2 was the first one we were shown, seating 37, I think. Screen 1 is more impressive, with working screen tabs.



Everyman screen 2



Everyman screen 1



Photo taken during the conversion

THE DOMINION / GRANADA ACTON

By David A Ellis

The Dominion in Acton, West London was a 1,500-seat cinema situated on the High Street. It opened on Saturday 16 October 1937 with Gracie Fields putting in an appearance. She delighted the audience, singing several of her songs. Albert Bacal and Nat Lee, both owners of the building, introduced her. The first manager was Nat Lee's son Sam.

The theatre was designed by Frank Ernest Bromidge and built by TJ Braybon and Sons Ltd of Brighton. It was run under the name Dominion (Acton) Ltd. The decorations were in soft pastel shades and seating was in blue. Decoration was by Campbell Bros Ltd. The whole of the electrical installation was carried out under the supervision of Major CH Bell OBE. The first film screened was a short descriptive picture of the building's progress. This was followed by *Parole Racket* and *Dreaming Lips*. Live entertainment was also provided by Jules Adrian and his orchestra. Up in the projection room were Ross projectors with a Western Electric sound system.

In November 1946 the cinema was taken over by the Granada circuit. It remained as the Granada cinema until 1972, closing on 24 June with the film *The Revengers*. Construction work for bingo started a short time before the building was fully closed and only the circle area was open for evening performances. It then became Granada Bingo, opening on 6 October 1972. It was opened by comedian Arthur Askey. The last person to manage it as a cinema was Mr Aubrey Cingel, who managed it from 1971. He moved over to the Granada Kingston.

The managerial staff was headed by Nick Hall, who at that time was the youngest general manager ever appointed by the company, being 23. Later Granada bingo became a Gala Bingo club. Bingo ceased in March 2014 and the building was purchased by the Destiny Christian Centre. They left in 2016 and the building was up for sale. In 2017 a company called Arch, which operates indoor climbing, purchased it. The Granada still stands and is listed Grade II.

Editor's Note: The CTA visited the Dominion/Granada in its guise as an indoor climbing centre after the 2023 AGM last May.



Two upstairs screens at the Everyman



[L] the projector access corridor; [R] the disabled lift shaft

But what is interesting is the somewhat 70's style gold curvy lines that were added by Everyman to the ante-proscenium walls. If you look at the photo David Eve took during the conversion [previous page], the original grille work is far more interesting, in my opinion anyway. This photograph also shows the steel framing going in to support Screens 3 and 4.

The upstairs screens are effectively new constructions within the shell of the original cinema. Both have their unique styling, both very 'Everyman' but bearing no relation to Glenn's original work. What this creates is a bizarre access space behind them, with ventilation ducts coming out of the original projector portholes. The projectors servicing the new screens are in this corridor, on lifts so they can be lowered for servicing as needed. There is also a rather natty lift for disabled patrons, the shaft looking like something out of a space ship.

The manager here, Philip Bendall, made us very welcome and Laura and I sampled some lunch there before heading home.

Salisbury now has two traditional cinemas, even though one is a brand-new conversion back from bingo. These days that's quite an achievement. I'd like to thank David Eve for organising the visit and allowing me, at least, to see how a cinema I once, briefly, worked in, has changed over the years. I look forward to more CTA Wessex trips in the not-too-distant future.



The Dominion / Granada Acton; photo taken March 2019

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.

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GRAVESEND AND DARTFORD

A report of the CTA visit, October 2023

The latest in the series of CTA trips to the wider South East of London by Marion Kennett, ably assisted by husband John, took us to the Thames estuary towns of Gravesend and Dartford in October of this year.



The Woodville Arts Centre [1]



The Paul Greengrass Cinema [1]

Despite the continuing issue of train disruption but blessed by unseasonably warm weather, a group of members assembled outside the Woodville multi-purpose arts centre situated in Gravesend town centre. Built in 1968 to the design of architects HT Cadbury-Brown and Partners, who were followers of the modernist school of architecture, it is very much of its time and still owned and operated by Gravesend Borough Council. The Woodville houses a 600-seat theatre, a smaller studio performance space, an art gallery and café. The theatre also runs regular film as the Paul Greengrass Cinema, named after the film director and it was in this configuration for our visit.

Go further East along the riverside and the town gives way to marshland somewhat reminiscent of the opening scenes from David Lean's *Great Expectations* but with added electricity pylons.



The State/Granada Dartford as the net church [1]



The interior of the former State/Granada as the net church [1]

We regrouped up-river at Dartford, a much more interesting town than you would expect for its association with the heavily trafficked M25 tunnel under the river and where we were to visit the State/Granada (1935 John Stanley Beard / WR Bennett). Latterly on Gala Bingo, it was sold to a church in 2014. The State originally seated 1,500 in Stalls and Circle. The church has since been carrying out a programme of repair and redecoration inside and out and it is a prominent feature of the town centre.



The exterior [2] and interior [3] of the Orchard Theatre

There is no obvious remnant of Barnard's Imperial Bioscope (1915) on the opposite corner of the street and the Gem adjacent to the State, now appears to be a vacant lot. The Scala theatre remains nearby, heavily altered as Atik nightclub but the Picture Palace was demolished for retail. However, our planned final stop was to be the Orchard Theatre of 1982. It features seating for up to 1,017 on three levels and a busy programme, halted by the finding, just days before our visit, of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in its construction. Our host allowed a squint through to the stage end of the auditorium but sadly no entry. Since our visit, the local authority has quickly moved the busy production schedule to the close-by Orchard West venue.

It took a national emergency to throw a wobbly at a CTA visit but Marion and John coped admirably and our thanks go to them and our hosts for a good day out.

Magwitch; photos by [1] Richard Norman; [2] Kent OnLine; [3] Kristian Lavercombe

CINEMA IS KING AGAIN

By Mike Whitcombe

It's a little over three years since cinemas across the world reopened their doors following the Covid pandemic. At the time, many claimed cinema was dead. Streaming movies in the comfort of your own home was now the only way to watch a film. Cinemas were dinosaurs that belonged to a time before a deadly pandemic swept the world.

At the time I wrote a couple of pieces for the Bulletin (vol 54 no 6 and vol 55 no 1), detailing the grim reality of cinemas being forced to close for months on end. I wrote how wonderful it was when they first reopened and the excitement we experienced returning to our favourite movie palace despite the restrictions – masks, social distancing – and the lack of new product. Just being back was thrill enough. I eventually concluded that I believed cinema could and would return to its former dominance. Three years later I believe my optimism was warranted.



The seven-screen Empire Catterick Garrison [North Yorks] opened October 2015; closed July 2023; photo taken August 2017

It hasn't all been good news, of course. In the United States, there are now just under 40,000 screens, that's 3,000 screens fewer than in 2019. Covid has clearly played a part in this although cinema analysts believe there were too many screens anyway. Here in the UK we've seen the loss of well-known cinema chain Empire Cinemas, who were founded in 2005 following the mergers of Odeon with UCI and Cineworld with UGC. At the time the Office of Fair Trading ruled that both new groups should lose a number of their cinemas, which created the opportunity for Empire Cinemas to be formed. The shuttering of their cinemas during Covid hit them hard financially and they entered administration in July 2023 when six of their fourteen cinemas closed immediately and the fitting out of their much anticipated ten-screen new build in Basildon, part of the £25 million town centre East Square development, was halted, leaving the cinema unopened and, unless an operator can be found, nothing more than a ghost cinema.

We've also seen one of our major cinema chains, Odeon, close sites this year. On the same day in June, Odeon closed one of their Oxford city centre sites (the Grade II listed Magdalen Street) as well as their cinemas in Blackpool, Weston-Super-Mare, Ayr and Banbury. In a glib press release, the company announced: "We can confirm that, following a thorough assessment of all available options, we have made the difficult decision to close a small number of cinemas."

Just how thorough that assessment was is anyone's guess but Merlin Cinemas quickly took over the Odeon at Weston (to be renamed Plaza) and Ayr (to be renamed Astoria). Cornwall-based Merlin Cinemas were founded in 1990 by Geoff Greaves. They own 18 cinemas in the UK, predominately in small coastal towns and operate the most southerly cinema in the UK at Penzance and the most northerly one in Thurso. They have a good track record and their decision to take over two former alleged loss-making cinemas within months of closure suggest that both sites are still viable concerns if in the right hands.

Odeon reported a £31 million loss last year despite post pandemic turnover increasing fifty per cent to £202 million. But this deficit does not mean that Odeon, or the cinema trade in general, is in trouble. Odeon has invested heavily in cinema improvements since Covid, particularly in regard to Luxe seating conversions. Luxury costs but it's

now regarded as standard by most cinema goers. A deficit because of much needed improvements during a financial year in which the entire cinema trade was finding its feet after enforced closure should not ring alarm bells.



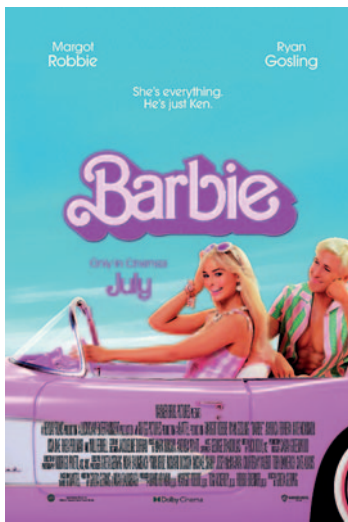
The nine-screen Cineworld Wakefield; photo taken August 2003

In fact, it could be argued that the biggest success story since the pandemic is the fact that Cineworld is still trading. \$8 billion in debt before Covid, they shuttered their cinemas for far longer than a proactive Odeon and few analysts thought they would reopen. But after filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the USA last September and entering administration in the UK during the summer, they have undergone a massive financial restructuring process. Out is former CEO Mooky Greidinger, who stubbornly presided over the sinking firm and in is Eduardo Acuna, former president of Mexican cinema chain Cinepolis Americas. Cineworld certainly wouldn't exist today if the money men believed there was no future for the cinema industry.

Both Odeon and Cineworld are fortunate in that they are the biggest cinema chains in the world. Odeon is a wholly owned subsidiary of AMC Theaters, the largest movie theater chain in the world, while Cineworld, owner of Regal Cinemas in the USA and Picturehouse in the UK, are globally the second largest movie theater operator. In short, both firms can absorb losses. But the same cannot be said for the many independent cinemas that dot the UK. They are struggling and it's not just because recession haunts the land. Recession, ironically, is good for business and always has been. In the USA, for example, the last eight recessions saw box office revenues increase six times over. And the same can be said in the UK. People need escapism when times are tough and the cinema delivers on that score.

The main problem facing all cinemas is not the recession as such but the cost of living crises, particularly the unjustified – morally or even business wise – rises in the cost of energy. Some sites have seen their electric and fuel bills rise two hundred plus per cent since the privatised energy companies decided to raise unit costs last year. Huge, hitherto unprecedented, hikes are swallowing up the slim profits that independent operators, in particular, have made since emerging from enforced closure. Many are calling for government help but the general consensus is, no matter which political party holds power, nothing will be done to halt the excessive profits of the privatised energy sector.

At this point, you might be asking why I'm still feeling positive about cinema's future. The answer for my continued optimism is *Barbenheimer*, which *Variety* called the movie event of the year. On 21 July, seven months into a year when cinema attendances were struggling to increase from the same period in 2022, Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* and Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* were released. The simultaneous theatrical release of these two films – one a fantasy feminist fable about the fashion doll Barbie, the other an intense biographical thriller about physicist J Robert Oppenheimer who oversaw the creation of the first atomic bomb – caught the public's imagination like nothing since the premiere of *Gone With The Wind*. Concession stands ran out of popcorn and coke, queues – yes, queues – stretched from every cinema foyer in the land, sold out signs were posted for multiple screenings and cinema was king once more.



Artwork by a team member at the Odeon Port Solent [above] – it greeted you as you entered the screens; photo by the author

Everyone wanted to watch these two movies. Even Tom Cruise, the man who the previous year had, according to director Steven Spielberg, pretty much single-handedly saved Hollywood after his *Top Gun: Maverick* made \$1 billion plus at the global box office, posted a picture of himself holding tickets to see both films on the same day. People got dressed up in pink for *Barbie* or wore a trilby and a jacket for *Oppenheimer*. It was the cultural event of the year, if not the decade. Two films do not make a summer, of course but the knock-on effect of these films continued into the autumn. Cinema was suddenly hip again. Those who had not returned after reopening now did and were hooked once more. As legendary director Francis Ford Coppola stated about the *Barbenheimer* effect: “It’s a victory for cinema.”

In fact, the summer was a profitable time for cinemas. Studios might have seen some of their releases underperform and not make them a profit – *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* and *Mission Impossible 7*, both hugely enjoyable films, were the so-called biggest flops making ‘just’ \$380 million and \$570 million respectively – but cinemas did okay with them. Don’t forget, distributors receive the majority of the sale of each ticket. Cinemas get a small percentage, of course but they make the bulk of their money from the concession stand. Add up global ticket sales of such ‘underperforming’ films this year such as *Indy 5*, *MI7*, *Little Mermaid* and *Galaxy of the Guardians 3* and you still get a box office total of more than \$2 billion which is a lot of footfall and equals a lot of food and drink sold – most of which is spilt on the auditorium floor. Make no mistake, when you add the global box office totals of *Barbie* (£1.4 billion), *Super Mario* (\$1.3 billion) and *Oppenheimer* (\$950 million) into the mix, it’s safe to say cinemas made money. But then, that’s what happens if you give the public what they want. In other words, cinema beats staying home and streaming.



A screen at the Odeon Bournemouth; photo by the author

I’m also filled with optimism with the way major cinema chains, as well as the independents, are facing the reality of keeping their audiences. As already mentioned, luxury is now taken as standard. The term ‘premiumization’ is the latest buzz word in the cinema industry. It’s a term that describes giving audiences the very best, whether in sound, vision or seating. Dolby, Imax, Ice Theatres, 4DX and Screen X are becoming more and more common. Premier seats and recliners are now replacing more standard fare. The Vue cinema in Portsmouth, for

instance, recently replaced every seat in their fourteen-screen multiplex with recliners. Odeon are doing the same with their Luxe sites. And film makers are insisting that their big budget epics are shown in the biggest, broadest format possible. Both James Cameron’s *Avatar: The Way of Water* and Nolan’s *Oppenheimer* played to sold out Imax screenings where the viewer could be wowed! At the risk of repeating myself, you don’t feel wowed sat at home streaming the latest movie.

When Nolan agreed his deal with Universal Pictures to direct *Oppenheimer*, part of his contract stated that his film would play in cinemas for one hundred days (three months and more) before it could be streamed. Nolan is a real film nut. He also insisted that *Oppenheimer* was released digitally and on actual 70mm film. A few years ago – heck, a few months ago – this would have been unthinkable but the demand for a cinema-going experience is increasing and even the streaming firms seem to be realising it. Netflix, Apple Studios and Amazon are investing heavily in films and appreciate that releasing a movie at a cinema isn’t only so they can be in the running to be nominated at the Academy Awards.

“It’s very encouraging,” said Greg Marcus, CEO of Marcus Theatres. “We believe in the importance of theatrical in an entertainment ecosystem. A theatrical run sets the tune and distinguishes product in a way that nothing else can (and) with the appropriate length window the customer is incentivized to go to theaters.”

More importantly, both Amazon and Apple have announced that they will be investing \$1 billion annually in films, which they will release theatrically for a month at least before they are streamed. Netflix even owns two cinemas – the Paris Theatre in New York and the Egyptian in LA – while Amazon recently opened the Culver Theatre in California.



Streaming firms might not begin owning cinema chains but they are realising the power of cinemas. And it seems to be paying off. Apple Studios recently invested \$200 million in Martin Scorsese’s *Killers of the Flower Moon*, a three-and-a-half-hour masterpiece. It will eventually be streamed on Apple TV+ but after premiering at the 76th Cannes Film Festival it was released theatrically under the Apple Original Films label along with Paramount Pictures. In two weeks, it grossed \$119 million worldwide. For a movie aimed at an older audience that already pays for several streaming services, those box office receipts are more than impressive. Similarly, Ridley Scott’s much anticipated *Napoleon*, starring the mesmerising Joaquin Phoenix, produced by Apple Studios, will get a proper theatrical release before going to Apple TV+. The days when big budget films produced by streaming companies would never see the inside of a cinema are long gone. To get your \$100 million plus movie noticed, show it first on the big screen.

Cinema-going is clearly alive and kicking and although tough times undoubtedly lie ahead – the recent SAG strike has already put back release dates and postponed much needed financial revenue – our favourite movie houses will only continue to cement their iconic status within our communities. As Christopher Nolan wrote in the *Washington Post* days after cinemas were forced to close in March 2020: “When this crisis passes, the need for collective human engagement, the need to live and love and laugh and cry together, will be more powerful than ever. We need what movies can offer us.”

And what better place to do all that than in a darkened cinema auditorium? See you at the movies.

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

By David Simpson

Since 2014, trade magazine *Screen International* has been presenting the Big Screen Awards, which celebrate many (and varied) aspects of the UK film industry, from 'Best British Film' and 'Breakthrough British Actor' to 'Poster Design of the Year' and 'Trailer of the Year'. (In 2023, there were 21 award categories, which attracted 243 entries.) Our principal interest, of course, is in the 'Cinema of the Year' awards. There are two such categories: '24 Screens and Under' (for individual cinemas) and '25 Screens and More' (for individual cinemas within the larger circuits). These categories "honour the cinemas that showed strong performance with ticket sales and also engaged in new and improved ways to serve both its local audience and distributors. While ticket sales will be a factor, judges will be looking for evidence of how the cinema connects with and serves its community, as well as innovation and/or ambition around programming."

