



CINEMA  
THEATRE  
ASSOCIATION

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

# BULLETIN

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Bingo at the former Plaza Stockland Green, Birmingham, which will not reopen after the current closure – see p14; photo taken March 2008



The Regent at Redcar (Cleveland) which will be demolished and replaced with a three-screen cinema – see Newsreel p20; photo taken July 2006

## FROM YOUR EDITOR

As a Lancastrian, I was ashamed at my typing error in the last sentence of the item on the back page of the last Bulletin about the first ABC 'Luxury Lounge'. Lancaster is the County town and not just a 'country' town. Must get a new keyboard.

I see that we now have to wear masks in cinemas, although in most places you can take them off once seated. I understand the industry is hoping this will bring back audiences; what are your thoughts? I don't know about you but it has the opposite effect with me. I hate having to wear one in shops and I won't use public transport whilst the regulation is in force.

I have quite a few cuttings and reports about drive-in and open-air cinemas, which are popular during the current pandemic. I will try to mention them if I think they illustrate something different but I am minded of the CTA's Mission Statement [see opposite] that we are interested in all aspects of cinema buildings so I can't cover them all.

I have run into the dreaded 'multiple of four pages' problem again this time so I have had to omit one or two things you have sent. They weren't time critical so I'll try and include them next time.



We spent a pleasant few days in Woodhall Spa in July. I was able to visit the Kinema in the Woods and view their [relatively] new 74-seat screen ③, which only opened last year – very nice indeed, photo above. Thanks to Dave Gilks for showing me around. They have recently reopened after the Covid-19 closure. Dave told me that the hand sanitizer they have provided is taking the coatings off the door handles! They were worried that drops might do similar things to their bespoke carpet.

Just a couple of Bulletin 'housekeeping' reminders. My preferred formats for submissions are Word or plain text documents and good resolution jpg images. However I can open virtually any file or image format so don't worry too much if your program does something different. Also I put Internet and email addresses in [square brackets] just to make them stand out and to avoid the DTP program converting them into links as I type. Remember not to type the [square brackets] when putting the address into your browser or email program.

Finally, nothing to do with cinemas but another little story I hope might amuse. Unable to find one locally, I ordered a tea cosy from Amazon. Those of you who have used Amazon will know that they send a follow-up email asking you to rate the item. One of the questions they asked me about the tea cosy was, "What do you use this item for?" Answers on a postcard, please.

*Harry Rigby, CTA Bulletin Editor*

## VISITS AND EVENTS

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

*Ken Roe*

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE  
TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER**

## CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

(Founded January 1967)

promoting serious interest in all aspects of cinema buildings

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CINEMA THEATRE ASSOCIATION

BULLETIN: Members are invited to submit items for possible publication to the Bulletin Editor. However, it is stressed that the publication of an item does not necessarily imply that it reflects the views of the Cinema Theatre Association, its Committee or its Bulletin Editor.

It is assumed that submissions are for publication, unless stated otherwise; items may be shortened or edited at the discretion of the Editor.

Please state if you require items to be returned and enclose SAE, otherwise everything will be passed on to the CTA Archive.

VISITS: Members and non-members are reminded that they attend visits entirely at their own risk and no responsibility can be accepted by the Cinema Theatre Association or the owners of the buildings for any accidents or injury sustained during the course of any visit.

PRODUCTS: The Cinema Theatre Association does not necessarily recommend or endorse any products or services advertised in the Bulletin or in any flyer or document included in any mailings to members.

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# HERITAGE CASEWORK

By Tim Hatcher

## Grade II\* Listed

The Association instigated a Freedom of Information request of Thurrock Council, which has been declined. This relates to the revision of the approved plans relating to the State at Grays, which former includes additional fenestration as previously reported. Specialist advice confirms that an appeal against this refusal may – and indeed will – be instituted, in order to ascertain the exact nature of the proposal prior to the submission of any requisite interposition.

The scheme for renovation of the Granada in Walthamstow has been granted planning permission. A written recapitulation, accentuating points raised in previous discussions with the relevant parties, has been forwarded by the CTA; this emphasises the importance of complete restoration of the dual-console Christie organ, the significance of which has been endorsed by Historic England. Overall the scheme is acceptable, with the exception of a new plant-room injudiciously located at the rear of the circle. Advice will continue to be proffered upon surface finishes.

Despite its request for additional funding, communication with the Trust responsible for the Picture House in Paignton has proven to be somewhat elusive. It has been indicated that Historic England would regard the support of the Association as politically advantageous, yet it remains of import to determine the objective which is intended to be advanced by any potential further financial provision and the prospect of its resultant efficacy.

## Grade II Listed

The CTA's comments concerning proposed alterations to the Savoy at Burnt Oak have been furnished, alongside those of Brent Council, to the relevant development company. It is to be hoped that it will consent to these and render an amended proposal with alacrity, as the building has deteriorated significantly during its period of desuetude.

In a distressing scenario, the Nepalese community, which is renovating the Ritz in Nuneaton, has allegedly been defrauded by a contractor; this has resulted in a paucity of funding necessary to continue the undertaking. Following enforcement action by the local Council (initiated by the CTA), a new project manager has been appointed, whose primary objective is to ensure that remedial measures to the roof are undertaken in order to prevent further internal deterioration.

See AGM Supplement with last Bulletin for photos of all five of the above.

## Unlisted



The latest design for the site of the Regent/Odeon in Bournemouth has received planning approval. The colonnade of the cinema will be retained in the new structure, which is of a scale more appropriate to its locale than previous concepts. *Photo taken May 2006.*

Somewhat fortuitously, a Conservation Area appraisal is currently in progress in Eastbourne and its Conservation Officer has agreed in principle to extend its boundaries to encompass the Picturedrome and the Luxor [photo R].

Following its closure in March and unbeknownst to the CTA, it is reported that permission to demolish the Odeon/Boleyn in East Ham has been granted. *See p16 last Bulletin.*



A revised scheme for the Regal/Odeon in Colchester proposes demolition of the entire cinema with the façade reconstructed in facsimile to form the frontage of the replacement building. The local Conservation Officer is not in favour; Historic England and the Association have also submitted objections. *Photo taken July 2007.*

The Abbey, in Liverpool's Wavertree area, has been acquired from the Co-Operative Society by Lidl Great Britain, which supermarket concern is considering either further conversion or demolition in order to build a new emporium. The building lies within a Conservation Area; the responsible Council and its Conservation Officer are in favour of its retention, as is the local civic society. Having been in alternative utilisation to cinematic exhibition for a considerable period, it is unlikely that significant internal detail remains. *See p17 Bulletin 54/3.*



In a circuitous manoeuvre to compel removal of the telecommunication masts upon its roof, the owner of the Odeon in Balham wishes to convert its tower into an apartment. This would involve additional fenestration; the lower windows would prove acceptable but the upper assemblage will be resisted. *Photo taken March 2004.*



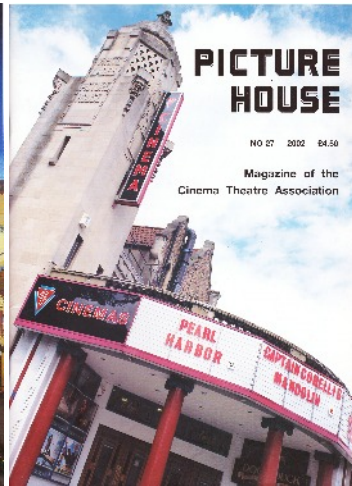
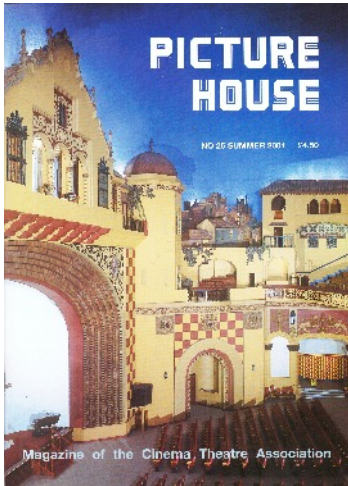
The Luxor Eastbourne – photo taken April 2008

# PUBLICATIONS

## Flash Sale of *Picture House* Back Numbers

Enjoy a brief opportunity to pick up mint-condition, vividly illustrated back issues of our annual magazine at a reduced price! Choose any five of the following issues for £19.50 or all ten for £38, post free – a great opportunity for newer members to catch up on the wealth of in-depth historical material we have published.

**No 25** covers FE Bromige – Cinema Architect; a full account by Bruce Peter of an amazing career (that included the Rio Dalston and Grosvenor Rayners Lane); Allen Eyles on the history of the Duke of York's Brighton, establishing its claim to be the country's oldest operating cinema; John Skinner on the Carlton Swansea, before and after it became The Very Best Bookshop in Wales; profiles of two Gaumont managers, David Goodman and Albert Watts.



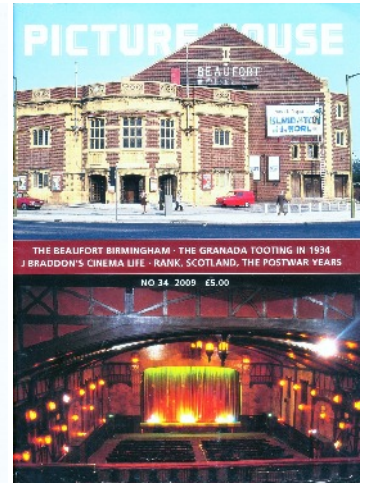
**No 26** has Edward Dietz's powerful case for preserving the Odeon (ex Paramount) Newcastle Upon Tyne as part of an unsuccessful attempt to save the cinema; veteran Granada manager Ivan Morgan interviewed about his career; Sally McGrath's study of Wessex architect E de Wilde Holding (Modèrne Winton etc); a revealing reminiscence (originally published in 1932) of managing the huge Rivoli Whitechapel; Allen Eyles separating fact from myth at the Electric Portobello Road; Richard Gray discussing the Astoria (later Rainbow) Finsbury Park after its restoration.

**No 27** offers "Hands off the Whiteladies", Graham Staples' compelling argument for preserving the Bristol cinema that was part of a successful campaign; high quality photographs from the archive of Clark and Fenn of its beautiful interior decoration of new ABC cinemas in the 1930s; Allen Eyles on the forgotten battle over showing *Gone with the Wind* in 1940, with period advertising; Tony Moss on John Compton, Organ Manufacturer with 23 illustrations and a checklist of installations; David Trevor-Jones on the work of Tim Foster Architects at the Tricycle Kilburn and ex-Odeon Peterborough.

**No 28** fights to preserve the Picture House/Torbay Cinema Paignton with its history told by Elain Harwood; plus Tony Moss on the delights of Tabs (the often decorated curtains in front of the screen in olden times); Bruce Peter and Tom Widdows on Scottish architect James McKissack (Cosmo/Glasgow Film Theatre, etc); more splendid interiors by Clark and Fenn in the 1930s from the company archives; Richard Gray on the cinemas of architect WJ King (Ionic Golders Green, Ritz Edgware etc); David Simpson selecting and illustrating the best exteriors of UK multiplexes.

**No 29** presents *Cinerama in Britain*, a history by Allen Eyles with much advertising and detailed chronology; John Fernée on *Being There*, vivid recollections of going to the cinema in the boom years; superb photographs from the archive of builders Braziers of their cinema work (Forum Southampton, Royal Plymouth, etc); Jon Burrows on the pioneer Waller Jeffs and his scrapbook; dramatic depictions of cinemas by the artist John Duffin, from Barrow to Kilburn.

**No 30** offers the extensive autobiographical notes of showman Alfred Davis with rare photographs (Davis Theatre Croydon, Marble Arch Pavilion etc); Sheldon Hall on *The Sound of Music's* box office success with reference to its run at the Gaumont Norwich; Jon Burrows on the Central Hall Colne's claim to be the first purpose-built cinema; Giles Woodforde on the return of the Compton organ to the Apollo Hammersmith.



**No 32** provides specially printed photographs by Harry Myers including the ABC Colchester and UK Cinerama installations; John Skinner on cinema use of the welfare halls and institutes of the Swansea and Amman valleys; David Eve on the terracotta and faience exteriors of Shaws of Darwen from the company archives; Ken George on the early work of cinema architect Edward A Stone in south London and elsewhere.

**No 33** has Richard Gray highlighting Theodore Komisarjevsky and his Granada interiors including Tooting and Woolwich; Allen Eyles dissecting the film releases of 1956 with advertising week by week from the major circuits and box-office data; Mark Nicholson putting the case for saving the New Victoria/Odeon Bradford as part of a campaign that has saved the building against great odds.

**No 34** recalls the unique Beaufort Birmingham in colour images as it looked before its closure; the Granada Tooting as a working cinema in 1934 with press advertising, box office figures (including daily admissions) and confidential reports on the films, variety and organists; J Braddon on early cinema-going and working in projection rooms in Croydon and the West End; Odeon and Gaumont cinemas in Scotland in a pictorial survey from the late 1940s.

**No 35** delivers Jon Burrows debunking some myths about the 1909 Cinematograph Act that introduced cinema licensing; Allen Eyles on cinemas that imitated the Odeon style of exterior; Bernard King on the 1954 showmanship drive at the Odeon Kingston; Michael Darvell on cinema-going in his youth in the Harrow area; Ned Williams on the records of the Royal and Empire Cradley Heath; Tim Hatcher explaining Holophane and the Golden Age of Colour Lighting with a list of installations.

This temporary offer is NOT available through the website and expires on 3 October 2020, (Overseas orders 17 October). Post cheques payable to Cinema Theatre Association or send full credit/debit card details to CTA Sales Officer, Jeremy Buck, at address shown opposite.

## Back Numbers Available

### PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

The full list of back issues in print was published in the last *Bulletin* and will be repeated in the next one. A copy can be obtained by SAE or email from the Sales Officer or Bulletin Editor.

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

### BULLETINS

We can supply back numbers of most Bulletins from Volume 21 (1987) to date. Prices for issues from 1987 to 2018 are £4.00 per year ( 6 issues), individual issues are £1.00 each. Prices for issues in 2019 and 2020 are £5.00 per copy. All prices include postage. There are some issues available from earlier years – 1967 to 1986. Please send enquiries to the Sales Officer.



