



Entertainment in Kirkcaldy Its Theatres and Cinemas



Kirkcaldy has enjoyed a long and lengthy relationship with the cinema and, prior to that, with the entertainment which theatres provided in the years leading up to and beyond 1895. It was in that year that the Lumière brothers unveiled the first public screening of their Cinematograph which, in reality, was the birth of the true moving picture. The name covers both the camera, the projector, and in the Lumière's case even the ability to print film. The brothers were adding to and building on the work carried out earlier by others – in particular Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope. The Kinetoscope had the distinct disadvantage of only being able to be viewed by one person at a time through the medium of a peephole which, it could be argued, was the forerunner of a modern viewfinder.

The Lumière brother's apparatus had the major advantage of film being able to be projected onto a screen in order that a number of viewers could see the images collectively. This was the dawn of mass entertainment at the cinema – which Kirkcaldy embraced with a will.

Matters moved on quickly from 1895 and in April 1896 the first moving picture shown in Scotland was screened. This took place in the Empire Palace in Edinburgh and *The Music Hall and Theatre Review* of the 10th April reveals it was shown by *Howard's Cinematographe*. Slowly but surely “movies” made their way to Kirkcaldy. In these early days there were no purpose built cinemas and normally use was made of established entertainment venues which were often hired by travelling entertainers.

The questions this object sets out to answer are how and where were Kirkcaldy people entertained before the advent of the cinema and, when it arrived, how did it develop? Home entertainment was by far the most common with music, singing and party pieces, shaping early communal entertainment with friends, neighbours and family. The public house was also where many sought 'entertainment' and without question drinking was sometimes taken to excess. Kirkcaldy's newspapers reported on a myriad of appearances before the town's magistrates which were the consequence of overindulgence. There was continual concern over the issues of drinking and

the fall-out from it with many Abstinence Societies being formed to combat the effects.

For many the church formed part of people's social lives as well as their religious wellbeing. Any number of societies, clubs and guilds, were connected to almost every church with a full calendar of events throughout the week. The newspapers covered many clubs and groups where like-minded people could enjoy relaxation, friendship and exercise, with interests ranging from horticulture to lectures to swimming and everything in-between. In essence, every entertainment was under the banner of being of the live variety. Excitement, engagement and social acceptance, have always been the essential characteristics of being entertained and probably in that aspect the cinema has always ruled supreme.

From 1847 with the twin introduction of Michael Nairn's floorcloth industry and the coming of the railway, Kirkcaldy became an industrial powerhouse. It is difficult today to imagine the sheer scale of manufacturing in the town but it led to employment, which led to an expansion of the town and that in turn led to a huge increase in the population. The increase was not just down to the 1876 expansion of Kirkcaldy by assuming Pathhead, Sinclairtown and Linktown, into an extended burgh. People gravitated towards Kirkcaldy to seek employment and there was money in the pocket. Theatres started to appear to provide entertainment via touring groups, bands, concerts and novelty acts – the local newspapers were awash with advertisements to secure audiences. These would sit beside the fairs and circuses which visited from time to time.

Part of the intention of this Object is to look at communal entertainment in the town with an eye on the part, sometimes modest, which was played in developing Kirkcaldy's appetite for the cinema. It is not just about cinema but encompasses the more traditional theatres which sprung up in the mid 20th century thereby creating the town's entertainment industry.

It is a large and substantial story relating how formal entertainment developed, which will be mostly examined in chronological order. Rather akin to the story of linoleum it is too unwieldy to be contained in one narrative – this Object will be produced in two parts

Initially, it examines the traditional theatre – then the gradual move towards

combining this live entertainment with the first rays of moving pictures - before ending with the purpose built cinema itself. In its heyday Kirkcaldy's cinemas did not destroy live entertainment but rather existed alongside it. Kirkcaldy has been very fortunate to have many musical societies and theatre groups which have kept live entertainment to the fore.

So, exactly what was on offer in Kirkcaldy's theatres prior to the introduction of moving pictures and the arrival of purpose built cinemas. Most entertainments of this type and time were performed by travelling companies who would visit the town for short spells of one/two weeks. The most famous of these travelling shows was Messrs. Poole and their Myriorama. From circa 1837 this family business dominated the pre-cinema entertainment via Panoramas, Dioramas and the Myriorama.

Each of the above were attempts to give static scenes apparent movement with each being an improvement on its predecessor. Poole apparently first brought the name *Myriorama* into vogue around 1883. It loosely meant a *myriad of cards* and that is exactly what was involved. Large painted scenes on canvas were moved across the stage on rollers – which gave a sense and impression of movement. What was very impressive was that the scenes were painted by some of the outstanding scenic artists of the day at a great cost. The scenes could depict any subject from battles to landscapes to seascapes and proved very popular. It was not until 1897 that the Poole's added actual moving pictures to their shows as opposed to the illusion of movement through the Cinematographie mentioned earlier.

ENTERTAINMENTS. — Messrs Poole and Young's splendid diorama of Paris, and the scenes of the late war, was exhibited in the Corn Exchange on the evenings of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Notwithstanding the fact of its being a first-class work of art, it failed to draw large audiences. On the other hand an equestrian company who could produce nothing very striking, save a procession through the streets, succeeded on Thursday evening in drawing a vast concourse of sight-seekers together. As hinted, however, the entertainment was nothing great.

There was a visit recorded in the *Fife Free Press* by Messrs Poole and Young in its edition of the 6th July 1872. This was a show produced via a Diorama and was held in the Corn Exchange the previous Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The Diorama featured scenes of Paris and also made mention of a late war. This would in all probability have been

the Franco-Prussian War which had ended the previous year. “Notwithstanding its being a first class work of art, it failed to draw a large audience. On the other hand an equestrian company who could produce nothing very striking, save a procession through the streets, succeeded on Thursday evening in drawing a vast concourse of sight seekers together”. The article ended with the slightly harsh comment of “As hinted, however,

the entertainment was nothing great”.

This intelligence was all the more surprising as the previous week the same newspaper had carried, not just an advertisement, but an article quoting the words of critics from its London season. The *Daily Telegraph* was quoted as saying:- “The work has an artistic value not always connected with panoramas”. *The Standard* believed that “the landscapes would take high rank as works of art”. *The Daily News* believed that - “the views are painted in a style of art that may safely challenge a very critical judgement”.

MESSRS POOLE & YOUNG'S PANORAMA.—
This splendid panorama of the Franco-German war is announced for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, next week. We hope this interesting exhibition, which has drawn immense assemblages both in London and the provinces, will have a successful stay in Kirkcaldy, as, judging from the opinions of the press, it is unquestionably one of the finest works of art at present before the public.

FIRST VISIT
OF
POOLE & YOUNG'S
GREAT DIORAMA,
FROM THE EGYPTIAN HALL, LONDON,
Will Open at the
CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY,
ON MONDAY, TUESDAY, and WEDNESDAY
Evenings, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd July, at 8.15.
Doors Open at 7.45.
Afternoon Exhibition on Wednesday at 2.30.
Admission, 2s, 1s, and 6d.
Juveniles Half price to 1st and 2d seats only.

The article assured readers that “the exhibition had drawn immense assemblages in London and the provinces”. Kirkcaldy clearly had very high standards in the style and form of the art that was laid before it!

The advertisement, which is shown here, is interesting in itself with two shows per day and admission prices ranging between 6d and 2/-. Juveniles were

POOLE & YOUNG'S
COLOSSAL PANORAMA.
The largest, most splendid, and interesting
Pictorial Exhibition ever produced.
—
PARIS BY NIGHT AND DAY.
In Grandeur!—On Fire!—In Ruins!
—
AN EXCURSION
THROUGH FRANCE AND GERMANY
Berlin, Potsdam, Mayence, Kehl, Strasburg,
Forbach, Metz, Wissenberg, &c.
Over 55 Views, each on 550 feet of Canvas.
A running verbal commentary on the
Paintings, by Mr WASHINGTON DAVIS.
A Vocal and Instrumental Musical Melange by
Miss C. VINING, Mrs POOLE,
Mr H. D. GLOVER, and Mr MAY.
De Prow's Trichord Oblique Piano; Alex-
andre's 14 stop Model Harmonium.
The French and German National Melodies.
The whole forms an Entertainment
None should fail to see.
—
REMEMBER—MONDAY, JULY 1st.

apparently only paying half price on the 1st and 2nd days. Over and above the main entertainment patrons were promised that they would enjoy a vocal and instrumental musical melange from a number of artists, two of which were - De Prow's Trichord Oblique Piano and Alexandre's 14 stop Model Harmonium.

POOLE'S MYRIORAMA.—To-night Mr Poole closes a week's engagement with his myriorama in the Corn Exchange. Nothing so instructive, entertaining, and amusing has been seen for some time in Kirkcaldy. The panoramic views are excellently finished, and embrace illustrations of interesting places all the world o'er. Our recent Egyptian and Soudan wars has furnished interesting material for the artists. If any of our readers desire to see foreign places to advantage without being actually transported thither in the body, let them visit Pool's myriorama and their store of information will be immensely enlarged, while that information will have been derived in the most enjoyable manner.

A report of a visit featuring a Myriorama was unearthed in the *Fife Free Press* of Saturday the 30th April 1887. The show was, that day, concluding a week's engagement at the Corn Exchange. “Nothing so instructive, entertaining and amusing, has been seen in Kirkcaldy for some time. The panoramic views are excellently finished

and embrace illustrations of interesting places all the world over. Our recent Egyptian and Sudan wars have furnished interesting material for the artists. If any of our readers desire to see foreign places to advantage, without

actually transporting thither in the body, let them visit Poole's Myriorama and their store of information will be immensely enlarged, while the information will have been derived in the most enjoyable manner”.

Locating the report was followed by a search for the advertisement for the entertainment. It was duly located in the previous week's edition and is reproduced here. The bill heading was *Mr J. Poole's Number 2 Jubilee Myriorama* and entitled *Picturesque Trips Abroad*. But that was not all, just as in 1872, other entertainments were also appearing in the shape of *Poole's Excelsior Concert Company* along with string and military bands. We discover that, along with the bands, Miss Kitty Clara rendered a number of songs and a Mr Fairley enlivened proceedings with character sketches. A Mr Hartwell acted as the “Tour Guide” but the most intriguing would have been - *Our Tiny Bicyclists* – small, smaller, smallest and smallest in excelsis.

CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.
POSITIVELY FOR SIX NIGHTS ONLY.
Commencing MONDAY, 25th April.
Day Exhibition on SATURDAY at 3; Each Evening
at 8—Doors Open half-an-hour previous.
PRICES OF ADMISSION—2s, 1s, and 6d.
FIRST visit of Mr J. POOLE'S No. 2 ROYAL
JUBILEE MYRIORAMA, entitled
“PICTURESQUE TRIPS ABOARD,” includ-
ing Soudan War, Nile Expedition, and fine views
of Barmah just added.
The whole accompanied by POOLE'S EX-
CELSIOR CONCERT COMPANY and
MILITARY AND STRING BANDS, under the
direction of Mr C. W. HORTON.
Proprietor, Mr J. POOLE.
Manager, Mr F. MAYER.

The programme seems to have altered very little in the intervening 15 years. Again, there were two performances per day, afternoon and evening, with prices ranging from 6d to 1/- then to a top price of 2/-. These remain identical to those charged in 1872, bar there was no discount for juveniles this time round.

Although the Corn Exchange was not the town's first theatre it is mentioned here in order to cover the style of entertainments prior to the advent of film itself. The Diorama and the Myriorama which followed it were the principal means of promoting the concept of movement prior to 1895 and the above indicates that both styles were known to Kirkcaldy audiences. The Corn Exchange will feature in greater detail after we examine what we believe to be Kirkcaldy's first theatre.

Before embarking on the story please keep in mind the impact which the 1909 Cinematography Act had on the showing of films. The earliest films were manufactured using a base compound, cellulose nitrate, which was highly inflammable. Illumination was provided by a flame fed by hydrogen and oxygen being directed at a canister of calcium oxide. This was all rather dangerous and there were several fatal fires. The Act was concerned with public safety and the principal requirement was that the projector had to be

contained in a fire resistant room. Another requirement was that where films were screened and an entrance fee charged – the venue had to be inspected and licensed by the local authority. The number of fire exits available were also of some importance and concern.

These measures led to many venues no longer offering screenings and without question gave rise to the construction of purpose built cinemas. Kirkcaldy had to wait until 1913 before one of these appeared.

The Royal/The Grand

There is a quiet confidence that *The Royal* can claim the title of being Kirkcaldy's first theatre. It was housed in part of a flax mill, once owned by



Swan Brothers in Kirk Wynd. In its current guise it is the Hunter Hall although through the years it has been much changed, primarily as the result of a fire in 1889. A map highlighting its location is included here. There is one publication which suggests that the theatre was in the old Burgh

School in Kirk Wynd. Given that building survived into the 20th century we believe that the site we quote is the correct one.

The Fifeshire Herald of the 20th October 1859 devotes space to advising that the previous Saturday the theatre opened for the season. There is a suggestion in some quarters that it dated back to the 1830s but it can be stated confidently that in 1859 it was under the management of Mr J.G. Day and handbills indicated that the season would feature a “talented company, new wardrobes, scenery and appointments”. While the article could not speak for the ability of the players – it was in Mr Day's interest to secure a good staff of actors. A Mr Lambert was mentioned as being “favourably known under previous management”.

THEATRE-ROYAL.—This place of amusement was opened on Saturday evening, for the winter season, under the management of Mr J. G. Day, with, according to the playbills, a “Talented Company, new Wardrobe, Scenery, and Appointments.” It were premature at this early stage to pledge our word for the talents of the company—amongst whom, by the way, we have Mr Lambert, favourably known under a former management—we would only express the hope, in the meantime, that Mr Day, as candidate for public support, will find it to be his duty, as he will find it to be for his interest, to secure a good staff of actors. The scenery, we may observe, is exceedingly good.

While not taking place in the theatre itself the *Fifeshire Journal* of the 4th

Dramatic Entertainments.—For four successive nights last week, Mr Somers and a number of his talented company, from Kirkcaldy Theatre, performed in the Hall here, and were each evening patronised by a large and respectable audience. The stage was tastefully fitted up as a drawing-room, and the pieces produced were such as were well adapted for representation thereon.

March the previous year makes mention of four successive nights of entertainment in Markinch given by Mr Somers and a number of his talented company from the Kirkcaldy Theatre. The stage was apparently

tastefully set up as a drawing room and the audience was “large and respectable”. The same newspaper reported in its issue of the 8th April 1858 that the company had performed in the Gardener's Hall in Leven. The article makes us aware of three of the players, Miss Batson, Mr Davis, and the aforementioned Mr Lambert, who “are a great attraction and play to crowded houses”.

It would seem that Mr Day did not stay long in Kirkcaldy as the Dundee Peoples Journal covered a court case in its edition of the 21st July 1860. Here, a Mr Frimberley was suing Mr Day for £3:8s:6d which was in respect of unpaid wages when he was employed by Mr Day in the Kirkcaldy Theatre. These snippets are the earliest it was possible to identify so the theatre was certainly in operation in the 1850s but there appears to be nothing to substantiate the claim to being in existence two decades earlier.

What can be said however is that there were indeed some eminent individuals who gave the theatre their patronage. *The Caledonian Mercury* of the 3rd April 1860 reveals that the tragic actress, Miss Goddard, had appeared for 5 nights during the previous week. On the Tuesday night Lady Harriet St. Clair had given her patronage and, on the Friday, Provost Russell was in the audience. The Manager of the time Mr J. F. Lambert had immediately engaged the actress to visit other towns and cities to play 6 of her characters. Mr Lambert is very possibly the player mentioned earlier and in all probability is the same Lambert who was connected to a Dundee theatre.

