

BYGONES

The last picture show?

Since the closure of The Grand in 1986 there has been no purpose-built cinema in Leek and for commercial reasons it seems unlikely such a thing will ever exist here in the future. In the first of two articles, **NEIL COLLINGWOOD** looks at the history of two of Leek's three cinemas, The Majestic (1922-1961) and The Grand (1909-1986)...

APPARENTLY the first moving pictures shown in Leek were shown at the Nicholson Institute by Messrs Stokes & Watson of Manchester in 1898 but it would be another decade until Leek had an actual 'Picture Palace'. Which though was Leek's first cinema and is that such a simple question?

The Majestic
The Majestic was located in Union Street near its corner with Horton Street, on a site now occupied by Buxton & Leek College. In one sense The Majestic could be said to have been the earliest cinema in Leek, as it occupied a chapel built in 1834.

The Union Street chapel closed c1864 and was converted into a public hall by the Temperance Movement, whose aim was to prevent people from indulging in the 'demon drink'. As well as holding temperance meetings, the hall was used for a variety of entertainments, presumably to help pay for its upkeep. Leek Amateur Musical Society gave its first concert there on 8th May 1866 and on November 11, 1869 there was to be a performance by Mr Arthur Lloyd's Concert Party. This troupe included 'Professor Beaumont the Wonderous sic Wizard' and Mr Henry Collard the wonderful little tenor aged 18 a 'perfect little gentleman' who is 'less than (smaller than) Tom Thumb or Commodore Nutt', and is a beautiful singer.'

George Washington M Nutt, named 'Commodore Nutt' by showman PT Barnum, was an American performer 29 inches (74 cm) tall and who weighed about 25 pounds (11 kg). Nutt was best man at the wedding of 'General Tom Thumb' who also worked for Barnum.

Tom Thumb, real name Charles S Stratton, was only 26 inches tall at four years old but eventually 35 inches (89cm tall). Stratton married Lavinia Warren, with whom the best man had apparently fallen in love.

In October 1884 Oscar Wilde lectured at the Temperance Hall as well as in the following year at the Nicholson Institute.

Apart from temperance meetings and entertainment, serious meetings were also held there. The local paper of January 8, 1898 reported the fortnightly meeting of the Leek Board of Guardians, including details about the management of the care of the inmates of Leek workhouse.

There was also an account of a New Year's meal and entertainment provided to those inmates at the Temperance Hall by the textile industries Trades Unions. After the meal there was a concert of songs and sketches followed by a presentation of sweets for youngsters and tobacco and snuff for adults before they left. Obviously no provision of alcohol was made.

According to the late Ray Poole, the Temperance Hall's next metamorphosis was into a skating rink and a place where the Salvation Army met while their new Salisbury Street headquarters were being built. Might

he perhaps have been mistaking the Temperance Hall with what became 'The Palace?' (see Part 2).

Finally in January 1922 the Temperance Hall was converted into a cinema, which was named The Majestic. The Staffordshire Sentinel of January 10th reported the opening: A 'breezy little speech was given by Mr Billy Booth' the Manager, and the program consisted of Joseph and his brethren, with its cast of 7,000, together with a comedy and a 'fine study of bird life depicting the history of the Heron' – how would that be received in a cinema today has to be wondered? Because the films would have been silent, a 'capital orchestra' led by Mr P.J. Eaton was required to play appropriate music.

In 1931 the Majestic was fitted with a 'Western Electric 'Mirrophonic Sound System' a state of the art sound system that had appeared in the US in 1929 meaning that the Majestic was only two years behind the latest cinemas.

As well as showing existing films, The Majestic was instrumental in causing at least one short film to be created. In 1933 a Gaumont Ideal Film Company crew travelled to the Manifold Valley to film the Leek and Manifold Light Railway shortly before it closed in 1934. The crew was directed there by Mr Edward Marriott, the Majestic's Manager. He must have shown this film at the Majestic over many years because the original footage was apparently still there when the Majestic closed in 1961. Apparently three pieces of 16mm film shot by this crew have now been reunited and appear on a video documenting the railway, although whether these pieces are the original footage is not clear because reports differ about whether or not the Majestic's projection room was destroyed by a fire in 1961.

In November 1937 a concert organised by the Appeals Committee for the new Leek Hospital Building Fund, took place at the Majestic. The concert was mainly a musical event but also included Tiny Bostock the well-known Leek lightweight boxer. The cinema was placed at the disposal of the organisers by Mr S.G. Bown the Managing Director.