## BINDERS FOR PICTURE HOUSE MAGAZINE

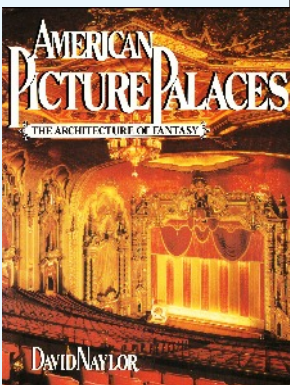
These binders are to a new, revised design, which should allow easier storage for the more recent thicker copies of the magazine. The 'Wirex' system allows copies to be inserted easily and removed if required. There are twelve wires per binder, although the number of copies that can be inserted may vary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



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

## Second-Hand Book Sale

We have cleared out duplicate copies of several books from the CTA Archive and these are now for sale to members. There are many rare and collectable titles, such as *Odeon*, *Cathedrals of the Movies*, *The Picture Palace*, *American Picture Palaces*, etc. To receive a full list, containing around 85 titles, please send an email to the Sales Officer [sales@cta-uk.org] with 'Second Hand Books List' as the subject. Or write to: Sales Officer, 34 Pelham Road, London, N22 6LN (an SAE would be appreciated). Thanks to Archive volunteer Doug Raynes for help in sorting and listing the books.



## Recently Published

(reviewed in recent Bulletins)

The Matcham Directory – £10.00 plus postage

Abandoned Cinemas of the World – £29.50 plus postage

## Ordering

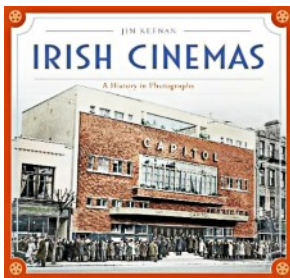
For post and packing: Total order value up to £20.00 please add £3.00, Total order value from £20.01 to £40.00 please add £4.00 Total order value from £40.01 to £60.00 please add £6.00. For larger orders and overseas, please contact the Sales Officer, email: [sales@cta-uk.org]. Orders to Jeremy Buck, CTA Sales, 34, Pelham Road, London, N22 6LN. Cheques/POs payable to Cinema Theatre Association, or send credit/debit card number with expiry date and security code. A complete sales list is available by sending an SAE and all the books can be seen on the CTA website [www.cta-uk.org] where you can also place your order using PayPal. A sales list is sent with every order.

## Also Available (but not from the Sales Officer)

*Irish Cinemas: A History in Photographs* by Jim Keenan. 144 pages, hardback. ISBN 9780955068393. £21.99.

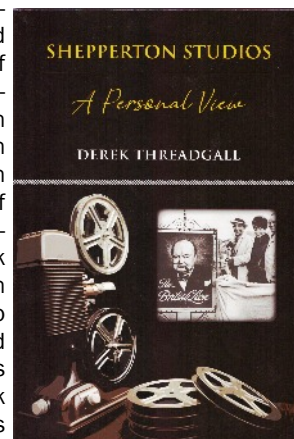
Available from [bookdepository.com]

Published in October 2019 but not previously known to us. This review is from the Cinema Heritage Group: "Founding CHG member Jim Keenan has produced a wonderfully evocative follow-up to his 2005 pictorial history of Dublin Cinemas. Presenting his own photos (taken predominantly 1992-94) when most of these classic cinemas were still in operation, as well as archival images from their 1930s to 50s heyday, this visual journey across the country is truly engaging. We get to glimpse smartly dressed staff, patrons and construction crews, as well as retro marquees and a myriad of great façade designs (stately, modernist or pared-down) ranging from Dublin, across rural Ireland, to Belfast. Augmented with insightful capsule histories, this book provides a great, nostalgic journey through largely unseen photographs to Ireland's cinematic past."



*Shepperton Studios: A Personal View* by Derek Threadgall. 52 pages, softback, illustrated. ISBN 978-19996984-0-9. £7.99. Available through Amazon, etc or by post for £9.50 from the author at 10 Robjohns Road, Chelmsford, CM1 3AF. email: [dthreadgall1165@gmail.com]

This book lifts the lid on a traditional British independent film studio, operating before CGI, Video Assist and other modern film-making technology. Derek worked in management at the studio from 1960-65 and here he presents an insider's view of movie making at Britain's major independent studios, from its beginnings in 1932. Hollywood came to Shepperton following the McCarthy 'witch-hunts' in the USA leading to the blacklisting of several actors who abandoned Hollywood and came to Shepperton. Derek returned to Shepperton in 1972 to run the successful 15 month campaign to prevent the studios being demolished by asset strippers. A preamble to this story charts his efforts via the BFI, Rank and certain individuals to complete his journey into the studio at 21 years old.



## The Kinematograph Theatre Arrives

Part III of The London County Council and the Kinematograph by Tony Fletcher ISBN 978 1 910722 11 4.

Local History Publications. A4 paperback, 152 pages. £20.00.

I am grateful to Tony Fletcher for his assiduous work in documenting and illustrating in three volumes the early cinema conversions and the first few purpose-built picture houses in the old London County Council area. I say this because the short-lived conversion of shops to cinemas has never interested me much (Keith Skone did all the work on the early venues when we first undertook the history of London's West End Cinemas.) These often terrible and makeshift properties seem to excite some cinema historians more than the great palaces that followed. And I might add my belief that now the overlooked area is the hundreds of often very good cinemas that opened in the late 1930s with little or no attention in the screen and design periodicals as there were too many to cover them all.



Tony Fletcher states: "Between the end of February 1909 and the end of December 1909 the LCC checked on venues in the LCC area that showed films. They concentrated on the unlicensed venues, which had been reported to them by the Metropolitan Police, as well as utilising reports from their own inspectors, architects' department and the London Fire Brigade. The results of these checks will be the main concern of this book." It is arranged by Boroughs and a principal source of illustration are the plans and correspondence surviving in the London Metropolitan Archives. It stretches ahead to note the issuing of licenses under the new Kinematograph Act in 1910, many of them for only a month or three months rather than a full year, indicating that changes were required. There was a scramble to engage reputable architects to handle the alterations and the Frank Matcham practice – no job too small – was busy with placing new projection boxes in existing premises as well as plans for a complete new cinema or two. Fletcher does not go on to describe what became of these buildings later on, as this would be a huge and lengthy task, even in précis form. But some long lasting cinemas such as the Gaumont Balham and Biograph Victoria have their origins in this period.

The book can be obtained from the author at a special price for CTA members of £15 + £3.50 p&p. Make cheques payable to Tony Fletcher and write to him at 11 Claverdale Road, London SW2 2DJ and tell him the CTA Bulletin sent you. Tony also has copies of his first volume covering 1897 to 1906 for £10 plus £3 p&p and may be able to supply the second volume. Email him with any queries at: [celluloidtapestry@hotmail.com]

# BEHIND THE SCENES

By Mike Whitcombe

Many of the movie houses built eighty or more years ago during the golden age of cinema building were spectacular places. It didn't matter whether their façades were imperially grand or sleekly modern, they were built to impress and to woo a cinema-going public spoilt for choice when it came to where they could watch Gable and Harlow sexually smoulder or Tracy and Hepburn verbally spar.

Today, any cinema to have survived on our High Street is considered a grand old dame, once beautiful but now a little weathered and unfashionable. Yet when they were built they were the brash new upstarts, screaming a world of possibilities where equality and innovation would eventually realise such fanciful dreams as free health care and a man on the moon.

Imagine a British High Street in the 1930s. It would not be architecturally challenged. Most of the compact street-lined stores would date from the past hundred and more years, evoking a sense of timeless tradition and noble virtue. But then a building plot is acquired by one of the new, fast expanding cinema chains. Several Dickensian buildings are demolished and in a matter of months a stunningly futuristic art deco cinema is constructed, dominating its surroundings. The High Street suddenly got sexy.

The interiors of these dream palaces were equally impressive. Nowadays they are only a memory – and a black and white one at that if all we have to go on are interior shots by men like John Maltby (1910-80), one of the country's finest architectural and social photographers. But even from these we can sense the glamour, opulence and plain jaw-dropping beauty of many auditoria that would have come alive when playing to a full house.

These picture palaces were well-built. Odeon's Oscar Deutsch and ABC's John Maxwell might not have been extravagant spenders – woe betide a designer or builder that didn't stick within the original no-frills budget – but they demanded the best and nearly always got it. Their cinemas were extremely well built. They were intended to last for decades while entertaining thousands of regular patrons a week. Shoddy craftsmanship was not tolerated.

This even applied to those areas closed to the public. Behind forbidding solid oak doors marked 'Private' were corridors, staircases, stock rooms, staff rooms, offices, workshops, dressing rooms and boiler houses cunningly fitted into every available inch of space. These out-of-

bounds areas might have been built plainly without decoration but they still boasted high levels of craftsmanship. Beautiful brick work enclosing a stairwell that ascended the height of the building was commonplace – even if those stairs were only going to be used by a handful of projectionists who were forbidden to use a public entrance.

The craftsmanship of those skilled tradesmen from the 1930s should not be underestimated. I worked behind the scenes at three traditional High Street cinemas for twenty years and until the day the sites I worked at were closed down, some seventy or eighty years after being built – most of the original oak doors still opened silently on original hinges; the same can't be said for doors at many recently-built multiplexes.

The photographs that accompany these words reveal a closed world that those of who were fortunate to work in cinemas would be familiar with and where I personally spent many happy hours inhabiting. Behind auditoria crowded by patrons wanting an escape from their everyday life, existed an unseen world full of as much drama and excitement as any big screen blockbuster. It truly was a magical place behind that door marked 'Private'.



This stairwell led to the Boiler Room, deep underground at the ABC Portsmouth. Note the rounded bricks edging the staircase. Most architects and builders wouldn't be so thoughtful nowadays!



This corridor [L], photographed in 1997, led from the original projection box at the ABC Portsmouth to a private staircase that allowed projectionists to enter and exit the building unseen by the public. Note the fine brickwork, the oak doors and handrail to ensure projectionists wouldn't stumble up or down the solitary step. This area became redundant in 1967 when the projection box was moved to the rear circle to allow 70mm presentations to be screened.

The organist always looked a glamorous chap dressed in his dinner jacket as the organ emerged. At the ABC Portsmouth he got to the organ along this dimly-lit corridor [R], deep underground, which ran the width of the building. The organ was situated in a chamber on the left. A dressing room for the organist was situated on the right.



Even projectionists need a place to do paperwork. Here was my office at the ABC Cosham [top], situated next to the original projection box. At the Odeon Portsmouth I converted a derelict room under the rear of the circle into my office [bottom], using the back wall to show off an ABC sign I rescued from the ABC Portsmouth (which now sits behind a bookcase in my study at home!)



Roofs were obviously out of bounds to the public but they were still fascinating places. These photos show how you gained access to the roof at the ABC Portsmouth and what was comically called the swimming pool at this site. After a heavy downpour it would often fill up with water, meaning somebody had to climb down and unblock the drain. The projectionists' staff room lay underneath.



Boiler rooms were one of the most important areas of the cinema, particularly in the winter when you needed to keep a huge building heated. At the ABC Portsmouth the boiler room was deep underground; a cold, damp, brick-faced space that always smelt of oil. The two boilers pictured were relatively new and installed at great expense. They were expensive to run as well!



Everyone smoked in the 1930s! Signs telling you to put out that ciggie were commonplace in any area not seen by the public. Both these photos were taken in the original area behind the main screen at the ABC Portsmouth in the 1990s. The sign for the car park must have been there for thirty years as the land it was on was compulsory purchased by the Council for a road widening scheme in the 1960s.



[L] A large building needs heated or cooled air to be distributed evenly around and to do this a plenum chamber is used. At the Odeon Portsmouth, the original plenum system was used everyday from when the building opened in 1937 until it closed in 2008. To increase or decrease flow a cast iron knob had to be turned. When turned to maximum the whole room would hum. An amazing toy!

[R] The oak door at the top of these stairs led to the original projection room at the ABC Portsmouth and the only access to the roof. On hot summer nights, when the main feature was well underway, a couple of us would often climb these stairs with a cuppa, so we could sit on the roof where we would enjoy views over the City and the naval dockyard while being cooled by a welcome sea breeze.



Twelve hour shifts were the norm after I took over the projectionist rota at the Odeon Portsmouth so it was important we had somewhere to eat. When I transferred to the Odeon in 2001 my first job was to turn a derelict storage room next to the original projection box into a projectionists' rest room – at the time I was replacing my kitchen at home, which proved handy! We had a fridge, freezer and, most importantly, a Baby Belling cooker (that travelled with me from site to site) which cooked a lovely roast or a tasty fry-up. If a film went on late it was because I was still eating a meal!



Big capacity cinemas always had a number of rooms unseen by the public. At first they were in constant use but as the decades passed and staff numbers declined many of these spaces were not needed and were simply forgotten about. At the rear of the ABC Portsmouth were several rooms that became obsolete in the 1980s when the male and female staff rooms were relocated to the main building. Some of the rooms were used to store carpet or auditorium seats. Others, like the one pictured, were left to slowly disintegrate.

## SMALL ADS

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# CHANNEL ISLANDS CINEMAS

By Gavin McGrath

Following my look at the cinemas on the Isle of Wight and the Isle of Man it is now time to focus on those in the Channel Islands. Cinemas are featured in order of opening on each of the Islands.

## ALDERNEY

The Lyceum in the High Street, St Anne, was built as a Scottish Presbyterian Church in 1840. It is listed in the Kine Year Books from 1949 to 1958 being operated by MH Higgs, although evidence suggests it was a picture palace as early as 1924. It was later a skating rink and dance-hall but was demolished about 1970



The Alderney Cinema in Victoria Street, St Anne, previously known as the Alderney Arts Centre opened in February 1982 with *Dressed to Kill* and had seats from the Odeon in St Peter Port installed. At the time the building was owned by the Kay-Mouat family. There was a short closure in April 1994 when the projector broke down but it reopened that July. A digital projector was purchased in 2013. Films are shown up to six times a month in the summer period but less frequently during the winter months. The operation is run entirely on a voluntary basis.

Over the years films have also been shown at the Island Hall, the Chez, the Belle Vue, the Moorings and the Sea View Hotels.