The 2023 ceremony was held on 23 November at The Brewery, London EC1. The winners, which we congratulate and celebrate on the front cover, were Highland (Fort William) in the '24 screens' category (the other nominees being BFI Southbank, Ealing Project, Jam Jar (Whitley Bay), Living Room (Liphook, which was 'Highly Commended'), Montrose Playhouse, Palace (Broadstairs), Parkway (Barnsley) and Queen's Film Theatre, Belfast) and, in the '25 screens' category, Greenwich Picturehouse (the other nominees being Cineworld (Baldon), Curzon (Kingston), Light (Walsall), Odeon Luxe (Derby), Vue (Printworks, Manchester) and Scott (Bridgewater)).



BFI (NFT) Southbank [2]



Ealing Project [2]



Jam Jar Whitley Bay [1]



Living Room Liphook [1]



Montrose Playhouse [3]



Palace Broadstairs [2]



Parkway Barnsley [2]



Queen's Film Theatre Belfast [2]

PREVIOUS WINNERS WERE:

Cinema of the Year (24 screens and Under)

2014: Market Hall Cinema, Brynmawr
2015: Glasgow Film Theatre
2016: Genesis, Mile End Road
2017: Zeffirellis and Fellinis, Ambleside
2018: Picture House, Uckfield
2019: Rio, Dalston
2020-2021: No awards
2022: Ilkley Cinema

Cinema of the Year (25 screens and More)

2014: Cineworld, O2, Greenwich
2015: Odeon, Dorchester
2016: Picturehouse Central
2017: Vue, West End
2018: Odeon Luxe, Edinburgh West
2019: West Norwood Picturehouse
2020-2021: No awards
2022: Cineworld, Basildon

bigscreenawards.com

With thanks to Margaret Burgoine

Photos: [1] David Simpson; [2] Harry Rigby; [3] robboehm



Cineworld Boldon [2]



Curzon Kingston [1]



Light Walsall [1]



Odeon Derby [1]



Vue Printworks Manchester [1]



Scott Bridgewater [1]



The Awards Ceremony

MISCELLANY

DISNEY'S 'WOKE' WOES PART 1

Disney has dropped plans to build a £725m office complex in Florida amid an on-going row with Governor Ron DeSantis. This would have resulted in thousands of jobs moving from California but the company has been at odds with DeSantis since its former chief executive Bob Chapek criticised legislation that would limit the discussion of sexuality in schools – the so-called 'Don't Say Gay' law. The governor slammed 'woke Disney' and has looked to cancel special treatments given to the company.

Daily Mail – 20 May; sent in by Barry Quinton

DISNEY'S 'WOKE' WOES PART 2

David Hand, whose father, also called David, worked on the original *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, has waded into the row over the 'politically correct' remake. The new film, due to be released next year, does not feature a charming heart-throb and replaces the dwarves with 'magical beings'. His comments came after Rachel Zegler, who stars as Snow White, criticised the original as being "extremely dated" and suggested that Prince Charming was "a stalker."

Daily Mail – 19 August; sent in by Barry Quinton

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK UPSTAIRS!

A rare Star Wars toy, found in a loft, was expected to sell for up to £15,000 at auction. Barely a dozen of the Jawa figures – with a vinyl rather than a cloth cape – were distributed worldwide in the 1970s before being withdrawn. They would have cost £1.50 at the time. In the event, it was snapped up for a whopping £21,000!

Daily Mirror – 12 July; sent in by Barry Quinton; BBC News – 22 July

AUCTION NEWS 1: A VIEW TO A KILLING...

224 lots belonging to James Bond star Roger Moore went under the hammer at Bonhams in London on 4 October. All were sold, including important Bond memorabilia, collectables and personal ephemera. The top lot was a collection of 20 Swatch 007 wristwatches, with presentation case, dedicated to Sir Roger Moore and commemorating the 40th anniversary of James Bond on film; these sold for £76,000, against an estimate of £10,000 - £20,000. Other highlights included Moore's white ski suit from *A View to a Kill*, which sold for £28,200 (estimate: £15,000-£25,000), an Omega special edition '50 Years of 007' Seamaster, which sold for £57,600 (estimate: £20,000-£30,000), a large red, simulated leather backgammon case used on set in games against Albert 'Cubby' Broccoli, for £15,400 (estimate: £300-£500), a poster for *Octopussy*, for £14,100 (estimate: £500-£700) and even the actor's much-used passport (1991-2001) which sold for a whopping £12,200 (estimate: £2,000-£3,000)! A total of £1,117,300 was raised, against a pre-sale high estimate of £415,300. The auction ran from 1pm until 10:20pm, with bidding from around the world. The items were sold by his family, who said they will make a donation to UNICEF.

Daily Mirror – 11 July; sent in by Barry Quinton; Bonhams website

AUCTION NEWS 2: SORT OUT THOSE OLD POSTERS!

A collection of over 400 film posters was sold by Ewbank's on 6 October. Among them were *Zombie Flesh Eaters* (1979) which, estimated at £200-£400, sold for £715, *The Shining* (1980), estimated at £80-£120, which went for £143, *Zombies: Dawn of the Dead* (1979), estimated at £80-£120, which sold for £221 and, one of the star lots, *Dr Who and the Daleks* (1965), starring Peter Cushing, which went for £3,640, the upper end of its £2,000-£4,000 estimate. Others that did rather well included *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969/£1,430; estimate £500-£800) and *The Sound of Music* (1965/£520; estimate £100-£150).

Metro – 27 September; sent in by R. David Simpson; Ewbanks website

AUCTION NEWS 3: AND YET MORE BOND...

Steve Oxenrider, a retired teacher from San Francisco, reckoned to be the most prolific collector of Bond memorabilia, put his vast haul of memorabilia up for auction at Ewbank's. His hoard of some 32,000 items was expected to fetch around £1m – and was so vast that it had to be spread over two auctions, on 16 and 17 November. The star lots included British quad posters for *Goldfinger*, which had an estimate of £5,000-£8,000 and went for £10,075 and *Dr No*, which, estimated at £12,000-£15,000, sold for a whopping £24,700,

Daily Express – 30 October; i – 30 October (sent in by Tom Laughlan); Ewbanks website

A FILM STUDIO FOR SE28

Planning permission has been granted for film company Indie-Zero to build a film studio on a three-acre site in Greenwich. The 4,000 sq ft Studio E will be available for hire and the development also includes a green room, production offices and 80 parking places.

The News Shopper – 5 July; sent in by Ian Mitchell

SCREEN MACHINE WOES

The Screen Machine was on the inner Hebridean island of Colonsay when it was reported that a customer had "spent part of their visit damaging the wall next to their seat." Material on the wall had been picked off and left on the floor. Repairs were made prior to the cinema's next stop, at Port Ellon. The 80-seat mobile cinema tours Scotland's Highland and Island communities, giving people who live far from a static cinema the opportunity to see the latest film releases. After Port Ellon, it was due to visit Fort Augustus, Ullapool, Lochinver and Kinlochbervie.



The Cinemobile – currently on hire to the Screen Machine in Scotland

However, rather more seriously, it was later reported that the 'real' Screen Machine has been out of service since March, due to breakdowns and Regional Screen Scotland (RSS) has been leasing a replacement *Cinemobile*. That contract runs out in April 2024 and there is no funding in place beyond then. RSS says a new mobile cinema would cost at least £1.4m and take up to 18 months to build (and is needed anyway because the original 'sits' too low to get off the slipway at several islands). Calling on the Scottish Government to intervene, RSS said "Next month [October] will mark the 25th anniversary of this service and, whilst this is a cause for celebration, there is reason for concern. Without investment for a brand new, greener mobile cinema, the Screen Machine service will be wound down. We need the Scottish Government to provide 50 percent of the cost of a new cinema and we will fundraise for the balance."

The National – 29 August & 11 September;

Daily Record – 12 September (sent in by Tom Laughlan)

A BOOST FOR CORNWALL

Cornwall's burgeoning screen industry has been given a boost with funding for Screen Cornwall to grow the county's film sector and raise the profile of Cornish media, including Cornish language content. Screen Cornwall will also extend its outreach and talent development programme, which offers people from a diverse range of backgrounds the chance to take their first steps into the industry. The successful funding bid, worth more than £395,000, follows research conducted by Screen Cornwall, funded by the BFI, which found that the screen industry in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has the potential to become a "cluster of national significance", building on growing momentum for Cornish independent films and location filming.

Business Cornwall – 23 August

BARBIE BESOTTED!

Wearing a vintage-inspired pink and white gingham dress, modelling one of the looks from Barbie, aficionado June Furlong has been taking to the stage at the *Odyssey* St Albans, to introduce the box office hit. She has worked at the cinema for four years and when bosses found out about her collection of 300 Barbie dolls, dating back to 1995, they invited her to set up a display and to talk about the iconic fashion doll – all adding to the 'Barbie experience'.

BBC News – 9 September; sent in by Terry Hanstock

WONKA BONKERS!

Superfan Nick Anderton's house is 'choc' full of *Willy Wonka* memorabilia, after he spent £150,000 to build his own world of pure imagination. His collection, of around 2,500 items, includes the handprints of Gene Wilder, who played the eccentric chocolatier in the 1971 adaptation, plus a Wonka bar from that film. Nick was "blown away" when he saw *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* as a child but didn't start collecting until seeing the 2005 version, which starred Johnny Depp. He even has some memorabilia from the forthcoming film, starring Timothée Chalamet, after being given parts of a boat used during filming in Norfolk.

Metro – 25 July;
sent in by R. David Simpson

ELECTRA PALACE, SHEFFIELD

Terry Hanstock has sent in this charming image of a programme cover. It is undated but the cinema opened in February 1911, so it is most likely from around that time. Seating was for 670 in stalls and circle; there was a tea lounge at circle level and a restaurant in the basement. After alterations, it reopened in September 1945 as the *News Theatre* then, from January 1959, it became the *Cartoon Cinema*. In 1962 it was acquired by *Classic*, who covered the ornate façade with the-then ubiquitous metal cladding before renaming it. *Cannon* took over in April 1982 but closed it, still as the *Classic*, that November. Following a serious fire in February 1984 the remains were demolished and replaced by retail premises.



OSCARS TO ITV

ITV has taken over from Sky as the new home of the Oscars ceremony in the UK. The 96th Academy Awards will be broadcast live from the *Dolby Theatre* in Los Angeles through ITV1 and ITVX on 10 March next year. This is part of a multi-year agreement with Disney Entertainment.

i – 13 September; sent in by Tom Laughlan

PETER CUSHING: STILL A LEGEND

Bidders from around the world vied for memorabilia of the late acting legend at Canterbury Auction Galleries on 1 October. The sale, by his family, amounted to a treasure trove from his personal life and 60-year acting career and raised more than £100,000 – double its estimate. There were some 260 lots. *Star Wars* memorabilia sold well, with a 1977 letter from producer Gary Kurtz informing the actor of a bonus selling for £1,350, while an original script made £1,250. (Although the 'star lot': a pair of slippers worn on set together with a figure of him as Grand Moff Tarkin, made by the props/costume department, which had an estimate of £15,000 to £20,000, failed to sell.) Posters were also keenly sought after, with a French poster for *Brides of Dracula* fetching £1,250. But it was the more personal items that commanded most attention. A group of seven miniatures Cushing painted of Henry VIII and his wives, each dedicated to his own wife, Helen, sold for double their estimate, fetching £1,850. His Olympia typewriter, estimated at £200-£300, sold for £1,300 and even his childhood toy pig sold well over estimate for £580. He was also a talented artist: several watercolours fetched around £1,000 each and a book of caricatures, drawn while at his local tearoom, sold for £800. But perhaps the most poignant item was a silk scarf he made for his wife, which was bought by a man for his wife for £1,150. The story of this began in 1946, when the actor was 39 and between plays. Unable to afford a Christmas present for Helen, he hand-painted the scarf for her. She wore it to the opening night of a play, where it was spotted by a textile manufacturer, who invited Cushing to his mills to learn screen-printing. The actor took to it and for the rest of that year designed and created silk scarves. He was then thrilled to see the Queen Mother wearing one of his creations when they met in 1956. Other key items were a folder of 230 handwritten pages of his autobiography, dated January 1985, which sold for £4,000 and his big red *This is Your Life* book, which fetched £3,200.

Kent Online – 17 October; sent in by Philip Stevens

THE 'PLAQUE CAMPAIGN' GATHERS MOMENTUM

Further to the *Miscellany* item in Bulletin 57/4 p17, the campaign to install a plaque in honour of Romaine Hart at the *Screen on the Green* has gained the support of her daughter Nicola. She says her mother changed the face of Islington forever with the success of the cinema, famously called "the coolest in London" by director Quentin Tarantino, by bringing the area up to a new era of respectability and cultural interest. Indeed, she said her mother laughed that she'd priced herself out of living in Islington! Nicola has spoken to Bafta CEO Jane Millichip, who is said to be "super supportive of Romaine" and will now approach Islington Council and Everyman, operator of the *Screen on the Green*.

Islington Tribune – 8 September; sent in by Tom Laughlan

A DELICATE ISSUE...

With Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon* running a mammoth 3 hours 26 minutes, filmgoers are having to ask themselves that all-important question: Do I pop to the loo now, or wait for that Leonardo DiCaprio monologue? To assist those who cannot 'stay the course', some cinemas have introduced an intermission. However, while, to judge by reactions on social media, these have been broadly welcomed, they should have the distributor's approval, so operators have not exactly been shouting about them. But help is at hand: As with many of today's troubling situations, there's an app! This one is, er, *RunPee* and it apparently identifies the optimum moment(s) in which to take that much-needed comfort break! In the case of Scorsese's epic, there are apparently five – and, on your way back, the app will tell you what you have missed! Dan Gardner, the developer, says it already has a user base of around 250,000 and, with films getting ever longer (in 1982, the average running time of the 10 most popular films at the US box office was 108 minutes; by 2022 this had jumped to 132 minutes) this is only set to increase. And it might soon be needed like never before, as Kevin Costner is reportedly planning an 11-hour Western, spanning 15 years on the frontier. He will be editing it down into two chunks but that's still an awful long time to sit with crossed legs!

Daily Telegraph – 26 October;
sent in by Giles Woodforde (having taken a suitable comfort break!)

'CRASS OR CLASSIC'?

In a poll by sweets' brand M&M's, which is launching a Short Film Festival contest for aspiring filmmakers, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* has been voted the classic film that has aged the worst. This is all down to Mickey Rooney's now-infamous portrayal, in 'yellowface', of Audrey Hepburn's Japanese neighbour IY Yunioshi (which also caused controversy in 2022, when Channel 5 screened an edited version in which the scenes featuring this character had been deleted, although the actor's credit remained. This led to accusations of censorship...). Meanwhile, back at the poll, *Gone With The Wind* came second, amid concerns that it romanticises slavery and *The Last Samurai* (2003, starring Tom Cruise) was third, with accusations that it gives "an inaccurate account portrayal of Japanese culture."

Metro – 9 November; sent in by Tom Laughlan

THE THERAPEUTIC 'MAGIC OF THE MOVIES'

MediCinema has announced it will be building one of its facilities in the Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool, in 2024, in partnership with the Alder Hey Children's Charity and the Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust. Founded in 1999, the registered charity currently has cinemas in the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle upon Tyne, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow, Serennu Children's Centre, Newport, South Wales and St Thomas', Guy's and the Chelsea and Westminster in London. There are ambitious plans to double the number of sites by 2025, one of which is of particular interest to us: *Stanford Hall*, near Loughborough, in Leicestershire. Constructed in 1774, this was acquired by industrialist Sir Julien Cahn in 1928, who built the 350-seat *Stanford Hall Theatre*, complete with Wurlitzer organ. This opened in 1938 and presented films and live shows to the public right up to 2004. It had been acquired by the Co-operative Union in 1945, following Sir Julien's death and used as a college. They moved out in 2001 and there were plans to convert the Hall to residential use. These came to nothing and, in October 2011, it was purchased by Gerald Grosvenor, the Duke of Westminster. He donated it to the Ministry of Defence, which moved the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre there. MediCinema hope to open there "once the clinical facility is fully settled and an appropriate site can be found": there is no mention of whether the existing cinema/theatre, which is Grade II listed, could be adapted.

MediCinema press release – 21 November

CINEMA BUSINESS

UPS AND DOWNS AT EVERYMAN

Everyman saw its earnings double in July, as it racked up a record week of admissions. *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* helped lift earnings to £2.6m, from £1.3m the month before, while revenue rose from £7.1m to £10.6m. The early success of both films was expected to continue into August, which would produce welcome news as, in September, the circuit posted pre-tax losses of £4.3m for the first six months of the year. This was a five-fold increase in the £798,000 lost in the same period the previous year. Admissions fell by 0.2m but it was hoped that the recovery sparked by *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* would be sustained through the second half of the year.

Daily Express – 19 August; sent in by Barry Quinton; *City AM* – 27 September & *Evening Standard* – 28 September; sent in by Tom Laughlan

THE 'BARBENHEIMER EFFECT' ROLLS ON

Barbie became the year's biggest global box office hit when it reached £1.1bn in earnings. This beat the animated plumber caper *Super Mario Bros Movie*, which took £1bn following its April release. It also means that star and producer Margot Robbie will now have around £40m to play with, after a deal that combines her salary with a share of the box office. Meanwhile, *Oppenheimer*, the other half of the popular 'double bill', took third place with £675m, helping the US summer box office to hit £3.1bn for the first time since the pandemic.

Daily Express – 5 September

CELEBRATING THE MAGIC OF THE MOVIES – IN THE USA

Further to the item in the previous issue, nearly 8.5m people went to the movies to celebrate National Cinema Day on Sunday 27 August as cinemas offered tickets for only \$4 across all screens and formats. \$34m was taken at the box office, a significant increase from last year's returns of approximately \$24m. More than 3,000 locations and 30,000 screens across the US and Canada participated, with sold-out showtimes throughout the day, the National Cinema Foundation reported.

USA Today – 31 August

SWIFT-LY COME DANCING

Bosses at Odeon, Cineworld and Everyman told fans coming to see *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour* to forget standard cinema etiquette and enjoy singing and dancing along with the film. They were also encouraged to wear 'Eras attire' and swap friendship bracelets, although confetti and glitter remained prohibited. This came after Ms Swift took to Instagram to encourage her fans to enjoy themselves, after many had complained on social media that cinemas would not allow them to 'go full concert mode'. The film is tipped to break British box office records for a concert feature.