However, the theatre went into decline and the *North Briton* of Wednesday the 5th October 1864 attested to the situation. The theatre had fallen into disrepute and the newspaper was concerned when Frank Alderson and his respectable and talented company hired the venue. While business was not first class it

We give the following “bit” from the “Era” about the Theatre Royal, Kirkcaldy:—“Some five or six weeks back we observed with regret that this theatre had been opened under the direction of Mr Frank Alderson, with a numerous, respectable, and talented company. We say with regret, for the theatre of late having fallen so much into disrepute, we very much feared for the result. For a time our fears appeared to us to be prematurely formed. Business was—if not first class—much better than we could have anticipated. At length, however, it gradually dropped to the old standard; to wit, a few boys in the gallery, a wretched bit, and a “beggarly” account of empty boxes.

was better than expected for some weeks. However, the numbers fell off once again until what the article termed as being reduced to “a few boys in the gallery; a wretched pit and a beggarly account of empty boxes”. The cry was for a price reduction but Mr Alderson would not yield and refused to give the *threepenny gallery*. The crisis came when Miss Goddard made her return which resulted in “worse business than before”. One performance had such a scanty audience that it was brought to a halt. On the final evening Alderson refused to open the doors on what was billed as a farewell show. It was calculated that 800 people had turned up and were not given access. The article concluded with “in conclusion we would advise any managers wishing to speculate their money in Kirkcaldy, to abstain from performing the legitimate drama, but rather to provide something more akin to the “Punch and Judy” school; then there is every likelihood of obtaining a considerable number of pennies from the boys, the only true and steadfast patrons of the Theatre Royal, Kirkcaldy.

THE THEATRE CONVERTED INTO A PLACE OF WORSHIP.—The Theatre-Royal has just undergone a sudden and somewhat extraordinary change, having entered upon a new lease of life as a place of worship. After being inspected and found secure, the building was leased by a company of gentlemen who have at heart the best interests of the community, as a place in which to carry on evangelistic work; and on Sabbath evening last it entered on this new chapter in its history. Intimation having been made from various pulpits and otherwise that there would be religious services in the theatre that evening, a large number of people repaired thither at the appointed hour; and shortly after the doors were opened, an audience numbering from five to six hundred persons had assembled, including among others, we are told, many who attend no place of worship whatever.

It is fair to say that for the decade from the mid 1860s until the mid 1870s and beyond the theatre was in sharp decline and was only being used intermittently for its true purpose. It was also used for meetings and in 1870 had a lengthy spell as a place of evangelism. This was gleaned from the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 26th March 1870. They made mention that “suddenly a somewhat extraordinary change having been embarked upon with new lease of life as a place of worship”.

The fact that religious services were to be held saw some 500/600 people appearing for the first Sunday service. They had been alerted from the town's pulpits that the event was taking place. A combination of lay evangelists, the Rev. Thomson from Kirkcaldy Free Church and a missionary from Canada were the principal figures. The article indicated that the service was of a “deeply interesting and impressive nature”. Running throughout that week some 300 persons attended each night. It seems that the enterprise lasted some 6 months in total.

The 16th October 1875 saw the *Fife Free Press* make mention of the Royal opening for the season. In a less that

KIRKCALDY THEATRE-ROYAL.—This place of amusement of a certain kind was opened for the season last night. There was a large audience, but as the “star” failed to put in an appearance, there was no entertainment, and the public left the place, demanding back their money, or tickets to the next performance.

complimentary article readers were told that “this place of amusement of a certain type was opened for the season last night”. While there was a large audience the 'star' failed to turn up so there was no entertainment. The audience had to file out demanding their money back or tickets for the next performance. Not the most satisfactory start!

**THEATRE ROYAL,
KIRKCALDY.**

Lessee—Mr W. S. WYNN.
Directress—Miss EMMA RICHMOND.

This Evening the New and Original Drama, entitled the **FOUR KNAVES AND THE PACK**. To conclude with the celebrated Burlesque of **TAM O' SHANTER**, with Music, Songs, &c.

On **MONDAY, TUESDAY, and WEDNESDAY, JO, THE CROSSING SWEEPER.**

Doors open at 7.30, to commence at 8 o'clock.
Prices:—Boxes, 2s and 1s; Pit, 6d; Gallery, 3d.

By 1878 the lessee was W.S.Winn and the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 14th September was able to announce that that very evening a *new and original drama* – *The Four Knaves and the Pack* would be taking place. The evening would conclude with the *Celebrated Burlesque of Tam O'Shanter* with music, songs etc. On the following Monday to Wednesday the feature was *Jo, The Crossing Sweeper*. The doors would open at 7.30pm with

performances commencing 30 minutes later. Boxes cost 2/- or 1/- with the pit 6d and the gallery offered the cheapest option at 3d. The Directress was noted as Miss Emma Richmond.

Scanning the local newspapers of the time there is an obvious paucity of items connected with the theatre. This is probably as we shall see connected to the opening of the Corn Exchange. What was unearthed is an attempt to let the building contained in the *Fife Free Press* of the 25th June 1885. The advertisement is attached for interest. The ground mentioned in Hill Place is unconnected to the theatre – it is simply another piece of land being offered for sale. What remains a mystery is the connection to the theatre to Mrs Forbes of 291 High Street who placed the advertisement which ran for a substantial period of time.

TO LET, that Building in Hill Place, Kirkcaldy, known as the THEATRE ROYAL. It is well adapted for those requiring Space, being large and commodious, and ample Light could be given if required. Also Ground at the back thereof, with entrance from Oswald's Wynd, suitable for erection of a PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO or other place of business. Both subjects will be Let together or separately; Rent very moderate to a suitable tenant. Apply, Mrs Forbes, 291 High Street, Kirkcaldy.

There was certainly excitement reported in the *Fife Herald* on the 28th December 1889 when we find that the lessee is now a local plumber – John

THEATRE ROYAL, KIRK WYND.
KIRKCALDY,
Duly Inspected and fully approved of by the Dean
of Guild Court and Burgh Surveyor.

Lessee, Messrs FOREST KNOWLES and HOWARD
CAMPBELL.

TO-NIGHT (SATURDAY), 11th December,
UNDER THE GASLIGHT,
Concluding with a Screamingly
LAUGHABLE FARCE.

MONDAY, TUESDAY, AND WEDNESDAY,
December 13, 14, and 15, Special Attractions.
The most Sparkling and Mirth-Provoking
Comedy of Modern Times,
ROUND THE CLOCK,
OR THE FORTUNE HUNTERS.
Performed over 3000 Nights in the Principal
Towns of Great Britain and America.

Prices of Admission—Centre Boxes, 1s 6d
Side Boxes, 1s; Pit, 6d; Gallery, 3d.
Doors Open at 7.30; Commence at 8. Satur-
days; Half-an-Hour Earlier.

Torrance. He in turn had sublet the theatre to Forrest Knowles and Howard Campbell. The agreement was that they open for a winter season on the 17th October at an agreed figure of £6 per week. The agreement contained a proviso that if the arrears exceeded £12 then the agreement was considered broken. The arrears reached £19 and Torrance sought the court to have Campbell and Knowles ejected. They counterclaimed that they had reached an agreement on the 14th December that for the first week of the year they would pay Torrance £4 per day so that the arrears would

be extinguished after 6 days. They could not prove the agreement existed and were removed.

By 1888 the sole lessee had become one George Clark who gave his address as 51 Market Street. Advertisements appeared in some of the stage/variety newspapers with Mr Clark seeking first class companies, concert parties, dioramas and other novelty acts. This advert from the 10th September includes a testimonial from a previous company complimenting Mr Clark on the excellent manner in which he ran the theatre. What is noticeable is that the name has altered from the Theatre Royal to the Grand Theatre – presumably the work of Clark.

KIRKCALDY.—GRAND THEATRE
(late Theatre Royal).—Sole Lessee, Mr GEORGE CLARK,
51, Market-street (where all letters should be addressed).
First-class Companies booked, sharing terms.
Concert Companies, Dioramas, and other great Novelties
specially treated with. Dates booking fast.
Great success since opening.
Managers write for vacant dates.
Town Hall, St. Andrews,
Sept. 10th, 1888.

Dear Mr Clark—
On behalf of Mr Lambe, I beg to congratulate you on
the excellent manner in which you conduct your theatre
before and behind the curtain. The great improvements you
have made everywhere should induce the best combinations
travelling to visit Kirkcaldy. As the business we have done on
our third visit will prove, they will meet with success.
Yours faithfully,
ALFRED S. BANKES,
Stage-Manager for J. F. Lambe,
"My Sweetheart" Co.

However, matters move on apace when we reach December of 1888. *The Era* of the 1st December shows Clark still advertising for acts and the last

GRAND THEATRE, KIRKCALDY.—
PROFESSOR J. B. and MRS KESWICK,
from the Hydropathic Establishment, Scarborough, have
much pleasure in announcing that they are now deliver-
ing a Course of LECTURES on Mental Science and
Health in the above Theatre. Doors open at 7.30; to
commence at 8 o'clock.

SYLLABUS OF LECTURES.—On Friday Evening (To-
Night) December 7th, a Special Lecture to Gentlemen
only—Man and his Sexual Relations. Every man
should hear this very important and instructive
lecture. On Saturday Evening, December 8th—
Love, Courtship, and Marriage. On Monday Evening,
December 10, a Special Lecture to Ladies only—Woman,
Her Physical Culture; or, Her Diseases and how to Cure
them by Natural Means. Admission to these 3 Lectures—
Front Seats, 1s; Second Seats, 6d; Back Seats, 3d. On
Tuesday Evening, December 11—How to Make Life a
Success. On Wednesday Evening, December 12—The
Best Food and how to Cook it. A few Back Seats Free;
Reserved Seats 6d. A Collection will be taken in the
Free seats at the close of the Lecture. Reserved Seats
may be Booked from 10 A.M. until 4 P.M.

booking which it was possible to trace was in the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 7th December 1888. This could almost be 2024 as the advertisement was for Professor J.B. Keswick and his wife of the Scarborough Hydropathic Establishment. A series of lectures on Mental Science and Health. The first lecture that night was titled *Man and his Sexual Relations*. The whole series appeared to be on related subjects with some for men only and others

for ladies only. It would seem that consultations were also on offer and an office in the town buildings had been secured for that purpose.

The following week the same newspaper reported that:- "the audience, on the whole, were good, and appeared to appreciate not only the lecture but the professor's phrenological delineations".

As the year drew to an end on the night of the 29th/30th January the building caught fire and was totally destroyed. The police acted quickly and four men were arrested and charged with arson. Kirkcaldy buildings going on fire even then!!! They were John Torrance, Andrew Torrance, George Clark and an ironmonger, David Wilson, from Auchtermuchty. The police had established that a barrel of paraffin had been purchased and carried to the theatre.

CHARGE OF FIRE-RAISING.—In connection with the fire which resulted in the destruction of the Grand Theatre, a charge of incendiarism has been brought against John Torrance, plumber, residing in David Street; Andrew Torrance, plumber, Whyte's Causeway; George Clark, bill poster, Market Street; and David Wilson, ironmonger, residing in Auchtermuchty. On Monday they were brought before Bailie Dowie charged with having, between the 29th and 30th December, set fire to the building situated in Kirk Wynd known as the Grand Theatre, with the intent of defrauding the Federal Insurance Company, Limited. At the request of the Fiscal

The case was held in Dundee and the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 5th April 1889 carried the report. Wilson was not on the charge sheet – only Clark and the two Torrance's. It transpires John was the father and Andrew his son. The charge was wilful fire-raising in an attempt to defraud the Federal Insurance Company of £700. John and Andrew pled guilty while Clark

EJECTION OF THEATRICAL MANAGERS.—An action was recently raised in the Kirkcaldy Sheriff Court at the instance of John Torrance, plumber, Kirkcaldy, as trustee for the creditors of Messrs Forrest Knowles and Howard Campbell, both theatrical managers, carrying on business at the New Theatre Royal, Kirk Wynd, and asking the Court to grant warrant of ejection against them, and when so ejected to interdict them, or either of them, in all time coming, from entering into said premises. The condescence shows that pur-

produced evidence that he was in Edinburgh at the time of the fire. This was accepted and he was dismissed. It transpires that John Torrance had fitted out the sets for Knowles and Campbell and that placed his firm in the position of

creditors. When the venture failed he became the Trustee under a Trust Deed on behalf of the creditors. He tried to carry on with the Theatre under his own direction but failed in that venture. The only assets of the Trust Deed

were the “fittings, apparatus etc”. It would seem that the insurance cover was raised from £300 to £700 prior to the fire. John Torrance was sent to jail for 5 years while his son suffered 9 months imprisonment. It was said that Torrance was a respectable businessman and his actions were a major surprise. Clark however returned to Kirkcaldy from Dundee that same night and was “met by many friends at the station, who gave him a hearty cheer”.

John Torrance had power to carry on the business on behalf of the creditors, and did so without success. The Advocate-Depute withdrew the charge against the prisoner Clark, and he was accordingly set at liberty. His lordship sentenced John Torrance to five years' penal servitude and Andrew to nine months' imprisonment. Clark returned to Kirkcaldy the same evening, and was met at the station by many friends, who gave him a hearty cheer.

The Theatre was actually owned by John Hunter of St Brycedale and he had the building rebuilt as the Hunter Hall and handed it over to the Parish Church. It remains in use to this day.

If we accept that this is Kirkcaldy's oldest theatre then as it closed in 1888 – then its images would have been the older form of perceived movement along with magic lantern shows. It did not survive long enough to see the advent of true motion pictures – never mind the talkies! That said it was Kirkcaldy's first entertainment venue and is still used by the *Auld Kirk Players* for their performances to this day.

The Corn Exchange/The Pavilion

OPENING OF THE NEW CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.

On Saturday afternoon, the opening of the new Corn Exchange at Kirkcaldy was celebrated by a dinner in the new building. The requirements of the agriculturists of the district will be fully met by this handsome edifice, which, while providing ample accommodation for their traffic, is also so designed that it can be made available for public meetings, concerts, soirees, &c. It is calculated that the principal hall will accommodate at least 1500 persons, while along the right side of the hall a suite of waiting-rooms have been erected, and fitted up with every convenience.

Kirkcaldy's second Corn Exchange stood from 1860 until 1956. Built primarily for the agricultural fraternity it became a multi-purpose venue serving the town in many ways during its close to 100 year existence. It is the *Caledonian Mercury* which provides one of the reports of the building's opening which took place on Saturday the 31st December 1859.

The ceremony took place on the Saturday afternoon with Provost Birrell presiding. The audience contained a number of important personages including J.H.E. Wemyss M.P., Mr R.S. Aytoun of Inchdairnie, George Beveridge, a manufacturer, and Mr S. Davidson, a banker, who rose in time to become Provost of the Burgh. Perhaps the list of apologies is even more impressive – Colonel Ferguson, M.P., Lord Loughborough, Sir John

Melville, Mr Balfour of Balbirnie and Captain Oswald of Dunnikier.

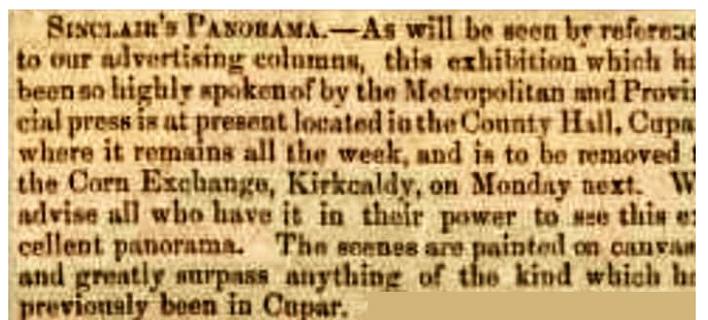
The Chairman's opening remarks reveal that the building was replacing an earlier one built some 30 years before. Quite simply, the amount of corn now being grown in the area had made that original building unfit for purpose. "The new hall could accommodate 1,500 persons and as well as its main function is expected to be used for public meetings, concerts and soirees". As well as the main hall a suite of small rooms ran up the right hand side which were "fitted with every convenience". The building was owned by the Town Council and had cost circa £2,500 – of which £2,000 had been lent to the Council at a low rate of interest. The foundations had been laid in the month of May, with full masonic solemnities, and built to an architectural design prepared by a Mr Hay. All reports of the occasion make reference to the fact that Provost Birrell "was the energetic promoter" and indeed in his own remarks he made mention that "this was a proud day for himself, who had laboured long and earnestly in this project".