## GUERNSEY

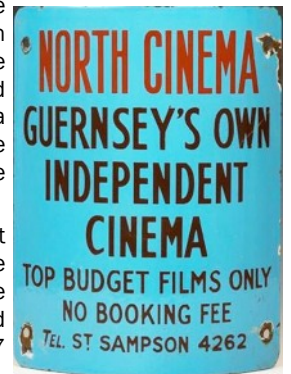


The Gaumont on St Julian's Avenue, St Peter Port, was situated in the former Oddfellows' Hall that opened in 1876. The Hall was later renamed St Julian's Hall but sold to the Channel Islands Entertainment Company and converted into a cinema. The Albany Ward circuit was running the house by 1915 but it was later run by PCT and then Gaumont. The building was reconstructed in 1930 to the designs of WE Trent and EF Tully and reopened in June that year as the Gau-

mont Palace. It seated 570 in the stalls with a further 188 in the balcony. It was under enemy occupation during the war but normal business had resumed by October 1945. The Gaumont closed in March 1980 for twinning, reopening in June that year with two screens of 391 and 157 seats. It closed in January 1985 and was converted into a bank. The building was later demolished and a new bank built on the site.

The Lyric in New Street, St Peter Port, was originally a chapel but rebuilt with a balcony and opening as the Lyric Hall around 1921. It was taken over by PCT/Gaumont in 1936 and later by an independent. The first talkie to be shown on the island, *Showboat*, was screened here in December 1929. After the war films were screened for the British Armed Forces and by 1951 it had been converted into a billiard hall. That closed in 1977 and the building was demolished for an office block.

The North Cinema on Vale Avenue, St Sampson, was a conversion of the Vale Mission Hall in 1929. The façade of the building was castellated and the Hall had around 500 seats. It closed around 1957 and was later demolished for a garage.



The Regal on Upland Road, St Peter Port, opened in May 1937 and was designed by Henry Cooper. It had 1,134 seats and had a Compton organ installed in November of the same year. The programme was exclusively German during the occupation. It was taken over by Odeon in 1948, renamed Odeon in January 1950 and closed in May 1980 when Rank twinned the town's Gaumont. It was later demolished and the site used as a car park.



The Beau Sejour Leisure Centre, just off Amherst Road outside St Peter Port, has a live theatre that doubles as a cinema and has around 400 seats. It originally opened in the early-1980s but closed in the late-1990s. It reopened after more than 15 years in October 2014 as the Beau Cinema with digital projection and 3D capability. The first film to be screened was *Jurassic Park*.





The Mallard Cinema on La Villiaze Road, Forest, is part of the Mallard Hotel and opened in July 1993 as a twin screen house. Two more screens were added in July the following year. It closed briefly in 2013 for two of the screens to be upgraded and all screens now have Sony 4K digital projection and Dolby Surround sound.

It is documented that films were also screened at the Rectory House in Market Street, St Peter Port, which was later occupied by Fuzzey's auctioneers and more recently the Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop and at St Sampson's Theatre. All Guernsey cinemas operating during World War II were closed on 28 June 1940 after the air-raid on St Peter Port by the Luftwaffe but reopened after the Island became occupied by German forces. Charity group Liberate screened a couple of films at the Fermain Valley Hotel's 27-seat cinema as part of a LGBT event in September 2016. The venue is a private screening house with 3D capability.

## JERSEY



The Opera House in Gloucester Street, St Helier, was built for Sidney Cooper on site of the Theatre Royal, destroyed by fire in March 1899. It was designed by Adolphus Curry and opened in July 1900. It is decorated in the Italian renaissance style and was originally lit by gas. The first performance at the house was *The Degenerates* with Lillie Langtry. The business was taken over by Albany Ward in 1914 and became a cinema. The building was damaged by fire in May 1921 but was reopened in August the following year by PCT and mainly used as a theatre. Gaumont took over in 1929 but the theatre was under German control during the war, after which it was mainly used as a cinema. It closed in December 1958 and went back to being a theatre owned by Tommy Swanson but the business was sold in 1989 to Dick Ray, who had been running the theatre for him. Ray restored the façade in 1993 but gave up restoration and sold the theatre to the States of Jersey, who closed it in 1997 for a major refurbishment. This included a new circle, boxes, stage-house and entrance canopy. It reopened on its centenary date in July 2000.



The cinema on Main Road, Gorey, was a conversion of the Bible Christian Chapel of 1864 in about 1916. It became a badminton hall after closure, then Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church from 1953. The Church closed in May 2013 owing to the retirement of Father Sandeman and also a dwindling congregation. In August 2016 plans were filed to demolish the building and build housing but this was thrown out. The following year the Council approved plans to turn the building into retirement homes.

The Picture House in Don Street, St Helier, opened in December 1921 to replace the Opera House after it had been damaged by fire. The 900-seater was situated in the Oddfellows' Hall and was later run by PCT/Gaumont but closed about 1936. *Perfect Alibi*, the first talkie shown in Jersey was screened here in December 1929.



West's Cinema at Bath and Peter Streets, St Helier, opened in September 1923. The building had twin towers, originally dressed in blue and white tiles but later grey. When talkies arrived the orchestra pit was removed, accommodating a much larger audience with seating for 896 people. The Jersey Film Society was formed here at the Café Bleu in December 1947. The cinema closed in December 1972 and the building was demolished five years later for shops and offices.

## The Projected Picture Trust

Dean Clough Mills, HALIFAX, HX3 5AX

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or if you would like to become a member only.

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The Forum in Grenville Street, St Helier, opened in March 1935 with *Abdul the Damned*. The 1,615-seater was designed by architect Andrew F Hedges with the frontage along Romanesque lines with two twin towers. It had stage facilities, dressing rooms and a Compton organ. It was taken over by Rank in the 1970s and remained open until January 1981. The building was demolished for offices with the organ moved to Fort Regent.



The New Era Cinema on Victoria Road, St Clement, opened in June 1951 with *The Lemon Drop Kid*. The building included a ballroom and a dance studio and was operated by Jersey Sports Stadium Ltd. The cinema originally closed in December 1972 with *The Burglars* but reopened in the sports hall in October 1973 with a screening of *Cabaret*. It is believed to have closed in early-1981 when the reopening of the Odeon after twinning was said to be imminent. By this time a bank was operating from the front of the building with plans to take over the bar area to expand its business. The front of the building today is occupied by a pharmacy with the Tivoli Tavern at the rear.



The former Odeon in Bath Street, St Helier, was designed by Thomas Penberthy Bennett and is instantly recognizable by its chequerboard appearance. This was achieved by rubbing down alternate squares with carborundum stone. It opened in June 1952 with *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The cinema was first twinned in 1980, reopening in February 1981, with the upstairs converted in 1989 and the downstairs in 1992 to make a four-screen cinema. It was refurbished in 1999 and designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest two years later. It was purchased by property developer Le Masurier in June 2004 and the cinema closed in October that year. It was reopened as the New Forum by Kevin Lewis on Good Friday 2005 with one source stating some of the twinning dismantled. The first film, *Finding Neverland*, was approved by the Bailiff on what would normally be a closure day, with free admission but a retiring collection afterwards. It closed for the final time in January 2009 after expiry of the lease. Plans for redevelopment were shelved in 2011 when the States' Environmental Minister upheld the building's SSI status. It is now occupied by the Freedom Church, which was formed in 2009 when the Abundant Life Church and the Jersey Community Church merged.

## NECROLOGY

### DAME OLIVIA DE HAVILLAND 104

Olivia came to prominence as Errol Flynn's leading lady in *Captain Blood* in 1935 but is probably best known for the role of Melanie Hamilton in *Gone With The Wind* (1939), for which she received an Academy Award nomination. She made nearly 50 films and won Oscars for *To Each His Own* and *The Heiress*.



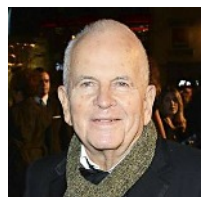
### ENNIO MORRICONE 91

The Italian composer is probably best known for his score to *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* and other spaghetti westerns. He also composed the music for *The Mission* and over 400 films as well as more than 100 classical pieces. He had a long collaboration with director Sergio Leone, a pal from their schooldays.



### SIR IAN HOLM 88

Ian achieved cult status portraying the android Ash in *Alien* (1979) and won a BAFTA and an Oscar nomination for *Chariots of Fire* (1981). He was equally memorable as Dr Willis in *The Madness of King George* (1994). More recently he played hobbit Bilbo Baggins in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.



### SIR ALAN PARKER CBE 76

Alan was born in Islington, North London and began his career as an advertising copywriter before moving into film directing and scriptwriting. He was acclaimed for a string of films, including *Bugsy Malone*, *Midnight Express*, *Fame* and *Evita*. He won six Oscars, 19 BAFTAs and 10 Golden Globes.



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The Ciné de France at the Lido de France (now Hotel de France) on St Saviour's Road, St Helier, opened with one screen in the 1970s, one source stating 1972, another January 1977. By the year 2000 it had three screens with a further screen added following reconstruction. It closed in September 2004 and was due to be converted into a medical centre. Kevin Lewis ran the cinema from 1985 until closure.



The Jersey Arts Centre fosters the development and celebration of the arts island-wide and beyond and screens films three or four times a month. It is situated in a former educational building in Phillips Street, St Helier, which opened in 1981 and where stage performances began in 1986. The auditorium is known as the Benjamin Meaker Theatre and seats around 250 people. The Centre hosts the 13<sup>th</sup> Parish Festival of Film and Music every year, featuring the best of independent world cinema and is home to the Jersey Film Society. It acquired a second site at the former St James Church, which it renovated in 1998.



Cineworld in the Waterfront Centre on La Rue De L'Etou, St Helier, is the latest introduction to the scene and is now Jersey's only remaining cinema. The ten-screen multiplex opened in December 2002 and has around 1,800 seats.

The Royal Hall in Peter Street, St Helier, is known to have been used by TJ West to screen films from around 1909 but was demolished in the early-1920s. Fort Regent, a leisure centre and former barracks on Mont de la Ville, also in St Helier, screens family films on Sunday mornings, presumably in the Gloucester Hall, which holds up to 2,000 people in an adaptable auditorium.

## SARK

Films have been shown at the Stocks Hotel, notably in December 2014 and March 2015 and also at the Island Hall when *Shamer's Daughter* was screened in October 2015. Two months later *Macbeth* was shown at the Hall. The former film was based on a book by a Danish writer, who was living on the Island at the time.

## OPEN AIR CINEMA

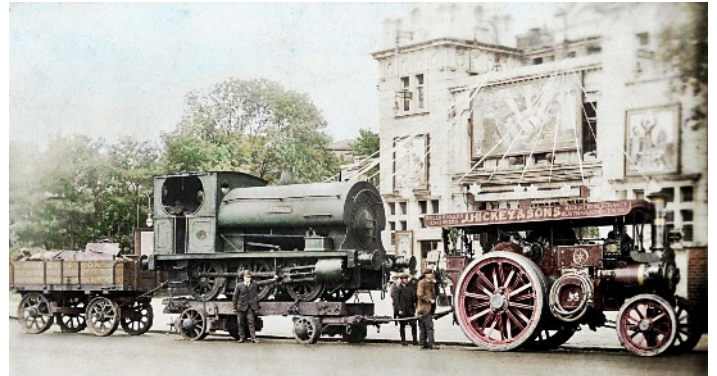
The Jersey Film Festival started out as a drive-in in 1994 at the old go-kart track in St Brelade, before moving on to Durrell, the Aero Club hanger, the Royal Square and finally Howard Davis Park St Helier, where it is held every August. The Festival is organised by Kevin Lewis, the Infrastructure Minister, who has over 50 years' experience in the cinema industry, having started work at the Forum in 1968. Screenings are free but there is a retiring collection for nominated charities. Past films have included *The Jungle Book*, *Mamma Mia* and *The Greatest Showman*, which reputedly attracted over 7,000 attendees in August 2018, a record for the Festival. Cobo Bay on the west coast of Guernsey played host to films courtesy of local phone company, Sure, in 2013 and 2014. Among those screened were *Cinderella*, *Frozen*, *Minions* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. *The Evacuation*, part of a three-part documentary was screened at Fort Grosnez on Alderney in July 2016. The documentary in full, *Alderney - The War Years*, was shown in the Battery at Fort Tourgis in April 2018. In August 2019 the Beau Cinema hosted screenings of *The Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Pie Society* at Castle Cornet overlooking St Peter Port harbour.

## PROPOSED CINEMAS

A proposal for a development at Admiral Park in St Peter Port, Guernsey, was on the table in January 2012 to include retail units, offices, a cinema and possibly a hotel. Nothing of the sort has so far come to fruition. A proposal was also being considered for a cinema on the waterfront in St Helier in 2014. This would involve the demolition of the ten-screen Cineworld if agreed.

Photos courtesy of: Cinema Treasures (Alderney, Mallard, Forum, New Forum); Cinema Theatre Association (Gaumont and Odeon); Martel Maides Auctions (North); Beau Sejour Centre (Beau), Gavin McGrath (Opera House, Jersey Arts Centre and Cineworld); Danrok (Gorey); Jersey Evening Post (West's); Mikebisson (New Era); David Simpson (Ciné de France).

## UNIDENTIFIED CINEMAS



We are trying to identify the location of the above picture. We believe the film shown at the cinema to be *Hollywood* (1924) which ties in with the known history of the traction engine. The only other clues are the hauliers were Richmond based and the locomotive on the trailer was known to have started work in Lancashire! Any help would be greatly appreciated. Please reply to your Editor if you know.