Daily Mail – 14 October & i – 17 October; sent in by Tom Laughlan

A MOVIE AND A BEER...

A study by the USA-based Motion Picture Licensing Corporation found that nine in 10 inns got a takings boost by showing Hollywood blockbusters. Some 82 percent said that film nights improved footfall and 93 percent found it lifted customer satisfaction levels. It was also discovered that 70 percent of customers had chosen to go to an inn because it was screening a film or a TV show.

Daily Record – 24 October; sent in by Tom Laughlan

THE CURSE OF THE 'STUDIO TAX'

Demand for UK film and TV production is set to spike – just as new 'studio taxes' cause venues to fear going out of business, industry executives have warned. The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has rethought the studios' rateable values and a higher value means a higher business rate. For example, Pinewood Studios' rateable value is set to rise from £3.95m to £16.2m. These increases are being investigated by the British Film Commission, which is meeting with the VOA to set out its concerns, especially as, in recent years, London has developed a reputation as a global filmmaking hub, making £97bn in revenue in 2022 as Europe's most-used destination. And new analysis from Knight Frank reveals that the UK needs a further 2.6m sq. ft of studio space by 2028 to keep up with a projected £2.4bn increase in film and TV production spending. "We hope that the situation will be averted before any studio goes out of business," said Stephanie Hartog, managing director of RD Studios. But the effects are already being felt: In the summer, Sunset Studios Waltham Cross, a £700m

project in Hertfordshire, was paused due to ongoing uncertainty with property taxes. A Treasury spokesperson responded by saying "We recognise this is a challenging time in the film and TV industry. That is why we have backed studios with sector specific tax reliefs that have supported over 6,000 film and TV productions and provided almost £1.4bn of support last year."

City AM – 11 October; sent in by Tom Laughlan

IT'S CINEMA, JIM – BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT...

A unique new cinema could be opening in the city centre in Newport, South Wales, as the *Cosy Cinema*, a family business, seeks to expand – opening up more of its trademark 'pods' in a derelict building on Upper Dock Street. It all started on a family trip to Disneyland, when John and Sian Colderley experienced the "madness" of the crowds and queues. Back home, in Dinas Powys, near Cardiff and wanting a bit of peace and quiet, they decided to build their own cinema. During lockdown, John designed a modular building (2.5m wide, 5m long and 2.4m in height, with a 92in screen, projector, sound bar, 'lounge-style' seating, air conditioning and heating) and installed it in their back garden. Having showcased it on social media and generated much interest, they started hiring it out. This proved so successful that they opened a further eight pods: two more at their home and six at Cardiff Caravan Park. Each can accommodate up to two adults and four children and can be booked for three-hour sessions, which cost £55, six-hour sessions, at £99, or even overnight, from £138. Their new site should be home to 15 pods, over two floors. A concession stand will sell their 'Cosy Combos' – a selection of fizzy drinks, sweets, popcorn, crisps and chocolate – and there will be showers (for those staying overnight) and toilets on both floors.



South Wales Argos – 2 October; photo sourced from cosse.co.uk

EMPIRE'S WOES LAID BARE

A statement of affairs, issued by administrator BDO, has given an insight into Empire's financial situation. Trade creditors are owed £4m, with the worst hit being Disney (owed £712,000) and power supplier Pozitive Energy (£598,000). Details of the debt owed to secured creditor Barclays were redacted, to avoid offering a guide to potential bidders. However, in June 2021, the bank refinanced £13m debt previously advanced to Empire Cinemas by AIB and extended further finance through a coronavirus lending scheme. Meanwhile, the circuit's Empire cinemas at Birmingham (Great Park), Clydebank, High Wycombe, Ipswich and Sutton and Tivoli cinemas at Bath and Cheltenham, are continuing to trade.

Sunday Times Ireland – 1 October

ENTER THE CHALMERS GROUP!

News has only just reached us, through a fairly innocuous Newsreel item (see under Bathgate), that Scottish entertainment company Chalmers Group entered the wonderful world of film exhibition during the past decade by converting three nightclubs into full-time cinemas. All are named after their locations: Arbroath Cinema, with four screens, is believed to have opened around 2014, Bathgate Cinema (three screens) around May 2016 and the single-screen Alloa Cinema followed in September 2017. The Bathgate and Alloa cinemas are housed in Category 'B' listed former churches while, in Arbroath, it occupies a 1980s waterfront building that opened as a nightclub. It is not known what prompted the company to make this switch. There are indications at Arbroath of involvement by the police (regarding nightclub operating times) and the council (which favoured other family activities alongside the nightclub) but, judging by on-line searches, no serious issues appear to have been reported. Indeed, these developments seem to have largely eluded the local press – hence we have only just become aware of them.

Submitted by David Simpson

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.

David Simpson adds: Many apologies to Tom Laughlan for spelling his surname incorrectly in some items in all three News sections in the previous issue. He kindly sends in batches of items and, once I had made the mistake, it was replicated on all the items in that particular batch. So apologies, Tom, and do keep sending the items in; they are much appreciated!

ABERDEEN

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p20, a preferred operator for the closed **Belmont Filmhouse** was revealed at a council committee meeting on 13 September. This is Belmont Community Cinema, which has set out plans to re-open the building as an independent, not-for-profit cinema focussing on four key areas: cultural film programming, education and filmmaking, community and customer experience. Its board includes Dallas King, the cinema's former manager, Timothy Baker, a former independent filmmaker who is a professor in Scottish and contemporary literature at the University of Aberdeen, community activist Jacob Campbell and charity chief executive Sophy Green. This preferred operator will now have an 'exclusivity period agreement' to allow it to undertake fundraising and finalise their redevelopment plans. Belmont Community Cinema was born out of the community-led Save the Belmont Cinema campaign, which rose to prominence soon after the news broke of the cinema's closure. Its ambitious plans also include establishing an Aberdeen Film Festival. The ultimate aim is to commence refurbishment work in April 2024, with the cinema re-opening in the autumn.

Screen Daily – 13 September; Aberdeen Live – 9 October

ABINGDON (Oxfordshire)



Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p20, the **Abbey** cinema has been saved after town councillors signed a new lease with owners Ian and Sue Wiper. This is only for two years, until August 2025, after which the building will close for an extensive refurbishment. However, the council said that "long-term cinema provision" is one of its aims, once the work has been carried out.

Oxford Mail – 2 October; photo by David Simpson (March 2019)

ALTON (Hampshire)



Initial plans to convert the former **Palace** into six apartments have been rejected. The application, by owner Raj Jevasingam, had its backers, with planning officers receiving three letters of support and Alton Town Council raising no objections. But, while planners did admit the renovation would improve the building's exterior, concerns about lack of parking, loss of privacy and light levels in the apartments were too strong to overlook. However, the good news for the applicant is that the council's heritage officer did not object to the plans, suggesting approval is not far off and reporting that "The proposed use as residential appears to be the optimal viable use for the building which also ensures the front visual element is retained. Overall, the scale and design of the extension to the building and alteration to the facades will ensure a good-quality development that will complement and respect both the retained façade and the wider area." The **Alton Picture Theatre** opened in 1912. Always independently owned, it was renamed the **Palace** around 1929. It closed for rebuilding, including the addition of a circle, in 1937, then for modernisation in 1969, after which bingo was introduced part-time. It had re-opened as the **New Palace**, but soon dropped the 'New'. Apart from occasional films at holiday times, the cinema operation closed in 1984, and other leisure activities took over. But in 1988 new owners opened a cinema in the former circle, while bingo continued in the former stalls – and a second screen was opened in 2003. Sadly, though, the **Palace** closed completely in 2022.

Liphook Herald – 26 October; photo taken March 2021

BANBURY (Oxfordshire)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/3 p12 the former **Odeon** has been placed on the market with a starting price in excess of £2m, with developers saying they are expecting a high demand. The cinema closed on 5 June, with bosses saying it was "no longer viable". The property is being marketed as an investment with a view to re-development. Interestingly, the 15,600sqft property is currently let to ABC Cinemas, guaranteed by Odeon Cinemas Limited at a current rent of £167,781.52 per annum.

Bicester Advertiser – 16 September

BASILDON (Essex)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p21, it has been revealed that the empty 'Empire' is costing the local council £60,000 a month for 24-hour on-site security, vacant unit insurance premiums, business rates, utilities and service charges. Basildon Council "recovered possession of the building" from Empire in August, and Craig Rimmer, councillor for economic stimulus and tourism, said "Plan A is to get a cinema operator in there" and open the complex "at some point next year". However, later on, he said a deal could be reached in three months, adding "The future of this project is bright, and the council is going at speed with a takeover process. We've got between four and six cinema operators that have submitted interest to us, and this gives us hope to get something done and dusted before Christmas."

BBC News – 22 September; Basildon Echo – 13 October

BATHGATE (West Lothian)

Emergency services were called to the independently run **Bathgate Cinema** at around 8pm on Saturday 28 October. The alarm had been set off after a group of boys entered the premises and set a toilet roll on fire in a restroom. It was quickly extinguished, but the venue had to be evacuated. Cinema bosses took to social media, blasting the offenders, saying they “put people’s lives at risk” – and that CCTV has been handed to the police. The cinema operates in the former St. David’s Church in George Street. (See also the Cinema Business section.)

STV News – 30 October

BEACONSFIELD (Buckinghamshire)



With Wetherspoon cancelling its plans to transform the former **Picture House/Chiltern** into one of their pubs, residents have been urging Everyman to transform it into one of their luxury cinemas. Unfortunately, while being pleased to hear so much positive sentiment towards his company, CEO Alex Scrimgeour has pointed them in the direction of their nearby cinemas at Gerrard’s Cross (the former **Picture Playhouse/Essoldo/Classic** etc.!) and their new arrival at Marlow (see below). At Beaconsfield, the **Picture House** opened in 1927. Always an independent, it was acquired by the council in 1960 and a stage erected, so live shows could run alongside the films. They renamed it the Chiltern in 1963. It closed in 1989 and became a children’s play centre before becoming a branch of pizza restaurant chain Prezzo. That closed at the onset of the pandemic, and Wetherspoon purchased the building in 2022.

Bucks Free Press – 21 September; photo taken March 2021

BELFAST

The **Strand Arts Centre**, the oldest surviving cinema in Northern Ireland, is asking cinemagoers to contribute their memories of the many other picture houses which have come and gone over the years. The Lasting Picture House project aims to celebrate the shared history of cinemagoing by collecting reminiscences of the cinemas which were once a feature of every town and village across the north. The stories will be “woven throughout the fabric of the renovated building” at the John McBride Neill-designed cinema, which was opened by Union Cinemas in 1935. This is part of a transformational £6.5m re-development, poised to begin early in 2024, intended to secure the future of this treasured landmark and create much-needed community arts spaces. On completion, visitors will have a ‘living museum’ experience, where they can absorb the architectural and social history of a pre-war cinema, with the sensitive restoration of original architectural features including the iconic façade, entrance and foyer. Two ‘heritage’ cinema auditoriums will double as intimate live performance spaces, the screen in the circle will be transformed into a world-class performance space, seating 250, while the restored front stalls will be transformed into a unique theatre space for 160. Enhanced backstage facilities will make the venue more attractive to local artists, touring productions and festival events. An interactive exhibition will celebrate the history of this iconic cinema, showcasing the story of the **Strand** and the many lives it has touched, while a separate high-end screening room will seat up to 60 patrons. There will be a new café and two flexible creative learning studios will increase the centre’s ability to facilitate performing and visual arts classes. The building will close in February 2024 and is expected to re-open in mid-

2025, in time to mark its 90th birthday. Taken over by ABC in 1937, the **Strand** was acquired by an independent operator in 1977, but closed in 1983. It became the **Strand Variety Theatre** until 1987, but then re-opened for films the following year, having been sub-divided into four screens. An initial restoration took place in 1999. The CTA visited in September 2014 (when this photo was taken).

Irish News – 15 March; Belfast News Letter – 2 November

BIRMINGHAM

New designs have been unveiled for the city’s £1.9bn Smithfield project, which seeks to transform the former Wholesale Markets site into a new district, complete with offices, shops, a pub, two community squares – and a new theatre or cinema. Historic England had set out a series of objections, arguing that the scheme would not only harm the historic cityscape but would also disturb significant medieval remains; developer Lendlease took account of their views in submitting a new planning application. If approved, construction on the 17-hectare site is set to begin in 2024, with the first building opening in 2028.

Birmingham Post – 2 November

BLACKPOOL (Lancashire)

Council approval has been granted for “urgently required” repairs, costing around £500,000, to the **Grand Theatre**. The Grand Theatre Trust had submitted plans for the work, which focus on the venue’s dome. An initial site survey found it to be “generally in poor condition”, with water penetration. Arts Council England will be approached for their help with the funding. Designed by Frank Matcham, the Grade II* listed theatre opened in 1894. Having been equipped for the ‘talkies’, for many years it was a full-time cinema during the winter months. It closed, and was threatened with demolition, in the early 1970s, but survived on bingo before being refurbished and re-opening as a live theatre in 1981. A full restoration was completed in 1994, in time for its centenary.

The Stage – 17 August; sent in by R. David Simpson; The Gazette – 14 September; BBC News – 18 September; The Stage – 5 October; sent in by R. David Simpson

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p21, all 10 screens have been removed from the former **Odeon** multiplex, along with the seating and interior walls, as part of a 10-week project which has left just the shell of the once bustling cinema. Austringer Capital Ltd, which owns the site, has applied to Blackpool Council for planning permission to convert the building into self-storage premises, with Storage King their prospective tenant. A previous application was approved for leisure purposes such as indoor sports and ten pin bowling, but that failed to attract interest. If planning permission is granted for the new use, it is hoped the building will also include food and drink outlets. Indicative computerised images depict brands such as Nandos, Subway and Greggs, although no tenants have been confirmed as yet, and documents submitted in response to the application include an objection from Blackpool Council’s public health department, which has raised concerns over the number of food outlets that are being proposed. The objection warns that Bloomfield ward is one of the most deprived neighbourhoods, which means residents, including children, are at higher risk of obesity and “poor outcomes” linked to unhealthy eating. It says there are currently 46 fast food outlets trading in the ward, with another 14 currently closed but which could re-open. The objection says that, while it is acknowledged the outlets proposed for this site are not hot food takeaways, “Public Health have concerns that additional food establishments will add to the burden of obesity within the ward.” The team is calling for healthier food options to be considered if planning permission is granted. New glazing and cladding will be put onto the building as part of the proposed upgrade. The **Odeon** opened in December 1998, when Jane Horrocks and Brenda Blethyn attended a VIP screening of *Little Voice*. The new 9-screen **Backlot** cinema (see *Bulletin* 57/4 p21) is being built next to the Houndshill Centre in Tower Street.

The Gazette – 8 September & 19 October

Blackpool bid farewell to one of its liveliest pubs, and favourite landlords, after the Crazy Scots Bar closed its doors on Saturday 11 November after nearly three decades. Publican Hamish Howitt issued a parting shot at the council, blaming it for the closure, especially after hotels and guest houses, which gave him half his trade, were knocked down (albeit this was 15 years ago, but then the private developer



behind a 'replacement' housing scheme went into administration). (As an aside, Mr Howitt was the first person in the town to be prosecuted following the introduction of the smoking ban in 2007, after he failed to enforce this for 18 months. He racked up a number of court appearances and lost thousands of pounds as a result of his doomed battle. The Council later revoked his licence, but, in 2009, three months after he won a £30,000 High Court battle, this was reinstated.) Originally built as Rigby Road Garage, this became the King's Hall, then, in 1909, the **King's Hall Cinema**, and, later that year, the **Royal Pavilion Theatre**. It became the **Futurist** cinema in 1929, then the **Plaza, Alexandra** and, in 1948, the **New Alexandra**. Between 1949 and 1959 it was home to the Jack Rose Repertory Players, but it entered a new phase in 1960 when it was taken over by the self-styled 'King of Glamour', Arthur Fox, who, for the next nine years, presented 'Folies Strip-tease' in the summer and other shows in winter and spring. It was then acquired by solicitor David Taylor, the grandson of Sir Frederick Emery who at one time controlled the Emery Circuit of more than a hundred cinemas. He spent £20,000 on a comprehensive modernisation which included a 347-seat cinema, a shop, cafe and bar. Unfortunately business was very poor and in the following years a succession of lessees came and went, running the then re-named **Royal Pavilion** as both a cinema and a theatre, but with little success. It then became the Crazy Scots Bar in 1996. Sadly, there are few reminders of the building's illustrious past. Most of the iron and glass canopy has been taken down and the 'ghost sign' on a side wall that read "Royal Pavilion. We Excell All Others" has been painted over, although the projection box remains, jutting out over the street. In addition, the surrounding area has become badly run down with empty shops, boarded up former guest houses and a burnt out hotel, and is apparently is now avoided by local residents.

The Gazette – 15 November; sent to the CTA e-group by Darron Keeling; additional reporting by Raymond Dolling; photo taken September 2003

BOURNEMOUTH (Dorset)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/3 p13, the plans to transform the former **Regent/Gaumont/Odeon**, Westover Road, have been given the go-ahead by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. Developer Libra Homes wants to revamp the exterior, build 64 apartments, a 67-space car park and 1,093sqm of commercial space. However, the council has also said there are some conditions that must be adhered, including contributing £70,000 towards improving cycle and pedestrian routes in the area and £15,488 in heathland mitigation. The site, along with the nearby former **Westover/ABC**, was bought by Libra Homes for more than £6m in 2017, following the construction of the BH2 complex where the successor **Odeon** is now located. In 2017, two planning applications were submitted, the first for 101 flats and the second for 84, but both were refused due to concerns about their scale. The **Regent** opened in 1929, before being renamed **Gaumont** in 1949. It became the **Odeon** in 1986, and closed in 2017, having, over the years, been sub-divided into six screens.

Bournemouth Echo – 11 October

BRADFORD (West Yorkshire)

The **Pictureville** cinema at the National Science and Media Museum was closed following an investigation on 20 October that discovered reinforced aerated autoclave concrete (RAAC: see Dartford below).