From time to time mention has been made in these Objects of the number of toasts which were drunk on these civic occasions. This was no exception with some being listed below.

- Loyal and Patriotic Toast.
- Success and Prosperity to the new Corn Exchange.
- The Clergy of all Denominations
- Both Houses of Parliament.
- Our Educational Institutions.
- Our National Volunteers, Artillery and Riflemen.

It is always difficult to imagine that the participants would be able to walk to their carriages unaided at the conclusion of these events.

The Fife Herald of the 1st March 1860 gives the first glimpse of a panorama appearing in the hall. It is *Sinclair's Panorama* who are to appear the following Monday having been in Cupar during this present week. The paintings are on canvas and "greatly surpass anything seen previously". There are two sections with the first



SINCLAIR'S PANORAMA.—As will be seen by reference to our advertising columns, this exhibition which has been so highly spoken of by the Metropolitan and Provincial press is at present located in the County Hall, Cupar where it remains all the week, and is to be removed to the Corn Exchange, Kirkcaldy, on Monday next. We advise all who have it in their power to see this excellent panorama. The scenes are painted on canvas and greatly surpass anything of the kind which has previously been in Cupar.

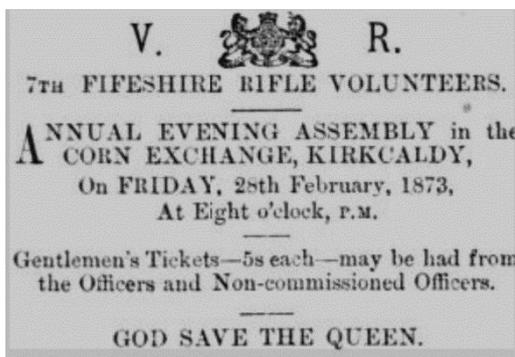
dealing with the Crimean War. Canvasses include:-

- The battles of Alma and Inkerman.
- The Light Brigade Charge at Balaclava.
- The fall of Sebastopol, etc.

The segment which followed dealt with India and in particular the mutiny and included:-

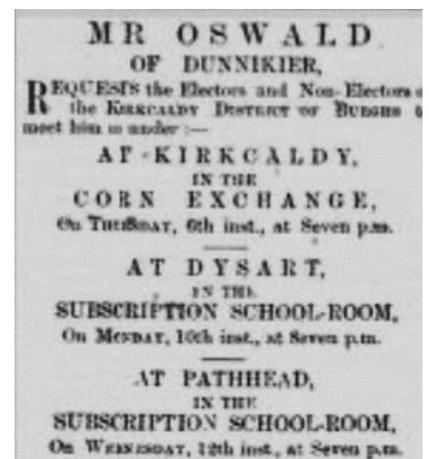
- Well known scenes of the Revolt.
- General Havelock at Fallehpole.
- The taking of Delhi.
- The siege of Lucknow.

The paintings were supported by a lecturer “giving a brief and graphic description of each scene and from time to time bursting into an appropriate song in an excellent voice”.



The following is intended to provide a small snapshot of what was on offer through the decades starting with an advertisement for the Annual Assembly of the *7th Fife Shire Rifle Volunteers*. This was taken from the *Fife Free Press* of the 22nd February 1873. It would seem that this may well have been a gentlemen only function.

On the 1st November 1873, the same newspaper carried a political notice from Mr Oswald of Dunnikier advertising his wish to meet the electorate. This is a Westminster campaign as the various centres mentioned were included in the *Kirkcaldy Burghs Constituency*. The eastern side of the Constituency, Buckhaven, Methil and Innerleven, were seemingly being left for another day. John T. Oswald was the Conservative candidate but mustered only 1,228 votes, while the Liberal, Robert Reid, secured 1,967. Sadly, Reid died in 1875.



JOINER WORK
OF Every Description done on the Shortest notice, at the most Moderate Terms.
OLD HOUSES GUTTED and REPAIRED.
 Estimates given for all kinds of work connected with the Trade.
R. DEAS,
OLD CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.

Interestingly, an advertisement for R. Deas – a joiner was stumbled upon. It is of interest as Deas was operating from the previous Corn Exchange, now referred to as the Old Corn Exchange. It seems his speciality was gutting and repairing old houses. This advertisement is also from the *Fife Free Press* and is taken from the edition of 14th July 1877.

For those who enjoy music then the *Fife Free Press* of the 21st January 1882 carried two advertisements of interest. On the 9th February, the *Kirkcaldy Music Society* was staging Haydn's oratorio "The Creation". While more details would appear in future issues what was revealed was that the chorus and orchestra would consist of 120 performers.

CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.
 THE KIRKCALDY MUSICAL SOCIETY will give a Performance of HAYDN'S ORATORIO "THE CREATION," ON THE EVENING OF THURSDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY, 1882.
 Chorus and Orchestra of 120 Performers.
 MR. ADAM HAMILTON, CONDUCTOR.
 Particulars in future Advertisements.
 R. D. ANDERSON, Hon. Sec.
 Kirkcaldy, 20th January, 1882.

GRAND EVENING ASSEMBLY UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE KIRKCALDY MUSICAL SOCIETY IN THE CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY, ON FRIDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY.
 Gentlemen's Tickets, 10s each.
 Kirkcaldy, 20th January, 1882.

Hot on the heels of that function a *Grand Evening Assembly* was scheduled for the 10th February – again under the auspices of the Society. Mention is only made of Gentlemen's tickets which were priced at what is now 50p.

The *Fife Free Press* of the 20th October 1883 is not untypical in its advertisements for the Corn Exchange. A cluster of these give an indication of the mix of local and touring groups who made use of the facility. On that very day the Parish Church is holding a Bazaar with the specific purpose of the *Erection of an Organ and other Church Improvements*. In addition to the bazaar there are entertainments in the shape of vocal and instrumental music with the Trade's Band also in attendance. There is also on offer what is described as a Comedietta (a light farcical comedy apparently) which goes under the title of *Man Proposes*.

TO-DAY.
 CONTINUATION OF THE KIRKCALDY PARISH CHURCH BAZAAR IN AID OF THE ERECTION OF AN ORGAN, AND OTHER CHURCH IMPROVEMENTS, IN THE CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.
 Great Success of the Comedietta, "MAN PROPOSES."
 Performances at Four, Seven, and Nine o'Clock.
 GLEES will be Sung by the CHORUS, under Mr CHARLESTON.
 VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC at Interval.
 KIRKCALDY TRADES' BAND will Perform.

CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.
 Enormous Attraction! TWO NIGHTS ONLY, MONDAY AND TUESDAY, Oct. 22 and 23, MR. C. BERNARD'S "BILLEE TAYLOR" COMIC OPERA COMPANY, Under the Management of Mr William J. Allyn.
 Reserved Seats, 4s; First Seats, 3s; Second Seats, 2s; Third Seats, 1s; a few admissions at 6d. Plan of Seats and Tickets at Mr John Bryson's, Bookseller.

On the 22nd and 23rd, for two nights only, Mr C. Bernard's Comic Opera Company provide the entertainment with a production of *Billee Taylor*. A reserved seat can be had for what is now 20p and the prices for other seating range from 5p to 15p. It seems

that there are a few admissions at 2½p. The tickets can be purchased at a local bookseller where a floor plan is available.

GREAT ATTRACTION.
 CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.
 THREE NIGHTS ONLY,
 OCTOBER 25TH, 26TH, AND 27TH,
 THE KIRKCALDY AMATEUR DRAMATIC
 COMPANY.
 THURSDAY, 25TH—"ROBERT MACAIRE," or
 the Murder at the Roadside Inn, to conclude
 with a Laughable Farce.
 FRIDAY & SATURDAY—The Great Sensational
 Drama of "OCTOROON," to conclude on
 Saturday with the well-known Comedy,
 "RAISING THE WIND."
 Tickets to be had from Booksellers and Mem-
 bers of the Company.
 For particulars see Hand Bills.

On the 25th, 26th and 27th we are back to local fare with the *Kirkcaldy Amateur Dramatic Society*. On the 25th they are staging *Murder at the Roadside Inn* and on the following nights the feature is *Octoroon*. Each evening, after the main event, a farce is being performed. Once again tickets are available at local booksellers but there is no mention of the price.

On the 1st - 3rd November, it is back to a touring company taking centre stage with an appearance by *Tannaker's New Grand Japanese Entertainment*. The prospective audience is told to expect new artists and new feats. Another incentive to attend the show is that each visitor will receive a *nice Japanese present!* There does seem to be a wee issue with geography as the show is billed as:- "a farewell visit to Fife" – however, they are shortly to appear in both Burntisland and Dunfermline!

CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.
 THURSDAY, FRIDAY, and SATURDAY,
 1st, 2nd, and 3rd NOVEMBER.
 TANNAKER'S
 NEW
 JAPANESE
 GRAND
 ENTERTAINMENT.
 NEW ARTISTS.
 NEW FEATS.
 A Nice Japanese Present
 for every Visitor.
 Farewell visit to Fife.
 DAY PERFORMANCE
 ON SATURDAY at 3.
 PRICES—6d, 1s, 1s 6d,
 AND 2s.
 BURNTISLAND, MONDAY, Nov. 5 only.
 DUNFERMLINE to follow, Nov. 6 and 7 only.



In 1889 The Freedom of the Burgh was presented to the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava in the Corn Exchange. We covered all these ceremonies in Object 11. Difficult to understand the reason behind this award – could the fact he was the son-in-law of the Provost Ronald Munro- Ferguson be the reason?

PROCLAMATION — THIS IS TO NOTICE
FRAME AND ROB ROY
 COMES TO
 KIRKCALDY, WEDNESDAY, 24th October,
 CORN EXCHANGE, at 8.
 FRAME'S VANDEVILLE COMPANY,
 In Scenes from Sir Walter Scott's "Rob Roy."
JOHN CLYDE
 Will Play "ROB ROY M'GREGOR."
FRAME
 As "BAILIE NICOL JARVIE."
 Great Success in Edinburgh.

The new century sees *Frame's Vaudeville Company* make an appearance on the 24th October at 8.00pm. The *Fife Free Press* advertisement reveals that John Clyde will play Rob Roy McGregor with Frame himself playing Bailie Nicol Jarvie. The notice assures us that the performances were an outstanding success in Edinburgh.

On Saturday the 11th January 1908 the *Fife Free Press* tells us the Corn Exchange are offering *A Pictorial Carnival* – thanks to the *Scotch-Canadian Picture Company*. The films on offer are

THE FAMILY RESORT.
 CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.
PICTORIAL CARNIVAL.
 Week Commencing January 13th, 1908. Every
 Evening at 8. Doors, 7.50; Prices, 1s, 6d, 3d
 SCOTCH-CANADIAN PICTURE CO.
 A Most Marvellous Production—
 THE CLOCKMAKER'S SECRET
 Full of the Grandest Magical Scenes ever
 Produced.
 Artful Lover, | Horse Stealer
 Don't go to Law. | Kidnapped.
 THE POOR LITTLE ORPHAN,
 A most touching and very Pathetic Story.
 And Miles of others.
 Special Engagement of the
 GREAT SCOTTISH HUMORIST—
MR JACK MARSON.
 The Renowned Mimic, Impersonator, and
 Humorous Sketch Artist. One of the Greatest
 Entertainers of the present day.

The Clockmaker's Secret and *The Poor Little Orphan*. The former is “full of the grandest magical scenes ever produced” with the latter – “a most touching and very pathetic story”. Variety has not been excluded as “Mr Jack Marson, the great Scottish humorist, has also been engaged”.

CORN EXCHANGE PAVILION,
KIRKCALDY.
 Comfort Enjoyment. Safety.
MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1909,
 And Every Night at 8 o'clock.
 Licensee, - - - Dr WALFORD BRODIE.
 Manager, - - - GEORGE LEE.
THE SAFETY BIOSCOPE COY.
 (London), with Up-to-Date
ANIMATED PICTURES.
 Rifle Bill; Attack on the Mail, most exciting;
 Drama in Messina; a Sound Sleeper; Scratch
 as Scratch can; The Hand; The Mended Lute;
 Motor Boat Races; The Winning Coat; Mary
 Jane Lovers'; The Fisherman's Son; Left Out,
 or the Forsaken Child; and a host of others.
 Children's Penny Matinee To-day (Saturday),
 2nd Oct. Doors Open 2.30. Commence at
 3. Children, 1d, 2d, and 3d. Adults, 3d
 and 6d.
 Prices of Admission—9d, 6d, 4d, 2d.
 Children under 12 years of age Half-Price
 except to Pit.
 Early Doors at 7.15, 2d extra to all parts.
 Ordinary Doors, 7.30. Commence at 8 o'clock.
 Don't Forget—We always have the Raith
 Rovers' Results by Special Telegram when
 playing away from home, and announce it on
 the Screen.

The following year, 1909, the Corn Exchange entertainments are operating as the *Corn Exchange Pavilion* and it is generally accepted that 1909 brings about the commencement of regular showings of films in the Exchange. As mentioned earlier 1909 brought licensing to cinemas and the Corn Exchange/Pavilion benefited from a greater number of fire escapes being installed. The advert shown here reveals that the licensee is a Dr Walford Brodie and his manager is George Lee. This advert from the *Fife Free Press* of the 9th October reveals that the *Safety Bioscope Company of London* have been engaged and are showing a range of animated pictures. Added to the advert is a reminder that

when Raith Rovers are playing away from home – a telegram will be received giving the score which will then be shown on the screen.

The fact that the *Pavilion* was still a crossover between cinema and Theatre can be seen from this advertisement from the *Fife Free Press* of the 10th October 1914 where players are live on stage performing comedy sketches and *A night w' Burns*. However, later in the week on the 15th, 16th and 17th – the usual all star picture programme saw the film *The Man who Carries the Gun*. being shown.

PAVILION.
 MARKET STREET, KIRKCALDY.
 Nightly at 8. Saturdays, 6.30 and 8.45.
 Week commencing MONDAY, 12th October, 1914.
 Starring Engagement of
3 CALEDONIANS
 in their Scotch Musical Comedy Sketch entitled
A NIGHT W' BURNS.
CISSIE CAMERON,
 Dainty Comedienne and Dancer in all her latest
 Successes.
MANN-DE-LAINE.
 In Novel Musical Act without Instruments, intro-
 ducing Mandolins Novelty, Unique and Original,
 And Usual All Star Picture Programme.
THURSDAY, FRIDAY, and SATURDAY, 15th,
16th, and 17th Oct., For 3 Days only—
THE MAN WHO CARRIES THE GUN,
 USUAL POPULAR PRICES.

The Fife Advertiser of the 7th August 1915 reveals that the Pavilion is about to be reopened on the 16th August after extensive alterations and refurbishment.

This same style of mixing the types of entertainment is demonstrated again in the *Fife Free Press* on the 23rd October 1915. *The Land of the Otter* features on the Monday – Wednesday with the Thursday – Saturday

PAVILION,
MARKET STREET, KIRKCALDY.

WEEK COMMENCING MONDAY, OUT. 25.
Nightly at 8. Saturdays, 6.30 and 8.45.

Starring Engagement of **JACKSON GRANT**
and **JUNE GRAY** in their Distinguished
Entertainment of Delightful Singing and
Irresistible Comedy.

GEORGE R. SIMS, Aeola and Concertina
Expert, in his refined Musical Speciality Act.