Kevin Mills

The Science and Society picture library carries a photo of an unidentified Empress cinema, dated February 1953. It looks to be a deteriorating wooden structure with the projection box on stilts over the entrance. The advertised films are *The Monster and the Ape*, *Black Hills* and *The Glass Mountain*, all of which date from the mid to late 1940s. I can't print the picture here as the copyright owner wanted a not insignificant sum to reproduce it but you can access it at [tinyurl.com/y6g8h4ef]. The site also has some other cinema photos; there is a tick box to search for 'cinema' on the photograph page. It has been identified as in Billinge, near Wigan and was demolished c1954. There is a higher resolution copy at [tinyurl.com/yyjo4x3t] {63198}

Sent in by David Johnson

# A NICE NAME FOR A CINEMA?

By Allen Eyles

You can still buy Corona beer and Corona cigars and stay at Corona Hotels in London, Blackpool and elsewhere but it's perhaps fortunate that none of the British picture houses named Corona still operate – otherwise they would almost certainly be contemplating a name change as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. As a Latin word for a crown or garland, Corona had some appeal to café proprietors by the 1910s but has been less popular than Coronation and Coronet where the naming of picture houses is concerned, though seemingly ahead of the word Crown. (In actual fact, the Corona name has been defunct as far as British cinemas are concerned for over fifty years but I won't let that stop me.)



The Corona Felling, circa 1920: as in Frank Manders' book; courtesy of PG Haywood.

Research into the pre-WWI period has been restricted by the current circumstances but Frank Manders, in his book *Cinemas of Gateshead*, relates that a local company acquired a site in Felling, near Gateshead, for a cinema: "In October 1911 a competition for a name for a new cinema was held, with a prize of £1: in 1911 it was hardly surprising that two people came up with the name 'Corona'; they were awarded 10/- each at the opening on 14 November." The Corona Picture Hall came under the control of local circuit operator Edward J Hinge in 1924. The 600-seat cinema seems to have been the first in this country to adopt the name and never changed it, closing in November 1960 after nearly fifty years and being later demolished.



The derelict Corona Gorton circa 1984, photographed by Allen Eyles. The attractive name sign may well be an addition from its later club days. Also colour photo top next column [L]

A striking façade makes the Corona at Gorton, Greater Manchester, a more interesting cinema from a design point of view. Opened in April 1915 with around 1,000 seats, it was part of the Gaumont circuit for many years but was last operated by the Snape circuit, which closed it on 4 October 1958. It was then a club and music venue before being demolished in May 1985 after several years of standing derelict.



[R] Corona Gorton, circa 1946, showing *The Woman in the Window*, with its name in a vertical sign on the right corner, missing the initial letter, as well as on the front of the canopy. (Author's collection)



Corona Crosby, circa 1946, showing *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Note GB sign (Gaumont British) added above the name. (Author's collection)

The Corona at Crosby opened in May 1920 with 1,200 seats but Harold Ackroyd's *The Dream Palaces of Liverpool* records that construction had started before World War One. The local architects were Fraser and Ainley. Becoming a minor Gaumont theatre, it was never renamed and closed in December 1956 in a big clear-out of weaker Rank properties. It was demolished, to be replaced by shops.

In London, the Corona at Manor Park opened in September 1921 with 1,197 seats, designed by the practice of Adams and [George] Coles. It was renamed Coliseum in 1923 for unknown reasons and then Essoldo in 1955 after being taken over by Sol Sheckman's circuit the previous year, closing in 1963 for bingo and later demolition, to be replaced by housing.

In September 1927, a very undistinguished Corona cinema opened in Holbrook Lane, Coventry. Quoted by Gil Robottom in his book *Coventry Picture Palaces*, WG Edkins declared: "Only the frontage block was brick, the rest being asbestos sheeting, known as 'The Hut'. [...] The heating system was a coal fire. There was a single projector and a piano provided the music." It had only 347 seats.



Corona Manor Park. Flamboyant artist's impression from an opening newspaper report. (CTA Archive) No opening photographs have been traced.

The Corona name was short-lived: it became the Arcadian Pavilion in 1931 and the Lyric the following year while also being known as the Cinema Palace. It was replaced by a new Lyric from 1937.



Corona Leigh-on-Sea. Exterior at opening in 1929 (author's collection). Note a café entrance to the left.

The Corona at Leigh-on-Sea in Essex, opened in October 1929 to the design of James CE Saunders, an unfamiliar name. With 1,429 seats it was the largest to take the name and had a Christie organ. Acquired by Essoldo in January 1954 along with the town's Coliseum, it was closed in April 1959 in favour of retaining the other cinema. It became a snooker club.



Corona Stretford, circa 1950, showing two British films.

At Stretford in Manchester, a Corona Super Cinema opened in November 1929 on Moss Road. Though its design was handled by a regular cinema architect, J Knight, it was unprepossessing with a mere 796 seats and ceded any Super Cinema status to the spectacular Longford (later Essoldo) in Stretford from 1936, also betraying a lowly status by closing uncommonly early on 21 July 1951, reportedly to become an extension to a social club.

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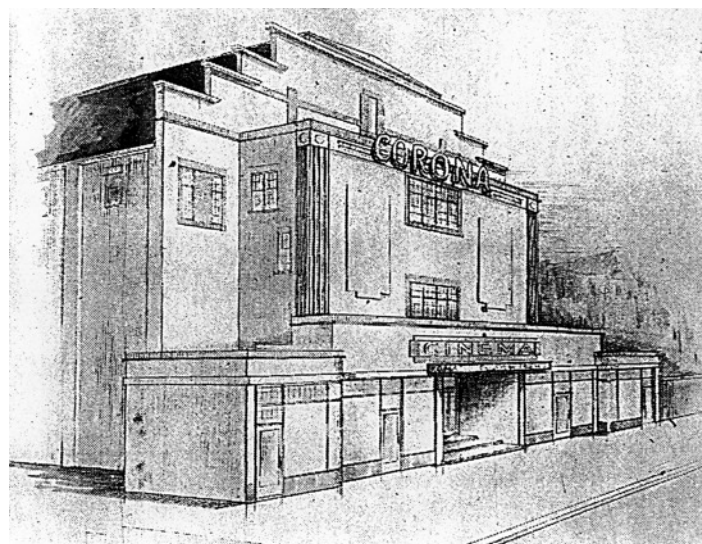
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A further Corona cinema operated in Little Lever, near Bolton, in Lancashire. It replaced the Palace circa 1931 and may have been a revamp of this existing cinema. It closed circa May 1957. No photographs have been readily available.



Corona Swanley. Artist's impression and entrance circa 1941. (CTA Archive)

Having become somewhat old-fashioned, the Corona name surprisingly resurfaced in 1938 with the opening of the Corona at Swanley, Kent, in October as an independent with 800 seats that continued to 1965, latterly on two days a week, the rest being given over to bingo, then being demolished to make way for a shopping centre. The last to take the name, it was the last to close with it.

However, the Corona name lingers on at Leigh-on-Sea, having been bestowed on the block of 21 flats where the cinema stood, with the sales brochure emphasising its origin in the 1920s cinema, although the design is otherwise completely modern. I wonder how the residents feel about the name.

In both the US towns named Corona in California and New York State, movie theatres took the place name. The word Corona survived in California as part of the marquee when a church took over the Spanish Mission-style cinema (1929-82) and advertised its services in changeable letters below the name. Little is known about the New York State movie theatre: it seems to have opened in 1927 and after closure had its entrance opened up for retail use.



Corona Leigh on Sea. Poster with crown motif, from 1934, on display at the CTA Archive (donated by Roy Dilley, photographed by David Simpson).

# BINGO CLOSURES & REMAINERS

Buzz Bingo [formerly Gala Bingo] announced on 15 July that they will be permanently closing 26 of their bingo clubs. They were initially closed on 21 March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Out of those 26, there are 8 located in former cinemas (all the others are in purpose-built bingo sheds). Here is the list, with the relevant Cinema Treasures page number:

- ♦ Birmingham, Stockland Green Plaza {39676} *photo on front cover*
- ♦ Bournemouth Odeon {20076}
- ♦ Bridlington Regal {3224}
- ♦ Chorley Odeon {15202}
- ♦ Hereford County / New Regal (Listed Grade II) {48537}
- ♦ Milton Keynes Point (in the basement of the Point) {25085}
- ♦ Salisbury Regal / ABC {2449}
- ♦ Worcester Gaumont {20709}



The interior of the Regal Bridlington – photo taken September 2013



The Grade II listed County/New Regal Hereford – photo taken April 2010



The Gaumont Worcester – photo taken May 2006



The Odeon Bournemouth – photo taken May 2006



The Odeon Chorley – photo taken February 2006



The Regal / ABC Salisbury – photo taken March 2009

The remaining 91 clubs in their estate were due to reopen on 6 August. Of these, 15 are in former cinemas:

- ♦ Aberdeen Kingsway {4591}
- ♦ Aldershot Ritz / ABC {4429}
- ♦ Arbroath Picture House (Listed Grade B) {23217}
- ♦ London, Barkingside State / Ace {14647}
- ♦ Clacton-on-Sea Century {13442}
- ♦ Coventry Savoy {34034}
- ♦ Darlington Arcade {39653}
- ♦ Dover Kings Hall / Gaumont {35681}
- ♦ Dumfries Regal / ABC / Odeon {27022}
- ♦ Keighley Ritz / ABC {6209}
- ♦ Maidstone Granada / Cannon / ABC {29170}
- ♦ Shrewsbury Granada (Listed Grade II) {22680}
- ♦ Slough Adelphi {14760}
- ♦ London, Tooting Granada (Listed Grade I) {9424}
- ♦ Worthing Plaza {23445}

Sent in by David Eve & Gary Donaldson; lists compiled by Ken Roe



The Kingsway Aberdeen – photo taken September 2008



The Arcade Darlington – photo taken September 2006



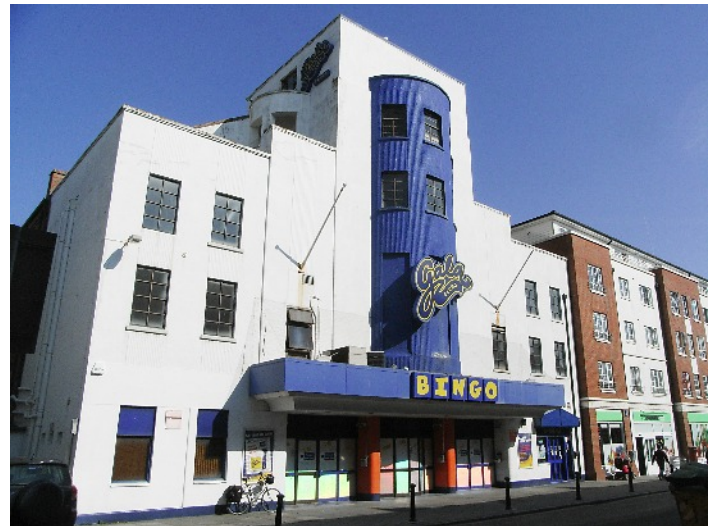
The Grade B listed Picturehouse Arbroath – photo taken September 2006



The interior of the Kings Hall/Gaumont Dover – photo taken July 2006



The Savoy Coventry – photo taken March 2006



The Plaza Worthing – photo taken March 2009



The Granada / Cannon / ABC Maidstone – photo taken April 2004



The Grade II listed Granada Shrewsbury – photo taken August 2007

# NEWSREEL

The items in this section are taken mainly from press cuttings from local newspapers. Although their factual accuracy has been checked by Allen Eyles, there may be minor errors in reporting dates or other detail. Allen has also added comments, where indicated. Photos by Harry Rigby within entry, except where stated. A number in curly brackets {nnnnn} is the reference for the Cinema Treasures website. Go to: [cinematreasures.org/theaters/nnnnn]

## ABERDEEN

The Belmont Filmhouse shut its doors in March due to the coronavirus pandemic lockdown. To help it through this period, it has launched a fundraising campaign, which hopes to raise £25,000. They have asked members of the public to donate £40 – the price of a membership – to the cinema to help it get back on its feet, or whatever amount people can afford. It will also have to invest extra money into making the building safe when it does open. To donate to the fundraiser, visit: [gofundme.com/f/belmont-filmhouse]. {26736}



Aberdeen Evening Express – 29 June; photo taken September 2008

## BANGKOK (Thailand)

The 900-seat Scala cinema closed in July with a showing of *Cinema Paradiso*. It opened in 1969 with John Wayne in *The Undefeated* and was equipped for 70mm films. The coronavirus is blamed for the closure, although the lease was up at the end of this year. An 'open house' was arranged for people to view the cinema before the closure. {32785}

The i Newspaper – date unknown; sent in by Keith Taylorson

## BEESTON (Notts)

The current pandemic has delayed work on the new eight-screen Arc cinema. It will now be ready for fit-out in December with the opening date projected to be June 2021.

East Midlands Business Link – 31 July; sent in by Terry Hanstock

## BELFAST

The ten-screen Movie House on Dublin Road closed on 17 March, earlier than the announced date of 26 April, due to Covid-19. It will become part of an office block. {26684}

Sent in by Tim McCullen

## BIRMINGHAM (Central)



There are fears for the future of the two-screen Electric Cinema in Station Street. Staff were made redundant in March and the cinema has been closed since. The local newspaper's attempts to contact the owner have been unsuccessful. The cinema opened in December 1909. {9559}

Birmingham Mail – 7 July; sent in by Trevor Chapman; photo taken September 2005

## BIRMINGHAM (Kings Heath)

The former Kingsway closed on bingo in 2007 and was almost destroyed by fire four years later, just leaving the façade. In recent years land at the rear has been cleared for future redevelopment and the site is now being used for pop-up cinema screenings. {19912}

Birmingham Mail – 6 August

## BLACKBURN (Lancs)

Work is continuing on the new eight-screen Reel cinema. It was due to be handed over at the end of August with a view to opening in November.

Lancashire Telegraph – 13 July; sent in by Philip Crompton

## BOLDON COLLIERY (South Tyneside)



The twelve-screen Cineworld has had a full refurbishment during lockdown and reopened on 31 July. The revamp includes a 17m x 7.3m Superscreen with Dolby Atmos sound and 4k projection. Opening offers were standard tickets at £5 and £9 for the Superscreen. The cinema opened in October 1997 as a Virgin and was later a UGC. {24191}

Chronicle Live – 30 July; photo taken September 2006

## BRIDGWATER (Somerset)



Plans have been submitted to remove twelve cylindrical pillars from the roof of the former Odeon. Historically, the pillars have created wind uplift to support the canopy but in recent years cracks in the pillars have led to freeze-thaw action and the move is being made to protect the public. The building opened in July 1936 and became a Classic from December 1967. It was around this time that the roof was removed from the tower, leaving just the pillars in place. In January 1973 the building was subdivided with bingo downstairs and two 250-seat cinemas in the circle, today operated by Scott Cinemas. {16641}

Bridgwater Mercury – 23 June; photo taken February 2006

## BRIGHTON

The Palace Pier Theatre hosted some early film shows. The Pier itself became home to open air screenings from deck chairs at sunset, starting on Wednesday 5 August with *Grease*, to be followed by the usual suspects, *Pulp Fiction* and *Dirty Dancing*, among others. Sound is provided by Bluetooth earphones. What price success with tickets costing from £20 to £35?