Detailed surveys are taking place to see what remedial action might be required. Meanwhile, the Museum itself closed in June for work to continue on 'Sound and Vision', a £6m project which will add two significant new galleries. Accompanied by a programme of activities, these will "showcase key objects and stories from our world-class collections of photography, film, television, animation, videogames and sound technologies." The Museum is set to re-open in summer 2024, followed by the new galleries in the winter.

Reported by Lynne Collins and George Reywer

BRIGHTON (East Sussex)



The **Theatre Royal**, which originally opened in 1807, closed in July for two months to enable further upgrades to the historic building. This further work is taking place alongside the multimillion-pound replacement of the Grade II listed theatre's façade. That project is scheduled to be completed by March next year.

The Argus – 14 July; sent in by Barry Quinton; photo taken April 2004

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p22, after nine years of campaigning, Save Brighton **Hippodrome** say the theatre's future now rests in the hands of Brighton and Hove Council. A petition, with more than 3,000 signatures, has been handed in, along with supporting documents. However, they say, the council classifies this historic venue as having "nil use" – despite its Planning Committee regarding it as an "entertainment venue" for the abortive cinema development by Vue in 2014. In addition, the group considers that other organisations have also hindered their restoration plans, with the Theatres Trust and Historic England both insisting on an expensive West End-style theatre layout. Local family company Matsim Properties is offering to fund the restoration, but the council has questioned its commercial viability.

Brighton and Hove News – 14 September

BRISTOL

The only cinema in south Bristol – the **Cineworld** at Hengrove Leisure Park – closed on Sunday 26 November. Developers have planning permission to demolish it, and the bingo venue close by, as part of a "flagship" project to build hundreds of homes. The 14-screen multiplex opened in December 1997.

B24/7 – 8 October

Meanwhile, the fight to save the **St George's Hall Picture Palace/Granada**, in the Redfield district, continues, despite developer Landrose having an ACV (Asset of Community Value) overturned (see *Bulletin* 57/3 p13). Campaigners have enlisted local architecture students to draw up plans for a three-screen cinema with a food hall, supported by social housing above.

The Guardian – 11 October

Following on from the news about the **Cineworld**, the city centre **Showcase Cinema de Lux** closed on Thursday 30 November. Circuit bosses said this was “due to our inability to agree terms on a new lease with the landlords.” It is believed that Hammerson, the company that owns Cabot Circus, offered to negotiate a new rent after Showcase asked for it to be reduced, but the two sides could not come to an agreement. (It has also been alleged that ticket sales have been slow to recover following the pandemic.) The 14-screen multiplex was regarded as one of the key ‘anchor attractions’ when the centre opened in 2008. A spokesperson said “Social, cultural and entertainment uses are a key part of Cabot Circus, and we remain committed to providing a ‘best in class’, renewed cinema alongside other complementary uses. We look forward to providing more updates soon.” So hopefully another operator will soon step in. In the meantime, Showcase are directing patrons to their out-of-town multiplex at Avonmeads Retail Park, less than three miles away, which also has 14 screens. According to the circuit, following recent investment, that cinema now has “the only fully customisable recliner cinema seating in Bristol.”

Bristol Live – 20 November

However, even though two multiplexes have closed in one week, there is a glimmer of hope for the city’s filmgoers, as plans have been put forward for a new, independent three-screen cinema in the Broadmead district (which includes Cabot Circus, where the **Showcase de Lux** was situated). The New Bristol Cinema company wants to convert a vacant retail unit into a 216-seat cinema “that will be the best place in the city to watch classics, cult and popular cinema from around the world at affordable prices.” The team, which has experience with local art-house venues such as the **Cube Microplex** and **Watershed**, plans to launch a temporary pop-up cinema in early 2024, for six to ten weeks, to trial the idea and to raise funds.

Business Live – 21 November

BURNLEY (Lancashire)



The new 7-screen **Reel** multiplex opened on Friday 8 September, part of the £23m town centre Pioneer Place development. The opening weekend featured Star Wars cosplayers The 99th Garrison, special sing-a-long screenings of *The Greatest Showman* – and patrons wearing a Burnley FC shirt received a free scoop of ice cream on the Sunday! Reel has had a presence in the town since the circuit acquired the 9-screen **Apollo**, in Manchester Road, in 2013. That had opened in 1997 and received a significant refurbishment by Reel in 2017, including the introduction of a luxury screen, the Reel Lounge. It closed on Tuesday 5 September.

Burnley Express – 23 August; photo by David Simpson (October 2023)

A £35,000 fund-raising campaign has been launched to restore the stage house of the derelict **Empire Theatre**, to help bring it back into public use. The Burnley Empire Trust is working on a long-term restoration of the Grade II listed building, after purchasing it for just £1 in December 2018. The project was kick-started with a £44,000 grant from the National Lottery in April 2019 but has received setbacks, including a break-in in May 2020 and an arson attack two months later. The **Empire Theatre of Varieties** opened in 1894. Films became part of the programming in 1909, and it became the (mostly full-time) **New**

Empire cinema in 1930. It was eventually taken over by Star Cinemas, which closed it in 1970. Bingo took over until the building closed in 1995. It is on the Theatres Trust’s Theatres at Risk Register.

The Stage – 28 September; sent in by R. David Simpson

BURY ST EDMUNDS (Suffolk)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/3 p13, branding has appeared on the windows of the new **Everyman** advertising job vacancies. The 228-seat, three-screen cinema is due to open in early 2024. It is housed in the basement of the former Debenhams store at the arc Shopping Centre. The unit will be shared with fashion retailer, Primark, which will be located on the ground and first floors, and is also due to open early in the new year.

Suffolk News – 26 October

CANTERBURY (Kent)



Raymond Dolling reports that it has been confirmed that the **Odeon**, which has been closed since the onset of the pandemic, will definitely not re-open. The building has been offered for sale, with the site being earmarked by Canterbury City Council, in its draft local plan, for 50 new homes. The **Regal** was opened by County Cinemas in 1933 before being taken over by **ABC** two years later. At that time a ballroom and café were added, but these were lost during bombing in 1942. The cinema was renamed **ABC** in 1963. Then, in 1972, it was converted into a cinema/bingo operation, with bingo in the former stalls and the cinema in the former circle. In 1988 the stalls area was converted back into cinema use. In later name changes, it became the **Cannon/MGM/ABC** then **Odeon**. During the pandemic it was used as a vaccination centre.

Photo taken September 2021

CHESTER

The long-awaited six-screen **Picturehouse** at Chester Northgate finally opened on Friday 10 November. Work on the fit-out had resumed in the summer, although further changes were proposed to its layout: In an application to Cheshire West and Chester Council to vary the details of its premises licence, parent company Cineworld asked for permission to remove a kiosk on the ground floor, ‘re-shape’ the first floor café/bar and make alterations to the concessions area and toilets on the second floor. Last year, the company pulled its plans for an on-site café; in response the council has submitted a planning application to separate off part of the ground floor foyer so that an independent food and drink outlet can be installed. The cinema features interiors influenced by the pastels and 20th-century design of Wes Anderson’s iconic film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and an original mural by award-winning multi-disciplinary artist Murugiah.

Cheshire Live – 25 September; Wirral Globe – 2 November

COLNE (Lancashire)

Work has begun on a £1.6m refurbishment of the **Pendle Hippodrome Theatre**. The project, funded in part by the government’s Levelling Up programme, involves alterations to the ground and first floor of the adjacent historic Derby Arms public house, including the installation of three passenger lifts, and the re-development of the existing theatre’s foyer, box office and toilets. The theatre opened in 1914 on cine-variety. In 1931, after the installation of a sound system, it became a full-time cinema. This closed in 1965 and the venue moved over to bingo. This, in turn, closed in 1978. Three local amateur groups acquired the

building and, after an extensive refurbishment, it re-opened as a live theatre in 1986. The Derby Arms was purchased in 2014 with a view to linking the two buildings, to provide disabled access and other facilities. Of the current work, Kevin Mason, director of the theatre's operating company, said: "The **Pendle Hippodrome** has been entertaining audiences for almost 110 years and within that time not a lot has changed within the building. While it is important to us to retain the historic features of both the theatre and the Derby Arms, including decorative cornices and cast-iron seats, there is a lot of work to be done to future-proof the building and make it accessible for all – right now there are a lot of steps! The Derby Arms was in quite a severe state of disrepair when we bought it, and we knew it would need a huge amount of investment to achieve our dream. Luckily the Levelling Up fund has enabled us to forge ahead with our plans." Lancashire-based Readstone Construction is heading the year-long project, with the company's project director, Simon Whittam, adding "When we received the brief to create a West End-style theatre in Colne, we immediately wanted to be involved."

Lancashire Telegraph – 12 October; sent in by Philip Crompton

DARTFORD (Kent)

Performances at the **Orchard Theatre** were suspended from 5 September following the discovery of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). This material gained popularity in the mid-1950s as a cheaper and more lightweight alternative to conventional reinforced concrete (it is also more fire resistant), but structural deficiencies began to be observed in the 1990s. Concerns were heightened in July 2018, following a roof collapse at Singlewell primary school in (coincidentally) nearby Gravesend, but it was not until August 2022 that the UK Government Property Agency announced that "RAAC is now life-expired and liable to collapse". In 2023, the government raised further concerns, leading to the inspection at this theatre, which was built in 1983. Issues were found, and it was at first hoped that the remedial work would be completed over the Christmas period. However, later on, Dartford Council revealed that this will cost £7m, and the theatre will be closed for a much longer period. But at least this year's Christmas attraction, *Beauty and the Beast*, and other affected shows, will be able to go ahead as **Orchard West**, a temporary, "state-of-the-art" 1,000-seat venue very close to the theatre, is due to open, with the panto, on Saturday 9 December. Meanwhile, the CTA had arranged to visit the **Orchard Theatre** on 3 October; fortunately, with the main concerns restricted to the auditorium, members were able to tour the unaffected areas and take a quick look into the auditorium from the back of the stage.

ITV News – 5 September; Kent Live – 16 October; The Stage – 19 October (sent in by R. David Simpson)

DEAL (Kent)

Further to the item about the **Regent** in *Bulletin* 57/4 p23, Raymond Dolling has written in with some corrections and more recent information. The owners, local businessmen James Wallace and Mark Digweed, had originally wanted to demolish the building and replace it with apartments. The adverse reaction resulted in a rethink: Housing would still be included, but there would also be a 49-seat cinema. However, neither of these plans were submitted to the planning authority. Instead, an entirely new plan was drawn up, and this has been approved by Dover District Council, subject to various conditions. The housing has been dispensed with altogether, and the building will in part be returned to its former cinema use, with two 96-seat auditoriums, plus a 114-cover restaurant, a bar and a 'multi-purpose' area which could be used to screen sports events. The owners describe this as "the most viable scheme", while former mayor Cllr Nick Thomaszewski said "We finally have confirmation that plans have been approved for the installation of a cinema at the **Regent**. Despite all the nonsensical objections such as where to store the broom used to sweep up spilt popcorn, the owners can now go ahead with their plans."

Raymond also reported on developments at the former **Royal**, where the council has approved plans for demolition and a re-vamp of the site with 16 one and two-bed apartments, plus three shop units. The building opened in 1892 as the **Theatre Royal**, becoming a full-time cinema in 1913. Following a complete reconstruction in 1934 it was renamed the **Royal**. That closed in 1981. The building was divided horizontally, with an amusement arcade in the former stalls and a

snooker club in an extended circle, and became the Royal Leisure Centre. In 2021 it was briefly 're-branded' as a music venue, Ivanhoes, for scenes in Danny Boyle's *Sex Pistols* TV drama *Pistol*.

DERBY

Quad, the cinema and exhibition space that was granted a £150,000 emergency loan by the council in July, says it needs a further £30,000 for urgent repairs and to update its equipment. Bosses said that the loan was "really helpful", but that the venue is "suffering from wear and tear". An on-line campaign has so far raised only £2,000. **Quad** opened in 2008, but has struggled since the pandemic, despite recently experiencing its busiest month since then, with *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*.

BBC News – 25 August

Derby City Council has announced that plans to build a new theatre on the **Assembly Rooms** site have been scrapped.

The authority was awarded £20m of levelling up cash to demolish the venue, closed since a fire in 2014, and replace it with a new theatre. However, rising costs have now made that plan "unviable" and the funding will be diverted into a re-development of the Grade II listed **Guildhall Theatre**, which has been disused since 2019, and the **Derby Theatre**, in the Derbion shopping centre, which had been set to move into the new theatre. This has been agreed by the government. An "alternative solution" will now be sought for the **Assembly Rooms**; the council has received "a number of bids from developers."

BBC News – 10 November

DEVIZES (Wiltshire)



Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57:4 p23, David Reeves went along the **Palace** on Heritage Open Day, Saturday 16 September. He reports that some impressive refurbishment work has taken place and, although there is a lot more to be done, the end results will be well worth the wait! The cinema in the former circle, built by Zettlers in the 1970s, has been removed, opening up the whole auditorium. The raised bingo floor in the stalls has also gone, revealing the orchestra pit, and the stage area has been cleared of bingo paraphernalia. It appears that the original projection box (which David spent a lot of time in as a projectionist) will not be re-used; instead, a 'control room' is being built at the rear of the stalls, with smaller 'control boxes', perhaps for spotlights, at the rear of the circle. However, a lot of the original

features have been preserved. Mouldings have been taken so that new plaster decoration can be produced, to replace the Zettlers conversion, and, where possible, original light fittings have been saved. A lot of work is being carried out on the stage house/fly tower to enable live acts to be presented for the first time since the 1960s. There was a very good turn-out, with a lot of residents anxious to see what was going on - and to be reassured that the cinema will re-open! This Open Day should allay those fears. Indeed, Picturedrome should be proud of the work they are carrying out on such a historic cinema that required a lot of attention and investment. The company is hoping that the cinema will re-open by the end of 2024. Opened in 1912 as the **Electric Palace**, destroyed by fire in 1932 then rebuilt, the Palace is the county's oldest operating cinema. In that context, it deserves to survive for future generations to enjoy their cinema going.

Report and Open Day photos by David Reeves

DOVER (Kent)

Raymond Dolling reports that Wetherspoon has applied to Dover District Council for permission to demolish the building that once housed the **Plaza**. This is at the rear of the Metropole Hotel, now an apartment block, which had a car showroom (not a bus garage, as is often stated) on the ground floor that, in 1929, became the entrance to the cinema. This area, together with a former shop, was converted into The Eight Bells pub by Wetherspoon in 1997. Now the company wants to extend their pub into the former cinema. The **Plaza** opened in 1929. It was taken over by ABC in 1931, then by **Essoldo** in 1956 before being acquired by an independent operator, and renamed the **Rio**, in 1968. Sadly, this only lasted a year, and bingo took over, until 1993. It then became a nightclub, but is currently an empty shell.

DUNDEE

Bosses at **Dundee Contemporary Arts** are warning it could face closure due to a considerable funding gap. Director Beth Bate told MSPs that the venue, which boasts a two-screen cinema, art gallery, print studio and restaurant, may be forced to use the last of its £450,000 reserves to remain in operation. She blamed this on a "lack of clarity" surrounding funding decisions, but also referenced post-pandemic reduced attendances and rising costs. This comes after Creative Scotland warned that one in three arts bodies are at risk of insolvency.

The National - 12 September

EAST GRINSTEAD (West Sussex)

Scott Cinemas @ the Atrium held the world premiere of *Broken Eyes* at 8pm on 7 and 14 October, "a no-budget film shot locally in East Grinstead, Forest Row, Hammerwood and Lingfield, featuring local actors." Makes a change from amdram!

Submitted by Allen Eyles

EDINBURGH

Work has begun on the **Odeon**, Clerk Street, as it is set to be 'brought back to life'. The credits rolled on the final film way back in 2003. Plans for the building to be demolished, which had been approved by Edinburgh City Council, were overturned by ministers in 2009 following the intervention of Historic Scotland. Then, in 2022, new owners, The Scotsman Group, announced their own plans for a complete renovation. It has been rumoured that it will re-open as a cinema and bar, but the owners have said only that they "can confirm that the former **Odeon** is still under our ownership, and we are working hard in the background on plans to bring this historic site back to life." Designed by W.E. Trent, the **New Victoria** opened in 1930 and was renamed **Odeon** in 1964. It was tripled in 1982, with two further screens being added in 1989. Since closure as a cinema, it has seen



sporadic use as a concert venue. While parts of the rear have been converted into student flats, the majority of the building remains. Having been awarded Category B listing in 1974, this was upgraded to Category A in 2012.

Edinburgh Live - 31 August; photo taken February 2003

Further to reports in previous *Bulletins*, the **Filmhouse** is set to return after a deal was struck between Caledonian Heritable, the B-listed building's new owners, and a charity, **Filmhouse** (Edinburgh) Ltd, which was formed in December 2022 by four former Filmhouse colleagues: James Rice, programme manager and now a cinema strategist at specialist consultancy Mustard Studio, Rod White, head of programming, David Boyd, head of technical and Ginnie Atkinson, CEO of **Filmhouse** and Edinburgh International Film Festival. Screen Scotland has awarded the charity £60,000 to support its near-term planning and development work, and a £1.25m fundraising campaign has been launched. Once the refurbishments have been carried out the charity will enter into a 21-year lease with Caledonian Heritable and the venue will operate as an independent cinema "celebrating the diversity of filmmaking worldwide." The owners are currently undertaking a programme of upgrades, and they will gift all the projection equipment to the new **Filmhouse**. Ginnie Atkinson said: "This is a significant step on the journey towards restoring cultural cinema provision for the city. **Filmhouse** is more than just a cinema: it's a home for cinema lovers and for film festivals and is proud of its track record in the area of film education, which will continue. We are delighted to be able to launch the fundraising campaign with the goal of opening the doors to a newly refurbished cinema building in 2024." The campaign has been backed by high-profile supporters such as actors Brian Cox, Ewan Bremner and Alan Cumming, and received a huge boost in early November, when Screen Scotland provided a further grant of £299,000.