FLO DIXIE, Male Impersonator. The Scottish
Vesta Tilley.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday — Exclusive
Picture to be seen only at the Pavilion, **IN THE
LAND OF THE OTTER, &c.**

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—Episode 8 of
the Great Transatlantic Serial, **THE BLACK
BOX.**

Pavilion Orchestra under the direction of Mr
Arthur de Gabriele.

Popular Prices—9d, 6d, 4d, and 2d.
Early Doors—1s 9d 6d, 3d.

Matinee every Saturday at 3. Complete change of
Pictures every Monday and Thursday.

featuring episode 8 of the great transatlantic serial – *The Black Box*. Alongside the films are three variety turns one of which is a male impersonator, Flo Dixie – billed as the Scottish Vesta Tilley. It is clear that whatever the alterations made in 1915 were – *the Pavilion* was not exclusively for cinema purposes.

The Fife Free Press of the 2nd September 1916 carried an advert which claimed that this was 'The Popular Family House' which was clean, clear and comfortable, showing

PAVILION
MARKET STREET, KIRKCALDY.
THE POPULAR FAMILY HOUSE.
CLEAN, COOL, AND COMFORTABLE.
The Most Perfectly Projected Pictures in Kirkcaldy,
Continuous Performance Nightly from 7 o'clock
SATURDAYS FROM 6.30.

Week commencing **MONDAY, 4th September**, the Program will include—

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday— Great Exclusive Drama, to be seen only at the Pavilion— THE FATAL WOMAN. A Stirring Mystery with a great Shipwreck Scene.	Thursday, Friday, and Saturday— Great Exclusive Drama, to be seen only at the Pavilion— THE GREAT STROKE. A Sensational Story of a Band of Criminals.
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And All Star Picture Programs par Excellence.
Complete Change of Pictures every Monday and Thursday.
USUAL POPULAR PRICES.
Special Children's Matinee every Saturday at 2.30. Wednesday at 4.15. Admission 1d to all parts

the most perfectly projected pictures in Kirkcaldy. Always happy to go up any tangent the two offerings were checked. It transpires that *The Fatal Stroke* was a Dutch film from 1915 – not that that really matters in the days of silent films! *The Great Stroke* was a 1914 film which seems to surround the repercussions of an uncle refusing to continue paying off his nephew's gambling debts. Both films are over 100 years old yet the internet still comes to the rescue!

TO CINEMA PROPRIETORS AND
OTHERS.

THE TOWN COUNCIL of Kirkcaldy are willing to entertain proposals for Selling or Leasing the Building known as the Corn Exchange, Kirkcaldy, which for a considerable period was used as a Cinema House, but which was burnt about two years ago. If a lease were granted it would be of the building as it stands, and enquirers are asked to submit plans showing how they propose to reconstruct the place, and what Rent they would offer. If a purchase is wished enquirers are invited to say what upset-price they would be prepared to bid at a Public Sale.

WM. L. MACINDOE,
Town Clerk, Kirkcaldy.
Kirkcaldy, 19th April, 1924.

So just what was the fate of the Pavilion – which suddenly seemed to vanish from all advertisements. Research led to the *Fife Free Press* of the 19th April 1924. Here was displayed an item which is reproduced here. The owners Kirkcaldy Town Council are willing to sell or lease the property which until two years previously had been a cinema. The plain fact is the property had been the subject of a fire. The Council wanted to know from

those who may wish to lease what the plans would be to restore the building and what rent they would offer. If a purchase was sought, the Council asked what price they would be prepared to pay. One thing was certain and that was it was being leased or sold - "As it stood".

Further research was proving difficult until the *Kinematograph Weekly* of the 7th April 1921 provided the answer. The Corn Exchange or Pavilion

Cinema had burnt down over the night of the 31st March / 1st April 1921. The fire had been discovered at 5.45am although the flames had already taken a strong hold. Fire and water damage amounted to £3,000. The Fire Brigade's first task was to try and remove the films in which task they were successful. By 9.00am the fire had been subdued but the gallery was gone as was most of the floor. The roof was described as a long gaping hole surrounded by a few slates. The stage had been mostly saved but it was doubted if the piano or projectors would be fit for further use. The Town Council were the owners while the lessee was given as *The Scottish Cinemas and Variety Ltd* of Glasgow. The cause of the fire was put down to a cigarette smouldering in the gallery. The insurance company paid out £3,000 which was paid into the town's Common Good Fund.

KIRKCALDY FIRE.

A disastrous fire occurred in Kirkcaldy on the morning of Friday, April 1, in the Pavilion Picture House (formerly the Corn Exchange), Market Street, which practically wrecked the whole building and caused damage by water and fire to the amount of no less than £3,000. First word of the fire came about 5.45 a.m. from James Mitchell, a slaughter-house keeper, who observed flames rising from the building and soon conveyed the alarm to the Fire Brigade Station. In a short space of time the brigade turned out and, breaking open several of the doors, the firemen at once set to work.

As the report indicated all had seemed well with the building when it closed the previous night so a little more research was called for. The *Fife Free*

Pavilion, Market St, Kirkcaldy	
<p>MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, 26th, 27th and 28th March, 1921. Montague Love and June Elvidge in Broken Ties An intense and interesting Drama</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Great Serial ROUND THE WORLD Episode 7.</p>	<p>THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, 29th March, 1st and 2nd April, 1921. Margaret Fisher in Beauty to Let The story of a poor girl, who by her talents, was able to turn them to the mutual advantage of her lover and herself.</p> <p>Adventures of Shorty Hamilton Episode 4—The Mail Box Theatre, And Splendid Comedy Programme.</p>

Press of the 26th March 1921 carried an advertisement for what would be the last film shown in the *Pavilion* – the main feature was *Beauty to Let* with a supporting episode of *The Adventures of Shorty Hamilton*. These films of the 'episode variety' were a great way of ensuring

patrons returned the following week to view the next thrilling episode. It would seem that these were the last two screenings to have taken place in the venue.

The building was taken over by A & R Forrester who specialised in bus tours. They operated from the Corn Exchange and organised outings. In 1927 on September the 9th for 17/6d – 87½p – you could attend the Braemar Highland Gathering – assuming you were up for the

A. & R. FORRESTER,
CORN EXCHANGE, KIRKCALDY.

BOOK NOW FOR
Royal Braemar Highland Gathering,

THURSDAY, 8th September.
Fare, 17/6.

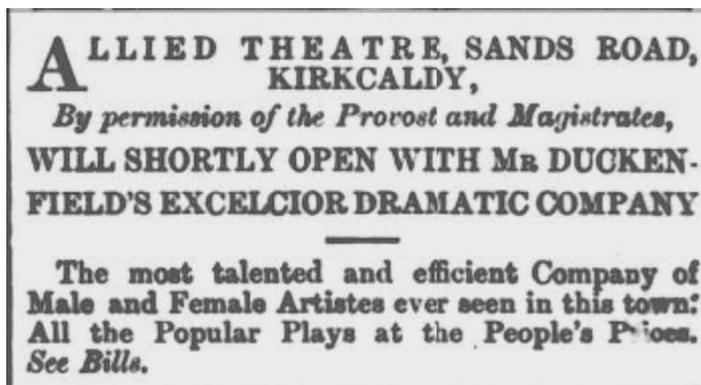
Leave Corn Exchange at 8 a.m.
Intending passengers should benefit from our experience, and leave early and arrive at the Royal Highland Gathering early.

You travel in Comfort and Safety when you travel in one of Forrester's Luxurious Motor Coaches.

leaving time of 6.00am. The building was demolished in 1956 but certainly served Kirkcaldy well during its lifetime. So while we have traced the site of the first film shows – it certainly did not survive to accommodate a talkie.

The Allied Theatre

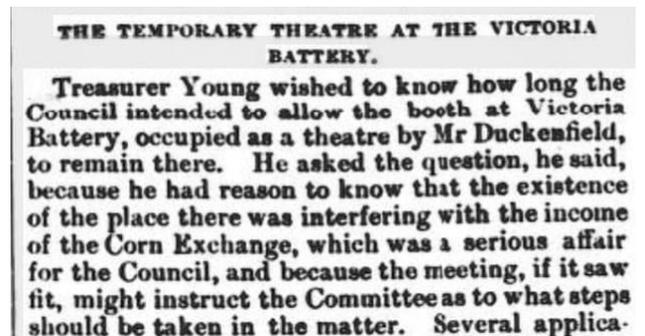
This one appeared out of nowhere and while it was not longstanding was very successful – as the audience numbers testify.



Apparently Allied's success had an effect on the Council's own Corn Exchange patronage, much to their consternation. It appeared in late 1883 and was gone by Spring the following year – but it made a splash! The starting point is a meeting of the Town Council in late November 1883 which was reported on by the *Fife Free Press*

on the 1st December.

Treasurer Young was asking how long Mr Duckenfield's theatre is to be allowed to remain - “as it is interfering with the income of the Corn Exchange, which is a serious matter for the Council”. It transpires that a request had been received from Mr Duckenfield, the owner of a travelling theatre, seeking to rent the Victoria Battery ground for use as a theatre.



With it being Winter the Artillery Volunteers did not use the site. The Council had referred the matter to Superintendent Walker of the Burgh Police Force. He in turn had granted the use of the site. However, this was no ordinary marquee and one which could hardly be considered portable - in fact, it was of a wooden construction which took over two weeks to erect and it was even connected to the gas mains. The venture was so successful that crowds of 700 each night seems to be the minimum and it was reported that on several occasions this rose to 1,000.

It is obvious that the Council had not expected such a success and it was a double edged sword – in a positive manner it was bringing entertainment to the town but, on the negative side, it seemed to be harming the Corn Exchange audience numbers. On the other hand Councillors believed that it was emptying public houses – which they considered a positive. The police could find no fault with the theatre as there had been no complaints of poor

MR DUCKENFIELD'S THEATRE—EXTENSION OF TIME.

Minute of Finance Committee of 24th December was read. A letter of date 12th inst. was laid before the meeting from Mr Duckenfield, the proprietor of the portable theatre which had been erected at the Battery, Sands Road, requesting that his theatre might be allowed to remain where it was until the middle of March next. The committee having considered the subject resolved to recommend the Commission to allow Mr Duckenfield to remain with his theatre on the present site until the 14th day of March next, the fee for the occupation of the ground from 14th January, 1884, to 14th March, 1884, to be thirty shillings per week.

behaviour. It was apparently being well managed and it appears that Mr Duckenfield was given to denouncing the evils of drink on a Sunday. So, the Council were in a quandary. They had agreed to the let and the Allied was a huge success with it being said that, as the theatre filled, the pubs emptied. That was a positive for the Council but of course there had to be a

negative which was that the takings at the Corn Exchange were falling off and some acts were even refusing to appear given this competition. The Council wrestled with the conundrum of was it a portable theatre or not? Could they force an eviction on that basis? Common sense prevailed and the Council did not give notice to leave – what they did was double the rent from the 15 shillings (75p) and this compromise was acceptable to both parties.

There can be no doubt that this Theatre was a major success and all the advertisements spoke of its continuing success. *The Fife Free Press* of the 2nd February 1884 gives an example of clever publicity from the said Mr Duckenfield. The previous evening a grand concert and ball were held in the Corn Exchange. The purpose was to raise funds to clear the outstanding debt for new uniforms incurred by Dunnikier Band. Mr Duckenfield acted as compere and he also closed his theatre for the night to prevent it being

GRAND CONCERT AND BALL.—Last night a grand concert and ball took place in the Corn Exchange, the object being to assist in clearing off the debt incurred by Dunnikier Instrumental Band in the purchase of their new uniform. There was a large attendance. Mr G. Duckenfield, of the Allied Theatre, presided, and in opening the proceedings gave an excellent address. A long and interesting programme followed. Miss Ada Rosalind sang with much taste and precision "Macgregor's Gathering," but was most successful in her rendering of "Maxwelton Braes are Bonnie."

competition. The performers were local ladies and gentlemen but were given assistance by members of Mr Duckenfield's company. At the close Duckenfield thanked the large company for attending and wished the Dunnikier Band every success in reaching the fund's target. The hall was then cleared for dancing which went on well into the morning.

A L L I E D T H E A T R E ,
VICTORIA BATTERY, KIRKCALDY.
TO-NIGHT, SATURDAY, 23rd FEBRUARY,
At Seven o'clock,
T H E G R E A T D R A M A
OF
T H E O C E A N O F L I F E !
Admission, 1/-, 6d, and 3d.
To commence at Half-past Seven o'clock.

It was back to drama when the *Fife Free Press* of the 23rd February carried an advertisement for that evening and for that night only. The doors opened at 7.00pm for the 7.30pm start of the great drama – *The Ocean of Life*. The admission charges are 1/-, 6d and 3d. Hard to imagine a

significant and substantial temporary theatre was playing to 700 people just outside the Volunteers Green. It would now be in the middle of the Esplanade traffic.

The Fifehire Advertiser of the 22nd March revealed that the company had left on the expiry of their lease and were heading for Arbroath. The article was surprised that such a substantial erection had been allowed to stand for such a lengthy period. Gentle fun was poked at the Council over their dithering as to whether the

Mr Duckenfield, who opens his theatre at Arbroath to-night, intends returning to Kirkcaldy in the autumn, provided he can get accommodation. On Monday evening, previous to his departure, he entertained his company, along with a few friends, to the number of over forty, to supper in the National Hotel. The meeting was a very enjoyable one, and ample justice was done to a sumptuous repast, which did credit to mine host, Mr Reekie. After supper, a few hours were spent in a happy manner.

lease be cut short to defend the Corn Exchange, or should it even be lengthened to take advantage of the increased site rental? “As the weeks passed that issue did not prevent Magistrates and Councillors from publicly testifying to the character of the place and the entertainment provided”. On the Monday before leaving, Mr Duckenfield entertained his company and a few friends in the National Hotel where excellent fare was provided by the licensee, Mr Reekie. In reality the lease had to finish as, with the advent of Spring, the Garrison of Artillery Volunteers again required the use of the site for their battery.

SINGULAR MISHAP TO A THEATRE PROPRIETOR.—One evening this week while Mr Duckenfield, the proprietor of the Allied Theatre, was taking money at the door, he allowed a threepenny piece which he was holding in his mouth to pass into his windpipe, where it became fast. A fruitless effort having been made to extract the coin, Mr Duckenfield went across next day to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, where instruments for the purpose were procured and relief afforded.

In some respects Mr Duckenfield was fortunate to be able to leave. As the *Fife Free Press* had reported on the 9th February he had managed to swallow a threepence piece which he had been holding in his mouth. It stuck fast in his windpipe and could not be dislodged. The next day a journey to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary was

required – where the necessary implement removed the obstruction. That was the medical reality at the time if you lived in Kirkcaldy.

The Adam Smith Halls

Without a shadow of doubt this is Kirkcaldy's most enduring theatre and is another which owes a debt of gratitude to the late Michael Beveridge. While the Beveridge Park is known as being the gift of Provost Beveridge – the part he played in ensuring that the halls came into being is not quite so readily known. The story of the planning and execution of the hall was told in Object 11 and it serves very little purpose in recounting it here. However a brief outline will not go amiss.

When Michael Beveridge was elected Provost of Kirkcaldy he realised that the centenary of the death of Adam Smith would fall during his term of stewardship. In the intervening century nothing tangible had been done to recognise the man generally regarded as Kirkcaldy's most famous son.