The Argus – 29 July; sent in by Allen Eyles & Barry Quinton



## BURNLEY (Lancs)

There has been another act of [unspecified] vandalism at the Grade II listed derelict Empire Theatre. It happened just days after the Burnley Empire Trust launched another fundraising appeal to save the building, which is on the Theatres Trust 'at risk' register. {36755}

*Lancashire Telegraph* – 16 July; sent in by Philip Crompton & R David Simpson

## BURY ST EDMUNDS (Suffolk)



The Abbeygate cinema began a phased reopening from 10 July. On 31 July the new 180-seat screen ③ opened. Situated in the former bingo area in the original stalls, it has a curved screen with tabs, 4k laser projection and 7.1 sound. Three drop-down chandeliers will be installed in time for Christmas. {24294}

*East Anglian Daily Times* – 24 July; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken May 2004

## CHELTENHAM (Glos)

The new four-screen Tivoli in the Regent Arcade was scheduled to open last April but is now expected to be open by October. Each screen will have between 80-90 seats.

*Gloucestershire Echo* – 6 August

## CIRENCESTER (Glos)



The 200-seat BARN Theatre is to show films as a new way of generating revenue after Covid-19. The project has been partially funded by Cotswold District Council, with Cabinet voting to provide a grant of £10,000 and a loan of £20,000 towards installing the cinema facilities. The total cost for the cinema transformation project is around £80,000 including the BARN's investment into a media studio. However, the venue's website [barntheatre.org.uk] had no mention of this at the time of your Bulletin going to press.

*Gloucestershire Live* – 16 July; sent in by Chris Snowden

## COLCHESTER (Essex)

Historic England has objected to plans to demolish the former Regal/Odeon in Crouch Street and replace it with flats. The proposals include rebuilding the façade. See Casework p3. {17575}

*Essex County Standard* – 10 July; sent in by Terry Hanstock

Plans have been submitted for a development incorporating a twelve-screen Cineworld at the Northern Gateway. If plans are approved, work will begin at the start of 2021, for completion in 2022/23.

*Essex County Standard* – 4 August

## CORK (Ireland)



There is a proposal to spend €4m on converting the former Kino into an arthouse hub. There would be a basement for kitchen and services, a cinema/café/bar on the ground floor, three floors of student accommodation and a roof terrace to act as a community space. The Kino opened in 1996 with 188 seats, a conversion of a snooker hall. There were plans to triple it at one stage but that never happened. It closed in November 2009. {24357}

*Irish Examiner* – 6 August; photo by David Simpson

## CUMNOCK (Ayrshire)

Cumnock Town Hall is to receive £12,612 in Lottery money through Screen Scotland's Cinema Equipment Fund to provide a motorised screen and projection equipment to establish a year-round accessible film programme. See Miscellany p23.

*Cumnock Chronicle* – 8 July

## DUBLIN (Ireland)

The thirteen-screen, 2,200 seat IMC at The Square mall in Tallaght went into receivership in early July and is not expected to reopen. This was a relatively recent replacement for an earlier multiplex, dating only from 2012 and had no local competition in this dormitory town. High rent was cited as a contributory factor. The other IMC cinemas are not affected. {57833}

Sent in by Bob Bradshaw

## DUNFERMLINE (Fife)

The Dunfermline Cinema Project is to set up home in the new Ironmongers Studio of the Alhambra Theatre. The cinema will seat 80 on ground level with plans to install an upper gallery to accommodate a further 30. The studio is being converted from a former retail unit directly opposite the main theatre.

*The Courier* – 6 August

## EDINBURGH (Cameron Toll)

Plans for a new ten-screen Empire cinema in an extension to the Cameron Toll Shopping Centre have been recommended for approval. It would be built on what is currently the centre's car park. No time scale has been given.

*Edinburgh Evening News* – 29 June

## EDINBURGH (Central)



The Filmhouse launched a fundraising appeal in June after closing in March due to lockdown. By mid-July they had reached their target of £60,000. The venue was hoping to reopen in September. {23226}

*Edinburgh Live* – 21 July; photo taken March 2004

## GRIMSBY (Lincs)

Grimsby is competing for a £25m share of the government's Future High Streets Fund to create a new cinema, market hall, shops and restaurants. The new cinema is proposed for where the present market hall stands.

*Grimsby Telegraph – 26 June, 16 July*

## HARWICH (Essex)

Restoration of the Electric Palace has suffered a setback. Once the plastic covering the carpet was lifted, the carpet and wood underneath was soaking wet. A leaking pipe that caused the problem has now been fixed but the damage is at the front of the auditorium, the lowest part. Everything else has been renovated so it was still hoped to be able to reopen in September. {2597}

*Harwich & Manningtree Standard – 10 July; sent in by Terry Hanstock*

## KIDDERMINSTER (Worcs)

The four-screen Reel has announced that the closure due to Covid-19 would be permanent. It opened as the Warehouse cinema in April 2005, a conversion of a Grade II listed former carpet warehouse and was taken over by Reel in January 2009. {24790}

*Birmingham Mail – 20 July; sent in by Ken Roe*

## LINCOLN

The new four-screen Everyman opened in August at Exchange Square. The auditoria seat 140, 66, 52 & 33. {63219}

*East Midlands Business Link – 24 August; sent in by Tim McCullen & Terry Hanstock*

## LIVERPOOL (Woolton)



The owners of the Woolton Picture House said it was with “great sorrow” that they had made the “toughest decision to permanently close”. They added that rather than saying goodbye to “our beloved cinema”, they would simply say “you had me at hello”. The building, which first opened on 26 December 1927, was initially closed on 18 March by the Covid-19 lockdown. The single-screen cinema was originally built to host 800 people on wooden benches before more comfortable seating was added in the 1930s and has previously returned from two closures. Having stayed open during World War II, surviving the bombing of Liverpool, it was devastated by fire in the summer of 1958, but reopened three months later. In 2006, the sudden deaths of its chief projectionist and owner saw it closed again; it reopened again in March 2007. A campaign has been launched to save the cinema. They have set up a crowdfunding page at [tinyurl.com/yxz9n4wq]. At the time of writing, £24,217 had been raised. {17451}

*BBC News website – 31 July; Liverpool Echo – 1 August; sent in by Ken Roe & Mike Taylor; photo taken July 2007*

## LONDON (Barking)

Building work has started on the site of the former Abbey Sports Centre. The development will include a two-screen cinema, to be run by Arthouse of Crouch End. Opening is set for 2022.

*Barking & Dagenham Post – 7 August*

## LONDON (Dalston)

The board of directors at the Rio Cinema has stood down en-masse to make way for an entirely new board. The new members are understood to have set as their objectives the payment of the London Living Wage and roll-out of collective bargaining for staff, as well as a renewed pledge to protect the Rio's identity. This follows rumours that the cinema was about to be sold off to a commercial chain. The former board had stressed that “no plan or discussion or intention” exists to sell it off.

However, they warned that the pandemic's impact and resulting social distancing requirements will likely mean “difficult decisions” in reducing the operating costs of the cinema. “In the Rio's case, this means a 50-70% reduction in capacity: with current costs this will lead to the cinema losing a significant amount of money each month. In any case, the Rio is a charity that does not own its building – it has a nine-year lease of the site it operates on.” The *Save Our Rio* campaign, which has launched a petition signed by almost 6,000 people at time of writing, has accused the cinema's board of using the pandemic crisis as a smokescreen to reinvent it as a luxury boutique venue. Hackney Council confirmed that, due to its status as a not-for-profit voluntary sector organisation, any idea that it could transform into a mainstream concern without Council agreement is “plain stupid”.

*Hackney Citizen – 29 June, Hackney Gazette – 9 July*

## LONDON (Highams Park)



The new owner of the former Regal has submitted revised plans. Approval was granted in 2018 for flats and a two-screen cinema but the intended operator, Rio Cinema, has pulled out. The new owner wants to be allowed to sell up to 25 of the 30 flats before the cinema comes into use. He is said to be in talks with both Curzon and Arthouse. {30181}

*Chingford Guardian – 16 July; sent in by Nigel Pitt; photo taken August 2013*

## LONDON (Soho)

Twentieth Century Fox's former headquarters in Soho Square is facing demolition despite a celebrity-backed campaign to save it. But fresh plans, which part-retain the original façade, have been resubmitted by owners Royal London Asset Management. They are recommended for approval by Westminster Council's planning committee.

*Evening Standard – 20 July*

**AE writes:** This was the last major film distributor left in Soho. The building was no longer needed after Disney took over Fox. There has been interest in saving the 20th Century Fox roof neon sign, which has been there since the building opened in 1938, with The Cinema Museum willing to provide a new home.

## LONDON (Walthamstow)



I was in Walthamstow today and notice that the Dominion in Buxton Road has been demolished. It's a building site. I think it had been empty for around 24 years! It opened in December 1930 and films ceased in March 1961 in favour of bingo, which lasted until August 1996. {13802}

*Sent in by Jeremy Buck & Ken Roe; photo taken September 2004*

## MARLBOROUGH (Wilts)

Full planning permission and Listed Building Consent have been granted for The Parade Cinema. The project, on the site of the old United Reformed Chapel, has gone through with around 200 letters of support to Wiltshire Council. The developers hope to start work in early September on both the Chapel and The Manse. The Chapel, built in 1817, will house a single-screen auditorium with 112 seats including a balcony level. The Manse next door will be transformed into a bar & café. The last cinema in the town closed in August 1971.

*Wiltshire Times* – 3 August

## MARLOW (Bucks)

Plans have been approved for a two-screen Everyman at the top of the High Street. It will be in an extension at the rear of the retained part of the Grade II listed Assembly Rooms. The full plans can be viewed at [bit.ly/3eHnnsA]. No time scale has been given.

*Maidenhead Advertiser* – 23 July; *Marlow Free Press* – 24 July

## NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

Allegations of harassment and sexual abuse have been made by staff at the Tyneside Cinema. Nearly 200 former and current employees have signed a letter urging management to take action after the claims surfaced on social media. The cinema has insisted it takes staff well-being and safety “very seriously”. Cinema staff, many of whom are furloughed and face redundancy if the cinema cannot survive the coronavirus lockdown, have criticised the charity’s grievance procedures. {22729}

*BBC News website* – 30 June

## NORTHAMPTON



The Grade II listed Deco Theatre is to return to its roots by showing films again as the owners look to stay afloat while live performances remain banned. Opening was scheduled for 28 August. The Savoy, as it was originally called, opened in May 1936 before becoming the ABC Cinema in 1961. It was then taken over by Cannon in the 1980s, which ran it as a three-screen cinema until 1995 when it was abandoned. The cinema became the Jesus Centre in 2004 until last year when Stage Right Productions, which runs The Deco, bought it, reopened the original frontage and renamed it The Old Savoy. The CTA held their AGM there in 2012, when the above picture was taken. {22658}

*Northampton Chronicle & Echo* – 7 July

## NORWICH

Permission has been granted to convert the former Regent/ABC into 50 homes; it will be known as Regent Place. The development will have a gym, pool table room and a cinema room. The venue opened in December 1923 as a ciné/variety theatre with 1,800 seats. It was tripled in 1973 and a fourth screen later added. Films ceased in the early 2000s. The building was gutted and the balcony removed and converted into a nightclub, which closed in March 2018. {6329}

*Norwich Evening News* – 13 July; sent in by Les Woods

The Odeon/Hollywood in Anglia Square has closed and is due to be demolished to make way for a controversial new development. A new cinema will be provided at ground level. The controversy is mainly about the inclusion of a 25-storey tower that would dominate the City skyline.

Sent in by John West

## NOTTINGHAM

The former Majestic in Mapperley has been converted into a haunted museum. Now the owner says he will be investing in some vintage cars to park in the auditorium so visitors can watch classic horror films while sat in stationary vehicles. {45066}

*Nottinghamshire Live* – 23 August; sent in by Terry Hanstock



The former Futurist in Valley Road, Basford {37401} and the former Vernon Picture House in Vernon Road, Basford {31842} (pictured above in July 2004) have been added to the Local List of Heritage Assets by the Council.

*Nottinghamshire Live* – 6 August; sent in by Terry Hanstock

A new Light cinema destined for the redeveloped Broadmarsh Centre is in doubt after the Centre’s owners, intu, went into administration. They are hoping to reopen the Centre with leisure options rather than retail.

*Nottinghamshire Live* – 3 July; sent in by Terry Hanstock

## NUNEATON (Warks)

A new sign in the town centre appears to give a huge hint over who could be behind a new cinema. The sign, on hoardings around the partially demolished Co-op, shows a building with the word Vue on it. Earlier this year, the Council confirmed it was in talks with a cinema operator with a view to opening a venue on the former Co-op department store site. A Town Hall spokesman said the drawing was only “a concept”.

*Nuneaton News* – 24 June

## OXFORD



Like many others, the Grade II listed Ultimate Picture Palace is currently closed due to Covid-19. When they reopen, they will be operating with a reduced capacity of 20-30%, due to social distancing regulations. The BFI recognised the immense value of the cinema and granted £12,683 from their Covid-19 Resilience Fund. They have also been given a £10,000 small business grant from the government but still need public help to meet the shortfall. The cinema has launched a crowdfunding appeal at: [crowdfunder.co.uk/savetheupp]. It passed its £18,000 target in 90 minutes so they raised the target to £34,000 and achieved that by the end of the day. 19416}

*UPP Press Release* – 3 July; *Oxford Mail* – 7 July

### PAISLEY (Renfrew)

Plans have been unveiled for a £12m five-screen community cinema on the Bargain Buys site. This scheme replaces the Baker Street project, which was abandoned. The screens will have between 40 and 160 seats each. It is hoped the cinema will be open by 2023. The site, next to Paisley Cross, used to house the La Scala cinema, which was demolished in 1976. The project will be known as Pxls [Paisley Cross, La Scala – pronounced “pixels”].