STV News - 14 September; Daily Record - 15 September (sent in by Tom Laughlan); STV News - 2 October; The Scotsman - 3 November

The Omni Centre, which contains a 12-screen **Vue** multiplex, a Wetherspoon pub, a Nuffield Health centre and gym and the five-star Glasshouse boutique hotel, plus bars and restaurants, is on the market for £65m. Back in January 2017 it was sold for £74.8m, having previously gone for £107.35m in May 2006. No reason for these dramatic falls in its value was provided.

Edinburgh Evening News - 22 September

It has been reported informally that the bingo club in the former **Capitol**, Leith, is due to close "shortly" - after which the building is to be demolished and replaced by a car park. The cinema opened in 1928, and closed in 1961. It became a Top Rank Bingo Club, then operated as Mecca Bingo before becoming Club 3000.

Reported to the CTA e-group by Darron Keeling - 1 November

The former **George**, Portobello, which has lain empty for almost eight years, holds within it a "rare survival in Scotland", but Buckley Building UK Ltd wants to demolish the "streamlined, art deco" auditorium to create 20 flats and a car park. Its initial application was refused by the City of Edinburgh Council, and an appeal to Scottish Ministers was also rejected. However, the company has raised questions over the 'C' listed building's condition, and the refusal of its plans in comparison to other listed buildings projects. The cinema opened as the **County** in 1939, the last of the city's 'super-cinemas'. In 1954 it was acquired by the George Palmer circuit, and renamed accordingly. It closed in 1974 and moved over to bingo.

The Herald - 11 November

ELLAND (West Yorkshire)



Owner Charles Morris has warned that the **Rex** is facing closure if customer numbers do not pick up soon. This historic cinema opened as the **Central Picture House** in 1912, later becoming just the **Central**. It closed in early 1959, only to re-open later that year as the **Rex**. That, in turn, closed in 1964, and the building became a bingo hall until 1975, when films returned – only to be ousted by bingo, from 1977 until 1985, when the building was shuttered. In stepped Charles and Judy Morris (together with Peter and Pauline Berry, who have since retired) and they re-opened the **Rex** cinema in 1988. Their ethos is to offer an old-style cinema experience, including regular recitals on the Conn 651 organ they installed. However, sadly, like many local businesses, the cinema has been struggling of late following the impact of the pandemic. Charles had hoped that patrons would return when that abated, but two years on they are still feeling the effects: “The problem is that the traditional audience hasn't come back after Covid. They probably think ‘it would be nice to go again sometime’ but then never get round to acting upon it. We have been patiently waiting for people to get back to normality, [but] it's been a bit slow of late and we are finding that we need them to come [back] a bit sooner than we thought.” Asked about the impact of the cost of living crisis, Charles said: “I'm not sure if [this] has had much of an impact on us as I think we're generally very affordable” but he added a heartfelt plea “It's been two-and-a-half years now, and we can't wait much longer. The **Rex** has been around for many years and we're not done for yet, at least I hope we're not. Please come back, we will be so pleased to see you, we have a lot to offer.”

Yorkshire Live – 22 October; photo taken January 2020

FARNHAM (Surrey)

The fit-out for the new 6-screen **Reel** has begun, with a likely opening date in early 2024. The multiplex is part of the Brightwells Yard regeneration project which will also bring a new 25-unit shopping centre, cafés, bars, restaurants, an open space, 239 new homes and a multi-level car park to the town centre. The cinema will offer state-of-the-art laser projection and digital audio in all screens, a licensed bar and a Reel Lounge, a premium viewing experience with plush sofas and armchairs. It will be the first purpose-built cinema in the town since the closure of the **Regal/Odeon/Studios 1 & 2** in 1985, although films are part of the programming at the **Maltings Arts Centre**.

Farnham Herald – 20 August

GAINSBOROUGH (Lincolnshire)

West Lindsey District Council has teamed up with Savoy Cinemas for the delivery of a £9m town centre regeneration project which will include restaurants, retail units, car parking – and a four-screen cinema. This will be funded by the council, the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the government's Levelling Up Fund and Savoy Cinemas. It will provide a new walking link between Marshall's Yard and the historic market place, which is being rejuvenated through further investment from the Levelling Up Fund and the National Lottery Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Lincolnshire Today – 6 November

GLASGOW

Plans have been released for a possible re-development of the fire-ravaged O2 ABC building on Sauchiehall Street. The historic former cinema has lain derelict since the Glasgow School of Art fire spilled over to its roof in 2018, tearing through the 'B' listed structure. But now, as part of the City Council's masterplan for the so-called 'Golden Z' - Sauchiehall, Buchanan and Argyle streets – it has been revealed that the cinema's art deco frontage would be retained, but the levelling of the rest of the building would provide a clear view to the Rennie Mackintosh-designed art school. This would spell the end of a long history of public entertainment. The original building opened in 1875 as the **Diorama**, became the **Panorama** in 1888 and then the Ice Skating Palace in 1895. Further alterations in 1904 saw it re-open as the **Hippodrome**, after which, in 1927, it became the Waldorf Dance Palace, before ABC commissioned architect Charles J. McNair to convert the building into a 'super cinema', the **Regal**, which opened in 1929. This was renamed **ABC 1** in 1967, when a new auditorium, **ABC 2**, was built on its right-hand side. In 1979, **ABC 1** was turned into a four-screen cinema, and the complex re-opened as the **ABC Film Centre**. In 1985, it became the **Cannon**, then **MGM** before returning to **ABC**. It closed in 1998, after which **ABC 1** became the O2 ABC concert

venue, while **ABC 2**, which survived the subsequent blaze, went into nightclub use.

The Herald – 31 August

GOSPORT (Hampshire)



The former **Criterion**, which closed on bingo in 2020, was purchased by Gosport Borough Council in November 2022, for £600,000, with plans to restore it as a multi-use entertainment venue. In a council survey, some 73 percent of the 1,149 respondents said they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to visit. Activities that attracted the most interest were live music, theatre and comedy, film screenings, fairs and markets. The council is now working to clear weeds and carry out necessary repairs. Safety inspections will be conducted on the parapets and the statue (high on the façade; see photograph) with the likelihood that the large 'crown' sign will be removed. Tours of the building, organised by Hampshire Cultural Trust as part of the Heritage Open Days, were fully booked, with 100 participants. Many visitors contributed stories and photos that will support a local history project to be organised by the Trust next year. Organisations that participated in the consultation expressed enthusiasm for the project and a strong desire to be involved, while the council intends to conduct additional consultations with local businesses and groups to further explore potential uses for the building. The **Criterion Electric Theatre** opened in 1912, and closed in 1968. It became the Crown Bingo Club, hence the crown sign, and closed in early 2020. (Closure had been announced for May 2020, but this was brought forward by the pandemic.)

The News – 24 October; photo taken March 2021

HARTLEPOOL (County Durham)



The condition and future of the **Odeon**, Raby Road (which opened as the **Majestic** in 1936) has been raised as part of a Hartlepool Borough Council investigation into tackling the town's empty buildings. The Grade II listed venue closed as a cinema in 1981. After successive use as a bingo hall, nightclub and pool hall it was closed for good in 2002. Speaking at the latest meeting of the council's audit and governance committee, Councillor Gary Allen said the building has been “left to look ugly.” Tony Hanson, council executive director of development, neighbourhoods and regulatory services, said the property's listed building status makes it more difficult to take action against the owners and serve legal notices: “We can't tell them to aesthetically improve their building, we can only get them to either address defects that exist

with a notice, or potentially demolish. We couldn't serve that notice on them because we aren't allowed to demolish it without listed building consent." He added it was his view it "can only help" that it is located in the 'HDC' area. This is Hartlepool Development Corporation's masterplan, which aims to create a "community park" on the site.

Hartlepool Mail – 20 September; photo taken March 2021

HASTINGS (East Sussex)

The freehold of the **Odeon** was sold at an Acuitus commercial property auction on 21 September. The 19,219sq ft property, which produces annual rental income of £322,141, had a guide price of £1.9m-£2m, but sold for £2.25m. The current lease with Odeon Cinemas runs until June 2038. Jon Skerry, of Acuitus, said before the auction: "Located in the heart of the town centre and close to the main entrance to the Priory Meadow Shopping Centre, this is a unique property which also offers investors long-term income with further conversion possibilities in the future." The **Gaiety Theatre** opened in 1882, and was converted into a cinema in 1932 by the Randolph Richards circuit. In 1966 **Classic** acquired the circuit, and the cinema was renamed the following year. It was subsequently passed to **Cannon**, **MGM** and **ABC** before becoming the **Odeon** around 2001. It was sub-divided over the years, and currently has four screens.

Sussex World – 8 September; Acuitus website – 30 September

Trafalgar Entertainment is to cease operating the **White Rock Theatre**. No reason has been given, with the company saying only that it is "sad" that its contract is coming to an end. Owner Hastings Council said that discussions were underway with management company the Guildhall Trust, based in Portsmouth, which is set to take over the running of the building in February. The **White Rock Pavilion** opened as a concert hall in 1927. A cinematograph licence was held from then until 1986, with films presented occasionally. The venue was refurbished in 1985, when it became the **White Rock Theatre**. It is Grade II listed.

The Stage – 5 November; sent in by R. David Simpson

HEREFORD

Freedom Church is looking to make its exterior more eye-catching. In particular, it is seeking permission to put its lion's head logo across four panels measuring 15.2m by 7.5m, which would cover a large part of the streetside wall, and add a 2x4m video wall next to it. The stonework below would be painted dark grey to match the signage. The building opened as the **Ritz** in 1938, a takeover of a Union Cinemas project by **ABC**. It was renamed **ABC** in 1961, and twinned in 1972, when bingo was also introduced. The cinema operation closed in 1977, re-opening in 1984 as the **Classic**. It went through a series of name changes – **Cannon/ABC/Odeon** – before finally closing in 2014. It was acquired by Freedom Church in 2016.

Hereford Times – 16 November

IPSWICH (Suffolk)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p25, the £300,000 extension to the **Regent Theatre** - a modular building situated on part of the rear car park that provides additional dressing rooms, catering facilities and wardrobe space - is now open.

BBC News – 6 November

KING'S LYNN (Norfolk)

St George's Guildhall believes it is home to the only surviving stage on which William Shakespeare performed. The Grade I listed venue is the oldest working theatre in the UK, dating back to 1445. During recent renovations, timber floorboards were found under the existing auditorium; these date back to the 15th century, and it is claimed that documents indicate that Shakespeare acted at the venue in 1592 or 1593. At that time, acting companies had left the capital when theatres in London were closed due to the plague, and The Earl of Pembroke's Men - thought to include Shakespeare - visited King's Lynn. "We have the borough account book from 1592-93, which records that Shakespeare's company was paid to come and play in the venue" explained Tim FitzHigham, the Guildhall's creative director. The floorboards had been covered up for 75 years.

BBC News – 5 October

KINGTON (Herefordshire)

Plans have been announced to turn the former **Picture House** into a function room and art gallery – and an occasional cinema. In 2012 owner Keith Larratt, who lives on the premises, successfully applied to

convert part of it into a jazz club, but then did not pursue that any further. Built as a Methodist chapel in 1858, the building housed a cinema between the late 1920s and late 1960s. It was converted into housing, although presumably the auditorium remains intact.

Hereford Times – 19 September

LEADGATE (County Durham)



The **Roxy**, which opened in 1938 and was closed as a cinema by the early 1960s, re-opened on 2 September as a community arts centre. This has been a long-cherished dream by owners Keith and Karen Barnes, who spent a lot of their own time and money (Keith is a builder by trade, while Karen has a background in amateur dramatics). The principal use of the 360-seat auditorium will be live performances, with the initial focus on children's drama and dance, and private hires by amateur dramatic societies, business groups and hobby groups.

Sent to the CTA e-group by Darron Keeling; photo by David Simpson (October 2005)

LEICESTER

Over the weekend of 6-8 October, the **Phoenix** celebrated 60 years as a major part of the city's cultural scene with a specially curated series of films, works of art and special events. The cinema has its roots in the **Phoenix Theatre**, which opened in 1963 across the city, on Upper Brown Street. Financial pressures led to its closure in 1987, but it re-opened the following year as the **Phoenix Arts Centre**, including films in its programming for the first time. That, in turn, was replaced by the current **Phoenix Film & Digital Media Centre**, which opened in a purpose-built building on Midland Street (in the city's 'Cultural Quarter') in 2009. In January 2023 a multi-million pound expansion was completed, which included the creation of two new cinema screens (making four in total), a new art gallery, and an enlarged café bar. Meanwhile, the former **Phoenix** became the **Upper Brown Street Theatre** in 2010, and then the **Sue Townsend Theatre** in 2014, named after the Leicester-born author of the *Adrian Mole* stories, who died that year.

Leicestershire Live – 6 October

LITCHFIELD (Staffordshire)

Plans have been submitted which would see the former Debenhams store, which has been vacant for almost two and a half years, become a four-screen cinema. A wider scheme would also entail the demolition of retail units at 36-44 Baker's Lane to "support the revitalisation of the city centre" and provide a link through to the area proposed for re-development as part of the Birmingham Road Site project. The Debenhams 'unit' is the largest in the city centre; in addition to the cinema there would be food and beverage businesses on the ground floor and a restaurant on the second floor, with an external terrace giving views across the city. An evaluation by specialists from Prime Retail, submitted with the planning application, says that demand for former Debenhams sites across the country has not been high, with statistics in August suggesting around 80 remain empty. An accompanying statement from Evolve Estates, owner of the nearby Three Spires shopping centre, said the cinema proposal provides the most realistic chance of bringing the former department store back into use. Astonishingly, the city has not had a full-time cinema since the **Regal** closed way back in 1974.

Lichfield Live – 1 November

LIVERPOOL (Edge Lane)

Major plans have been submitted to transform the iconic 1938-built Littlewoods building into a television and film complex. Developers Capital & Centric are working with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Liverpool City Council on a £70m project to transform the derelict building (which had closed in 1994) into a 'Hollywood-ready destination'. The Authority has already committed £17m to develop 'The Depot': two temporary 22,000sq ft film and TV studios that opened in October 2021 and are managed by Liverpool Film Office. Mayor Steve Rotherham's vision is to turn the city region into the 'Hollywood of the North'. The re-development will include two new-build 20,000sq ft studios, offices, hotel rooms, education facilities – and a "screening and performance space", which will be open to the public and will include four screens. There will also be "greenery and new landscaping that will pay homage to local screen stars of the past" and a direct public link between the site and Wavertree park. And the clock on the iconic Littlewoods tower will be reinstated.

Liverpool World – 17 November

LIVERPOOL (Wavertree)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/3 p16, the future of the **Abbey** is still in considerable doubt. Standing boarded up, empty and purposeless, it is a shadow of its former self. Lee Quinn, managing director of Mason Partners had said: "We have been marketing this property for sale since April 2023 and continue to actively seek a buyer on behalf of our client." But he had no further updates. The building has been Grade II listed since April 2021. This states that it "has strong group value with the nearby listed Lock Up (1796), Picton Clock Tower (1884) and Lamb Hotel (mid-19th century, with late 19th century alterations) in highlighting the evolution, development and changing face of Wavertree village from a small rural village into a suburb of Liverpool." Regarding its architecture, the listing adds: "It is a good, and increasingly rare, example of a medium-scale 1930s 'super cinema' built for a small independent local circuit in the heyday of cinema design and cinemagoing" and that "it is an imposing building with a Moderne design that references continental cinema design and uses elegant brickwork treatment combined with a bold composition to maximum effect." Supermarket group Lidl bought the building from the Co-op and had planned to demolish it and build a new 18,000sq ft store. However a successful campaign culminated in it being granted its listed status. In response, Lidl returned with a new proposal that promised to "repair, restore and consolidate the corner rotunda feature, to include the installation of windows and wall tiles to match the original," according to planning documents submitted to Liverpool City Council. Other works were also set to take place to preserve the design while installing the new supermarket. However, in March, the company confirmed that it would no longer be moving forward with these plans. And, as the building attracts ever more anti-social behaviour, and becomes a real eye-sore, there are increasing calls for drastic action, which could include demolition. The **Abbey** opened in 1939. It was converted into a Cinerama theatre in 1964, closing in 1979. Since then the stalls area has been home to a series of supermarkets, while the circle has been used as a bingo hall, then a snooker club.

Echo – 21 October

LONDON (Bexleyheath)

The bar in the former **Broadway**, which was most recently The Elegance Lounge, has been renamed Broadway 167 (after its address). The cinema closed way back in 1956 and was initially a supermarket before starting its rather chequered history (including shootings and a riot!) as a pub.

Sent in by Ian Mitchell

LONDON (Brixton)

Further to the report in *Bulletin* 57/3 p16, the O2 Academy (the former **Astoria**) will be allowed to re-open after a fatal crowd crush – but Lambeth Council said the venue will have to meet 77 "extensive and robust" conditions. This comes after security guard Gaby Hutchinson, 23, and Rebecca Ikumelo, 33, died on 15 December 2022, when fans without tickets tried to enter a show by Nigerian Afrobeats artist Asake. The victims were in the foyer, while about 1,000 people were outside. In addition, a 21-year-old woman remains critically injured in hospital. Following the crush, which also injured 10 people, the venue's licence was suspended by Lambeth Council. Now, Academy Music Group said

they looked forward to welcoming fans back after spending £1.2m to improve facilities and carry out maintenance. The Metropolitan Police had urged the council to shut the venue, but later said it was never their intention to close it for good. It was said at an earlier hearing that officers found "large-scale disorder", with the crowd eventually pushing the doors open in the moments before the crush. The police investigation is continuing, while the Security Industry Authority has opened an inquiry into allegations that some security staff at the venue regularly took bribes.

Sky News – 16 September; sent in by Margaret Burgoine

Located in a railway arch near Loughborough Junction station, the **Whirled Cinema**, which opened in 2010, describes itself as being a "world away from your everyday multiplex experience." The 60-seat venue screens a diverse programme of the best of current world and art-house cinema, with admission based on a membership system. Sadly, the cinema is suffering in the current economic climate and is appealing for more people to take up memberships, or make a financial contribution if possible.