Latterly The Majestic was apparently anything but, and like the Palace (see Part II), had a metal roof which was extremely noisy when it rained. Wind, rain sleet and snow entering between the metal sheets would probably have added much extra realism to certain films. According to Linda Dearden though, one advantage of the Majestic was that it had double seats, 'which was great for courting couples.' - perhaps someone can explain this to me?

On July 30th 1961 the Majestic showed its last film before burning down early the following morning. According to the local paper hooliganism may have been responsible for the fire. The Manager was the last to leave the building at about 11:00 on the Friday evening and had made sure that every

The Majestic the morning after the fire that forced it to close. Sub Officer Tom Harrison on the left and Robert Plant on the right.



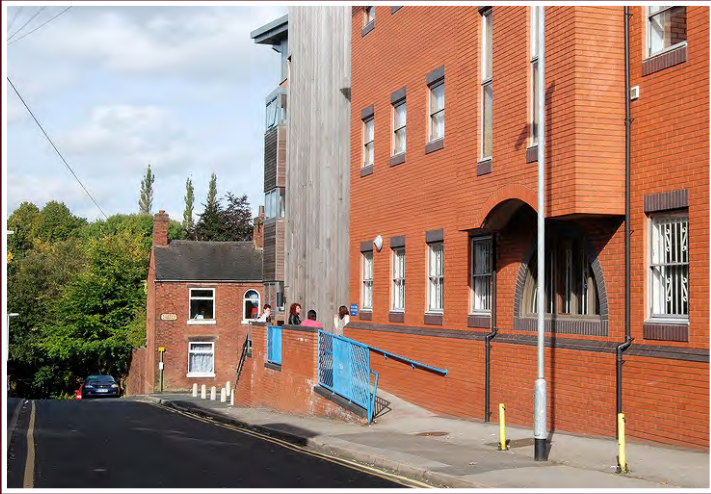
electrical switch in the building was off. One former customer said that litter used to accumulate between cracks in the wooden floorboards and that it may have been this that had caught fire. Certainly the fire was believed to have started at ground level and travelled upwards. Investigations carried out into the cause of the blaze uncovered the fact that as well as blowing dried peas at the screen through pea-shooters, it was quite common for youths to throw lighted cigarette ends at one another during performances. Whatever caused it, the fire was discovered at about 3:15am on Saturday morning when people in surrounding streets began to smell

smoke. Eventually fire appliances from Leek, Stoke and Ipstones attended and the eight crews present managed to put the fire out and prevent it from spreading to any other buildings.