Beveridge saw this as an opportunity to correct this omission and he had a grander plan than a simple local monument. His ambition was to create what would amount to a national memorial. He held a private meeting with influential local figures in April of 1889 before embarking on a public meeting in the June of the same year. Without question there was an appetite to recognise Smith and a committee was formed to both plan and raise the necessary funds. The early death of Michael Beveridge certainly did not help the cause but before his death it had been determined that the memorial should be more than a mere statue. It was agreed that a purpose built public hall would be a fitting tribute to Smith. From the genesis of the plan in 1889

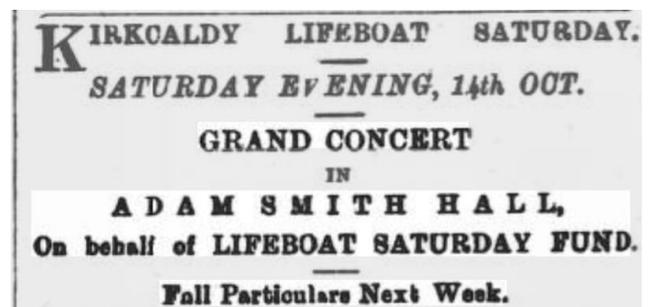
it took a full 10 years to fulfil, prior to the official opening by Andrew Carnegie on the 14th October 1899. The opening ceremony was followed by a Cake and Wine buffet in the Beveridge Hall where Andrew Carnegie was presented with the Freedom of the Burgh.

The venue was also used to host the final two Freedoms of the Burgh granted by Kirkcaldy Town Council. In January 1946, the award was made to Joseph Westwood – the Secretary of State for Scotland and Sir Michael Nairn. Object 11 recounted all the awards but only Nairn and Sandford Fleming were native to the town.

A significant part of Beveridge's £50,000 bequest was used to help fund the cost of the complex and part of the building was named after Michael Beveridge as a tribute. The hall could be described as having three main parts – the Adam Smith Hall itself which was capable of sitting 1,660 people, a smaller Beveridge Hall, and probably equally important a Lending and Reference Library which also carried Beveridge's name. A beautiful building with a high wall surrounding it – the building spoke of Kirkcaldy's increasing affluence on the back of its industry. A truly magnificent complex showing the increase in prosperity which began with the coming of the railway and Michael Nairn's foresight. Beveridge himself made a fortune from his involvement in the linoleum industry.

From the off this was altogether a theatre destined to provide quality programmes and artists. It was not really a home for variety or vaudeville acts. Those tended to remain in the Corn Exchange. Surprisingly the theatre was not equipped with an organ but this was remedied in 1901 by way of a gift from Andrew Carnegie.

The Fife Free Press of the 30th September 1899 carried an advertisement for a Grand Concert in aid of the Saturday Lifeboat Fund. This was to take place in the Adam Smith Hall on the 14th September. This was of course the concert to celebrate the opening of the halls earlier in the day.



The Fife Free Press of the 4th November 1899 carried an advertisement for

GONDOLIERS
(By Special Permission of Mr D'Ally Court.)

A GRAND PERFORMANCE WILL BE GIVEN BY MEMBERS OF
Kirkcaldy Musical Society
IN THE
ADAM SMITH HALL,
ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING DATES:—
WEDNESDAY, 15th NOVEMBER.
THURSDAY, 16th " "
FRIDAY, 17th " "

Doors Open at 7; Opera at 8; Carriages at 10.30.

SPECIAL TRAINS.
TIME-TABLE:—
THURSDAY, 16th NOVEMBER.

Capar,	Departs 6.30
Springfield,	" 6.37
Ladybank,	" 6.45
Kirkcaldy,	" 6.49
Falshaw Road,	" 6.56
Markinch,	" 7.7
Thornton,	Arrive 7.13
Dunfermline (Upper),	Departs 6.15
Halbeath,	" 6.23
Crosbie,	" 6.26
Cowdenbeath (Old),	" 6.34
Lochmyle,	" 6.41
Carnoustie,	" 6.48
Thornton,	Arrive 7.0
Leven,	Departs 6.45
Cameron Bridge,	" 6.53
Thornton,	Arrive 7.4
Thornton,	Departs 7.13
Dysart,	" 7.26
Stroudtown,	" 7.30
Kirkcaldy,	Arrive 7.30

Returning from Kirkcaldy at 11 p.m.

'The Gondoliers' being performed on the 16th, 17th and 18th by the Kirkcaldy Musical Society. While it is an extensive advert it is well worth reproducing here. Special trains were being laid on from all over Fife and the breadth of establishments where tickets could be purchased is quite amazing. It goes to show just how significant an attraction the new theatre was. Beveridge's vision was certainly paying dividends and it is fair to say that that has continued to this day.

TICKETS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE FOLLOWING:—

KIRKCALDY,	All the Musicalists and Booksellers.
COPAR,	Messrs J. & G. Innes.
SPRINGFIELD,	Miss Meikle, Post Office.
LADYBANK,	Mr John Willcock, Chemist.
KIRKCALDY,	Mr A. Poobles, News Agent.
FALSHAW,	Mr A. Aitken, Jun., Woodville.
MARKINCH,	Mr Thos. Gibson, Post Office.
THORNTON,	Mr Robert Gray, Post Office.
DUNFERMLINE,	Mr A. Romano, Stationer.
COWDENBEATH,	Messrs W. Low & Co., Grocers.
LOCHMELE,	Mr John Westrahe, Stationer.
LEVEN,	Mr Thomas Porter, Bookseller.
CAMERON BRIDGE,	Messrs J. & G. C. Barrie, Windygables.
BUCKHAVEN,	Messrs D. Wilson & Sons, Grocers.
DYSART,	Messrs D. Wilson & Son, 70 High St.
SINGLINGTON,	Mr James Anderson, 44 St Clair St.
BURNISLAND,	Mr David Wood, Post Office.
KIRKCHURCH,	Mr T. M. Henderson.

The Council were certainly pushing their theatre forward as can be seen from an advertisement in *The Stage* of the 28th December 1899. No less a figure of Victorian decorum than the erstwhile Town Clerk,

KIRKCALDY. — ADAM SMITH HALL. Population, 30,000. Handsome new Hall, fitted in the most modern style, seating about 1,600. Stage, 42ft. by 30ft. Kirkcaldy is on the east coast route, about midway between Edinburgh and Dundee. There is no theatre in the town. — Wm. L. MACINDOE, Town Clerk.

William L. MacIndoe, is promoting the town and its new theatre. It is interesting to note that the advertisement claims that there is no theatre in the town — possibly a bit unfair on the Corn

Exchange which has been doing sterling work for a number of decades. It would seem that the advertisement was carried each week for the month of December. Both the Adam Smith Hall and The Corn Exchange were in the Council's hands — private enterprise in Kirkcaldy's entertainment venues would have to wait for the new century.

One of the regular features of the Hall's programme was the running of Saturday Evening Concerts under the auspices of the Town Council. This advertisement from the *Fife Free Press* of the 25th November 1899 gives an idea of a typical entertainment. The advertisement shows that the Council are taking matters seriously as, one of their own, Councillor Orr was presiding or could it be comparing? This was not unusual as Councillor Lockhart was also much in evidence in these Council concerts. There seems to be a mixture of music and sketches this week. What is interesting is the footnote is that the venue for this event is the Halls and not the Corn Exchange as previously advertised.

KIRKCALDY SATURDAY EVENING ENTERTAINMENTS.
ADAM SMITH HALL.
T-O-NIGHT. T-O-NIGHT.
EX-COUNCILLOR ORR will Preside.
ARTISTE—
The Ever Enjoyable GLASGOW SOCIETY
SKETCH PARTY in their New Humorous Sketches—"Perfection," and the "Loan of a Lover."
MR HUGH MITCHELL, the Famous Bass Singer.
MR LEO RIPPIN, Distinguished Solo Cornet Player.
MISS HELEN MAINDS, Well-Known Contralto.
MISS MARGUERITE SIMPSON, High-Class Soprano.
Pianist—MR JAMES FREEMAN.
A NIGHT NOT TO BE MISSED.
Doors Open, 6.45. To Begin, 7.30.
Prices—1s, 6d, 4d, 3d.
To-Night's Concert in Adam Smith Hall, not Corn Exchange as in Programme.

ADAM SMITH HALL.
WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, and
SATURDAY, 20th, 21st, 22nd, and
23rd December.
Kirkcaldy Amateur Dramatic
Club,
 Under the Patronage of
SIR JOHN GILMOUR, Bart., of Montrava,
LADY GILMOUR,
JOHN OSWALD, Esq., of Dumfries,
MRS OSWALD,
THE MRSSES OSWALD,
R. G. E. WEMYSS, Esq., Wemyss Castle,
LADY EVA WEMYSS,
PROVOST and MRS HUGHISON, Braehead
House,
M. B. NAIRN, Esq., Dyar's House,
JOHN NAIRN, Esq., Forth Park,
A. H. MINTOSH, Esq., Victoria House.
 Will Produce the Great Sensational American
 Dramas, The
OCTOROON
 (By Dion Boucicault, Author of "Colleen
 Bawn," "Shaughraun," &c.)
 New and Magnificent Scenery, Specially Painted
 for this Production by Sir Chas. F. Lamball, Queen's
 Prize and Honorary, South Kensington (from
 London and Provincial Theatres.)
 Coon Songs by WINNIE and BESSIE (from the
 Pavilion Theatre, Edinburgh.)
 Miss MAY BAXTER, the well-known Scottish
 Mezzo-Soprano, will sing a few Solos during the Per-
 formance.
 Several Dances by Miss JENNY M'LEAN.
 Chorus of over 30 Voices. Specially Selected
 Orchestra.

Mention had been made above of the 'Kirkcaldy Musical Society' and their production of the 'Gondoliers'. That same edition of the *Fife Free Press* on the 16th December 1899 carried an advertisement for a production of the "Sensational American Drama "The Octoroon" being produced by the 'Kirkcaldy Amateur Dramatic Club' between the 20th and 23rd December. The list of the great and the good who were patrons of the club had to be included here if only for interest. It would appear that the Octoroon was first produced in 1859 and was an anti-slavery play. To modern eyes the portion of the advert listing *Coon songs by Winnie and Bessie* from the Pavilion Theatre Edinburgh is

beyond belief.

Saturday the 27th January 1900 sees an advertisement carried by the *Fife Free Press* which is of great interest. The first part carried information on the Saturday Evening Entertainments in the form of a Burns Concert. The advertisement, which was for that night, shows an array of 'First Class Entertainers' although only one is listed as being local.

POPULAR SATURDAY EVENING
ENTERTAINMENTS.
 ADAM SMITH HALL,
TO-NIGHT, TO-NIGHT,
GRAND - BURNS - CONCERT.
FIRST-CLASS ARTISTES :-
 MISS A. STURROCK, Celebrated Soprano,
 Glasgow.
 MISS J. ROBERTSON, Famous Contralto,
 Aberdeen.
 MR. MACGREGOR HENDERSON, First-
 Class Entertainer, Edinburgh.
 MR. R. BLACK, Eminent Baritone, Glasgow.
 MR. DONALD MUNRO, Gold Medallist
 Reciter, Aberdeen.
 MR. WILLIAM JOHNSTONE, Distinguished
 Violinist, Kirkcaldy.
Lovers of Burns Don't Miss this Treat.
 Doors Open, 6.45. To Begin at 7.30.
 Prices—1s, 6d, 4d, 3d.
 To give more sittings the Orchestral Gallery
 will be Erected. Admission 6d.

Adam - Smith - Hall, - Kirkcaldy.
 FOR SIX DAYS ONLY,
 Commencing MONDAY, January 29th, 1900.
 NIGHTLY AT 7.45.
 Day Exhibitions on Wednesday and Saturday
 at 3.
 Doors Open at 2.30 and 7.15.
 Popular Prices of Admission—2s, 1s 6d, 1s, 6d.
 Early Door to avoid the crush and with choice of
 seats open at 2.15 and 7.30 extra to all parts.
 Children under 15 Half-Price, except to the 6d
 places. Reserved Seats and Pans at the Hall.
 "CHAS. W."
POOLE'S
 LATEST and UP-TO-DATE
MYRIORAMA,
 A Revelation of Startling and Pleasing
 Delights. The Cape, Natal, Rhodesia, Orange
 Free State, Savage South Africa, The
 Transvaal, and the
Boer War.
 THE Great Trek. Royal Irish, King's Royal
 Rifles, and Dublin Fusiliers at Glencoe.
 The Terrors of Johannesburg—The Town Over-
 awed by the Forts, The Forts by Night, Boers
 Manoeuvring Outside Pretoria, Entry of Kruger
 into Bloemfontein. The Gordon Highlanders
 at Elundlasagte. Arrival of Our Troops at the
 Cape. Cairo to Fashoda and Central Africa.
 Omdurman and Khart-um. Charge of the 21st
 Lancers and Macdonald's Fine Stand at Omdur-
 man. The Hispano-American War! Grand
 Tour of the World, &c., &c., enlivened,
 brightened, and made thoroughly diverting by
 the "Chas. W." Poole's Vast Amusement
 Organization! A Bit of the Beat of Everything.
 The Phydora Trio, The Moxon Family, M'Carr's
 Dogs, Hector, The 4 Estos, Madia, Marie,
 Mephisto, Mr Fred. Charles, Tissoet's Living
 Marionettes, Carl Renhart, and last, but not
 least, Edison-Poole Event-graphie. Poole's
 Mandoline, Orchestral and Military Bands of
 Solo Performers.
 Originator, Sole Owner, and Director—
 Mr CHAS. W. POOLE.

Directly below is the announcement that Poole's Myriorama is appearing in the hall from Monday the 19th for 6 days. To avoid the crush we are advised that patrons should arrive early and we can see that the most expensive seat in the new venue is 2/- or 10p. The advert assures us that the programme is *a revelation of startling and pleasing delights*. While the show covers much of South Africa the centrepiece is without question the Boer War. Moving pictures of a variety has arrived in the Hall! Part of the advert showing some of the acts under the direction and management of Mr Poole are listed – they evidence Variety is not dead!

Evidence that true moving pictures had arrived is shown in an item carried by the *Fife Free Press* on the 14th September 1901. Kirkcaldy

CINEMATOGRAPH
 AND ELECTRO DRAMA.
 Eight times engaged by Royal Command at
 Balmoral Castle, and as Exhibited in London
 Halls.
 Entirely New Programme, including
THE ROYAL TOUR IN THE COLONIES,
 Receptions, Processions, Reviews,
 Scenes from Many Lands—
 Rome, Venice, South Africa, China, etc.
 Grand Naval and Military Spectacles.
 Science, Mystery, Magic, Fun.
 GREAT DISPLAY OF
LOCAL CINEMATOGAMS.
Kirkcaldy Volunteer Inspection
 (Black Watch),
 Showing the Full Battalion on the March.
Maackintosh's Works
 A Lengthy Film Showing Workers Leaving the
 Works.
Kirkcaldy Schools.
 All these Cinematograms are now shown for
 the first time, and for length and brightness far
 excel anything yet shown in the district.

was to receive a visit on the 26th, 27th and 28th by *Walker & Company's World Famous Cinematograph*. We are told that they were eight times engaged to appear by Royal Command at Balmoral Castle. The programme consisted of a Royal Tour to the Colonies and various other scenes which included “many lands – great naval and military spectacles – science – mystery – magic and fun.

What was of immense interest was that a number of short films had been shot locally and included – an inspection of the local volunteers from the Black Watch showing the full battalion on the march. Also included was a lengthy piece showing the employees leaving Mackintosh's furniture works plus what was termed Kirkcaldy Schools. If only these were still in existence!

It would seem that Walkers had their staple offering but then cleverly augmented it with local scenes – which would attract an audience of those who might be featured. We tried to do a little more research and a site “*The Theatres and Cinemas of Dunfermline & Rosyth*” was on considerable help. It is an excellent site and the research must have been lengthy and painstaking. It reveals that Kirkcaldy beat Dunfermline to the punch with Walkers as they only arrived in Dunfermline in the October;-

“Cinema projection in this area began as early as 1901, when in October, Walker and Co's cinematograph visited Dunfermline for 3 days. A number of local films were exhibited for the first time such as footage of the inspection of Fifeshire Volunteers at Ladybank, pupils and teachers leaving Dunfermline and Queen Anne High Schools, plus workers of Erskine Beveridge and Co. leaving their factory. The Town Band leaving for an excursion to Aberdeen was also included”. Walker's advertised that their films exceeded anything in length and brightness than had previously been seen.