*Paisley Daily Express – 13, 20 July*

### PENISTONE (South Yorks)



An £80,000 revamp of the Paramount is taking place whilst it is currently closed. The programme includes new seating and carpets and redecoration inside and out. The old seating was sold for £2,600 and it was suggested that this be given to charity. However, legal implications mean that the matter has been put on hold. The cinema was expected to reopen in early September. {20833}

*Barnsley Chronicle – 31 July; photo taken July 2006*

### PETERBOROUGH (Cambs)



One result of the lockdown is that the New Theatre Peterborough (former Odeon) is going back to films after several years as just a stage venue. From the beginning of August it will be showing films on Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 11am and 4pm, just one performance of each film. The cost of admission is £5. When the building reopened in 2003 as the Broadway Theatre it had state of the art equipment including 70mm. The CTA held their AGM there in 2002. {19950}

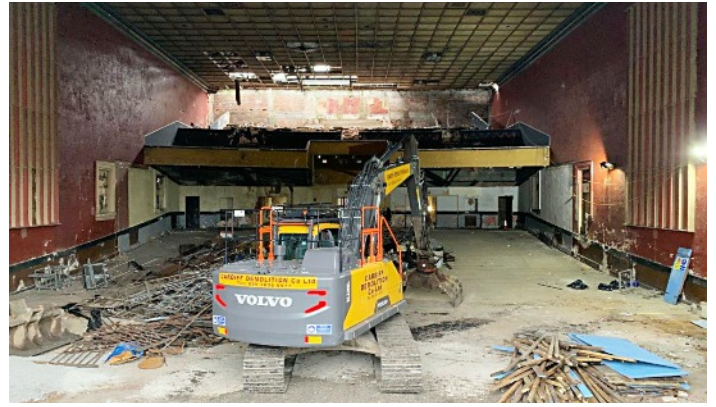
*Sent in by Brain Hall; photo taken May 2004*

### PETERHEAD (Aberdeen)

Plans have been approved to upgrade the front of the former Regal, which is being converted into a five-screen Arc cinema. New signs will be installed, the existing glass double doors will be repaired and the steps and handrail will be made safer. The cinema will have 422 luxury leather armchair seats and digital laser projection. The opening, delayed by the current pandemic, is now scheduled for 2 October. {45846}

*Evening Express, Aberdeen – 4, 20 July, 18 August*

### PORT TALBOT (Neath)



Demolition work is being carried out on the rear part of the former Plaza. It will be converted into a community hub, to be managed by the YMCA. The façade will be retained. Conversion work is due to finish in autumn 2021. {18212}

*South Wales Evening Post – 31 July; sent in & photo by John Skinner*

### REDCAR (Cleveland)

Plans have been approved to demolish the 320-seat Regent on the seafront and replace it with a £9.68m three-screen cinema with 34, 56 & 94 seats. It closed in April 2018 due to structural problems. Demolition could start in September with the replacement open by spring 2022. {5304}

*BBC News website – 6 August; Northern Echo – 8 August; photo on front cover; Darlington & Stockton Times – 14 August; sent in by Margaret Burgoine;*

### RINGWOOD (HANTS)

More than £250,000 has been pledged to a campaign bidding to buy back and restore the former Regal. See p16 last Bulletin. Information at [ringwoodcommunityinvestment.co.uk] {28134}

*New Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times – 28 June*

### ROCHDALE (Greater Manchester)

The new six-screen Reel opened on 4 July, delayed from April. The auditoria seat 66, 116, 86, 101, 62 & 62. {62892}

*Rochdale Online – 3 July*



The Empire was undergoing lockdown renovations when workers discovered a tiled mosaic bearing Rochdale’s coat of arms under an upper layer of quarry tiles. It will be polished and left in situ to view. The building dates from about 150 years ago and became a music hall in 1904. Cinema use soon followed but it is not known when films ceased and bingo took over. It was last used as a nightclub. {3342}

*Rochdale Observer – 27 June; sent in by Richard Lysons; photo taken January 2006*

AE writes: the Empire closed on 7 September 1963 for bingo and I believe had converted fully to films as the Empire De Luxe in September 1930.

### SHEFFIELD

Revised plans for an extension to the Meadowhall Shopping Centre no longer include a new cinema. However the existing eleven-screen Vue will be expanded and modernised. {25311}

*Star, Sheffield – 25 June*

Plans have been lodged to turn the former Palace in Wincobank into apartments. See p17 of the last Bulletin, where it was stated it was on the market. Photo on front cover of last Bulletin.

*Insider Media – 19 August; sent in by Terry Hanstock*

### SITTINGBOURNE (Kent)

The eight-screen Light cinema currently under construction has submitted plans to convert two proposed restaurant units into a nine-lane bowling alley. The planning document states there is an oversupply of restaurants in the County and such outlets are proving difficult to let. The cinema is due to open in October.

*Kent Messenger – 30 July*

### STRATFORD UPON AVON (Warks)



Demolition of the former two-screen Picturehouse has started. The site will become a Travelodge hotel. The cinema had operated for 22 years. Arrival of a new four-screen Everyman is blamed for the closure.

*Stratford Herald – 2 July; sent in by Terry Hanstock [photo] & Darron Keeling*

### WALSALL (West Midlands)



The former Imperial was due to go to auction on 9 July with a guide price of £200,000. However, it was sold prior to auction for an undisclosed sum. It closed as a cinema in May 1968 and had about 30 years on bingo before becoming a Wetherspoons pub in March 1997; this closed in March 2016. {24723}

*Express & Star – 1 July; photo taken April 2007*

### WEDNESFIELD (Wolverhampton)

The thirteen-screen Cineworld reopened on 31 July after a major refurbishment. The cinema has expanded its existing offering, introducing 4DX, ScreenX, and Superscreen auditoria as well as an on-site Starbucks. Standard screens have been fitted with new seats and the foyer and concessions stands have been updated. To mark the launch, the cinema has revealed offers such as classic film screenings from £5 and tickets for less than £10 for either of the new cinema experiences. It will also be hosting a special 4DX 'Never Been Seen' screening programme, classic films in 4DX for the first time ever in the UK, including *Inception* and *Harry Potter*.

*Express & Star – 31 July*

### WELLINGTON (Shropshire)

Permission has been applied for to demolish the former Clifton next spring and advertise the site as a brownfield development site. The cinema opened in January 1937 with 995 seats and was last used as a Dunelm fabric shop. The developer claims that, despite extensive marketing, the building has failed to attract interest. {37745}

*Shropshire Star – 8 July*

### WESTGATE-ON-SEA (Kent)

The three-screen Carlton has reopened and refurbished its old-fashioned ticket booth as part of new social distancing measures. {15032}

*Isle of Thanet News – 8 August; sent in by Margaret Burgoine & Martin Tapsell*

### WEYBRIDGE (Surrey)

Curzon has been awarded a licence to convert the former public hall into a £1.5m two-screen art house cinema. The building was opened as the Kinema in June 1920 with 570 seats. In around 1927 it was taken over by the County Cinemas chain and was re-named King George's Cinema. They re-named it County Cinema in late-1936. Taken over by the Oscar Deutsch chain of Odeon Theatres in September 1939, the County Cinema was closed in September 1956. The building became the Weybridge Hall, which has been disused in recent years. {39302}

*Surrey Live – 8 July*

### WICK (Highland)



Demolition has started on the former Pavilion. It opened in 1930 as a skating rink but became a 626-seat cinema in 1934. By the 1980s it was on part-time bingo. It later became a nightclub and was gutted by fire in 1996. There were attempts to rebuild it but they came to naught. {40206}

*John O'Groats Journal – 6 August; photo taken September 2008*

### WOODBIDGE (Suffolk)



Concerns have been raised about the future of the Riverside Theatre. With virus restrictions the cinema has a capacity of only 100 [instead of 288] people; however, current audiences for the shows have been between 6 and 30 people, leaving at least 2/3 of the seats empty. {22411}

*East Anglian Daily Times – 10 August; sent in by Terry Hanstock; photo taken April 2016*

### QUOTATIONS

Another cinematic quotation from the list sent by Gavin McGrath:

- ◆ In *Lawrence of Arabia* they only got two things right – the camels and the sand.

*Samuel Goldwyn*

# LETTERS

## JM SCHULTZ

Sad news to hear of the death of Jim Schultz, cinema engineer, as reported in the last Bulletin. I knew Jim for a number of years during my connection with the cinema industry, 35 years with the now defunct Associated Tower Cinemas, Leeds. Jim was a portly gentleman who possessed a dry sense of humour, delivered in a slow expressive manner. In 1979 he installed a pair of Cinemeccanica Victoria 9 projectors at Cottage Road Cinema in Headingly, Leeds, which I was managing at the time. I wonder if he ever wrote his memoirs as they would have made very interesting reading.

*Derrick L Todd*

I was very sorry to read in the Bulletin that Jim had passed away. I had met Jim many years ago and over the years he did many jobs for me. There was, I believe, nothing that Jim couldn't do or fix. He could be, like myself, very blunt and had a full command of the English language, often with four letters. I once asked him what he was doing living in England but had a German name. Back came his usual reply, followed by the fact that he was a Yorkshireman, "my boy", he declared. Any cinema will tell you of his work and he would go all over the place to help people out, sometimes costing him more in petrol than his charges. I can only say he was one of the best and a bloody good engineer and person. RIP Jim.

*Trevor Harris*

## RELAUNCHING CINEMA

I'd come across the list of 450 suggested old films to fill gaps in schedules on the Film Distributors' Association web site at [www.launchingfilms.com]. It's quite an intriguing selection, ranging from *The Philadelphia Story* to *A Matter of Life and Death*. It might be worth remarking that it is perhaps only because of digital projection that such an imaginative and flexible approach to the current challenge is possible.

*Jeremy Perkins*

**Editor's Note:** The list can be downloaded from the above website as a pdf. Use the link "Relaunching Cinema" in the top centre of the home page. The website also contains lots of other information.

## A NEW PAVILION

Until the various reference sources become available once again, it will not be possible to determine the precise origins of the **Royal Pavilion** Blackpool. However members might be interested to read the following report in the *Blackpool Herald and Fylde Advertiser* of 22 June 1909:

### Music Licence for the Blackpool 'Royal'.

Alfred Blacker, who held the **Colosseum** licence when the cinematograph exhibitions were held there, asked the magistrates at Blackpool, yesterday, to grant him a music, singing and dancing licence, including music for sacred concerts in respect to the **New Royal Pavilion** in Rigby Road and Tyldesley Road. Mr CW Callis, who represented the applicant, said they only proposed to have a cinematograph show. The machine itself was enclosed in a fireproof box and was fitted up with a patent apparatus that extinguished fire the moment it broke out. There were proper exits and the building would accommodate 1,050 people. Alfred Blacker said he had been manager at the **Colosseum** for two years previous to its being turned into a skating rink.

The Chief Constable raised no objection to the applicant, who was quite capable of managing the place but pointed out that the building was not yet completed. Mr Callis said they would give an undertaking to complete the building before it was opened. JA Barraclough, architect and surveyor, gave evidence and explained the plans. He added that there were sufficient exits to empty the building in three minutes. The Chief Constable: "I shall be satisfied if the building is made in accordance with the plans before it is opened." This undertaking was given and the application was granted.

The **New Royal Pavilion** duly opened with a programme of four films: *Napoleon*, *Under Northern Skies*, *Importune Neighbour* and *Earthy Paradise*. A Grand Sacred Concert was then held every Sunday with The Royal Pavilion Choir and films "of an uplifting nature".

*Ray Dolling*

## MY TIME WITH 16MM FILM

The article in the May/June Bulletin by Charles Morris on the use of 16mm film prints in commercial cinemas brought back some memories for me. Between 1978 and 1990 I worked for Cinephoto Film Productions Ltd in Salford, who primarily produced company or product promotional films on 16mm. I was Production Manager and looked after the preview theatre.

During the first few years everything was shot on 16mm Eastman Negative. This was then processed and a rush print produced. Once edited and sound added, it was then sent to the lab for final projection prints to be made. Later on, Sony U-Matic Video Master tapes would also be produced direct from the 16mm masters as clients were increasingly wanting copies on the new VHS video format for their sales people to use on the road.

At this time the BBC were still using 16mm film for location work and we were often requested to supply mobile facilities for crews to view rushes. For these we used a Magnaflex Double Band Projector, which was based on the Bell & Howell TQ range. Remember those anyone? It was a very ungainly machine with a heavy sound reader slapped on the side.

On one occasion we collected the cans of rushes from Piccadilly Red Star in Manchester and headed off to Wrexham in North Wales. Arriving about 9:30pm we set up and waited for the crew to arrive. The carpets in the room were all nylon and we had been walking around for some time setting up. When all was assembled and I came to switch off the lights to start the show, I received a heavy static belt off the switch. Needless to say a few expletives ensued much to my embarrassment as everyone turned around to look at me. Happy Days!

Over the next decade however, things changed dramatically. With the advent of new portable HD Video Cameras and clients wanting to reduce costs, 16mm gradually fell out of favour. In the early nineties, companies had started to use computers more and Microsoft PowerPoint became very popular, replacing the multiple 35mm slide projector presentations used for many years.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the industry, later becoming a corporate member of the BKSTS (British Kinematograph Sound & Television Society) now known as The International Moving Image Society and served as Chairman of the NW Branch for a year.

*Richard Hagon*

## FORUM EALING

Regarding the **Forum Ealing**, featured in the last Bulletin. ABC cinemas took over in early 1935, the press mentioning the takeover in the February, though it was still advertised as Yapp cinema in March of that year. The Sound system was Western Electric and the projectors were water cooled. Later, Philips FP20s were employed. After the cinema was tripled non-rewind (cakestands) were used. I lived in Ealing for a number of years until 1989 and would often visit. The chief was a chap named Basil but I can't remember his surname.