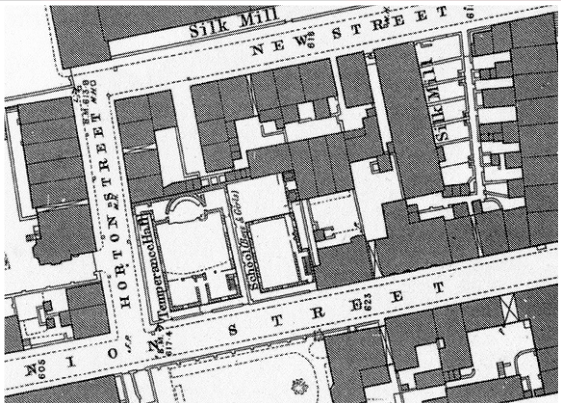
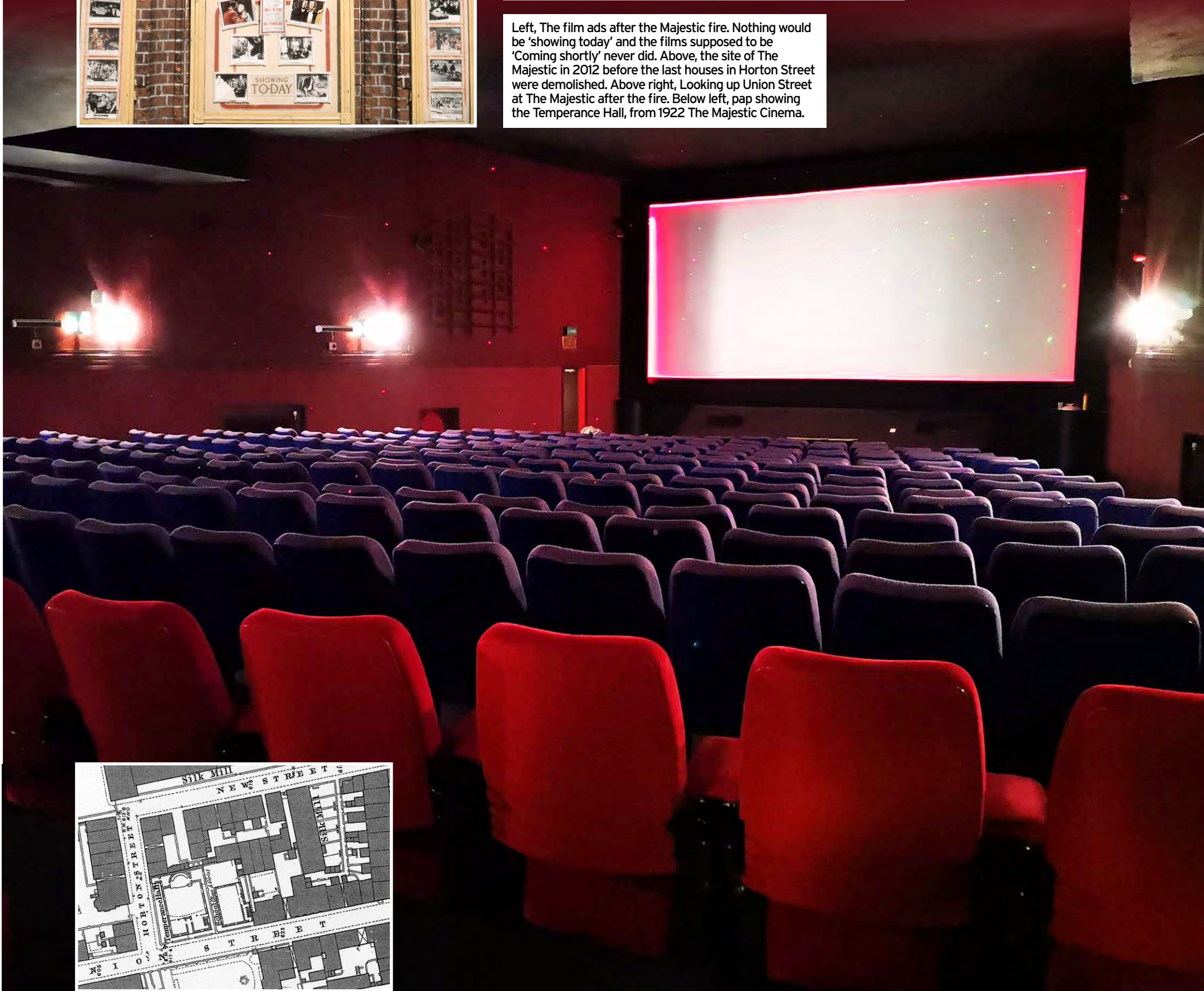
Little seems to have survived of the Majestic though and even one of the walls was severely cracked by the heat.

The owners, the Snape Cinema Circuit of Manchester felt that if they did replace the cinema, they would build it on another site. In the end the decision was taken not to rebuild it, probably because there were another two cinemas in Leek.

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Left, The film ads after the Majestic fire. Nothing would be 'showing today' and the films supposed to be 'Coming shortly' never did. Above, the site of The Majestic in 2012 before the last houses in Horton Street were demolished. Above right, Looking up Union Street at The Majestic after the fire. Below left, pap showing the Temperance Hall, from 1922 The Majestic Cinema.



BYGONES

Saturday night at the movies...

The Grand

ALTHOUGH not built until 1909, The Grand actually became a cinema before The Majestic. As often the case with cinemas The Grand started life as a theatre, originally “The Grand Theatre and Hippodrome”. In ancient Greece a hippodrome was a stadium for chariot and horse racing but this was probably never the function of the premises in Leek. The Grand stage was twenty feet deep and more than twenty-five feet wide.

The Theatre stood opposite where High Street car park is today and was built by Sampson Salt for a group of local businessmen: the Barnfathers, coachbuilders of Haywood Street, Harry Davenport of the Black Swan and Joe Ratcliffe a plumber from St Edward Street. At the time ‘The Grand was built, High Street had only existed for two years, previously having been part of Field House’s gardens. When The Grand opened the ribbon was cut by J.E. Ingham who was the Manager of the Co-operative Society in Leek.