Hot on the heels of Walker's appearance we find that the Corporation's Saturday Evening Concerts were also showing films. The *Fife Free Press* advertisement for Saturday 7th December 1901 revealed that Chalmers' Cinematograph had been engaged. The audience were promised humorous and historical pictures plus a sensational film – The History of Crime.

ADAM SMITH HALL.
KIRKCALDY CORPORATION SATURDAY EVENING CONCERTS.
SATURDAY, 7th DECEMBER, 1901.
 Special Engagement of the Celebrated
Chalmers' Cinematograph!
 In addition to Historical and Humorous Pictures there will be included the most Sensational Film ever shown, entitled—
 “THE HISTORY OF A CRIME.”
 Mr Rudall Hayward,
 Celebrated BARITONE.
 Miss Antonia Martinengo,
 Favourite SOPRANO.
 Miss Adeline Martinengo,
 Brilliant VIOLINIST & VOCALIST.
 Mr Fred Mills,
 The Celebrated COMEDIAN, who will appear in conjunction with
 Miss Antonia Martinengo,
 In DRAMATIC & HUMOROUS SKETCHES.
 Mr J. A. FREEMAN, PIANIST.
 Prices of Admission :—
 To Back Area and Back Gallery, 3d
 To Front Area and Front and Side Galleries, 6d
 A Few 1s Seats in the Front Area and Front Gallery.
 Admission to Back Gallery by Side Entrance Only. Admission to all other Parts of Hall by Main Entrance in Bannockburn Road.
 Doors Open at 6.45 : Concert at 7.30.

The event was not restricted to film and a number of singers and musicians not to mention a comedian. Mr J.A. Freeman is at the piano and we would

assume that he would be accompanying the film. The spread and popularity of film is really quite extraordinary in the few short years since 1895.

We can see that the Hall quickly embraced moving pictures almost from the beginning. Even the most casual glance at the advertisements shows that over the decades The Adam Smith Hall has provided a tsunami of entertainment and carries on to this day. It was never a purpose built cinema but it certainly provided a home for them in the infant days of film and when the last cinema closed its doors in 1980 – the Halls regularly showed films. Michael Beveridge's dream has certainly showed its worth in the town's history and it remains a bastion of entertainment to this day.

The King's Theatre/Opera House/The Hippodrome/Regal

This is private enterprise on the march in terms of building theatres in the town. Both the Corn Exchange and the Adam Smith Halls were in the hands of the local authority. The King's Theatre began life under the direction of R.C. Buchanan and his associates. Buchanan was a well-established theatrical Managing Director.

The story of the King's begins with the sale of properties on Kirkcaldy's High Street which were covered by the *Fife Free Press* on the 21st March 1903. An auction had taken place in the Town House on the 18th March to dispose of some old properties which the Council had acquired to widen the High Street allowing the rails for the tramway to be laid. Eleven sites were on offer and seven of these were purchased by J.L. Innes on behalf of clients. Innes's still function today in the guise of Innes Johnstone & Co., currently based on the Esplanade. The most important of these sites was on the High Street at its junction with Redburn Wynd. The article made it clear that the intention was to build a two tier theatre for a Glasgow syndicate whose Managing Director was the above mentioned R.C. Buchanan. The article advised that plans had already been drawn up by the joint architects, J.D. Swanston and William Williamson, both of Kirkcaldy. The theatre had already been christened "The King's Theatre" - which was the first to carry this name in Scotland. The capacity of the theatre was to be around 2,000 people and it was to be completed by the end of the year. Evidence that plans were already advanced comes in the shape of this advert seeking contractors

THE KING'S THEATRE.
TO CONTRACTORS,
ESTIMATES are required for the taking down of Old Buildings on the Site which has been acquired for above. Contractors may get any particulars they wish by applying to the Architects.
Joint: { J. D. SWANSTON,
Architects, { WILLIAM WILLIAMSON.
Kirkcaldy, 20th March, 1903.

to demolish the old buildings.

The newspaper's journalist felt that this would be a very successful enterprise as bookings would be made in conjunction with another fifteen theatres spread over the country and in which Mr Buchanan had an interest. Some of those mentioned included the *Grand*, the *Metropole* and the *Princess*, all in Glasgow. Add to these the *New Century* in Motherwell and two *New Gaiety Theatres* in Ayr and Leith. Each of the theatres would be included in the round of acts booked by Mr Buchanan.

The principal entrance was to be from the High Street which would be elaborate and handsome with marble panelling. The first part of the staircase was to be the full width of the vestibule and on reaching the landing would split into three where one stair went down to the stalls and the other two led up to the dress circle. The stalls would have accommodation for 200. The pit was immediately behind the stalls and the entrance would be from the corner of Redburn Wynd and was capable of accommodating 800. The second tier, or gallery, would have accommodation for 1,000, plus there would be 10 boxes on either side of the stage. The theatre would be fully lit by electricity which would include 600 lights and the cantilever style of architecture ensured a clear view for all. In the event of fire it was estimated that the whole building could be evacuated in 2/3 minutes. We learn that a site at the Port Brae had also been purchased and we will read more of that later. The site would contain flatted houses with shops at ground level. The article noted that arrangements had already been made for three of the shop units which would be filled by a tobacconist, a confectioner and a photographer.

At this stage we would draw attention to the fine blogs on our website where Tom Reid has covered the local body of work of both Williamson and Swanston. They present an excellent and authoritative summary of the work of two men who contributed much to Kirkcaldy's excellent architecture. It is well worth a visit.

The Fife Free Press of Saturday the 4th April included a sketch of Mr Buchanan alongside confirmation of his appointment as Managing Director. The article described the sketch as a photo which in today's parlance it certainly



is not. The anticipated accommodation figure appears to have risen to 2,400.

The Fife Free Press of the 4th July reported that much rock was having to be removed to allow the foundations to be constructed and “heavy blasts” had been heard. The foundations had to go to a depth of 12 feet in some places. An English firm, *Scofield and Hancox*, had won the contract for the steel work and this alone amounted to £4,000.

By the 11th July, when the plans were before the Dean of Guild Court, the capacity figure has risen to 3,000. That was just shy of double the capacity of the Adam Smith Hall. The total cost was now estimated at between £20,000 and £30,000.



It was not until the edition of the 19th November 1904 that the *Fife Free Press* was able to cover the official opening of the building which was carried out by Mr John Barry of Barry, Ostlere & Shepherd on the 12th November. We very quickly learn that there were two firms involved in erecting the building – they were the *West Regent Investment Company* from Glasgow and the recently formed *Kirkcaldy Theatre Company Ltd*. It would seem that

this method was a standard one for Buchanan. The construction would be carried out by the investment company and then floated off to local shareholders. While Buchanan retained the majority of the shares – these flotations offered local people a stake in their own theatre. The article now put the capacity as between 2,000 and 3,000 which hardly seems precise and the cost is given at £20,000.

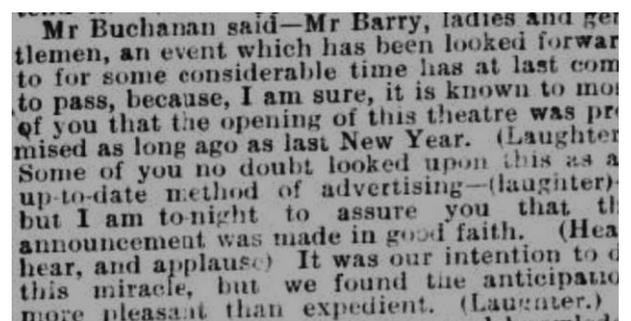
The ornate fibrous plaster ornamentation had been carried out by local sculptor – Mr A. Murdoch and an army of assistants both casting and fixing the mouldings in position. Some older readers may well remember a monumental sculptor, by the name of Murdoch whose premises were hard against the embankment at Abbotshall railway bridge close to where a gym is now situated. The assumption must be that this is the same man or his family.

Barry gave an excellent speech where he remarked that - “the opening of this beautiful theatre marks a new era in the history of Kirkcaldy. We are a

practical and hard working community. Much of our life is spent in a round of dry routine duty or hard manual recreation or amusement. Until now the people of Kirkcaldy have had very limited facilities for witnessing dramatic performances - an occasional company at the Corn Exchange or the Adam Smith Hall, or a rush over to Edinburgh on a Saturday night to see a play with the disagreeable necessity of leaving before the end of the last act and a wild helter-skelter to the station to catch the last train, or the alternative of stopping all night and that does not suit the pocket of everybody”.

He went on to say that “this is now to be all changed, thanks to Mr Buchanan and his colleagues, the people of Kirkcaldy can come to a beautifully arranged theatre in their own town, can depend upon seeing good plays, good companies, perfect comfort – and all at a phenomenally low cost. For this valuable addition to our social amenities and comfort, I hope we are all duly grateful and that we will show our gratitude in a practical way by supporting the theatre by all the means in our power.”

Mr Buchanan opened his remarks by apologising for the fact that the opening had been promised by the last New Year. To laughter he mentioned that they had found “the anticipation more pleasant than the expedient”. It then transpired that a Reverend Parry some years before had started concerts to try and take people off the streets and Mr Buchanan was a performer at many of these concerts. In time he “had the great honour of managing the *Saturday Night Concerts* for the Corporation”. He was at pains to stress the theatre was not competition but rather concerts in the Adam Smith Hall were mainly restricted to a Saturday night while his theatre was open every night of the week and he trusted that his acts would be worthy of the building in which they will be given. Interestingly enough this may well be factual as the Fife Free Press disclosed on the 12th September 1903 that Mr Buchanan had been appointed by the Town Council to organise their own concert bookings for the following season. Clearly the new each other before the advent of the Kings.



Mr Buchanan said—Mr Barry, ladies and gentlemen, an event which has been looked forward to for some considerable time has at last come to pass, because, I am sure, it is known to most of you that the opening of this theatre was promised as long ago as last New Year. (Laughter) Some of you no doubt looked upon this as a up-to-date method of advertising—(laughter)—but I am to-night to assure you that the announcement was made in good faith. (Hear, hear, and applause) It was our intention to do this miracle, but we found the anticipation more pleasant than expedient. (Laughter.)

It was a matter of gratification to him that the Rev. Gardyne of St. Peter's Episcopal Church was in agreement that the town needed a theatre and in his opinion the theatres he had opened had been a source of good. This he

claimed was the case in Falkirk where after the opening of the Opera House – drunkenness and petty crime had dropped by 40%. His argument was that theatres were taking people off the streets thereby preventing antisocial behaviour.

The opening was followed “by some stage dancing which was watched by many from their seats while others interested themselves by an examination of Kirkcaldy's latest; and certainly most wonderful public building”.

This Prospectus has been filed with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies.

THE LIST WILL OPEN ON 24TH MAY, 1904, AND CLOSE ON OR BEFORE 30TH MAY, 1904.

THE KIRKCALDY THEATRE COMPANY, LIMITED.
(Incorporated under the Companies Act, 1862 to 1900.)

Share Capital	-	-	£18,000.
DIVIDED INTO			
6 per cent Cumulative Preferences	-	-	£6,000.
Shares of £1 each	-	-	12,000.
Ordinary Shares of £1 each	-	-	£18,000.

THE Preference Shares will be entitled to a Cumulative Preferential Dividend of 6 per cent. per annum out of the profits of the Company, and will also be entitled to priority over the Ordinary Shares in respect of Capital.

The whole of the Shares (Preference and Ordinary) are now offered for public subscription as follows:—

1s	per Share on Application.
4s	“ on Allotment.
5s	“ Two Months after Allotment.

And the Balance in calls not exceeding 5s each at intervals of not less than Two Months.

A little research into the *Kirkcaldy Theatre Company Ltd* revealed that it was established in May 1904. The purpose was to carry on the business of the *King's Theatre and Opera House*. The majority of the names mentioned had no connection with Kirkcaldy but Mr Buchanan was amongst the signatories to the application. However, Mr E Batten, a linoleum manufacturer, whose address was given as Bennochry House Kirkcaldy was also named. We suspect that his business had been swallowed up in the formation of Barry Ostlere & Shepherd. The registered address of the company was 60 West Regent Street, Glasgow. The company was floated in June 1904 and the purchase price is to be £19,500 which of course is to be paid to

the *West Regent Investment Company*. £15,000 was to be paid in cash with the residue by cash/shares or a combination thereof. It was also revealed that Buchanan held 201 shares in the *West Regent Investment Company*. The prospectus carried a valuation of the King's on completion of £19,500.

For many years after, the local newspapers often carried advertisements for the sale of shares in the company – normally following the death of a holder and emanating from the deceased's solicitor.

The opening performance is often regarded as *Floradora* which was featured on the 14th November and the advertisement is shown here. However, this is not strictly correct as, prior to the official opening on the 12th, the *Fife Free Press* of the 19th November discloses that professional artists had appeared. There had been an invited audience numbering some 1,000 in attendance and prior to the

KING'S THEATRE, KIRKCALDY.

Managing Director, R. C. BUCHANAN.
Resident Manager, RAX. SUGDEN.
National Telephone No. 186 Kirkcaldy.

THE Directors have much pleasure in announcing that the above Magnificent Theatre will positively be Opened to the Public on

MONDAY, 14th November,

With the celebrated Ben Greet Company (under the direction of J. Bannister Howard), in the Great Success,

FLORODORA!

From the Lyric Theatre, London, with all the Gorgeous Scenery, Dresses, and Elaborate Effects as used in the London Production. Particular attention is drawn to the fact that, owing to the Spaciousness of the Building at their command, the Directors are enabled to provide all the No. 1 Attractions at prices below anything at present in vogue in first-class theatres. Prices

official opening “a delightful musical programme, opening appropriately with “God Save the King,” was ably carried through by the following professional artists:- Miss Essie Eunson, Mr J. Kirkwood-Campbell, Miss Baxter and an excellent Orchestra.

Monday, 16th January,
FOR THREE NIGHTS ONLY.
FAREWELL VISIT!

CHARLES FROHMAN presents the Lyceum Theatre success, William Gillette's Celebrated Play—
“SHERLOCK HOLMES,”

By A. Conan Doyle and William Gillette,
 Being a hitherto unpublished Episode in the Career of the great Detective, and showing his connection with the Strange Case of Miss Faulkner.

In January 1905, for three nights, the play Sherlock Holmes was performed in the theatre. The advert has been traced but no cast members are named. However, it is believed that a young Charlie Chaplin was a member of the cast – prior to finding fame and fortune in Hollywood. The play appears to be one written by William Gillette. Gillette

was an American actor who played Homes on stage and in a 1916 silent film.

However, the theatre struggled financially almost from the start with the result that it was wound up in 1908. It was exposed for sale in Glasgow and the *Fife Free Press* of the 8th February 1908 reported that the theatre which had cost £19,500 to purchase had fetched only £7,000. The encyclopedic website of theatre – *Arthur Lloyd.co.uk* suggests that the theatre was bought by a Mr Abrahams of London and a Mrs Ellis of the Borough Theatre, Stratford. What is certain is that by the 16^h March the theatre had been leased by an E.H. Bostock and

THE KING'S Theatre, Kirkcaldy, built and fitted up four years ago at a cost of £19,500, was exposed for sale in Glasgow on Wednesday, and purchased at the upset price of £7000.

also had a new name - the Hippodrome. That was the end of the Kirkcaldy Theatre Company Ltd. Messrs. Abrahams and Ellis were now the owners and Mr Bostock the lessee.

THE KIRKCALDY HIPPODROME,
 LATE KING'S THEATRE.
 Lessee and Manager. ... E. H. BOSTOCK.
 Resident Manager. ... W. GILLESPIE.