*David A Ellis*

## PRESCOT PALACE CINEMA

In the last edition of the Bulletin there were one or two mentions of the **Palace Cinema** in Prescott. I have in my collection a copy of the first National Agreement between the Cinema Exhibitors Association and the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees. This came into force on 2 September 1946 for the North West Region. The **Palace Cinema** Prescott is one of a list of twenty three cinemas classed as Sub Grade B with weekly takings of £50 to £75 per week. I was on the committee for the Union that covered the Merseyside Area.

*Mike Taylor*

## OXFORD CITY CENTRE CINEMAS

Interesting to see further letters on the above in the July/August issue and of course I was mistaken in saying the **Scala** is "now closed". I am so glad to learn that this cinema reopened in 1977 as the **Phoenix**, after (according to Google) some shady times as **Studio X** showing 'adult films'. Also how wonderful to see those two programmes of the première of *Dr Faustus*; I assume they were sent in by Dave Jones.

*Caroline Behr*

# MISCELLANY & CINEMA BUSINESS

## GAUMONT BENCH



This bench is located outside the artsdepot cultural centre in North Finchley, London. It is meant to be a representation of the Gaumont, which once stood on the site of the centre and was demolished in 1986.

Sent in by *Jeremy Buck*

## POSTER AUCTION

A collection of 1,773 vintage movie posters realised \$2,312,675 at an auction in Dallas (Texas) in June. A rare 1933 poster for *The Invisible Man* fetched \$228,000.

*Metro* – 17 July; sent in by *Barry Quinton & R David Simpson*

## OVERPRICED?

Cinematic items for sale on eBay include a large art deco mirror from an Odeon cinema at £350 and a copy of Brain Hornsey's Mercia Cinema Society 28-page A5 paperback booklet on *The Essoldo Circuit* for £5,000 – no, that's not a misprint – plus £4.50 postage!

Sent in by *Darron Keeling*

Editor's Note: Issue 31 of the CTA's magazine *Picture House* contains a full history of the Essoldo circuit and is still available from the Publications Officer (ordering details on p5) for only £7.50 (plus postage).

## A BRIDGE TOO FAR?

Newly released documents from the National Archive show that the War Office initially objected to the making of *Bridge on the River Kwai*. "I do not think much of this story. In the first instance it is quite untrue and only very occasionally resembles the facts as they were at the time." In the end, the War Office agreed to offer the RAF's cooperation in the making of the film.

*Daily Mail* – 12 August; sent in by *Barry Quinton*

## 20TH CENTURY FOX'S FINAL REEL

Disney has killed off 20th Century Fox and rebranded it as 20th Television. Disney paid £55m for Rupert Murdoch's Fox Media assets last year. It is thought it wants to distance its studios from Fox News, which remains a Murdoch company.

*Daily Mail* – 13 August; sent in by *Tom Laughlan & Barry Quinton*

## CARTOON CORNER



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

## SCOTLAND FUNDING

Screen Scotland's Cinema Equipment Fund, made possible through the National Lottery, has allocated money to 24 projects. The grants include £42,000 to the Eden Court Theatre in Inverness to upgrade its cinema equipment, £22,000 to the Phoenix cinema in Oban and £24,000 for Colintravie Village Hall in Argyll and Bute for its community cinema project.

*Press & Journal, Aberdeen* – 1 July

## POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Sky has issued warnings over some films, claiming they have "outdated attitudes". Among them are *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Gone With The Wind*, *Aladdin*, *Dumbo*, *The Jungle Book* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

*Daily Mail* – 20, 27 June; sent in by *Tom Laughlan*

## CINEWORLD SHARES

Shares in Cineworld rose 22.5% after they were told they could reopen their screens. The company has secured £201m in extra funding.

*The Sun* – 23 June, *Daily Mail* – 24 June; sent in by *Margaret Burgoine & Barry Quinton*

## BEST BOND EVER

Sir Sean Connery (89) has been voted the best James Bond in a *Radio Times* poll. More than 14,000 votes were cast and Sir Sean got 44%, beating Timothy Dalton and Pierce Brosnan.

*Metro* – 10 August; sent in by *Barry Quinton*

## UK CINEMAS OPEN

[[tinyurl.com/y36aluwa](https://tinyurl.com/y36aluwa)] A list of all UK cinemas currently open. The page was current at 10 August and it is stated it will be updated.

## FACE COVERINGS



Aware that Covid-19 has put a dent in my activity and that of all other CTA members, I decided the flimsy 50p masks were a bit boring, so I have designed a CTA-themed mask for use in shops etc. It cost me £6 but is washable and for me is the latter-day version of the green CTA tie that rarely gets an airing.

*Martin Tapsell*



I believe in proper masking! [item posted on Facebook]

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

A regular column celebrating our wonderful listed cinemas.  
All images come from the CTA Archive.

## 110 years



Duke of York's Picture House Preston Circus, Brighton.  
Opened 22 September 1910. Architect CE Clayton (Clayton & Black).  
Grade II listed.

## 100 years

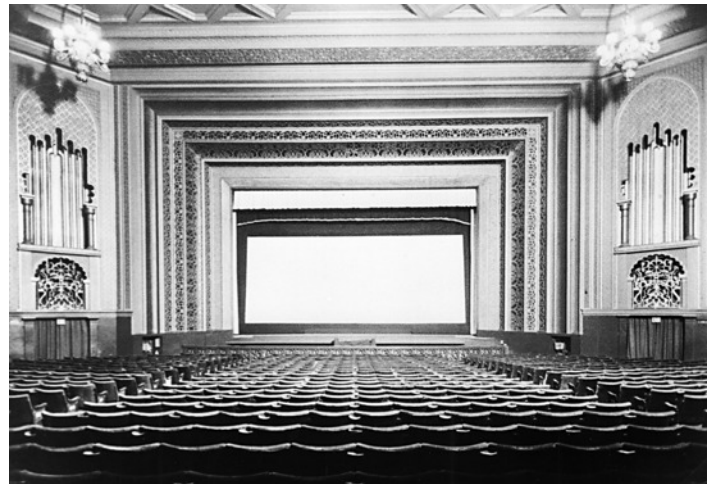


Adelphi Vicarage Rd, Attercliffe, Sheffield.  
Opened 18 October 1920. Architect unknown. Grade II listed.

## 90 years



Carlton/ABC 161 Essex Road, Islington.  
Opened 1 September 1930. Architect George Coles. Grade II\* listed.



Granada/ABC/EMD 186 Hoe St. Walthamstow.  
Opened 15 September 1930. Architect Cecil Masey  
(interior decoration by Theodore Komisarjevsky). Grade II\* listed.

Regal/Twins/Studios 10 Oxford Rd, Manchester.  
Opened 20 September 1930. Architects Pendleton & Dickson.  
Grade II listed. *No image.*



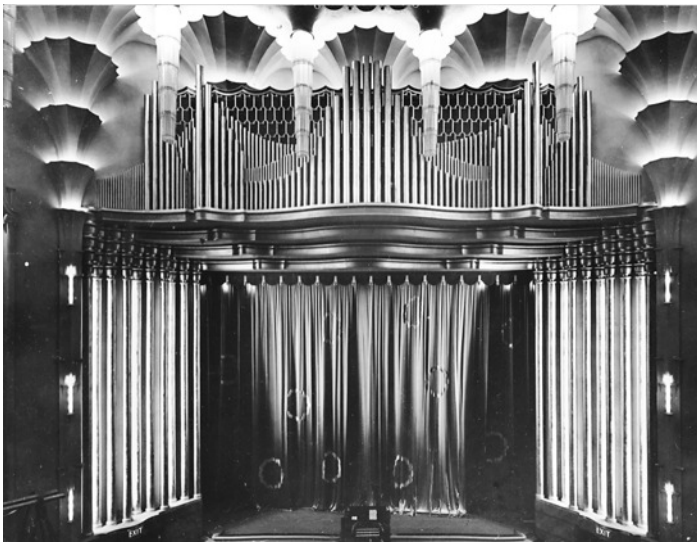
Regal/ABC/Odeon 296 High St. Beckenham.  
Opened 22 September 1930. Architect Robert Cromie. Grade II listed.



Astoria/Odeon 232 Seven Sisters Rd, Finsbury Park.  
Opened 29 September 1930. Architect Edward Albert Stone  
(interior decoration by Marc-Henri & G Laverdet). Grade II\* listed.







New Victoria, 17 Wilton Rd, Victoria. Opened 15 October 1930.  
Architects Ernest Walmsley Lewis / William Edward Trent.  
Grade II\* listed.

## ARCHIVE REOPENS

*The Archive will be reopening for enquiries and visitors from September, provided local conditions and government guidance allows. We will continue to monitor the situation carefully and the number of volunteers and visitors will be limited to allow for social distancing to be observed. It should be remembered that most enquiries do not require you to visit the Archive in person.*

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

### MAKING AN ENQUIRY OR ARRANGING A VISIT

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

The Archive is expected to be open on the following dates from 10am until 5pm: 12 September, 3 October and 14 November.

### 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.

### 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 and access to Word or Excel at home, you can still volunteer as we have plenty of work which can be undertaken remotely without visiting the Archive.

Another way to help the Archive is to join the friendly Archive Google Group – a safe email-based discussion board who's main purpose is to try to identify cinema photographs that are regularly shared with the Group. Other discussion of cinema subjects is of course welcome. You can sign up to the Group here:

[[www.groups.google.com/forum/#!/forum/cta-uk](http://www.groups.google.com/forum/#!/forum/cta-uk)]

If you are having trouble joining the Group please contact the Archivist.

If you don't wish to join the Group but want to be involved in identifying these photographs they can be viewed here: [tinyurl.com/uomjyom]. If you can identify any of these cinemas or have an observation that might help in identifying them, please contact the Archivist.

### ARCHIVE TWITTER

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

### CONTACTING THE ARCHIVE

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

*Clive Polden, CTA Archivist*

## London's West End Cinemas by Allen Eyles with Keith Skone.

Large format paperback, 210 pages, fully illustrated  
with over 400 pictures, including 71 in colour.  
Price – £25.00 + £3 postage.



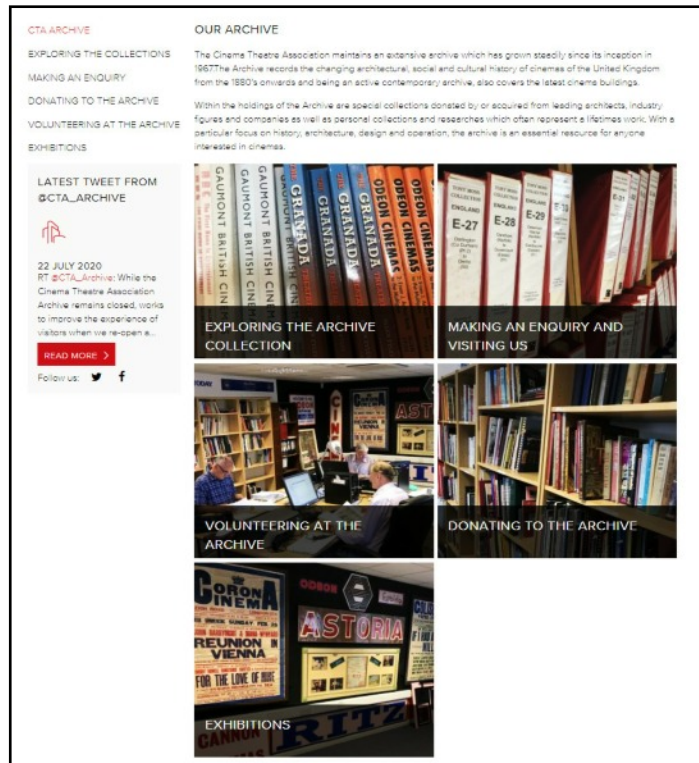
This is a redesigned and much enlarged third edition of a book not available for more than 20 years, fully updated by its original author, Allen Eyles. It is a complete record of all the cinemas that have entertained picture-goers in the West End from 1906 to 2013. There are maps, appendices of club cinemas and theatres as temporary cinemas as well as a name index.

Published in collaboration with English Heritage.

Ordering details on p5

## NEW ARCHIVE WEB PAGES

The Archive web pages on the CTA website have recently been comprehensively overhauled and are now available. The web pages now contain a lot more information for those wishing to make an enquiry or arrange a visit. There is an easy to complete enquiry form and lists are now provided of various collections to help researchers start to explore the wide range of material available.



Navigate to the new pages from the CTA website home page or directly at this address: [cta-uk.org/archive]. From the Archive home page shown above, visitors can choose to visit the following pages:

### EXPLORING THE ARCHIVE COLLECTION

A collection of catalogues and lists for collections within the Archive that will be useful for researchers, including:

- ♦ Indexes for the *Bulletin* and *Picture House* from 1967 - 2016
- ♦ List of cinemas visited by the CTA on visits, year by year
- ♦ Architectural plans, including those of George Coles and Alister MacDonald
- ♦ Photographs within portfolios including Union Cinemas and the George Coles Collection
- ♦ Kinematograph Yearbooks held at the Archive
- ♦ Indexes for periodicals held, including *Kinematograph Weekly*, *Ideal Kinema*, *The Cinema*, *Cinema & TV Today* and other trade papers and magazines
- ♦ List of original ABC opening programmes
- ♦ Annual bound volumes of *South London Press*, containing the weekly cinema advertising
- ♦ List of items within the David E Nye Collection
- ♦ All books and pamphlets held within the Archive Library
- ♦ The Audio-visual collection
- ♦ Mercia Cinema Society records and Bioscopes
- ♦ Cinema Organ Society Journals

### MAKING AN ENQUIRY AND VISITING US

How to make an enquiry and useful information for enquirers including a link to the enquiry form and list of charges.

### VOLUNTEERING AT THE ARCHIVE

Information about volunteering at the Archive or from home.

### DONATING TO THE ARCHIVE

Advice on donating material to the Archive and legacies.

### EXHIBITIONS

Information about the Archive material currently on display at the Archive, including the exhibition on cinemas in Southend-on-Sea and the surrounding areas. Information on how to organise an exhibition at the Archive.