On September 11, 1909 the new ‘Grand Theatre and Hippodrome’ advertised in ‘The Era, a leading theatrical newspaper, inviting ‘Variety Artists – All Lines’ to apply for engagement from November 1st onwards. It showed its first movie in 1910 and by 1915 cinema was a major feature of its repertoire.

In January 1911 the Theatre and Hippodrome was advertising in ‘The Stage’ for ‘sound musical comedies and absurdities’. According to the ad ‘Hundreds’ had been ‘unable to obtain admission’ on the previous Saturday night and houses were crowded. One has to wonder whether any of this was really true. Between 1913 and at least 1962 Leek Amateur Operatic Society appeared there many times performing Gilbert & Sullivan operettas for which coach trips would be arranged from and to the Potteries.

At least one early performer at the Hippodrome was famous. This was Horace

Hodges who appeared in the play ‘Grumpy’ which he had written together with T. Wigney Percyval in 1913. It had first appeared on Broadway, was made into a silent film in 1923 and then re-made as a ‘talkie’ by Paramount Pictures in 1930. Unlike the films, when the play appeared for three nights in Leek, Hodges acted the part of ‘Grumpy’ himself.

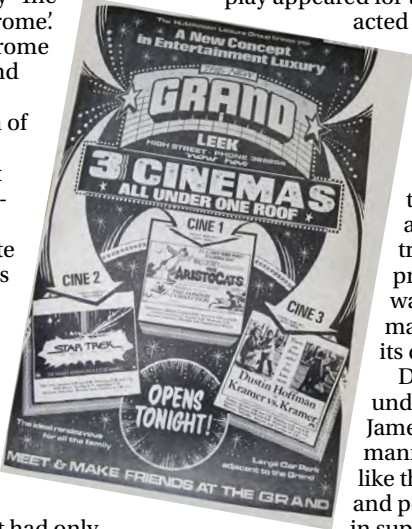
The Grand underwent a number of alterations both inside and out during its seventy-seven year life. Externally, it originally had a large semi-circular gable at the front, replaced soon afterwards (c1915) by a triangular pediment. Then, probably in the late 1920s, it was given the Art deco makeover that it retained until its demolition.

During the 1930s, The Grand under the Management of Mr James Pilkington hosted all manner of entertainments and, like the Majestic, also both charity and political events. It held events in support of hospital funds, in this the North Staffs Royal Infirmary, and again like the Majestic hosted a bus trip for elderly people from the ‘Ashbourne Road Institution’ to see ‘Sixty Glorious years’ all paid for personally by Mr Pilkington.

In April 1944 ratepayers at a Town Hall meeting voted overwhelmingly against the Urban District Council’s proposal to allow Sunday opening for Leek’s Cinemas. The company operating both the Grand and The Palace had been asking the Council to use their powers under the Sunday Entertainments Act (1932) to permit it since at least 1939 but the various religious organisations present objected.

Their interventions continued until at least August 1950 when Leek Magistrates refused permission for the Grand to be used for public music and singing on Sundays from October 1950 to March 1951. The application was opposed by the Leek Fraternal of Clergy and Ministers who said that the proposed Sunday entertainments would ‘upset the calm and devotional atmosphere’ of Leek on Sunday evenings.

In 1954, manager James Pilkington of Spring



The Grand shortly after closing on 30th January 1986.

Gardens, died. He had been the Manager of the Grand and the Palace for 32 years, was the former Chairman of Leek Urban Council and a also a director of Leek & Moorlands Building Society. Later Alan Pilkington took over as Manager and it seems likely that he was related to James, who definitely had a son. Alan Pilkington was not very popular with young cinema-goers and was generally referred to as ‘Pilko’.

A slightly amusing event that occurred at The Grand in August 1956 was when nearly 20 yards of rubber matting was stolen from the front stalls, during a performance. The matting was immediately under the screen but despite there being 400 people in the cinema at the time, no-one saw anything untoward and ‘Pilko’ was forced to offer a reward for information.

A local connection with one of the films shown in the 1960s related to ‘The Yellow Rolls Royce’ (1964) which according to Clive Hand included a credit that the cars in the film had been supplied by Leek Rolls Royce specialists Scott-Moncrieff’s.

Pantomimes were a popular event at The Grand and quite few well-known stars appeared in them. In January 1969 Charles Hawtrey one of the stalwarts of the Carry On films appeared there and it has been claimed by a former customer that whilst appearing in Leek Hawtrey occupied his own caravan in the corner of High Street Car Park. Ken Dodd, with or without his Diddimen, appeared a number of times but was problematical in that he tended to overrun and at least once was still on stage until after midnight.