Brixton Buzz – 31 October

LONDON (Bromley)

Trafalgar Entertainment, which operates the **Churchill Theatre** on behalf of Bromley Council, is poised to take ownership, and has announced plans for a "significant revamp." 5,000 people signed a petition to protect its future after concerns were raised, in July, by Bromley Liberal Democrats, that "the theatre seems to be at risk, due to the dilapidated state of the building caused by years of neglect by Bromley Council." The theatre opened in 1977, but with an intended lifespan of 'only' around 50 years. The Central Library, housed in the same complex, is due to relocate to the nearby High Street.

The Stage – 12 October; sent in by R. David Simpson

LONDON (Camden Town)

The Secret Group, which runs the very successful Secret Cinema events, has submitted a planning application to transform the former **Gaumont Palace** into a space for interactive entertainment and immersive theatre shows. The company says that very few structural changes will be made, and their aim is to "revitalise" the building. Meanwhile, Mecca Bingo continues to operate, but owner Rank said in a statement "Trading has been tough across hospitality, and regular players have been slow to return to halls since the pandemic. As a result, despite the prime location of our Camden club, we are not seeing the footfall required to ensure the continued operation of the venue as a bingo hall." The cinema opened in 1937, and was renamed **Odeon** in 1964 ahead of alterations which created a Top Rank Bingo Club in the former stalls and a new cinema in the circle. That became the **Gate** from 1980 to 1982 then, from 1983, the **Parkway**. That closed in 1993 when Odeon took back the building and created a five-screen multiplex, which is still operating. Meanwhile, bingo continued in the former stalls. It is assumed that The Secret Group's plans will only affect the bingo area.

Camden New Journal – 19 October (sent in by Tom Laughlan); The Stage – 9 November (sent in by R. David Simpson)

LONDON (Chelsea)

Guided tours are being offered at the **Royal Court Theatre**, but only, at least for now, on a limited number of dates. This is the first time they have been offered since their Open Day in March 2022. The current building, the second on the site, opened in 1888 as the **New Court Theatre**, but was converted into a cinema in 1935 until it was closed by bomb damage. Rebuilt as a theatre after the war, it re-opened in 1952 with a mission to present plays by young and experimental dramatists and "the best contemporary plays from abroad." Such was the topic of some of their plays that, in the 1960s, the theatre had to be redefined as a private members club to evade government censorship. Later, in 1973, *The Rocky Horror Show* premiered there. In the 1990s the venue was threatened with closure due to the state of the building, but a rebuilding/refurbishment programme saved it. The tours, which last 60-75 minutes, and cost £10 (tour only), £15.00 (tour and cream tea) or £19.50 (tour plus cream tea and fizz) began in October. Unfortunately, the only date available as we go to press is 23 January (at 2pm): Contact the box office at boxoffice@royalcourttheatre.com or 020 7565 5000 to check the latest situation.

'Ian Visits' website – 9 October

London landlord Cadogan has completed a £235m development on the King's Road called The Gaumont – in honour of the site's past as the **Gaumont Palace**. The mixed use development includes a rooftop bar with panoramic views, a 600-seat cinema, flagship retail opportunities, an enhanced Waitrose, creative space, office accommodation and 47 residential apartments, as well as an installation by London-based artist Shezad Dawood. Hugh Seaborn, CEO of Cadogan, said "The purpose of this project has always been to reinvigorate the King's Road's distinct character and contribute to its rich legacy, whilst seeing it enter a new era - from the independent 'creative cluster', cinema, major new public art commission to the beautifully restored (art deco) façade. The Gaumont is a major part of a wider revitalisation plan for one of the world's most famous high streets." The Gaumont is expected to open in phases, with the rooftop bar and retail units set to open in early 2024, followed by the remaining spaces, presumably including the cinema, in the autumn. The **Gaumont Palace** opened in 1934, on the site of the studios and laboratory of film pioneer William Friese-Greene, whose image is one of the bas-relief sculptures high up on the façade. The cinema became the **Gaumont** in 1937. It was modernised in 1960 and renamed **Odeon** in 1963, but closed in 1972. The foyer and stalls were converted into a Habitat furnishing store while the stage area became flats and offices. A new **Odeon**, which opened in 1973, was created in the former circle; that area closed in 1981. Artificial Eye took over, and re-opened it as the **Chelsea Cinema** in 1983. This then became the **Curzon Chelsea**, which closed in 2018. The entire building, apart from the art deco façade, was demolished. The cinema operation in the new build was originally to have three screens, which were due to open in 2022. An artist's impression of the new building includes 'Chelsea Cinema' branding.

TheIndustry.fashion – 25 October

LONDON (Ealing)

The eight-screen **Picturehouse**, on the site of the former **Forum**, opened on Friday 20 October. This is part of a growing leisure and hospitality offering at Filmworks, which has been developed by St. George, a member of the Berkeley Group, and also includes entertainment venue and arcade Boom Battle Bar, artisan coffee shop Black Sheep Coffee, neighbourhood bar Teatro Hall, award-winning ramen (Japanese) restaurant Kanada-Ya and fried buttermilk chicken specialists Butchies, in addition to residential units. Members will no doubt be aware that this cinema has been a long time coming. The 2,175-seat Forum opened in 1934, its façade being dominated by eight tall columns. It was renamed ABC in 1961, then tripled in 1975. A series of ownership changes resulted in a number of name changes – **Cannon/MGM/Virgin/ABC/UGC/Cineworld** – before **Empire** took over in 2006. They closed the cinema in 2008. The auditorium and foyer were demolished and a new 16-screen cinema was to be built behind the iconic façade. But this never happened and, in 2015, Ealing Council acquired the site through a compulsory purchase order. Fresh plans were approved for an eight-screen cinema, which was due to open in 2018, then 2019. In 2020 bar/restaurant Teatro Hall opened at the front of the building, now badged as 'Filmworks', and now the cinema, with nearly 900 seats (the auditoriums are very well proportioned) and a café, bar and restaurant, has finally opened. In homage to the history of the site, it has been reported that the restoration "sensitively integrates many of the cinema's original features with art deco and 1920s features throughout. Due care was taken to carefully repair the art deco frontage of the residential scheme, which was originally designed by John Stanley Beard, an English architect known for designing cinemas in and around London. This included restoring the eight 'iconic' colonnades to create a grand entrance. No detail too small, the Concierge at Bogart House also features one of the original chandeliers from the Forum Theatre, which has been restored to its former glory."

Bdaily News – 18 October

LONDON (Forest Hill)

The Wetherspoon pub in the former **Capitol** closed on 15 October. The company had announced in September 2022 that the premises had been put up for sale, then made the "commercial decision" to close the site. The cinema was built in 1929 on the site of three mid-19th century houses named Prospect Villas, once inhabited by the Hanoverian princess Sophie Matilda. Designed by John Stanley Beard,



the **Capitol** opened in 1929. It was taken over by **ABC** in 1933 but not renamed until 1968. It closed in 1973, and stood empty for several years before opening as a Mecca bingo club in 1978. It subsequently became a Jasmine bingo club, before that closed in 1996. The building re-opened, as The Capitol, part of the Wetherspoon network, in 2001. In 2014 the company closed the pub, and put it up for sale, only to re-open it in 2017. The building is Grade II listed.

Southwark News – 16 October; photo taken September 2004

LONDON (Holloway)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p26, The Coronet (the former **Savoy/ABC**) was due to close on 10 December. The property tycoon who has purchased it from Wetherspoon, David Nourani, says it will be refurbished and re-open as a public house.

Reported by Tom Laughlan

LONDON (Mayfair)

"The **Curzon Mayfair** is not just an important and beautiful building – it is a cultural generator without which the social health of central London would be significantly compromised." So says Oscar-winner Tilda Swinton, one of the cinema's patrons, adding that "the 'Save Curzon Mayfair' campaign has touched a nerve in the local community, with 20,400 people signing a petition to ensure the cinema remains under Curzon's stewardship. At the heart of our success is a team with decades of experience and expertise in the industry. We proudly offer a diverse film menu to suit many tastes. When we hosted Steven Spielberg for the premiere of his latest film, he spoke of his 'fond memories' of **Curzon Mayfair**, but they are not just memories. In the past 12 months, almost 70 percent of films shown were international, independent or arthouse. We are proud that this is a focal point for the community while remaining a prime location for red-carpet events and premieres. Our two screens are housed in a Grade II listed building designed in 1966 as a livelier and more bespoke replacement of the earlier 1934 cinema. With listed wall reliefs by sculptor William Mitchell and a stunning Op Art-inspired ceiling, this has been praised by Historic England as 'the finest surviving cinema building of the post-war period.' To keep evolving, we have bold plans to refurbish the cinema, partnering with world-renowned Benedetti Architects, who designed the new BAFTA HQ. The plans include the latest audiovisual screen technology and improved acoustic and lighting, along with luxury seating and a new food and drinks offering. Our proposals would protect and restore the historic features, while retaining the two screens and seating capacity of 373, meaning the cinema would continue to be open to the community with competitive ticket prices. Sadly, though, we have hit a wall with the landlord who has blocked our plans at every turn and relaunched his own alternative proposals, which are eerily like our original vision. Perhaps 'imitation is the sincerest form of flattery' but this is no flippant PR game, the future remains in a precarious position. With the backing of the local community we will keep making the compelling case to keep the doors open at this wonderful institution for decades to come. As one of our other patrons, actor Toby Jones, said, 'the **Curzon** has been more than just another cinema... it's been a kind of club to which anyone can belong.' Only under our stewardship will this continue to be the case."

Evening Standard – 26 September

LONDON (Notting Hill)

Music and arts charity Aspect Foundation have submitted an application for planning permission to bring the Grade II listed **20th Century Theatre** on Westbourne Grove back to life as a 175-seat concert hall. The theatre (which was – rather misleadingly – built in 1863) started out as part of an arts complex called Victoria Hall. It wasn't given its own name until 1866, when it became the **Bijou Theatre**. Later it became the **Century Theatre** then, eventually, the **20th Century Theatre**. Mostly presenting live shows, it was briefly used as a cinema in the very early days, before the First World War. In the 1960s it became an antiques warehouse. Aspect Foundation aims to transform the building into a community space and concert hall aimed at small-scale chamber music and educational work. Renamed the **Aspect Theatre**, the restored venue would also feature youth educational facilities, rehearsal rooms and a school function space.

Secret London – 19 September; sent in by Gary Donaldson

LONDON (Sidcup)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p27, Ian Mitchell adds that the three-screen **Sidcup Storyteller** occupies the first and second floors, while the new library is on the ground floor of the former Blockbuster Video store. He also reports that an apartment block is being built on the site of the town's **Odeon**, which closed in 1961 and was converted into swimming baths. Those, in turn, closed in the early 2000s. The cinema façade was due to be retained, but it has been demolished. However, the new 31-apartment development still celebrates the site's cinematic heritage: It is called The Urban Picturehouse, and a timeline on the frontage includes four photographs of the **Odeon**.

LONDON (Stratford East)

Lendlease has signed Everyman as the anchor leisure tenant at its landmark Turing Building within International Quarter London. Both are set to open in 2024. Designed by architects Arney Fender Katsalidis, the 21-storey “next generation” building has been created “to inspire collaboration and support new ways of working” and will offer 350,000sq ft of Grade A office space in addition to the leisure facilities.

Bdaily News – 3 October; sent in by Tim McCullen

LONDON (Walthamstow)

On 9 September police received reports of an unlicensed music event taking place at the **Empire** multiplex, which had closed in July when the circuit went into administration. Officers attended; a section 35 Dispersal Order was put in place and the majority of the attendees departed. A few squatters remained, and declared their intention to stay in their new “home”. Through notices plastered on the front of the building they set out their legal rights, maintaining that “This is a non-residential building. Section 144 LASPO [Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012] does NOT apply.” They also said that “at all times there is at least one person” in the property, and that any entry or attempt to enter into the premises “without their permission is a criminal offence” and anyone using or threatening violence to gain entry into the cinema will be prosecuted. However, it seems they need to brush up on their legal advice as, the very next day (12 September), they were removed in a joint operation between the police and the building's owner, Waltham Forest Council.

Waltham Forest Echo – 11 September

LONDON (West End)

Further to the item about the **Carlton**, Haymarket, in *Bulletin* 57/3 p16, The Crown Estate have released broad details of their plans for Phase Two of the St. James' Market development. Phase One was completed in 2017, and created a new public square and two office buildings, including 1 St. James' Market, home to The Crown Estate's London offices. Phase Two “will build on the success of Phase One, delivering significantly more urban greening, flexible commercial space and newly enhanced public spaces in St. James' Market.” In particular, this includes transforming six inefficient 1960s buildings into a single new building, delivering around 200,000sq ft of mixed-use commercial space, creating new and enhanced public spaces with new pedestrianised green spaces – and “Retaining and sensitively refurbishing and restoring the Grade II listed **Carlton** cinema on Haymarket.” Considering that demolition was on the cards not too long ago (albeit with the façade being retained) this is good news, but we look forward to further information being released in due course.

The Crown Estate Newsletter (St. James' Market Phase Two) – June 2023; sent in by Richard Gray

SPPARC, one of the architects working on the huge redevelopment at Olympia, has been asked by the same client, Yoo Capital, to transform the Grade II listed home of the **Odeon**, Shaftesbury Avenue, into a new theatre (which entertainment group Cirque du Soleil is considering as its first permanent home in London) and a hotel, to be operated by citizenM. Yoo said it has begun a consultation with local stakeholders ahead of a planning application being submitted to Camden council, although no timeframe has been laid out. The **Saville Theatre** opened in 1931, presenting small-scale musicals, revues and plays. In 1965 it was leased by Brian Epstein, and Sunday concerts were introduced alongside the weekday plays. Seeking a West End showcase, ABC purchased the theatre and opened **ABC 1 & 2** in December 1970. Later on it was taken over by **Cannon**, then became **MGM** before reverting to **ABC** in 1996. Taken over by **Odeon** in 2000, it was sub-divided into four screens the following year. It is believed that the original stage house and fly tower are still intact. (Yoo's Olympia scheme, designed by Heatherwick Studio and SPPARC, also includes a new theatre as well as a live music venue, 550,000sq ft of offices, dozens of new bars and restaurants, four exhibition halls and two new hotels. That £1.3bn development is due to open in 2025.)

Building – 22 September; The Stage – 28 September; sent in by R. David Simpson

LYME REGIS (Dorset)



The **Under the Stars Cinema** opened in Broad Street in May 2023. After a career in the film and TV industry, Tom Littledyke returned to his home town with his partner, Georgia Wellman. They acquired The Shave Cross Inn, in the nearby hamlet of Shave Cross, in January 2020, and subsequently expanded the ‘Shave Cross’ branding to include craft beer pub the Shave Cross Cellar and the Italian-themed Shave Cross Taverna, both in Lyme Regis. (‘Shave Cross’ refers to an order of monks who pilgrimaged from Shave Cross to nearby Abbotsbury.) Then, Tom realised a long-held dream, and opened the **Under the Stars Cinema**. Mindful that the iconic **Regent** had closed following a catastrophic fire in March 2016, he wanted to bring some form of ‘big-screen’ experience back to the town. So he converted a former butcher's shop, and has the Shave Cross Farm Shop on the ground floor and a 20-seat cinema in the basement. The seats are a mixture of very comfortable two and three-seat sofas, with the cinema's name being derived from the lights in the ceiling. Films are screened from DVD/Blu-ray and from streaming services onto a large-format TV screen. There are scheduled film shows every day, repertory-style, and the cinema can also be hired for private screenings. Tom's ultimate aim is to open a more professional ‘boutique’ cinema but, for the time being, he has, at least, achieved his initial aim.

Submitted by David Simpson (photo taken August 2023)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p27, a drinks licence has been approved for the foyer of the former **Regent** for local company Black Cow Vodka. A 42sqm decking area has already been added to the front, albeit without planning consent. The application for a full premises licence had attracted objections, but also letters of support. Objectors included a second-home owner, who said they feared this could lead to a public nuisance, and a property owner who claimed this would create a “major noise nuisance” and change the character of the top end of Broad Street from being a quiet, residential part of the town. Conditions attached to the new licence include 24-hour CCTV, which must be made available to the police and Dorset Council, and no speakers or amplified music will be allowed outside. The operators will also have to make their telephone numbers and e-mail addresses available to nearby residents. The licensing hearing was told that the business aimed to create a small and relaxed coffee and cocktail bar with a shop selling Black Cow-branded products and items from other local businesses. Live music was likely to be limited to piano or acoustic musicians. Meanwhile, a separate planning application has been submitted which seeks a change of use from ‘cinema’ to ‘bar and adjacent shop’ - and to formalise the addition of the decking.

Bridport & Lyme Regis News – 2 October

MANCHESTER

Tony Munda, founder and director of Northern Light Cinema, the family business that operates the **Ritz Belper**, **Regal Melton Mowbray**, **Savoy Heaton Moor** and **Rex Wilmslow**, in addition to the **Northern Light** at Wirksworth, Derbyshire, is in negotiation for a new venue “in the Manchester area” that will be his smallest yet, with three screens, none with more than 50 seats. There will be staggered screenings administered by a staff of just three. “It’s all about keeping your borrowing and your staff size down,” he says. “There’s no doubt that relatively small cinemas appeal to people because they get proper attention.”

The Guardian – 11 October

MARLOW (Buckinghamshire)



Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/3 p17, the long-awaited **Everyman** opened on Friday 29 September. Situated in the Grade II* listed former Town Hall, latterly occupied by the Steamer Trading Company, on Market Square, the cinema has two screens, with 89 and 72 seats, plus the usual Spielberg restaurant/bar. This brings ‘big screen’ entertainment back to the town for the first time since the **County/Odeon/Regal** closed way back in 1985.