## INTERNET CORNER

- ★ [tinyurl.com/ycxvrq3t] Cinemas in County Carlow, Ireland.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y7m6klmu] Old Dublin Cinemas
- ★ [tinyurl.com/teogy] An interesting article about the relaunch of bus route 77 in Belfast. Along with several pictures, there's a list of the cinemas that were passed by along the route of the bus. *Above three items sent in by Darron Keeling*
- ★ [youtu.be/EfW7-hMXkG4] I unearthed a bit of local cine society newsreel from 1964, which has some footage of the demolition of the Embassy North Harrow; it's from 4'26" to 6'10". *Sent in by Gary Donaldson*
- ★ [tinyurl.com/ya6tas94] From the *Stoke Sentinel* – 23 pictures of the cinemas of Stoke-on-Trent and surrounding Staffordshire. *Sent in by Allan Pointon*
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y3lbp7zr] From *Kent Online* – Kent's old cinemas and what are they now: over 40 photos. *Sent in by Philip Stevens & Martin Tapsell*
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yxp6syr] From *The IP Kat* – An interesting account of popcorn and cinemas. *Sent in by Terry Hanstock*
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yadzfyv8] From *The Guide* (Liverpool) – 15 movies you didn't know were filmed in Liverpool.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yc9tubra] From the *Liverpool Echo* – inside the Forum/ABC Lime Street: 15 photos.
- ★ [youtu.be/cBjQbXhTc1U] A 15½ minute film about the screening of *How The West Was Won* in 3-strip Cinerama in October 2019 at the Cinerama Dome in Hollywood. Includes a visit to the projection booth. The page has links to other cinema films.
- ★ [youtu.be/bF93jYwNB-4] A *Pathé News* on the opening of the ABC Sheffield in 1961 – note two sets of tabs!
- ★ [youtu.be/pQeQwYs5M2E] Another *Pathé News* on the opening of the ABC New Bristol Centre in 1966.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y35wpg2t] From *The News* (Portsmouth) – 17 lost Portsmouth cinemas – how many do you remember?
- ★ [cinemaprojectionist.co.uk] A new website dedicated to the history of projection in UK cinemas. It includes a treasure trove of photographs taken in projection boxes across the 20th Century. There is a 'Virtual Projection box' and a range of audio-interviews with projectionists. Developed by the University of Warwick.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y6ly7ydv] I have opened a YouTube channel with some cinema-related videos. They are not brilliant, and the video cameras I used were not the greatest but you might find them of interest. *Sent in by Kevin Wheelan*
- ★ [tinyurl.com/yxjnh7fv] From *Vogue* magazine – The most impressive movie theaters in the world: 8 lovely photos.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y49kanb3] From *Secret Manchester* – Nine of the Cosiest Cinemas That Greater Manchester Has To Offer: 9 photos.
- ★ [tinyurl.com/y5a2k3qe] From *Leeds Live* – An interactive map of 81 cinemas past and present in Leeds – excellent!

A **MUST** for your collection

# CINEMAS IN BRITAIN

A History of Cinema Architecture  
by Richard Gray

First published in 1996 to celebrate the centenary of cinema in the UK. In this fully revised edition, the text has been completely rewritten and expanded and there are extra photographs, 10 in full colour. Of particular interest is the 24-page gazetteer of cinema buildings, telling the reader what there is to see in most places in the UK. There are useful appendices about listed cinemas, a glossary of architectural terms and a comprehensive bibliography.

**Hardback, 180 pages, fully illustrated in b/w & colour.**

Special price for CTA members  
£29.50 + £6.00 postage from  
Jeremy Buck, CTA Sales Officer  
34 Pelham Road, Wood Green, London, N22 6LN

## OBITUARIES

### JOHN THORNLEY 73



The cinema museum team in the Christchurch Regent's projection box have to report the sad passing of John Thornley on 22 July. John had been receiving treatment for a medical condition at Bournemouth Royal Hospital but unfortunately this hadn't worked. He remained cheery until the end, so typical of John, who many of you will have known or seen around the Regent.

John had many hobbies and interests in life, particularly in trolleybuses and local history. It was his love of cinema, however, that was his deep passion, fired up at an early age by helping his dad present film shows in the 1960s. His father had 16mm projectors and they would load up the family car to present film shows at the large Bournemouth hotels as part of the holidaymakers' entertainment. John not only liked to be in charge of a projector, he was an avid film watcher too and had a enviable collection of films and DVDs and had an excellent recall of stars and plots of the day.

He became involved with the Regent around the time of its 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations and subsequently took on the task of creating a Museum to celebrate the history of the local cinemas and was a dab hand at projector restoration. John spent most of his working life looking after the accounts at a chemical company in Poole but at heart he was the projectionist, who could restore, repair and operate any make or design of projector.

The Museum at the Regent is a great credit to John and we will continue to develop it as he would have wanted. He will be missed by his sister and nephew but at the Regent, particularly by the rest of the projection box team.

*David Eve, Martin Hickson, Philip Stevens, Barry Sinclair, Bob Dobson, Chris Simmons and Kevin Wheelan*

John had numerous interests, from local transport including buses, trolleys and railways. He photographed and filmed them, establishing valuable archive material. His interest began when he was at school and remained throughout his life.

He was a projectionist at the Rex Cinema, Wareham with the then owner, 'Rusty' Irons. He became a part-time projectionist in the Ashley Cinema at the newly-opened Poole Arts Centre, now The Lighthouse. He actively ran a film society at his place of work, British Drug Houses, as well as belonging to The Wimborne Ciné Club. He was passionate about the cinema and also home movie equipment, particularly Bell and Howell, of which he was very knowledgeable and had a comprehensive collection of their projectors. His interest in the cinema led him to visit local halls and further afield, many of which have long gone.

His passion led him, with others, to form a cinema museum in the projection room at The Regent Centre in Christchurch, which will be a lasting tribute to him.

John's passing has been a terrible blow to all who knew him, he will be sadly missed, however his photos, his films of local transport and his wisdom will always be with us.

*Martin Hickson via Kevin Wheelan*

### ANDREW RICHARDSON 77

Andy was a long-standing, active member of the CTA. With his white baseball cap, cheery disposition, friendly approachable manner and scouse humour, he was a regular on CTA visits, often accompanied by his wife Sylvia, with whom he shared a love of travel, live theatre shows, films and ballroom dancing, especially the Foxtrot!



With retirement from GPO/BT he pursued his many interests. He was a member of the Victorian Society, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Society and locally, the West Derby History Society, giving illustrated talks and publishing his own books. He and Sylvia explored Britain, often in his old friend 'Morris' Oxford, particularly the Scottish lowlands and North Yorkshire, seeking out a surviving local cinema for an evening visit. Learning French and German, he visited Paris and Berlin to admire the architecture, the buses and the trams.

He organised a memorable CTA weekend in Liverpool but liked nothing better than a film show in Picturehouse at FACT with Sylvia to see a beloved classic, art film or up-to-date release.

"Ta ra lar"

*Chris Lyons*

Andrew Richardson was instrumental in getting David Atwell to travel up to Liverpool and directly as result the Forum, later ABC, became a Grade II listed building. A very fitting epitaph. Apart from the listed pubs at both ends, the north side of Lime Street went a couple of years ago, taking the Futurist and Scala with it. Although on the other side of the street surely the Forum would have gone the same way.

*Richard Gray*

Andrew was a very likable, somewhat eccentric figure, very knowledgeable about the buildings and history of his own area. He provided text and his own photographs for *Cheshire County Cinemas* – cinemas in Northwich, Runcorn, Widnes and Liverpool (Woolton) – in issue 11 of *Picture House* as well as a touching follow-up on the Woolton cinema cat in the following issue.

*Alan Eyles*

### ALAN JONES 70

Alan, who had worked at the ABC Leicester, was killed in a traffic accident on 7 April, the day before his birthday. He was taking his usual 25/30 mile tour on his bicycle and was knocked down by a car. He remained on life-support for about ten days but nothing could be done; his head injuries were too serious.

*Malcolm Beeson-Earwicker*

## MEMBERSHIP

### NEW MEMBERS

We offer a warm welcome to the following new members:

Jennifer Pendleton, Alan Myers, Michael Cordner, Simon Carter, Tony Jones, Ruth Thomason, Paul Wynn, Mark Priestley and Brian Hannan.

### DONATIONS

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

JC Barnes, IE Barrow, HD Behr, IJ Bellion, MJ Bigham, RJ Buckler, RA Buckley, MJ Burke, J Clarke, WP Cobb, M Collins, DWT Corn, PJ Edmunds, DN Hammond, MG Hammond, AM Harris, TA Harris, CD Harrison, A Heaton, PG Hennessey, PJ Hoare, BD Hopper, M Hutton, PL Kent, AS Kidd, JM Lewis, SD Locking, JJ McKillop, CM Oxley, IJ Patterson, A Philip, DJ Profit, J Ramsden, HR Rowley, JJ Seabrook, BC Sinclair, PV Stevens, BP Stoveld, PF Thomas, KS Wheelan, D Williams, and JE Williams.

### IN MEMORIAM

We have been sorry to learn of the deaths of the following CTA members in the period since the last issue of the Bulletin. Our sincere condolences are sent to their families and friends:

Andrew Richardson, Maurice Thornton, John Thornley, Alan Jones and Ian Lockie.

*Ray Ritmeester, Membership Secretary*

# LIGHTS, CAMERA, MERTON!

## The Films of Merton Park Studios

By Clive Whichelow

They say that when you watch a swan gliding gracefully across a lake you don't see that underneath the water the legs are paddling furiously to maintain this serene image. Perhaps there is a parallel here with the glossy, plush and elegant cinemas of yesteryear and the small film studios furiously trying behind the scenes to keep up with the insatiable demand that the cinemas had for more and more films.

With the advent of the British quota system following the Cinematograph Films Act of 1927, studios such as Merton Park in south London needed to provide a continuous supply of films to satisfy the voracious appetite of the British cinema-goer.



The King's Palace [L] and the Elite [R] Wimbledon

Just a quarter of a mile from the King's Palace cinema (opened 1910) and the Elite (1920), both in Wimbledon Broadway, Merton Park film studios was making some of the very films that they would be showing. The nearby Wimbledon Theatre (1910) even featured in one or two of those films.

The studios started in 1929 but they followed another nearby studio, which had been there since 1913. To begin with, Merton Park was mainly making documentaries, advertisements and wartime propaganda films but by the 1940s was producing feature films and, from the 1950s, the crime series that they became famous for: *Scotland Yard*, *Scales of Justice* and the *Edgar Wallace Mysteries*.

Although Merton Park studios are little remembered today they were responsible for several films that have become minor classics of one sort or another. The renowned theatre director Joan Littlewood made her first and only film here in 1963 - *Sparrows Can't Sing* starring James Booth and Barbara Windsor - perhaps the best film this actress ever made. In fact, she was nominated for a best actress BAFTA for her performance. When the film was shown in America it was given English subtitles for audiences who couldn't understand the Cockney language! The following year Merton Park made *The Leather Boys*, starring Rita Tushingham, which was a ground-breaking story of a gay 'ton-up' boy's crush on his married friend.

These two films had been preceded in 1961 by *Konga*, the British answer to *King Kong*. The film starred Michael Gough, Jess Conrad and Claire Gordon and has since become something of a cult classic, spawning on the way a series of American comic books, a novelization and various items of merchandise. Michael Gough had already starred in the studio's 1959 film *Horrors of the Black Museum*. This is said to be a favourite film of legendary American director Martin Scorsese. Another classic was the Goons' short *The Case of the Mukkinese Battle-horn*, made here in 1955. This was the first film of a young producer named Michael Deeley, who later went on to make *Blade Runner*, *The Deer Hunter* and *The Italian Job*.



Many actors, directors, writers, technicians and others started their careers at Merton Park and perhaps the biggest name of all is J Arthur Rank. He was a humble Sunday-school teacher whose father owned a flour business, later to become Rank Hovis McDougall. Being unable to find suitable well-made films to show to his Sunday school children he decided to make his own and it was one of the first feature films to be made at Merton Park. It was entitled *The Mastership of Christ* and was released in 1934. This was the beginning of Rank's career in the film industry, which saw him go on to open Pinewood Studios in 1936, where some of the biggest franchises in British film history were to be made. The 1940s then saw Rank acquiring the Odeon chain of cinemas.

Many readers will remember the *Scotland Yard* series of crime dramas that were made at Merton Park from 1953-1961. The stories were said to be based on true crime cases from police files and were introduced by Edgar Lustgarten, who always seemed to be described in the press as 'lugubrious', though ironically the literal translation of his name is 'pleasure garden'. The first few episodes were written by Ken Hughes who went on to a successful career in Hollywood. Hughes' first ever film had been crime drama *Wide Boy* (1952), also made at Merton Park. These films were originally made as supporting features but have been shown extensively on TV both here and in America right up to the present day. The *Scotland Yard* series was succeeded by *Scales of Justice*, also introduced by Edgar Lustgarten and this ran from 1962-1967, with the last few episodes in colour. Running concurrently with these were the *Edgar Wallace Mysteries* (1960-65) which were loosely based on Wallace's books but updated to a contemporary setting.

So during the sixties this little studio was extremely busy, producing not only these crime dramas and feature films but also many advertisements, documentaries etc and effectively providing a training ground for a whole generation of new writers, directors, producers, actors and technicians who would go on to much bigger things. There were also many children's films and series made here under the banner of the CFF (Children's Film Foundation). Some of these were used as serials for cinemas' Saturday morning pictures.

The latter days of the studios have been shrouded in mystery worthy of Edgar Wallace himself with some saying the last film was made here in 1967 and some giving other dates but it seems that the last feature film made here was *Horror Hospital* (1973) starring Merton Park stalwart Michael Gough. The [britishhorrorfilms.co.uk] website calls it 'one of the greatest, if not the greatest, horror films ever made on these islands.'

Happily, most of Merton Park's output is available on DVD and many of its films are still shown on TV to this day. Most of the cinemas that were once nearby have now gone. In Wimbledon alone there have been nine cinemas since 1910 and two of the more recent, the Odeon and Curzon, still survive but the old picture houses, the elegant swans of the industry have all gone as have the furiously paddling feet of Merton Park studios that made a significant contribution to the glory days of British cinema.

Adapted from *Lights, Camera, Merton! The films of Merton Park Studios* b/w photos courtesy Richard Norman