Changes inside involved the Grand’s conversion from a single screen cinema to three screens. It re-opened after a £130,000 facelift on May 22nd 1980. The main cinema which was upstairs housed 250 people and the other two 175 persons each. Newspaper ads talked of ‘A Grand Re-opening’ but there seems to be no record of a celebrity cutting a ribbon or anything of that sort. The first films shown were The Aristocats, Star

Trek The Movie and Kramer vs Kramer. Monty Python’s Life of Brian (1979) was booked to be shown soon after the refurbishment but when it did, it was greeted by protestors from Leek Baptist Church. One young Leekensian managed to sneak his girlfriend into the film without her being seen by her father, who was demonstrating outside.

In 1985, Screen 1 became a Surewin bingo hall, at least for some of the time, but screens 2 and 3 continued to show films. It seems that the Grand’s future had been uncertain since the mid-1970s and this was one of the company’s last attempts to avoid closure.

The *Post & Times* of January 30, 1986 announced that ‘Santa Claus the Movie’ that night would be the last film to be shown. The next day the building was stripped by its owners, the Hutchinson Leisure Group of Burnley. The cinema had been for sale for a number of months at a price of £180,000 and two companies were rumoured to be interested. Steve Jolly Autos and Partners the Stationers, both of whom had adjacent properties. Eventually though they both withdrew.

In October 1993 a developer announced plans to refurbish the Grand into a nightclub on the first floor with the ground floor being a multi-functional space.

As today, this was needed, because of the demolition of the Town Hall in 1988. The space was to be rented out for tea dances, amateur theatre, youth discos etc. The proposed refurbishment was to cost £1/2m and be completed by Valentine’s Day 1994. For some reason this too fell through and in 1994, there were complaints about the building just being ‘left to rot’. In the event it stood unused for 17 years before being demolished and replaced by a block of apartments called Paramount House in 2003.

Hippodrome program for the play Grumpy starring Horace Hodges. Photo: Stef Callear. Inset left, re-opening poster from May 22nd 1980 when the Grand became a three screen cinema.



The ruins of The Grand awaiting demolition.

All good clean fun – mostly

HEARD ANY GOOD JOKES LATELY? **MARION McMULLEN** LOOKS AT THE LEGENDS OF RADIO COMEDY AS WE TAKE JUST A MINUTE TO SAY FAREWELL TO NICHOLAS PARSONS

COMEDY quiz Just A Minute launched with a breakneck speed version of Chopin’s Minute Waltz and Nicholas Parsons explaining the rules of the game.

Guests had to speak for 60 seconds on a given subject without “any form of hesitation, repetition, or deviation”.

The first contestants on the launch show in 1967 included Beryl Reid and Derek Nimmo who were tasked with chatting about such diverse subjects as keeping fit, the English nanny and things to do in the bath.

Veteran entertainer Nicholas, who passed away last week at the age of 96, ended up hosting more than 900 instalments of the BBC panel show over the next 53 years.

In fact, he only ever missed one episode in 2018 and Gyles Brandreth stepped in for him.

Prince Charles was a fan of the show and even made a cameo appearance on the 2016 Christmas special and guests over the years included Kenneth Williams, Stephen Fry and Graham Norton.

Paul Merton joined the show’s line-up in 1989 and paid his own tribute to Nicholas saying: “He was always upbeat, and loved to work. He gave 100% to everything he did. Nicholas was the embodiment of Just A Minute and his chairmanship was always very fair and very honest.”

Comedy has long ruled the airwaves on the radio. It’s That Man Again (ITMA) was the BBC’s secret comedy weapon during the Second World War.

It saw Liverpool comedian Tommy Handley and his team lifting the spirits of the nation and it proved to be one of the BBC’s most popular radio comedies attracting 16 million listeners a week.

ITMA first aired in 1939 and the supporting cast included the likes of future Carry On star Hattie Jacques and Deryck Guyler, best known as the grumpy caretaker of TV sitcom Please Sir!