Maidenhead Advertiser – 8 September; photo by David Simpson (November 2023)

MARYPORT (Cumbria)

The **Carlton** is being brought back to life in a £3m project managed by Cumberland Council. It is set to become a creative hub, with an indoor events and performance space, studios and workshops. The work is being funded by the council and the government’s Future High Street Fund and is expected to be completed by summer 2024. The 1830s building was originally a bank. It was converted into a cinema in 1934, with the addition of an auditorium. This closed in 1962, and bingo took over until 1993. The building was purchased by the Civic Society, but was then damaged by a fire. In 1998 the National Lottery helped fund a restoration, and there was talk of it being converted into a nightclub,



but this never happened. In 2009 a ceramics factory opened, with a gift shop and café in the former foyer, but this closed in 2013. The building is now part of the town’s wider £12m regeneration, which includes the opening of Christ Church as a Maritime Museum, the creation of the new Shipping Brow Gallery, major high street improvements, and – pending Government approval – the revitalisation of the harbourside, promenade and the Wave Centre.

Cumbria Crack – 21 September; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken February 2008

MILTON KEYNES (Buckinghamshire)

Plans have been submitted for a 21-storey apartment block, and (unspecified) leisure/retail use, which would entail the demolition of The Point. This was famously the home of the UK’s first purpose-built multiplex, when the 10-screen **AMC** opened in November 1985. It gained its popular name from its foyer, which was in the shape of a pyramid, with supporting struts that were originally edged in red neon. In December 1988, it was taken over by UCI. Then, in April 2003 it was leased to **easyCinema**, for a ‘low-cost’ cinema project which turned out to be a failure. In May 2006 the cinema was taken over by **Odeon**. It closed in February 2015, when an 11-screen **Odeon** opened adjacent to MK Dons Stadium. There were hopes that it would be given a Grade II listing, due to its historical relevance, but this was turned down.

MK FM – 2 November

AE writes: The area at the front under the Point feature was not the foyer of the cinema – it was an area of bars and restaurants that could be walked through to reach the cinema with its foyer, which was an add-on using the template of an AMC American multiplex. The cinema also had entrances from the roads on either side and occupied the rear half of the development. Heavy alterations before it closed, as well as lack of an alternative use, defeat any idea of preserving it as Britain’s first multiplex.

NEWTON ABBOT (Devon)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p28, which reported that a new, four-screen cinema was to be one of the town’s regeneration improvements, it has been announced that the council has unanimously voted to abandon this element of the plan. Instead, resources will be concentrated on the existing **Alexandra Theatre**, home to a twin-screen cinema (not three-screen, as mentioned in the previous item). The council’s decision “sparked delight” for campaigners protesting against the council’s plans. South Devon Alliance leader, Richard Daws, said the decision to ditch plans for the new cinema was the right one: “The council’s executive has listened to the residents and traders in making this change.”

BBC News – 1 November; sent in by Terry Hanstock

NEWTOWN (Powys)

The owner of the **Regent**, a finalist for ‘Best Cinema Experience’ at the 2023 Welsh Hospitality Awards, says the support from locals has been “absolutely fantastic” since he took over the family business in 2019. David Thacker quit his career in hospitality just before the pandemic to run the cinema after sadly losing his father to a brain tumour: “I couldn’t let his hard work go to waste.” The Grade II listed venue was built in 1830-32 as Flannel Exchange Mart. In 1919 it was converted



into the **Scala**, a concert and theatre hall, but that quickly became the **Scala Picture House** (there was also a ballroom in the basement). The cinema area was re-modelled in 1936, re-opening the following year as the **Regent**. In the 1980s a local syndicate acquired the building. It was re-modelled, once again, with the cinema in the former circle, a nightclub, Crystals, in the former stalls and, from 1999, a pub, The Exchange, in the former ballroom. Crystals and The Exchange closed in 2017, but the **Regent** continues, now as a two-screen picture house, with a 40-seat screen complementing the 'cinema in the circle'. (Sadly, however, the Regent did not scoop the 'Best Cinema Experience' award. There were nine other finalists, and the winner, announced on 2 October, was the **Maxime**, Blackwood. We congratulate that cinema, and send our very best wishes to the **Regent** and all the other finalists.)

County Times – 5 October; photo taken June 2003

NORTHAMPTON

The **Northampton Filmhouse**, at the **Royal and Derngate Theatre**, was given the all-clear to re-open on 18 September, after being ordered to close the week before when reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC; see the item for Dartford) was detected in the foyer roof. That area has been "adapted" so that visitors do not need to use the main entrance, and a "temporary in-person box office" has been set up at John Franklins bar. The now two-screen **Errol Flynn Filmhouse** opened on 20 June 2013, the birthday of the Tasmanian-born actor who spent six months at the **Northampton Repertory Theatre** (now the **Royal and Derngate**) before finding stardom in Hollywood. Not long afterwards, in spring 2018, it was decided to re-name the cinema, and it became the **Northampton Filmhouse** in 2019. It is a shame that the connection with the celebrated star has been lost, especially as no specific reason for this name change appears to have been provided, other than that "it was felt the time was right". Perhaps a member can shed some more light on this?

ITV News – 12 September

NORWICH

A four-screen, 300-seat **Everyman** is set to open at the Chantry Place shopping centre. It will occupy three units, including the former Cafe Rouge and Pizza Hut restaurants. The application for change of use was received by Norwich City Council on 29 August. Other alterations include modifications to the entrance and the existing customer toilets. However, Chantry Place itself has not confirmed or denied this development, saying only that "The centre continues to perform strongly, with Frasers re-opening as planned and Urban Outfitters joining our line-up earlier this year. Next year we'll have more big brands joining us, one of which will really put Norwich on the retail map, and we continue to explore a number of potential lettings to further enhance our offering in retail, catering and leisure. The future is really exciting for us as we work to surpass the aspirations of our visitors and provide them with even more reasons to visit, and we'll announce more details on next year and future plans as and when we can." So the city's filmgoers will need to watch this space!

Norwich Evening News – 13 October; sent in by Terry Hanstock

NUNEATON (Warwickshire)

The Really Local Group has been revealed as the operator of the cinema being built on what was the old Co-op car park in Abbey Street.

This will be part of the second phase of the Grayson Place development. Construction is due to be completed by the end of 2024, with an opening early in 2025. This will be the rapidly expanding Group's first project outside London and the south east. At Nuneaton there will be five screens, and the venue will also host live music and comedy. It will be open throughout the day and will also have a community space as well as a coffee shop/bar alongside pop-up shops selling local food and produce.

Coventry Live – 28 September; sent in by Terry Hanstock

OLDHAM (Lancashire)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/3 p 18, plans have been submitted for a new home for the **Coliseum**, which closed in March after its application for renewed Arts Council funding had been rejected the previous November. Oldham Council aims to build a £24m theatre on Greaves Street, and also develop a new public space to stage outdoor events, as part of its Cultural Quarter. This will be surrounded by the new venue for the **Coliseum** – the former Post Office and Quaker meeting house – and the Old Library, which is also being restored. The council says the space will bring together the Cultural Quarter's three key buildings: the current Library and Gallery, the restored Old Library, which is set to open in early 2025, and the new theatre which, if approved, is expected to open in 2026. A decision is expected to be made by the planning authority in October. In the meantime, the Oldham Coliseum Trust has commissioned an independent inspection which apparently shows the theatre to be in good working order, stating "it could re-open with immediate effect at a capital cost of only £150,000", representing "a fraction of the ring-fenced £24 million". And Emma Thompson, Vanessa Redgrave and Ian McKellen are among the internationally renowned actors who have put their signatures to an open letter in *The Stage*, alongside prominent local actors Jim Carter, Maxine Peake and Julie Hesmondhalgh, which calls for a renewal in dialogue between the parties involved, saying: "There is a way we can save the historic auditorium, and expand and rebuild the foyer, backstage and café-bar area, create studio and rehearsal spaces fit for the next 138 years, and return the **Coliseum** to its former glory as a producing theatre... Is the fight to save Oldham **Coliseum** over? Oh no, it isn't!" The council responded by saying "Positive discussions continue between the new **Coliseum** Board, Arts Council England and Oldham Council to agree the future plans for the theatre, and we will be considering all of the feedback received during the planning process as part of these discussions."

BBC News – 31 August; Oldham Times – 4 September (sent in by Terry Hanstock); Mancunian Matters – 25 October

PAISLEY (Renfrewshire)

A war of words has broken out over the failure of an ambitious plan to create a cinema and community hub. Members of Paisley Community Trust confirmed they would dissolve the volunteer-led charity as a result of Renfrewshire Council's "institutionalised disregard for the very communities it is appointed to serve", highlighting its failure to submit the trust's "fully compliant" funding application to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund and its handling of its market research, which focussed on the provision of cinemas in and around the county rather than whether or not a carefully "curated" and community-led cinema would be successful in the town centre. However, council bosses hit back by saying that the trust's business case was simply not strong enough, with independent consultants, jointly appointed by the trust and the council, concluding that there was insufficient demand, and therefore no commercial justification, for a new 'high street' cinema. (Meanwhile, at least filmgoers do have the 14-screen out-of-town **Showcase De Lux**.)

Paisley Daily – 5 October & 18 October

PLEAN (Stirlingshire)

It's a former mining village whose population barely nudges towards 2,000 – but that hasn't prevented its residents from dreaming of Hollywood glamour. And now this small community is to get its very own picture house, thanks to a coming together of the local council and the **Macrobert Arts Centre** at the University of Stirling. **Macrobert Moviehouse** will be based in the village's Balfour Community Centre and will operate on Thursday and Friday evenings and all day at the weekend. Tickets will be sold on a 'pay what you choose' basis, albeit with prices starting at £4.50, as this initiative will bring a much-needed

boost to a village rated high on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. There will be 20 “comfy” seats - and the “obligatory” popcorn - and screenings will be shared with the **Macrobert Arts Centre**. Planning and project management was made possible through Screen Scotland’s Recovery Fund for Independent Cinemas, backed by the Scottish Government. As part of the project’s legacy, **Macrobert** is working with community trust Plean’s Voice to fund and manage the **Moviehouse** in the long term.

The Herald – 5 September

PLYMOUTH (Devon)

Cleaning processes at the **Vue** have been enhanced after a patron spotted a mouse climbing on one of the auditorium seats. A spokesperson said that a “full deep clean” took place over the weekend following the incident, adding that “further measures” were being put in place to avoid a repetition. It was not reported which film the rodent was there to see, although he is known to favour one particular cartoon character...

ITV News – 1 November

PONTARDAWE (West Glamorgan)

Plans for the construction of a new-build 70-seat cinema, and to refurbish the existing building, at **Pontardawe Arts Centre** have been submitted for a second time. They were originally granted, by Neath Port Talbot Council’s planning department, in March 2023, but on the basis that a number of conditions were first met, including the undertaking of a historic building recording survey, as the venue, originally a Public Hall, which opened in 1909, is said to be of architectural and cultural significance to the area. The developers also had to add a storm water attenuation tank and flood water compensation tank, built under the building to hold and disperse water in case of flooding. A report within the plans read: “Having hosted regular cinema showings, **Pontardawe Arts Centre** has identified that there is a significant opportunity to expand its film offer to include ‘first release’ blockbusters as well as art house movies within a new dedicated cinema space.” The Public Hall was originally paid for by workers through a subscription scheme, and featured a 1,500-seat theatre, meeting rooms, offices, a billiard hall, library and reading rooms. A 650-seat cinema opened in 1910. That closed in the early 1960s; after years of neglect, and a major refurbishment, the **Arts Centre** opened in 1997.

Nation Cymru – 1 November

PORTSMOUTH (Hampshire)

Work has started on a new housing development behind the former **Odeon**, North End. The auditorium is being demolished, to be replaced by a mix of eight terraced houses, six flats and a maisonette with an undercroft parking area. However, the iconic tower frontage, which houses a branch of Polish supermarket Minutkais, is not included in this re-development. The **Odeon** opened in 1936. It was tripled in 1973, and a fourth screen was added in 1990. It closed in 2008. The auditoriums were never re-used, while the foyer has been occupied by a succession of retailers.

The News – 31 August; sent to the CTA e-group by Darron Keeling

PRESTWICK (South Ayrshire)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/3 p18, The Friends of the **Broadway** say they are on the cusp of success, and awaiting news of ‘big grant’ funding which could allow them to take over the building and return it to its former glory. And the funding will need to be “big”, as the cost of restoring the building into a working cinema, with other facilities for the community, is in the region of £10-12m. Director and trustee Kyle Macfarlane said: “It will become a community hub, with a café, perhaps a book and record exchange and that massive stage, which could host musical events, musical theatre and comedy shows. We would also like to extend the building, with two more screens at the rear which would allow films to continue to be shown while other events are taking place in the main auditorium.” Other aspects of the Friends’ vision include turning the building into a Gaelic-friendly venue, hosting Gaelic film events, and adapting part of it into a Museum of Scottish Cinema, which, it is hoped, would attract visitors from around the world. The building is currently owned by Ayrshire-based hospitality group Buzzworks Holdings, who have indicated their willingness to sell.

Ayr Advertiser – 20 October

READING

The **Vue** multiplex at The Oracle could be knocked down if transformation plans are given the go-ahead. The site is the subject of a proposal to replace it with a new cinema (with two large and one smaller screen), a restaurant and 247 apartments. The scheme, designated ‘Yield Hall Place 2’, is being put forward by Hammerson, the managers of The Oracle. Justifying the project, their planning agents, Turley, said: “Now, at over 20 years, the cinema is in need of significant investment to upgrade the existing facilities, both in terms of physical environment for customers and technological infrastructure. [It] is facing increased competition from more modern facilities within the Thames Valley including the **Showcase** in Wokingham and **Cineworld** at the Lexicon, Bracknell as well as market trends resulting in lower cinema footfall, including at-home streaming services and cost of living challenges.” The **Warner Village** opened in 1999, becoming the **Vue** in 2004. (And, in case you were wondering, ‘Yield Hall Place 1’ seeks to have the former Debenhams building, just across the river, replaced by 202 apartments, a restaurant, a leisure unit and co-working office space.)

Reading Chronicle – 26 September

REDHILL (Surrey)

The **Harlequin Theatre and Cinema** closed on 26 September, as a precaution, following the potential discovery of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC; see the item for Dartford). Initially performances were cancelled until 26 October, while a survey was carried out, but this was extended and the next show available for sale is the Christmas panto, *Beauty and the Beast*, which opens on 8 December. However, in the meantime, Halloween and Christmas shows for children, and other regular activities, are being presented in the **Harlequin Pop-Up**, in the nearby Belfry Shopping Centre.

BBC News – 27 September; sent in by Martin Tapsell; Harlequin website

RINGWOOD (Hampshire)



Back in *Bulletin* 55/6 p22 (November-December 2021) it was announced that a public consultation “has been held” over plans to convert the former **Regal** into flats, with the façade being retained. These plans were presumably approved, as the building is now being offered for rent, while it is being “sensitively and comprehensively re-developed to provide up to 4,940sq ft of commercial space and 1 x 3 bed units, 11 x 2 bed units and 8 x 1 bed units.” This was the former Corn Exchange, which was converted to cinema use around 1914. It became the **Regal** in 1936-37, which finally closed in 1972 (having ceased being a full-time cinema in 1959). Subsequent use, including a shopping arcade, night club and restaurant, came to an end in 2015.

Rightmove property specification; sent in by Philip Stevens; photo taken March 2009

RUNCORN (Cheshire)

The **Cineworld** closed on Sunday 26 November. A spokesperson for the circuit said: “We can confirm that following a review of all available options, we have taken the difficult decision to close **Cineworld Runcorn**” adding “We hope to see [our customers] again at one of our nearby cinemas in Speke, Warrington, Broughton and St Helens.” The 9-screen multiplex opened in December 1999. Apparently the Trident Park venue was originally set to close following the pandemic, but it is believed that a petition, launched by its staff, helped to keep it open. Patrons have inevitably been expressing their dismay, with one going so far as to say that “I wouldn’t live in Runcorn if it wasn’t for the cinema.” Perhaps another operator will step in and answer this particular customer’s prayers.

Runcorn and Widnes World – 24 October

ST. ANDREWS (Fife)



A petition has been launched to try and prevent Tiger Woods and Justin Timberlake opening a premium sports and entertainment gastro-pub, to be called T-Squared Social, in an extensive remodelling of the **New Picture House**.

Inspired by upscale lounges, cocktail bars and restaurants, the new venue would include dining and viewing areas with multiple low and high-top tables and a variety of plush lounges. Developer NEXUS Luxury Collection said the bar would “redefine the multi-dimensional dining experience, merging elevated cuisine and craft cocktails with state-of-the-art ‘Full Swing’ simulators for golf and other interactive gameplay, duckpin bowling, darts and premium sports-watching with large format televisions.” Personal touches from Woods and Timberlake would permeate the space. David Morris, managing director of the **New Picture House**, said: “[This planned] investment will [give] the local community, students and visitors the opportunity to experience a broader range of cinema, dining and entertainment at the popular venue.” One of the current three screens would be retained for “watching theatrical films, live-to-cinema events and marquee TV programming.” Subject to planning approval, the re-vamped venue is set to open in 2024. Meanwhile, the petition was launched by Ash Johann Curry-Machado, of the St. Andrews Film Society, who said the proposed transformation of the cinema “threatens to strip away a vital part of our town’s identity and history.” He has labelled the plans “deeply alarming”, “short-sighted” and “out of touch with the needs and desires of the local community and the student population.” Since being launched last week, the petition has gained over 9,000 signatures. The **New Picture House** opened in 1930. A second screen was added in 1980, and a third in 2001; these are in the rear stalls, under the circle, leaving the original auditorium basically unaltered. The building is Category B listed.