GRAND OPENING
 OF THE ABOVE, ON
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 1908.
 Under the Distinguished Patronage of
SIR MICHAEL B. NAIRN, BART.,
 Provost MUNRO FERGUSON, M.P.,
 And Magistrates of Kirkcaldy.
 Doors Open at 7.15 p.m., commencing at 7.45.
 Half the Proceeds of the Opening Performance will be given to the Kirkcaldy Cottage Hospital.

Special and most Expensive Engagement of
IVAN TCHERNOFF'S famous sensational Animal Entertainment, by his wonderful group of Educated Ponies and Dogs.

TED CURTIS and his Piccaninnies. Popular Negro Entertainers and Dancers.

THE PAOLIAS in a Refined Drawing-Room Entertainment, including Paolia, the World's most extraordinary specimen of Muscular Perfection.

AVON & CREST.
 CISSIE CURLETTE.
 BROS. BRADSHAW.

There was a Grand Opening/Reopening Concert on the 16th and this was under the patronage of two of Kirkcaldy's best known figures – Sir Michael B. Nairn, Bart., and Provost Munro Ferguson, M.P. Given it was under the patronage of Sir Michael it is no surprise that one half of the opening nights proceeds were to go to the Cottage Hospital. The programme, which is shown here, was an eclectic mix – with educated ponies and dogs, piccaninnies, the World's most extraordinary example of

muscular perfection, comedy acrobats and a celebrated ventriloquist. Quite importantly, the Hippodrome Bioscope is mentioned – which is a generic term for an early movie camera.

On Monday the 5th October 1908 the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, was presented with the *Freedom of the Burgh* in the Hippodrome. Once more monies were charged for some of the better seats with the proceeds again going to the Hospital. There was however a substantial number of free seats. It is interesting to note that women were not allowed in the gallery in case there was a display of Suffragette activity. This was the second time the theatre had been used for this purpose – two years, earlier in 1906, General William Booth of the Salvation Army has been similarly honoured.

By March 1914 the name Hippodrome appears to have vanished and reverted to the Kings. An advertisement from the Fife Free Press of the 14th March shows the Resident Manager as Rupert G. Thompson – the point is that the advertisement covers a week, where on the Monday – Wednesday the latest films are being shown. On the Thursday to Saturday an Irish farce – *General John Regan* is a live event. This would suggest that whether theatre or film then the name King's Theatre is the one in use.

KING'S THEATRE,
KIRKCALDY.
Resident Manager—Rupert G. Thompson.
Monday, Mar. 16, and during the week, at 8 p.m.
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Mar. 16, 17, 18—
THE LATEST PICTURES AT
POPULAR PRICES.
Ft. 3d; Ft. Stalls, 4d; Family Circle, 6d;
Dress Circle or Orchestra Stalls, 9d.
—
THURSDAY, FRIDAY, and SATURDAY,
March 19th, 20th, and 21st,
Messrs Graham, Barwell, and Mirrieles present
their Company of Irish Players in the
rollicking Irish Farce—
**GENERAL
JOHN
REGAN.**
By George A. Birmingham (Gaston Hannay).
The greatest of all London successes, from the
Apollo Theatre, London.
Booking Office Open Daily at the Theatre,
10 to 4.

KING'S THEATRE, KIRKCALDY.
Special Feature all the Week.
The Most Dramatic Event of the Year,
SHOWING THE
Attack on the King's Horse.
—
THE DERBY RACE, 1913.

Working backwards, quite by chance a sensational event was found. This was recorded in the *Fife Free Press* editions of the 7th and 14th June. The event was a film of what was described as the attack on the King's horse in the 1913 Derby – it was to show throughout the week. The masthead of the edition even carried an advert for the film. The following

week, the 14th, one of the items on offer was a film of the funeral procession of Emily Wilding Davison – who was described as the Derby Suffragette Martyr.

The advertisement advised that the theatre is under new management and the whole auditorium had been thoroughly vacuum cleaned. So, before and after this change of management the name remained the King's. This edition of the 14th does not disclose who the new owners are but we learn that the theatre is under the discriminating management of no less a name than Mr C. Lilforth Delph.

A change of ownership and name took place in 1916. The *Fife Free Press* of Saturday the 16th April revealed that the theatre had been taken over by the *Kirkcaldy Picture House Company*. The article confirms that the building had previously been leased to B.B. Pictures Ltd – suggesting Mr Bostock had moved on. The purchase was to be completed in March 1916 with the sellers indeed being the aforementioned Abrahams and Ellis. The item is reproduced here.

As always this led to more research and at last the *Kirkcaldy Picture House Company* were traced. The *Fife Free Press* of the 6th April 1916 led us to an official opening of what was termed *The Theatre* – but, without question, it refers to the re-opening of the King's. A lunch was being held at the Station Hotel and the guest of honour was the famous motion picture actress – Florence Turner (Google her – she is the real deal!).

On arriving at the theatre it was found to be crowded by people seeking a glimpse of this heroine whom they had only glimpsed on the screen.

Sir Robert Lockhart presided and on the platform were Miss Turner and the three company directors. All three were well known names – Mr Hutchinson, Alex Fraser and local accountant Mr King. Sir Robert declared that it meant much to the inhabitants that the largest theatre in the town was in the hands of three such respected local men. After Miss Turner made a speech and declared the theatre open –



THE THEATRE
CHATELAIN BUILDING, KING STREET, KIRKCALDY.
Proprietors—The Kirkcaldy Picture House Co. Ltd. Manager—Mr T. F. MACKAY.
Phone No. 124.

Nightly at 7.45 Doors Open at 7.15.	MONDAY, 4th Sept. 1916. And closing the week.	Nightly at 7.45 Doors Open at 7.15.
6.45 Ordinary Interval 6.20.	SATURDAY TWO PERFORMANCES.	45 Ordinary Interval 6.20.

ANOTHER BRILLIANT VAUDEVILLE PROGRAMME

Expansive and Starving Engagement of the Famous Comedy Artists—
MOONEY & HOLBEIN,
Two Vaudevillians of Note.

MAUDE PHILLIPS & BILLY,
In Popular Opera Songs. Original Comedy.

RENE, Lady Juggler and Comedy.
Anticant—SUGGEST.

THE TWO PHIPPS, Will and Jack.
Comedy Acrobatic Specialty—"ON GUARD."

THE DELMORE TRIO
In their Fanny Comedy Skit—"IN & FIX."

EVIE VINCENT, Chorus Vocalist.

Miss Nance Jacobsen presents **THE KOSIQUES**
Five Charming Young Ladies in a Vocal, Dancing, and Electrical Opera entitled—
"THE ENCHANTED GLEN."
Featuring Miss NANCE in her beautiful Electrical Costumes.

POPULAR PRICES:
Gallery, 3d; 4d; 5d; 6d; 7d; 8d; 9d; 10d; 11d; 12d.
Free of Tax. 1d. 2d. 3d. 4d. 5d. 6d. 7d. 8d. 9d. 10d. 11d. 12d.
Early Doors 5d extra to all Parts.

Soldiers and Sailors Half Price to all Parts except Gallery.

she was presented with a quail by Mr T. MacKay – the theatre manager. The opening was brought to a conclusion with the showing of *The Welsh Singer* featuring Miss Turner as Mifanwy.

In the *Fife Free Press* of the 8th April 1916 – we find that the advertisements for the following week are indeed branded as *The Theatre*. The programme as befits the new owners is all film with no variety. From here it gets very mysterious and some greater research will be needed. By Saturday the 2nd September 1916 the programme carried by the *Fife Free Press* has reverted

on the list of Directors of the new venture. The prospectus is shown here to save referring to the next section. Soon the ABC grew from Maxwell's empire and the Opera House was part of it. More on Maxwell in the next segment. By 1928 the Opera House was film only.

However, by far the most important event to take place was commented on in the Fife Free Press of the 25th May 1929 - "The Management have pleasure in announcing the *Opera House* is the first provincial cinema in Scotland to instal the most perfect and expensive system for the presentation of talking pictures known to the scientific world" - It was to allow the first talking picture to be screened in Kirkcaldy – Al Jolson in *The Singing Fool*.

OPERA HOUSE
KIRKCALDY
KIRKCALDY ENTERTAINMENTS, LIMITED.
Resident Manager, A. F. CARBY. Telephone 2145.

Performances Daily, 2.30, 6.30, 8.30.
Saturday, Four Performances, 2.30, 4.30, 6.30, 8.30.

Week commencing MONDAY, 24 June 1929.

THE TALKIES
The Greatest Success Ever Recorded
compels another week of
Al. Jolson in
The Singing Fool

PRICES OF ADMISSION
(INCLUDING TAX)

BOXES (Each party)	CIRCLE	STALLS	HALCONY
2/-	1/6	1/-	6 ^{3D}

NO HALF PRICES. CHILDREN IN ARMS NOT ADMITTED

The name continued until 1937 as the Opera House. In that year a reconstruction had taken place and a significant one at that. The work to produce a modern streamline cinema was carried out by architect Charles McNair.

THE REGAL
(LATE OPERA HOUSE)

OPENING CEREMONY
By Provost JAMES WILSON
ON MONDAY, 23rd AUGUST
At 2.30 p.m.

"PENNIES FROM HEAVEN"
Starring BING CROSBY

The *Fife Free Press* of August the 14th 1937 described the interior as "A splendidly equipped and furnished cinema capable of seating two thousand has been fashioned out of the shell of the Opera House. (In January the Press had spoken of the theatre being taken back to the steel girders). One of the most important features was the installation of the most up to date sound

system – The Mirrophonic System. The theatre was reopened on Monday the 23rd August by Provost James Wilson. It had a new name – *The Regal*.

The *Fife Free Press* advert of the 21st August for the opening event dwarfed all the other cinemas' adverts put together. The first film to be shown was Bing Crosby in *Pennies from Heaven*. *Louis Armstrong* was also included in the cast. The advert is reproduced here with the text containing phrases such as;- *an engineering wonder is the*

THE REGAL
(Late Opera House), HIGH STREET.
Manager: A. F. CARBY

Kirkcaldy's Most Palatial
Super Cinema

GRAND OPENING
On Monday First, 23rd August, 1937
At 2.30 p.m. Doors Open at 2 p.m.

The Opening Ceremony will be performed by Provost JAMES WILSON.

THE REGAL, specially designed to provide exceptionally good entertainment, is certain to achieve an immediate and overwhelming success. In the opinion of those who are present and in an atmosphere of dignified and convincing beauty of the pleasure of public entertainment are given.

Perfect sound reproduction is provided by the latest and most complete type of Western Electric Microphonic System. The most recent model of the cinema.

An Engineering wonder is the most up-to-date in the cinema world, being in the cinema. The cinema of it is a masterpiece of engineering and is a masterpiece of the building, the opening a particularly noteworthy achievement.

BRILLIANT OPENING ATTRACTION
BING CROSBY MADGE EVANS EDITH FELLOWES
LOUIS ARMSTRONG

"PENNIES FROM HEAVEN" (1)
A STRATTONS PICTURE PRESENTATION

most apt description of the heating and ventilation plant and an atmosphere of dignified and entrancing beauty. It was also mentioned that you would be sitting on exquisitely upholstered seats.

There was a name change to simply the A.B.C. and it was in 1974, with the destruction by fire of the *Odeon*, that what had began life as the King's and moved through so many changes of name and ownership was left as the last man standing. For this purpose we ignore the revamped Adam Smith Hall which was indeed showing film at that stage.

There looked to be a bright future when it closed temporarily for conversion into a three cinema multiplex. The first cinema reopened in December 1977 with seating for 547. the second and third opened in January with 287 and 235 seats respectively. A total of 1069 seats – a far cry from the glory days.

In recent memory the A.B.C. Cinema Group passed to E.M.I. and then to Cannon in 1988. By 1993 it had become M.G.M. The next owner appears to be Richard Branson's Virgin Group when it was closed in 2,000.

The venue was purchased by a commercial company with a plan to convert it to a pub and performance area. However, building consent was withdrawn and the complex was sold in 2005. Sadly, it remained empty and suffered from a lack of maintenance. It is listed but only the facade has this protection.

In 2016 the building was purchased by the Kings Theatre Kirkcaldy Ltd with the intention of restoring the cinema and the Y.W.C.A. This has been successful in terms of the later which is now functioning but questions remain over the cinema itself. Despite a grant from the Theatres Trust to cover the building with a temporary roof there is still much damage suffered/suffering to the interior. Only time will tell what its fate will be.

The Port Brae Picture House / Kirkcaldy Picture House

No. 8428—Kirkcaldy Picture House (Ltd.), 2 Walker Street, Edinburgh, to acquire ground a Port Brae, on the south side of High Street, Kirkcaldy, and to erect suitable buildings for an electric theatre. Capital, £4000, in 3500 Ordinary and 500 Deferred shares of £1 each. Subscribers:—O. Barclay, 17 Gayfield Square; P. Weir, S.S.C. J. R. King, C.A.; and Clunie Macgregor, solicitor all of Edinburgh; and W. Williamson, architect J. Rowan Thomson, C.A.; and J. Sutherland bank agent, all of Kirkcaldy.

Although universally known as the Port Brae Picture House it was under the title of Kirkcaldy Picture House Ltd that the Prospectus for the Company appeared in the Fife Advertiser on the 9th November 1912. The main details are

reproduced here and as can be seen the intention was to purchase ground at the Port Brae and erect an Electric Theatre. The plans had already been passed by the Dean of Guild. It can be seen that the two directors, Oswald Barclay and George MacGregor, are already involved in the Haymarket Picture House in Edinburgh. £4,000 is the sum sought with £3,500 in ordinary shares of £1 each. The usual style of the day for payment was being applied – 5/- (25p) on application, followed by 5/- on allotment. The remaining sum would be paid in instalments which would be determined by the Directors but at not less than one month intervals. It is interesting to note that the solicitors are the previously mentioned A & J.L. Innes – now a father and son partnership. The architect is shown as William Williamson – yes, he of the King's fame.

The Kinematograph Weekly, on the 8th May 1913, reveals that the cinema will open in three weeks time and a Mr T.S. MacKay has been appointed manager. He was moving from the *Edinburgh Olympia*. The three weeks turned out to be ambitious in the extreme as it was not until the 29th October that Hon. Sheriff R.C. Lockhart performed the opening ceremony. There were a considerable number of dignitaries in the audience including the directors mentioned above.



Mr Lockhart took time in his address to make mention of the huge changes already seen in the century – motor cars, aeroplanes and hydroplanes, were three of those mentioned. He made reference to the fact that not everyone wanted the cinema as some considered the films might have a detrimental effect on children. However, he believed that the films shown here were “above reproach” and that they would act as a counterbalance to public houses. He argued that attending the cinema was far better than “hanging around the High Street indulging in doubtful jokes and rough horse play”. Lockhart was especially proud of the fact it was “designed by a local architect and built by local labour”. Mr and Mrs Lockhart were presented with a silver coffee service to mark the occasion before a number of reels of films were shown.

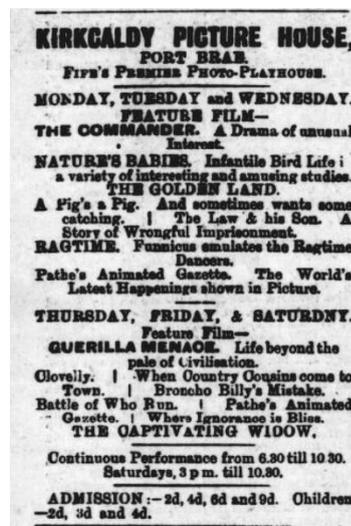
The cinema's very first advert is shown here and there were indeed



continuous performances from 6.30 – 10.30 pm on weekdays and 3.30 until 10.30 pm on Saturdays. The cinema was not allowed to open on a Sunday – this had been determined by the Council in July 1909. It was advertised as the best ventilated cinema in Fife – the air being changed every 6 minutes. The seats were priced at 2d, 4d, 5d and 9d.