The 40s also offered Take It From Here which showcased the comedy



Sixties radio show Round the Horne starred Hugh Paddick, Kenneth Williams, Kenneth Horne, Betty Marsden and Douglas Smith



Dick Bentley, June Whitfield, Jimmy Edwards and singer Alma Cogan during a 1953 recording of Take It From Here



Tommy Handley with fellow entertainers Joan Harben, Deryck Guyler, Linda Joyce, Hattie Jacques, Fred Yule and Jack Train

The late, great Nicholas Parsons (front centre) with Just a Minute regulars Ian Messiter, Derek Nimmo, and Kenneth Williams in 1969



Bebe Lyon rehearsing with her family and, right, The Goons: Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan and Harry Secombe



talents of Jimmy Edwards and a young June Whitfield. It was written by Frank Muir and Dennis Norden and introduced listeners to characters like The Glums, which followed the fortunes of Ron Glum and his long-suffering fiancée Eth.

Radio continued to offer some of the biggest comedy stars throughout the 1950s including Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe, Peter Sellers and Michael Bentine in The Goon Show and Bebe and Ben Daniels in Life With The Lyons.

The latter began in 1955 and was a situation comedy written by popular American actress Bebe Daniels. She starred in it alongside her real-life family – husband Ben and children Barbara and Richard. She played a scatterbrained version of herself and the show regularly attracted more than 11 million listeners.

Bebe, who starred in the movie

42nd Street, once said: “All during the war we kept saying, Ben and I, that when it was over, we’d come back to Hollywood. But now we’ve been here [in the US], and we just have to be honest, this is no longer home. Home’s back in London because we went through the bombings with them.”

The Goon Show began a year later in 1951 as Crazy People and was described in the Radio Times as “Radio’s own Crazy Gang”.

The comedy ran until 1960 – with the cast reuniting for a final show in 1972 – and the show spawned a spate of colourful characters such as Eddie Seagoon, Eccles, Major Bloodnok, Bluebottle, Private Bogg and Henry Crun.

Episodes included programmes entitled I Was Monty’s Treble, Ill Met By Goonlight and Ned’s Atomic Dustbin.

Spike once said: “I spent many years laughing at Harry Secombe’s singing until somebody told me that it wasn’t a joke.”

Listeners also immediately took to the characters in Round The Horne when it launched in 1965.

Kenneth Horne helmed the show with Kenneth Williams, Hugh Paddick, Betty Marsden and Bill Pertwee bringing the laughter as Julian and Sandy, Celia Molestrangler and folk singer Rambling Syd Rumpo.

The show was created by Marty Feldman and Barry Took and was the successor of Beyond Our Ken. The pair took advantage of the permissive air of 1960s Britain to insert lots of saucy humour and double entendres.

Kenneth Williams and Hugh Paddick played popular camp characters Julian and Sandy – “I’m Julian, this is my friend Sandy” – and spoke in the underground slang of Polari used when homosexuality was still illegal in the UK.

Kenneth Williams also provided the voice of the outrageous J Peasmold Gruntfuttock, who ended up making spoof calls to the programme.

The comedy was transmitted on a Sunday afternoon and Kenneth Horne would declare: “I’m all for censorship. If ever I see a double entendre, I whip it out.”

Saturday Night at the Movies (Part 2)

The Palace

Having looked at The Majestic and The Grand last time, this week it is the turn of The Palace Cinema, later renamed The Regal, and the public cinema that came later.

The Palace stood on the corner of High Street and Salisbury Street and, like the Grand Theatre and Hippodrome, was built by Sampson Salt c1909. Also like The Majestic and The Grand, The Palace did not start out as a cinema but was originally the Salisbury Roller Skating Rink. According to the National Archives, between 1908-1912 the enthusiasm for roller skating rose, boomed and quickly declined. At the height of the boom there were at least 500 rinks in Britain but interest faded with the rise of silent movies and economic recession.

Many roller skating rinks had 'rink hockey' teams and the Salisbury Rink had at least one team who played in the league. In March 1911 the Leek Salisbury team became Champions of the North Staffordshire and District Rink Hockey League for the first time since its foundation. The 'decider' was an exciting match against 'Leek Thursday' that clinched the title and attracted a 'tremendous crowd' to the Salisbury rink.

As the National Archives say, the enthusiasm for skating waned as the interest in going to see silent movies increased. In September 1912 a pianist was sought at the Palace for both 'pictures' and variety, so changes were already underway there at this time. Perhaps reflecting this, between 1913 and 1915 there seems to have been some laxity over what the establishment was called, with advertisements in the entertainments newspapers referring to it either as the Salisbury Palace or simply The Palace. At some point it also went by the name the Salisbury Electric Picture Palace and was advertised as such in local newspapers. In 1913 a notice in The Era stated that the Salisbury Palace was occupied by the Leek Skating Rink Co. Ltd. The licensee was Sampson Salt and the General Manager was George Salt. It seems that the Salts were also in partnership at the rink with Joseph F. Bermingham, a silk manufacturer.