The Herald – 19 October; photo taken September 2006

SHEFFIELD



The **Adelphi**, Attercliffe, has gone on the market as the city council seeks an operator to revive the Grade II listed building as a “vibrant” cultural hub. It was acquired by the council earlier this year as part of the £17m Attercliffe Levelling Up project. In addition to the purchase, funding is also available to bring it up to an “occupiable state”, with the aim of the creation of a mixed-use space which will support the health and well-being of residents through leisure, arts and music. The **Adelphi** opened in October 1910. Although there was a circle, the projection box was at the rear of the stalls. Another unusual feature was that patrons entered at the screen end. Always independently owned, the cinema closed in October 1967 and bingo took over. That closed around 1995, after which the building was home to a nightclub, followed, in 2000, by a music teaching centre. That closed in 2006. The building was vacant from 2006 to 2013, since when it has been used for storage. Interested parties have until midday on 8 December to submit their proposals, after which the council will shortlist the best applications and request more detailed plans.

The Star – 18 September; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken February 2005

STOKE-ON-TRENT

The **Film Theatre** is set to move to a new venue in its 50th anniversary year, after failing to come to an agreement over its former home at Staffordshire University. The independent cinema, which was founded in 1974, was forced to shut its doors in March 2020, due to the pandemic, and has remained closed ever since. In January this year, local media reported that it was locked in an “extremely frustrating” dispute about re-opening and, although the university later “offered the **Film Theatre** a contractual way forward”, it appears the two were unable to reach an agreement. So it has now been announced that the cinema’s new home will be the Wade Conference Centre, in Hartshill, based in the North Staffordshire Medical Institute building. That centre, which will be able to seat 154 patrons, as opposed to 213 previously, needs to be fully fitted out as a public cinema, and projection equipment that has become damaged through lack of use will have to be replaced. So a fundraising drive is ongoing, and January 2024 is being looked at for the **Film Theatre**’s re-opening.

Stoke on Trent Live – 13 September

SUNDERLAND

A £2m plan is being considered to revive the Sunnyside Leisure complex following a string of closures, including the **Empire** multiplex. The site has been acquired by the city council, which is seeking funding “for the refurbishment and fit-out of the cinema and the three adjoining vacant retail units, in order to attract new tenants to support the regeneration of the area.” However, this is just one of several schemes that are subject to further decision-making as part of the council’s budget-setting process. The final capital and budget proposals are expected to be finalised in early 2024. The **Cineworld** had opened in 2004, and been taken over by **Empire** in 2006. It closed in July 2023 when the circuit went into administration, leaving this Wearside city without an operating cinema.

Sunderland Echo – 15 November

SWANSEA

Work on injecting a new lease of life into the Grade II listed **Palace Theatre**, that began in 2021, is continuing. So far, steel girders have



been installed, a framework for a lift has been inserted, thousands of original red bricks have been saved for future use, timber roof beams and iron pillars have been repaired, the dilapidated roof has been removed and restored (in readiness for a new slate roof) and sandstone decorative blocks on the façade and “other original theatre elements” have been repaired. The aim is to transform the building into “a modern and attractive base for tech businesses, start-up companies and creative businesses”, with

Tramshed Tech leasing the building as its lead tenant. Owner Swansea City Council is aiming for a 2024 re-opening. The **Pavilion Theatre of Varieties** opened in 1888. It was renamed the **Empire Theatre** in 1892, before becoming the **Palace Theatre of Varieties** in 1901. Following part-time cinema use in the silent era, the theatre was wired for sound in 1932 and gradually went over to full-time cinema use, first as the **New Palace**, then the **Palace**. Around 1954, live shows returned, as the **Palace Theatre** (with Anthony Hopkins making his professional debut in 1960). Soon afterwards, bingo took over, followed by use as a nightclub, the final one of which closed in 2006. The council acquired the then derelict building in 2019 and began the £5m transformation.

ITV News - 1 September; photo taken August 2007

SWINDON (Wiltshire)

There is good news for at least some of the former regulars at the **Empire**, which closed in July when the circuit went into administration. The Greenbridge multiplex used to host screenings for over-60s every Wednesday – and one of the regulars, Marie Wood, helped to bring these back at the **Cineworld** at Shaw Ridge. “I took a leap of faith and wrote to Cineworld HQ asking if it would be possible for them to take up where Empire was sadly forced to abruptly end.” The company said this would be discussed at the next board meeting and, a few weeks later, Marie was told that the screenings would be continued at Shaw Ridge. *Chevalier* subsequently played at 11.30am on Wednesday 21 September under the circuit’s CineSeniors branding, which was already in operation at seven other locations. Priced at £4.50, these over-60s screenings include a hot drink and a biscuit – and the chance to have a chat with fellow movie lovers. Rather ironically, the **Empire** had opened, in 1998, as the **Cineworld**. It was acquired by Empire in 2006. Meanwhile, the Shaw Ridge multiplex opened as the **MGM** in 1991. It was subsequently acquired, and renamed, by **Virgin**, then **UGC**, and then, in 2005, **Cineworld**.

Swindon Advertiser – 22 September

There was then even better news for the former **Empire** patrons, when Vue confirmed it would be taking over the Greenbridge multiplex. Rumours had quickly spread when an application for a premises licence was spotted in a window, and the circuit subsequently revealed it will be investing in a major refit that will add recliner seats to every auditorium. It was then announced that the multiplex, which includes the area’s only IMAX screen, would re-open as Vue on Friday 8 December, with the refurbishment to take place during 2024. The circuit hopes that the cinema, alongside the existing shops and restaurants, and the soon-to-open Hollywood Bowl, will make the park “a good place for a family day out.”

BBC News – 13 October; Swindon Advertiser – 14 November & 28 November

One of the town’s most historic buildings has become home to its latest ‘film experience’. Create Studios, based in the listed Carriage Works (built around 1876 for the Great Western Railway) launched **Sofa Screenings** on 12 October. They are offering something ‘a little different’ for film lovers (but without specifying what that ‘difference’ might be, other than that they are revival screenings). This is the first in a series of initiatives that Create Studios will be sharing as part of the three-year British Film Institute ‘Spotlight’ initiative in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, aimed at “bringing the best of old and new film to audiences hungry to share screening experiences again”. Initially, at least, screenings will take place on Friday evenings.

Swindon Advertiser – 29 October

TODMORDEN (West Yorkshire)



A planning application has been submitted for a three-storey extension at the **Hippodrome Theatre**, which is owned and operated by Todmorden Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (TAODS). This is one of eight projects which are sharing £17.5m of government funding aimed at improving the town. The proposal is for the demolition of the existing cinema projection “tower” and its replacement with a new three-storey extension between the main theatre and the adjoining shop. This will provide new front of house facilities, a main entrance foyer on the ground floor and new flexible multi-use rooms on the upper floors. The **Hippodrome** opened as a live theatre in 1908, but as early as 1917 films had all but taken over. These ceased in 1956, when the building was, initially, leased to TAODS.

Halifax Courier – 18 September; photo taken January 2020

TUNBRIDGE WELLS (Kent)

The **Assembly Hall Theatre** is exploring ways to modernise and expand its offerings, and this could include showing films. Owned, funded and managed by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the 1,020-seat theatre opened in 1939, having been designed by architect Percy Thomas as part of the Civic Centre complex. Currently an exclusively live venue, the council has noted that many other theatres now include film screenings, and they are keen to host 10-20 percent more shows, which could increase annual revenue by around £100,000. They are also mindful that there is no commercial cinema in the city centre, although films are part of the programming at nearby **Trinity**, a “vibrant cultural hub” which opened in 1982, but which ‘only’ has 291 seats.

Kent Live – 9 October

ULVERSTON (Cumbria)

Further to the item in *Bulletin* 57/4 p31, the Roxy Collective has completed its work on the roof of the historic **Roxy**, and started painting the exterior. The group is a not-for-profit community interest company which was formed so it could purchase the building and renovate it. The exterior is being painted white, and a new logo has been created. The work on the roof was particularly essential, to make it completely watertight. The group was awarded a £300,000 grant, in December, from the government’s Community Ownership Fund. They have also received funding from the town council, Ulverston BID (‘Business Improvement District’), local businesses and donations from members of the public. They are now seeking further funding to undertake (unspecified) work in the interior. The **Roxy** opened in 1937. It was subdivided in 1975, with bingo in the former stalls and the cinema in the circle (which, since 2006, has been operated by Charles Morris). The bingo closed in 2007 and that area became a carpet showroom. In 2009, the Laurel & Hardy Museum moved into the former stage area, relocating to the stalls in 2014 when the carpet store moved out. U-Gym now occupies the stage area.

Westmorland Gazette – 6 October & Mail – 11 November; sent in by Terry Hanstock

WELLINGTON (Shropshire)



Independent cinema the **Orbit** has launched '**Orbit WOW**', which offers a wide range of benefits and savings. Announcing the membership scheme, Liam McClelland, one of the cinema's directors, said: "**Orbit WOW** is our way of keeping things simple and delightful for our amazing patrons. It's about giving back to our community as a thank you for their support they have shown us so far. We have already seen over 250 of our shareholders join the scheme and we're delighted to now be able to open it to the wider public." At £20 per year, among the offers members receive are 10 percent off food and drink and standard cinema tickets, plus £5 tickets for selected films. The **Orbit** opened in May 2019 in premises previously occupied by HSBC Bank. The community group operating it had hoped to re-open the former **Clifton**, which had closed as a Dunelm store in 2012, but that was eventually acquired by a developer.

Shropshire Star – 3 October; photo by David Simpson (July 2022)

WESTON-SUPER-MARE (Somerset)

According to a post on Facebook from 'Visit Weston-super-Mare', in mid-November, the former **Odeon** could be re-opening very soon. It said there is "Exciting news coming soon. Check back soon as we've got some brilliant news to share!" Well, they weren't wrong: A few weeks later it was announced that the renamed **Plaza** would be re-opening on Friday 15 December! Merlin Cinemas have acquired the now-four screen cinema, which opened in 1935 and closed in June 2023. According to Odeon, it was "no longer viable." They didn't elaborate, but the appearance of an 8-screen **Cineworld** on a nearby site, in January 2018, couldn't have helped. However, let's hope that Merlin can breathe new life into this iconic cinema.

Weston Mercury – 16 November & 3 December

WOODHALL SPA (Lincolnshire)



The **Kinema in the Woods** featured in the 'Lincolnshire' episode of Channel 5's *Susan Calman's Grand Day Out*. After waxing lyrical in the foyer, and buying some popcorn, the comedian settled down in Screen 1 to watch Chaplin's *The Kid*, with accompaniment by resident organist Alan Underwood.

Sent in by Tom Laughlan; Photo taken July 2020

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

DUBLIN

The **Ambassador**, in Parnell Street, is set to make a come-back as an exhibition centre. It was last open in 2018, when it was home to 'Dinosaurs Around the World', but it has remained shuttered since it closed during the pandemic. Originally designed in 1764 as an assembly hall for the Rotunda Hospital, the venue hosted very early film presentations before becoming a full-time cinema in 1910. It was redesigned, and extended, in the 1950s, finally closing to film shows in 1999. Until 2008 it was a live music venue, after which it has been used for one-off concerts, exhibitions and corporate events.

FM104 News – 5 September

St Stephen's Green Shopping Centre, situated at the top of Grafton Street, which has high vacancy levels in its upper floors despite the key location, is the subject of a proposed revamp. This would include a small two-screen cinema in the basement. A previous proposal to build a much larger cinema complex upstairs did not materialise. Oddly, this prime area of Dublin has been without a cinema for about forty years.

Sent in by Bob Bradshaw

STOCKHOLM



For many years the **Skandia** has been used for 'special' film shows, such as premieres and the Stockholm International Film Festival, and other events such as conferences. (It has been operated by Filmstaden, which was set up following the acquisition of the SF Bio circuit by AMC Theatres about five years ago.) However, having celebrated its 100th anniversary in September, with screenings of silent classics, including *Nosferatu* and *Metropolis*, accompanied by a full orchestra, the devastating news came though that this iconic cinema is to close on 31 December, when Filmstaden's lease expires. And it is as yet unclear what the owner, property company Hufvudstaden, has in mind. Designed by celebrated architect Eric Gunnar Aspland in Neo-Classical style, the **Skandia** had a semi-atmospheric ceiling with 60 silk-covered star shaped lamps which were extinguished one by one before the start of each film. Remarkably, it is not listed; equally remarkably, in Sweden, the owner has to consent for a listing to be granted. So the local authority says, while it is aware of the imminent closure, it is unable to intervene.

Sent in by Kjell Furburg; photo by David Simpson (August 2018)

SYDNEY

One of the Kings Cross district's last surviving art deco theatres, the **Metro-Minerva**, is to be converted into a 63-room boutique hotel and 250-seat auditorium offering Parisian-style cabaret entertainment. Conditional approval was granted by the Town Hall's Central Planning Committee, despite the last-minute intervention of the state's former arts minister. This is property developer Central Element's third attempt to progress its \$69AUD scheme, and Lord Mayor Clover Moore said the proposal had been subject to a very rigorous and thorough planning process. While she conceded that the hundreds of residents who had petitioned for its use as a theatre would be unhappy, the plans represented the best outcome for the site given the circumstances. The **Metro King's Cross** was originally part of a live entertainment complex called the Minerva Centre. The **Minerva**, a live theatre, designed, externally and internally, in a Streamline Moderne style, opened in 1939. By 1948 it was failing to attract large enough audiences, and it was sold to MGM. They refurbished it and initially it re-opened with live shows, but it was converted into a cinema, the **Metro Kings Cross**, in 1952. Live shows, including the (in)famous staging of *Hair*, returned in 1969, but the theatre was sold in 1979 (having been taken over by Greater Union) and became a supermarket. That failed, and the building became home to a soundstage and recording studio until 2018. It was placed on the State Heritage Register in 2020.

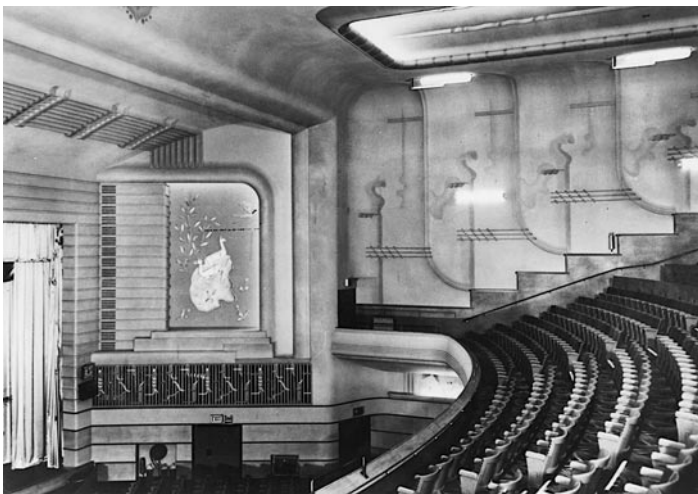
Sydney Morning Herald – 10 November

HOLLYWOOD BRITAIN

By David C Evans



In 1954 those sitting in any British Odeon watching Danny Kaye in the Paramount US-made, London-set *Knock on Wood* would have been highly amused, especially if they were Londoners, when he walked around the corner of Oxford Street into what should be Park Lane only to land up on Fleet Street! Later, in 1956, many in British audiences, at Granada or Essoldo houses, would have been surprised to find that according to 20th Century-Fox's *23 Paces to Baker Street*, starring Van Johnson, his flat on the Thames Embankment was at around that distance from the street in question when, arguably, more than 5,000 paces might have been more accurate. These are just two examples of the 'effort' made by Hollywood studios to recreate Britain on their sound stages and back lots.



The interior of the ABC Rex Leytonstone
photo: CTA Archive, Tony Moss Collection

Well before this, in 1940, those watching Warner Bros' Technicolor *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, with Bette Davies and Errol Flynn in the title roles, at, say, the 1,900 plus seat ABC Rex Leytonstone would have been astonished to read a title card referring to Essex's estate in nearby Wanstead when the scenery shown featured very high hills or low mountains in the background, whereas Wanstead is quite flat and to emphasise the point it is home to an area called Wanstead Flats. A few years later, in 1943, MGM released its highly-popular adaptation of James Hilton's novel *Random Harvest* with Greer Garson and Ronald Colman in the lead parts and set in an English Midlands village with their pretty cottage featuring roses around the door and cherry blossoms over the gate, as imagined by MGM. The picture played to packed houses at the Empire Leicester Square and then on general release via the ABC circuit. It is, perhaps, interesting to speculate on the reaction of audiences in Liverpool cinemas – the imposing Forum for example – when after Ronald Colman is knocked down in a traffic accident in that City he finds himself surrounded by people with Cockney accents! Well, it was all in



jolly old England, wasn't it? Just like the Palace of Westminster, in RKO's *The Brighton Strangler* (1945) with John Loder and June Duprez, which showed the Houses of Parliament as being situated on the South Bank of the River Thames...



Occasionally, Hollywood craftsmen created a much more authentic Britain in movies such as *Hangover Square*, (20th Century-Fox, 1944), where the early Edwardian gaslit streets of London's Fulham and Earls Court were carefully recreated and, of course, this being London, there was always a hint of fog around in them. The same studio's *The Lodger* (1944) with Merle Oberon and Laird Cregar in the title role had an excellent Victorian London 'feel' too despite one UK critic's comment that when Oberon danced the Can-Can – she was playing a showgirl – it seemed more like the Can't-Can't! However, it was back to "London" with Universal's *Blood on My Hands* (Kiss the Blood off My Hands in the USA) featuring Joan Fontaine and Burt Lancaster (1949) and set in the London docks. Noted film historian David Shipman described this movie as "Hollywood's London at its foggiest and phoniest". The accompanying feature on the Gaumont circuit, *The Pirates of Monterey* with Maria Montez, probably offered some Technicolor relief from all this gloom. Another piece of Technicolor escapism, *Tonight and Every Night* (1945) featuring glamorous Rita Hayworth and set in a London theatre during the height of WWII bombing was popular but many seeing it on the Gaumont circuit must have been amused by Columbia's idea of London under fire and of the cavernous theatre where she worked, supposedly based on the famous intimately-sized Windmill, in which much of the action took place. Its director, the British Victor Saville, really should have known better. However, at least there was no fog!

Editor's Note: I seem to remember reading about a Hollywood film set in London where the cars were driving on the wrong side of the street and another set over here where the mains sockets were of the American type. Does anyone recognise these movies?