Almost immediately, a Matinee was organised by the town's two main newspapers towards a relief fund which they had established for the Welsh Mining Disaster.

For interest, the programme for the following week which was included in the *Fife Free Press* on the 22nd November is reproduced here. The programme changed twice during the week – the first running from Monday to Wednesday and then a replacement on the Thursday to the Saturday. The strap line for all the shows proclaims it is *Fife's Premiere Photo-Playhouse*.



In its review of the year published on the 27th December 1913 the *Fifeshire Advertiser* commented that “so far, this select hall, which is one of the present year's additions and improvements in Kirkcaldy, has proved very successful, more so, because the proprietors have achieved their aim to reach and satisfy the particular class of people they specifically cater for. The interior of this superb building cannot fail to appeal to refined taste”.

It would be a mistake to believe that only films were shown as, in the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 14th April 1914, a four act drama, *The Four Million Dowry*, was performed on the Monday to the Wednesday before film was restored on the Thursday. Examples such as this can be found at various times over the years the cinema was active.



On the 19th September 1914 the *Advertiser* has a far more sombre advert – it was filming by the cinema's own team of *Kirkcaldy's Recruiting – Day by Day* – this of course covers the outbreak of the First World War. Scenes from Lady

Lockhart's funding activities were also shown.

On the 14th November *The Fife Free Press* reported that on the Wednesday “four entertainments had taken place, during the afternoon and evening, in aid of the *Red Cross Ambulance Fund* with all being well attended and the final performance packed to the rafters”.

- The first showing took place at 2.30pm and was introduced by John Campbell, the Minister of the Parish Church. In his introduction he mentioned that two of his daughters were already at the front in the capacity of nurses. The principal entertainment was in the form of various films and we can not think other than it was the same films shown at each performance. As the advertisement shows here there were entertainments by live performers to go along with the films.

**WON'T YE HELP THE SUFFERING
WOUNDED ?**

BY kind permission of the Directors of the
Kirkcaldy Picture House,

TWO MATINEES

And **TWO EVENING PERFORMANCES** in aid of
the **RED CROSS AMBULANCE FUNDS**, will be given in
the **PICTURE HOUSE, PORT BRAE**, on
WEDNESDAY, 11th NOVEMBER.

PERFORMANCES, - - 2.30, 4.30, 6.30, 8.30.

Programmes include Vocal and Instrumental
Talent and Splendid Pictures.

PRICES :—3d, 6d, 9d, 1s, 1s 6d. Reserve Seat
Tickets may be had from various Members of the
Red Cross, or from Mr H. Lawrence, “Fifehire
Advertiser” Office, Kirkcaldy.

Carriages and Motor Cars will be directed to and
from their ranks.

- Councillor Garnock introduced the second performance at 4.30pm and his message suggests that the intention was to help fund a “*Kirkcaldy Ambulance* for the front”.
- Dr. Crawford introduced the 6.30pm showing and his message was to seek financial help for the Red Cross as well as the ambulance.
- It was Provost Lockhart who rounded off the evening introducing the 8.30pm showing. He fervently hoped that the war would come to a quick and satisfactory conclusion and that the least those at home could do was to raise money for the Red Cross and ambulances to ferry the wounded. Like so many of the time his message was that Belgium had to be protected from the brutal attack launched on it by Germany. Little did the Provost know that before the end of the conflict his own son would be one of the fallen.

On Saturday the 29th May 1915, again via the *Fifehire Advertiser*, we learn of the activities of the *Kirkcaldy Citizenship Committee*. The Council were

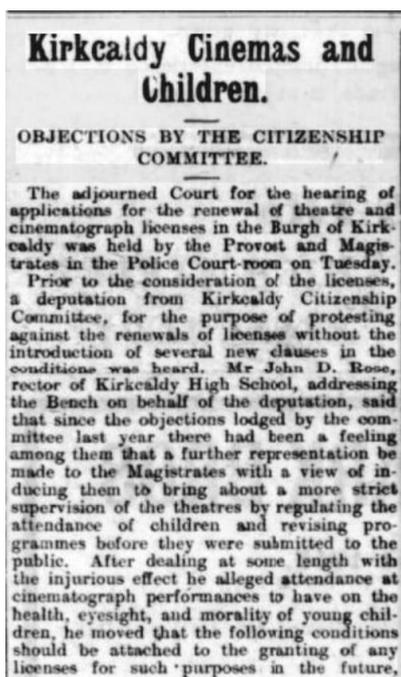
hearing applications for the renewal of Cinema Licenses but before commencing they were met by a deputation from the *Citizenship Committee* led by the erstwhile John D. Rose, the Rector of the High School. The Committee did not wish to see any renewals unless rules were introduced for the protection of minors. They sought to enforce:-

- That the Magistrates, on receipt of two or three well founded complaints, should suspend wholly, or for some time at all events, the license of the hall in question.
- That the presence of children under 14 years of age, after 6.30pm, should be strictly forbidden at cinematograph performances.
- That free passes should be discouraged and only issued to a limited extent.
- There should be no 'penny passes' to children as at present.

Mr Rose was supported in his view by the Rev. Wm. Wylie of Pathhead E.U. Congregational Church. He went as far as demanding that every film shown should be the subject of censorship before being screened in Kirkcaldy.

Lined up against the proposals were:-

- Charles Wood for the *King's Theatre* and the *Exchange Pavilion*.
- Mr MacKay himself for the *Kirkcaldy Picture House*.
- David Hetherington for the *Palace* in Whytescauseway.
- Mr Mackie from the *Pathhead Picture House*.



Their universal argument was that it was well-nigh impossible for an attendant to differentiate children aged 12, 14 and 16, and that the onus should be on the parents. It was also argued that this was a restraint of trade and finally that they were beyond the powers of the *1909 Cinematograph Act*, by which the only conditions which could be applied were ones which were related to a question of public safety.

When asked if he had any specific instances which he could bring to the attention of the committee, Mr Rose made mention of *Dante's Inferno* which had been exhibited some weeks previously. He was also critical of *A Pair of Silk Stockings* which had been featured in

the *King's Theatre* some weeks ago. It would be difficult to imagine Mr Rose's take on the offerings of the modern cinema. After some deliberation the Committee granted the renewals without any further conditions. Although a different time, and doubtless the Committee would be well meaning, there was something incongruous with such a report appearing amongst a tsunami of obituaries of Kirkcaldy's fallen youth. That said, in fairness, life had to go on.

During the war years there were any number of patriotic films shown woven in with those which transferred the audiences to the world of the silver screen.

Saturday March the 22nd 1924 sees a change of ownership not just for this cinema but another two in the town as well. The *Kirkcaldy Entertainments Ltd.* is being formed with the intention of purchasing the *Port Brae Cinema*, *The Palace* in Whytescauseway, and also the *Opera House* in the High Street. £20,000 is being sought for this purpose by means of a share issue. The properties were in the hands of the *Scottish Cinema and Variety Theatres Ltd.* As the Prospectus demonstrates this is not quite a complete break from the previous ownership.. Two of the directors of the vendors are to be directors in the new concern. Added are three local men – James W. Duncan – a High Street stationer, James W. Milne – a building contractors and finally John W. Simpson – a timber contractor. The theory was that this flotation would give the people of Kirkcaldy the opportunity to share in the profits of the cinemas they patronise. There would be no change in the fact that the films would still be provided by the *Scottish Cinema and Variety Theatre* and the fact that two of that company's Directors were involved in the new venture – would “secure the continuance of the experienced management which has made the three halls successful and profitable enterprises”. If the flotation was not a success it was fully underwritten by the vendors – this was going to succeed!

To attract shareholders it can be seen that there were generous incentives. Firstly, shareholders would receive a guaranteed dividend of at least 10%



Secondly, shareholders would receive a guaranteed dividend of at least 10%

for three years. On top of that, if a shareholder wished to sell inside the initial three years they were guaranteed to receive at least par for each share. In effect, the price could fall to 50p on the open market and yet they would still get their purchase price back. The Prospectus indicated that plans were before the Dean of Guild Court for each of the three cinemas. In the *Port Brae* case it was to extend the capacity from 631 to about 1,400.

On the same page and adjacent to the above mentioned advert was yet another prospectus – this time for the *Kirkcaldy Kinetic Company*. They were seeking to raise £15,000 to erect a cinema at 198-216 High Street. To be precise the cinema would have an entrance from the High Street but, the cinema itself, would be sited behind the High Street buildings. More on this one later, but it was interesting to see James Bogie, the outfitter, listed as a director. Bogie's was a long standing High Street shop which was eventually taken over by Wilkie's – a more recent casualty on the town's High Street. Bogie must have been something of an entrepreneur as, in 1938, he was Chairman of Raith Rovers F.C., as they won the Second Division Title scoring a British Record of 142 goals.

It was in 1932 that sound came to the *Port Brae Cinema* but it was certainly not the boost which was probably hoped for. Sadly, sanction had not been given to extend as per the 1924 submission. The Council were still trying to determine what alterations were needed at the junction of the Esplanade and the Port Brae, so the cinema remained with seating for only 641 instead of 1,400. The two major cinemas on the High Street were more ostentatious and sat a far greater audience. It is little wonder that it became the poor relation and went into decline.



An application to instal sound equipment had been made in late 1931. By January of 1932 an advert for *Night Nurse* indicates that sound had arrived. The film featured Barbara Stanwyck but further down the cast list was Clark Gable. His role had originally been allotted to James Cagney. However his success in *Public Enemy* made him

a star therefore he could not play a supporting role – enter Clark!

In 1938 it was in the joint ownership of *Kirkcaldy Entertainments* and the *A.B.C. Group*. It was perhaps little wonder that, that same year, the *For Sale* signs appeared.

The notice is reproduced here and it shows that two firms of solicitors are involved. *Maxwell, Waddell & Co* are the firm of John Maxwell, one of the original directors when Kirkcaldy Entertainments Ltd were formed. The other is *Clark, Hetherington* from Kirkcaldy, who again featured in the initial prospectus. To enable potential buyers to view, the keys to the cinema could be obtained from Mr A.P. Casey, the Manager of the Regal. This all adds fuel to the belief that the owners did treat it as being well down the pecking order of their stable of picture houses in Kirkcaldy.

John Maxwell, as mentioned above, was a solicitor but he is well worth investigating. He built a huge empire through his firm – *Associated British Picture Corporation*, which explains the joint ownership, and in 1938 was the owner of 502 cinemas. He died in 1940.

PROPERTY FOR SALE
 (Formerly PORT BRAE CINEMA).
SPLENDID CORNER SITE in Centre of Kirkcaldy.
 Apply **MAXWELL, WADDELL & CO.,**
 Solicitors,
 113 St Vincent Street, Glasgow;
 or
CLARK & HETHERINGTON,
 Solicitors,
 Whytescausway, Kirkcaldy.
 For keys, apply **A. P. CASEY,** Regal
 Cinema Kirkcaldy.

KIRKCALDY WARSHIPS WEEK
 10th to 17th JANUARY, 1942
Preliminary Announcement

1. **CONCERT IN RIO CINEMA—SUNDAY,**
 11th January, at 7 p.m.
 ROYAL MARINE BAND, by kind permission of Lieut. Col. McCausland. Conductor, Lieut. Keen.
 Solo Violin—Mus. William Ivory.
 Solo Soprano—Miss Helen Reid of the B.B.C. Singers.
 Speaker—
 Lord Provost WILLIAM Y. DARLING of Edinburgh.
 Tickets—3/-, 2/- and 1/- (inc. Tax) on sale now at Rio Cinema and at A. Buchanan & Son, and J. & W. Mentiplay, High Street, Kirkcaldy.
 Proceeds in aid of Kirkcaldy Hospital and Aid to Russia Fund.

2. **PUBLIC MEETING IN PALACE CINEMA—FRIDAY, 9th January, at 2.45 p.m.**
 Address by Mr R. FLETCHER, M.P.
 Presentation of Prizes to winners of school competitions for model destroyers and posters.
 Admission Free.

3. **EXHIBITION IN PORT BRAE CINEMA—10th to 17th January.**
 Open daily, 10.30 a.m.
 Exhibitions of Mines, Torpedoes, Depth Charges, and other naval apparatus and equipment, including diving equipment. Demonstrations.
 Special Exhibition of Salvage Products.
 Music by Naval and local Bands.

4. **OTHER ATTRACTIONS—Full detail next week.**

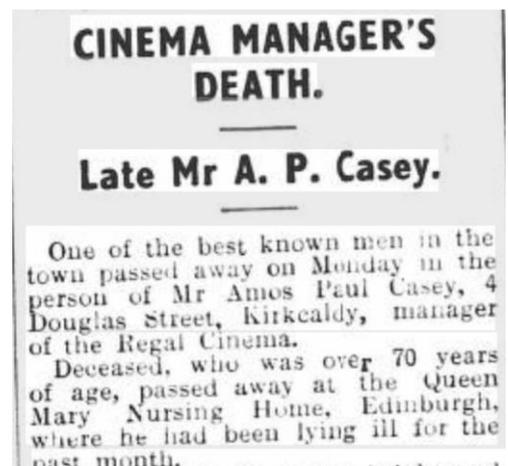
Information is scant but it seems that it was indeed sold/let but nothing concrete could be traced. It has been suggested that it reopened as the *Old Opera House* before closing for good in early 1942. Scanning the 1941 entertainment pages of the *Fife Free Press* found no advertisement in this name. Every other cinema was advertising but no sign of the Port Brae. However, an advertisement was unearthed from the *Fife Free Press* in December of 1941 which showed the cinema being used as an exhibition centre for Kirkcaldy's Navy Week in January 1942. A target of £600,000 had been set for the town to raise in one week. With huge efforts, by the Friday night the total stood at £570,000 with a day to go. A fund 'thermometer' on the High Street was updated each evening. It seems a sad day

when the cinema which had lain empty and unloved and was now only used from time to time as an exhibition centre. Given the phenomenal sum raised the week's programme had to be included.

In March of 1943 the cinema was again used as an exhibition centre during *Wings for Victory Week*. This time the centre of attention was a *Martlet Fighter Plane* which seems to have been in use with the Fleet Air Arm.

There is always the hope that something appropriate can be found to close a story. This time such an item was indeed located in the pages of the *Fife Free Press* of the 22nd April 1944. The item brought the sad tidings of the death of Amos P. Casey who, as mentioned above, had been the manager of the Regal Cinema and had lived in the town for over 30 years. The obituary advised that he had managed the Pavilion, the Palace, the Opera House, as well as the Port Brae Cinema.

While he had been equally successful as a theatre or cinema manager his first love was the theatre and many of the top-line variety artistes and stage personalities were personally known to him. It was with some regret that he had seen what he considered the legitimate art first of all threatened by motion pictures and then ousted from his theatre by the coming of films with sound. He was also something of a performer himself and took great pride in the fact that, some years earlier, he had secured a great success at a Glasgow charity concert with a "Larry Adler act" - only the older reader with know who Larry was and what he played.



Finally he had two main interests – motorbikes and pigeon racing – guess where his loft was? The answer is - on the roof of The Regal – wonder what the neighbours thought?

Part two follows in April – when we look at what were generally termed purpose built cinemas.

Acknowledgements

This story has been produced almost exclusively through researching newspapers. All the individual newspapers used for articles and advertisements are credited in the text. All the newspaper information was obtained from *Findmypast Newspaper Archive* in partnership with the *British Library*. Without access to this information it would have proved almost impossible to produce this narrative.

Mapping – The only map used is reproduced with the kind permission of the National Library of Scotland.

The History of Cinema in Kirkcaldy – A Kirkcaldy Civic Society Publication which was research by Sandy Elder was used as verification of some items.

We also thank the Local Studies Team at Kirkcaldy for their unfailing help and uncovering a booklet produced by the Mercia Cinema Society which was useful in confirming some of our research.

George Proudfoot of Kings Theatre Kirkcaldy was of immense help in terms of the attempts to save the Theatre of that name.