In 1915 a notice appeared in The Stage stating that the Salisbury Palace was changing hands on November 1st that year and that all artistes holding contracts for after November 15th should accept it as a Notice of Cancellation - future communications were to be addressed to Mr Allan Milton. The notice was signed by Fred. Salt, presumably another member of Sampson Salt's family. This notice actually led to a court case the following year when Birkenhead comedian 'Uncle Willy' sued Salt for Breach of Contract, saying that he had not received notice of cancellation of his contract and that, as he had not obtained alternative employment for the period booked, he had lost income. His legal action was unsuccessful.

On 3rd November The Era stated that Allan Milton had leased the Palace and that he was also the Lessee of The Grand Theatre and Hippodrome. He was commencing to run the house (the Palace) that week with pictures and variety (not skating it seems). Three weeks later when he was advertising for a pianist, Allan's address was given as the Hippodrome, Buxton so it seems that the Palace and the Grand were already part of a larger entertainments organisation, probably Buxton & High Peak Entertainments Ltd which is what the umbrella company was called by 1947.

The variety acts appearing at The Palace were many and varied. Some like 'Lover and Lever' had amusing names and some acts were of types that sound strange to us today: 'pantomimic novelty acts' and 'self liberators' - what we would today call escapologists. Salamonsky Swar was a siffleur and bird imitator – how many people today would know that a siffleur is a whistler I wonder - from the French siffler, to whistle?

By 1922 not only were The Palace and The Grand owned by the same company but they also had the same General Manager, James Pilkington. James held the post for thirty-two years and by 1947 was being assisted by his son Allan, better known to young filmgoers as 'Pilko'.

Like The Grand, 'The Palace' also hosted political meetings for example the one held in favour of Mr William ('Billy') Bromfield in November 1922.

In 1939 the Hill Challenge Cup was awarded to 'Champion Nemonite' Dorothy Simcock at the Palace Theatre. Nemonites were those who enjoyed Uncle Nemo's column 'Talks with Little People' in the Leek Post & Times, and entered his competitions. The Palace and Grand ran children's matinees on a Saturday and members of the Grand Pal Junior Cinema Club received a membership card and a badge showing a cowboy on his horse. Was this cowboy 'Bronco Bill' as suggested by Doug Pickford?

Later in 1939, the world was plunged into war with Germany and in September 1939 James Pilkington placed a notice in the Post & Times stating that 'Owing to the intervention of war' all places of entertainment (now open) shall close at 10 o'clock pm.' As a result, evening performances would begin at 5.45 o'clock and attendees were reminded to bring their gas masks with them.

The next major event in the Palace's history occurred between April and May 1960 when the cinema was refurbished and renamed The Regal, an event covered in the Post & Times:

'In the not too distant past it was generally accepted that if one went to the Palace cinema it was wise to take an umbrella in case the rain came through the not too substantial roof.'

Happily those days are now gone and during the coming week Leek people will see also the passing of the Palace as it has been known for years'

The seats, which had been in use for 40 years, were replaced and their overall number reduced because the replacements were larger and had larger gaps between the rows. The suggestion seems to have been that the number of cinema-goers was declining and it was hoped that the refurbishment might slow this tendency in Leek - gone were the days of queues of people stretching down the street, waiting to get into Leek's picture houses. The Palace's entire interior was given a make-over with new decoration a new screen curtain, new side-lighting and re-tiled toilets. Improvements at the entrance included a new pay-box and improved lighting. The most intriguing change was that a roof had been placed over the hallway into the cinema so making the whole of the building easier to heat. One has to wonder whether the entrance building was separate from the auditorium and going in to where the screen was involved a short trip outside between the two buildings – perhaps someone reading this can remember?

Thus the Regal was ushered into existence, the first films shown being *'Inn for Trouble'* starring Peggy Mount and David Kossoff, father of the famous Free guitarist Paul Kossoff. The second feature was *'And the same to you'* starring Brian Rix and Tommy Cooper.

Despite its expensive refurbishment The Regal didn't survive much longer as a cinema because just three years later in March 1963 it was being converted into the Regal Bingo Club. An application form for the club and information about its opening hours were printed in the Post & Times.

When the Regal closed even for bingo in 1987 it was converted into a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses but still retained the cinema seats fitted in 1960. When the building was finally demolished in around 2003 a block of flats called Davenport Court was built on the site although the auditorium, a long single storey structure remained for considerably longer until it was replaced by Salisbury House, another apartment block.

It seems that part of the old skating rink may have been separated from the rest of the building prior to the 1940s and converted into a small mill. This belonged to Walter Heath in the late 1950s/1960s and was called Moorland Styles. They made ladies knitwear and babywear. The chronology of this mill is somewhat confusing as it seems at one time to have been a commercial yarn re-spooling works run by a Mr Chadwick and his son Acer. It was later re-named the ValPercy works which made upmarket lingerie occupied in the 1980s by Rolls & Chadwick (Wholesale). The old Regal auditorium/Bingo Club was also divided up at some point and occupied by a wool shop run by John and Rene Salt. This shop, like Keates' wool shop in Stanley Street was the sort of place where you went in to buy a few balls of

wool but stayed for a considerable period of time afterwards having a 'good old natter'. John Salt is believed to be the person responsible for setting up the JS Knitwear factory in Ball Haye Green, still in business today. When the wool shop closed it was taken over by a shop called Flickerflame Heating Ltd who sold log-burners, fire-bricks etc. Flickerflame still exist having moved to Macclesfield when their shop was eventually sold and demolished.

Leek Town Hall

Under the headline 'The Big Screen Returns' the Post & Times of October 24th 1986 announced that the Weston Coyney and Caverswall Film Society, in conjunction with Leek Town Council were to present *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* at the Town Hall, nearly a year after the Grand Cinema had closed. Admission was £1.50 including membership of the society, which allowed reduced prices for screenings in Weston Coyney. It said that if the film was well-supported films would be shown on a regular basis. The Society ran the 'Reels on Wheels' service that travelled to village halls throughout the county. It clearly was adequately supported because Reels on Wheels were still visiting the Town Hall in 1987. This had to end soon afterwards though because the Town Hall itself was demolished in 1988.

Moorlands House Cinema

It seems that Moorlands House, the offices of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council took over from the Town Hall as the venue for film screenings as on February 19th 1988, *Dirty Dancing*, *Nightmare on Elm Street III* and *Dream Warrior* were shown there. Later in 1988 *The Princess Bride* was shown in 3D together with *It came from Outer Space* and *Mad Max Beyond the Thunderdome*. How long films were put on for at Moorlands House is not yet known.

Foxlowe Films

Today Leek's only cinema is presented in the Rainbow Room at Foxlowe Arts Centre. The programme is run by the Foxlowe Five Film Group all of whom have been involved for the eight years since it was set up in conjunction with the Arts Centre in 2012. Foxlowe Films present a programme of three seasons of feature films every year, dealing themselves with all the programming, ordering, marketing, publicity, ticket sales etc. On film nights a further group of volunteers is responsible for running the bar, arranging seating and everything else involved in making the evenings a success.

There is one screening per week on a Tuesday with an admission price of only £5.00 per person. The team manages to put together an appealing and up-to-date selection of British, European and World cinema and this, the 25th Season includes the musical 'Judy' (3rd March) starring Renee Zellweger in the role of Judy Garland, for which she has just received an Oscar for Best Actress. Also included is *Once upon a Time in Hollywood* (17th March) for which Brad Pitt was voted Best Supporting Actor.

During the Spring and Autumn seasons two specific volunteers order and show one documentary film each 2nd Wednesday of the month. An example of this is *The Wanted 18* (20th March). This film is about a Palestinian Dairy collective with eighteen cattle which finds itself declared 'a threat to the national security of the State of Israel'. The animated film presents the story from the viewpoint of the Palestinian activists, the Israeli security forces who pursue the cows, and of the cows themselves. As well as the film being shown, the evening also gives an opportunity for the audience to sample some traditional Palestinian food. The documentary films are presented free of charge but there is an opportunity for the audience to make donations. All proceeds from this film will go to Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP).

Having gone from having three 'picture-houses in the 1920s-early 1960s it seems highly unlikely that a purpose-built cinema will ever exist in Leek again, or indeed in any similar-sized English town. Rather like out-of-town shopping, out-of-town cinemas such as the one at Festival Park, Etruria have become the norm. But at least thanks to the Foxlowe volunteers Leekensians still have the opportunity to see some of the latest films at a reasonable cost without having to travel to the Potteries on a cold Winter's night.